

THE IMAGE OF WESTERN WOMEN IN AHMED MİDHAT'S DISCOURSE ON
WESTERNIZATION

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) represents a critical point in the course of Ottoman history as it faced increasing internal tensions and threats from the Great Powers. As Selim Deringil's in-depth analysis shows, different legitimization policies were adopted in order to put an end to these threats.¹ One of the aims of these policies was to construct an Ottoman identity and the sultanate was not the only actor in this endeavor; various factions wanted to contribute to this identity formation process. While some of them wished to highlight the Islamic aspect, others argued in favor of Turkishness; and some others preferred to see Western culture as an essential element of the desired Ottoman identity. Regardless of the winners, an "other" was needed in this process of identity construction, and in the Ottoman case the required "other" had long been there: the West.

In the construction of the Western subject, the West created the Orient as its "other" and conducted its policy in accordance with this distinction because the self needs the other to recognize and define itself. In Said's words,

[i]dentity after all is a construction and involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'. Each age and society re-creates its 'others' and it is a historical, social, intellectual and political process.²

It can be argued that especially in the nineteenth century a similar process worked in the Orient. In the construction of the Ottoman subject, a discourse was established by representing the West as the other through novels and other similar means.

¹ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 332.

It is constantly emphasized that Orientalism and its functioning have to be examined as a discourse, but what is meant by that? Stuart Hall explains it in very simple terms; discourse is a way of talking, thinking or representing a certain subject or topic.³ Through discourses it becomes easier to produce meaningful knowledge about that object. This knowledge is important because it influences social practices, and has real consequences and effects since discourses always operate in relation to power. Moreover, its effectiveness in practice is more important than its truth value. As Stuart Hall says “when it is effective –organizing and regulating relations of power- (say between the West and the Rest) –it is called a ‘regime of truth.’”⁴

The Ottomans became aware of the presence of the West well before the nineteenth century, but representing the West through a discourse can be considered a nineteenth-century phenomenon. The West had always been there and had always had negative connotations, however, after the Ottomans reluctantly accepted the superiority of the West –at least in the military sphere- a mixed feeling of fascination and repulsion prevailed. At the end of the nineteenth century when Ahmed Midhat began to produce his first works, the West had already become the reference point. Adoption of Western institutions was no more an issue but the effects of cultural Westernization began to be considered as a real problem. Some of the intellectuals began to exercise an Occidentalist discourse in order to criticize the wrong and super-Westernization of the upper-classes and also to show what the real West was. They aimed to affect the internal tensions if not the international policies of the Empire by means of an Occidentalist discourse. Ahmed Midhat (1844-1912), one of the most popular and influential public figures of the age,

³ Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power” in *Formations of Modernity*, eds. Stuart Hall, Bram Gieben (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 201.

⁴ Ibid.

acquired a particular relevance in this discursive process as he put forth an ideal Ottoman identity for both men and women.

Since I will be analyzing “Orientalism in reverse,”⁵ it will be wise to explain certain aspects of Orientalism that were adapted to “Occidentalism.” In *Orientalism*, Said searches for the roots of modern Euro-centric attitudes toward the Orient and distinguishes three forms of Orientalism.⁶ In view of the fact that the first one is an academic practice and attitude, it will not be taken into consideration. The second form is a style of thought “based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident.’”⁷ This basic distinction was accepted as the starting point for sophisticated theories, novels etc, concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind,” destiny and so on. It has been valid since antiquity; even Aeschylus’ *The Persians* or Euripides’ *The Bacchae* disclose this kind of distinction and it can also be deciphered in some of the writings of Flaubert or Hugo; in traveler accounts such as Nerval’s, and in political works such as Marx’s. The common element of these writers and many others is that they have based their theories, poems, novels, accounts, social descriptions and political accounts on the distinction made between the East and the West as mentioned by Said. The last and the most important form of Orientalism that gained a discursive characteristic is the modern one which “can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling

⁵ This term is hailed by political scientist Mehrzad Boroujerdi. Mehrzad Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1996), p. 1. The term “Occidentalism” was popularized by Ian Burma and Avishai Margalit in their book *Occidentalism: the West in the Eyes of its Enemies* (2004). The term is an inversion of Orientalism, Edward Said’s label for stereotyped Western views of the East. A number of earlier books had also used the term, sometimes with different meanings.

⁶ Said, p. 2.

⁷ Ibid.

it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”⁸ The starting point for a reverse Orientalism could be the late nineteenth century, since dealing with the Occident in Said’s terms occurred when the presence and influence of the West increased within Ottoman society. However, it showed differences as the appliers of Occidentalism did not mean to dominate, restructure and have authority over the West. Their concerns were domestic; they wanted to manipulate, restructure and have authority over their own society by dealing with the West.

This kind of alterity discourse is not unique to the Ottomans.⁹ Edward Said stresses Orientalism’s influence on imperial policies but Judy Mabro demonstrates that these discourses were also employed to maintain the order at home.¹⁰ She states that Europeans were curious to learn about “other peoples,” “but only at a level that would confirm their belief in the superiority of their own culture”¹¹ and offers to discuss the nineteenth century portrayals of Oriental women from this perspective as well. Since antiquity the Orient has been considered as a “place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.”¹² The nineteenth-century witnessed a profusion of travel books on the Orient and a brief survey of Orientalist literature exposes the recurring image of sexualized Oriental women –both in the male and female writers’ works. The common elements of these depictions reveal a female image that is

⁸ Ibid., 3. Said presumes that the late eighteenth century could be the starting point of modern Orientalism.

⁹ Xiao-Mei Chen and Mahomad Tavakoli-Targhi also try to explain the usage of alterity discourses, especially of Occidentalism, in the realm of internal policies. See introductions of Xiao-Mei Chen, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post Mao China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran. Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

¹⁰ Judy Mabro, *Veiled Half-Truths* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2nd ed., 1996), p. 9.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 3.

¹² Said, p. 1.

wildly charming, beautiful, oppressed, unhappy and brave –or sexually frustrated– enough to flirt, and even to have love affairs with strangers. This stereotypical image was strengthened owing to the works of painters like Ingres, Gérôme and Lewis, and writers like Pierre Loti, Flaubert, and Burton. Critics explain these “exoticizing” efforts primarily as a masculinist metonymic expression of the West’s drive to possess the world.¹³ Besides serving this purpose and meeting the demands of the readers, a discourse on the immorality and depravity of Oriental women helps to reinforce the social order at home. When travelers or writers compared the lives of Oriental women to those back in Europe they were almost invariably speaking of middle-class European women.

The developing bourgeois ideology was based on an opposition of two spheres – the male, public sphere of alienated labour, the female private sphere of self-sacrificing, nurturing, non-alienated labour. The whole structure depended on enforcing the ideals of monogamous marriage and women as passive sexual beings. To have depicted harem dwellers as ordinary women who cared for their children and looked after the home as did women in Europe would have undermined the whole basis of Western family life. In a century of constant flux, with middle-class culture ‘eclectic with tensions and contradictory impulses,’ it was vital to maintain these separate spheres, which were under constant threat.¹⁴

¹³Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), p. 10. For further analysis see Irvin Cemil Schick, *Batının Cinsel Kıyısı: Başkalıkçı Söylemde Cinsellik ve Mekansallık* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000).

¹⁴ Mabro, p. 9. Mary Poovey asserts that “As late as the 1740s woman was consistently represented as the site of willful sexuality and bodily appetite... women were associated with flesh, desire and unsocialized, hence susceptible, impulses and passions.” Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (London: Virago press, 1989), p. 10. However, from the mid-18th century on this image of woman was slowly transformed into the domestic ideal, the angel in the house, preserving the home as a refuge from the harsh world outside. Sexual desire was acknowledged to exist in some women but they were considered to be immoral, either lower-class or exotic women, such as gypsies or women from other races. Mabro presents Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s suggestion of suitable education for his ideal woman Sophie (*Emile*, 1761) as the embodiment of the ideals of the age. This, he wrote, ought to be wholly relative to men: “To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honoured by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, and to make life agreeable and sweet to them.” Marbo argues that such ideas were reinforced in the 19th century by Darwinism, which maintained that woman’s special evolution made her an organism adapted to child-rearing, but otherwise frail and ill-adapted to intellectual pursuits. Marbo, p. 10.

Moreover, through the constant emphasis on the veil as the symbol of oppression they highlighted the “equality” and “freedom” the Western women enjoyed.¹⁵ Thus, Victorian Christian middle-class women and the “immoral” Oriental women were juxtaposed in favor of the Western women, hence the Western social order.

However this image did not come into being all at once; it has a history which can attain meaning in the context of “latent” and “manifest” Orientalism that Said puts forth. Orientalism did not remain as a static discourse; it changed its apparent face and was influenced by contemporary theories and discussions. For instance, the romantic image of the Orient dominated literature when Romanticism was popular; Darwinism triggered the development of racial theories within Orientalism. In order to show the multi-layered structure of Orientalism Said distinguishes the two categories of “latent” and “manifest” Orientalism. The latter includes information and changes in knowledge about the Orient as well as policy decisions founded in Orientalist thought. “It consciously facilitates the dichotomy between the East and the West while justifying European superiority over other peoples and cultures.”¹⁶ Latent Orientalism on the other hand, is the unconscious, untouchable certainty about what the Orient is. It can be said that it is the basis of manifest Orientalism and displays a cumulative nature. Its basic content is static, unanimous and essentialist.¹⁷ The image it implicitly puts forth is taken for granted and in that way it helps to create stereotypes, fantasies or myths concerning the Orient and Orientals. It is an inherent attitude while manifest Orientalism is a set of stated views and sometimes actions.

¹⁵ Marbo, p. 12.

¹⁶ Said, p. 222.

¹⁷ Ibid.

In the Ottoman case we can discern a similar structure. The Ottomans were also aware of the distinction between the East and the West and even in the fifteenth-century chronicle of Aşık Paşazade a distinction was made between “us” and “them.”¹⁸ “*Frenk küffârı*” (European infidels) was the stereotypical image and the development of this primal image accompanied changing economic, social and cultural conditions. In order to understand the accumulation of latent Occidentalism and signs of manifest Occidentalism one should look at the internal dynamics of the society.

Although we cannot talk about any interaction –on a larger scale- between Westerners and the Ottomans, slowly a Western image began to be formed and tensions within the social structure of the Ottoman Empire played an important role in the enforcement of this image. In Ottoman society there were two basic differentiations between individuals. The first classification was based on religion and distinguished between Muslim and non-Muslim; the second differentiation was made between those who in the broadest sense worked for the state, the *askerî* (military), and all subjects of the sultan who were not members of the Ruling Class, the *reâyâ* (protected flock). The first group, adopting the culture of the Palace, constituted the “great tradition,” while the latter formed the “little tradition.”¹⁹

Associated with the “great” culture were such features as war and administration as life-time occupations, freedom from taxation, the use of language highly permeated with Persian and Arabic words, and orthodox Islam. The rural masses and particularly the Turkish tribesmen, on the other hand, used Turkish vernacular, engaged in buying and selling and in agriculture, were taxed to the

¹⁸ Aşık Paşazade, *Osmanoğulları'nın Tarihi*. transliteration Kemal Yavuz (İstanbul: K Kitaplığı, 2003), p. 366. Paşazade mentions an incident in which an Ottoman subject was asked if he had become a frenk just because of his hair style.

¹⁹ The distinction between the “little” and “great” cultures was originally devised by Robert Redfield for the study of peasant cultures. Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago: 1956).

gills, had access only to primitive technology and were suffused by heterodox currents.²⁰

In the course of Ottoman history it was the members of the great tradition who initiated and heralded the adoption of anything Western. However, this attitude aggravated the little culture's –as Mardin calls it- approach toward them and their opinion of the West. In the first chapter their relationship will be analyzed with respect to the changing conditions of the Empire.

The evolution of the West's image was closely related to internal tensions but we should look also for the audience of Occidental discourse for a better comprehension. The cultural gap between the “little” and “great” communities increased with time and one of the factors of this increasing gap was urbanization; “either because they relied on a cavalry to perpetuate their military advantage or because the nomads were not convertible *en masse* to city life, only the elite took to urban culture” says Mardin.²¹ The availability of technology to the elite also further accentuated the cleavage between the two groups. Besides, it is stressed that, “Any ruler who would attempt to use the more universalistic and affectively neutral structures of urban civilization would of necessity be estranged from his tribal community.”²²

Urbanization emerges as a crucial determinant but it only helps us to exclude the majority of the public. Although the dichotomy between the great and little traditions

²⁰ Şerif Mardin, “Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11, no. 3 (June, 1969), p. 270.

²¹ Ibid. Şerif Mardin points to urbanization as the first and crucial differentiator between the great and little cultures

²² Ibid., p. 272. Belonging to the little or great culture depended primarily on one's familial background but the system allowed social mobility via the grant of a certificate (*berât*). However apart from this “Aladdin lamp effect” -as Mardin calls it-, bridging the cultural gap appeared almost impossible at least until mid-nineteenth century. It becomes hard to talk about the presence of a mediator class between these cultural poles since the potential mediator groups such as the local notables disdained the rural sources of culture and like everybody else aspired to master the great culture.

acquired a crucial place in the process of Westernization, the rural part of the little community will not be taken into account because much of the reaction to issues of Westernization came mostly from the urban population, especially of İstanbul. Moreover, the reading public, which was the target of an Occidentalist discourse, resided mostly in the big cities of the Empire. So the focus of the analysis can be reduced to the dichotomy within the urban population.

Since I will be examining the works of such a popular writer it becomes a necessity to find out whom he addressed in those works. However, in spite of such a significant reduction it is still difficult to figure out who constituted his reading public. Although it is always emphasized that late nineteenth-century novelists aimed to reach the common reader, it was in fact almost impossible to address such a reader. Late nineteenth-century literacy and education levels showed a significant increase compared to previous centuries due to improvements made in the cultural sphere but still the literacy rate was very low.²³ Some could reach these works by listening to them in places like coffeehouses, but still they can be considered marginal. Thus, we are excluding the majority of the public but it should not be forgotten that the minor group was the intended audience of the Occidentalist discourse. Moreover, even an ordinary reader of a journal drew attention to the fact that the “majority follows in the footsteps of the minority.”²⁴

²³ Juan Cole claims that “a decade of educational work after the Crimean War produced a literacy rate of about 2 percent of the population in 1868. By 1876 a frenetic bout of school foundings and expansion in the numbers of students in existing facilities had raised the Ottoman literacy rate to about 5 percent.” In Istanbul the situation was better; according to Cem Behar’s estimation the literacy rate for adult males was around 25 percent in late nineteenth early twentieth century Istanbul; however they could not calculate a literacy rate for the female population. Juan Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East* (Cairo: American Univ. in Cairo Press, 1999), p.114. Cem Behar, *A Neighborhood in Ottoman Istanbul: Fruit Vendors and Civil Servants in the Kasap İlyas Mahalle* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003), p. 206.

²⁴ Feridun Necdet, ‘Bir Erkek Karısından Neler Bekler?’ in Cem Behar and Alan Duben, *Istanbul Households* (Cambridge Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 197.

Furthermore, the composition of this urban reading public cannot be understood simply by referring to its dichotomous structure. Nineteenth century developments added different dimensions into the framework and contributed to the emergence of “hybrid” groups. In the traditional urban texture, the craftsmen together with the cultivators were considered the most basic elements of the Ottoman social and economic system.²⁵ The corporative nature of Ottoman society led most urban economic groups to establish their own guild organizations (*esnâf*) to regulate their affairs, to promote group and individual membership of the ruling class.

The guilds performed all kinds of social functions, often in alliance with the religious orders or *millets*. They enforced moral principles to supplement those imposed on the individual by his religion [...] They took the lead in organizing and participating in urban festivals and processions [...] The guilds performed social functions for the urban population [...] In addition to serving their members and crafts, the guilds also performed a number of functions for the government and for the society as a whole. Their most important non-economic function was as mediators between the Ruling Class and their members.²⁶

Up until the mid-nineteenth century the guilds as an important part of the little culture could provide a sense of group solidarity and could display certain reactions. These city dwellers were not members of the ruling elite but had a different life style and more importantly different tastes from the rural people. Their education did not go beyond the level of *sıbyân mektebi* yet they comprised the major part of a reading, more correctly, listening, public of popular literature. In the nineteenth century, as a result of economic, social and educational developments, subgroups emerged within these basic groups of subject and ruling classes. Things were not the same as in the eighteenth century; the economic balance shifted in favor of foreigners and the weakness of urban guilds

²⁵ Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols (Cambridge. Cambridge UP, 1976), 1st vol., p. 155.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

overlapped with the looseness of group solidarity, intensifying with the abolition of the janissary corps. On the other hand, wealthier members of the subject class grew in number and began to appear more in city life, most of the time especially with their unfounded comprehension of Westernization. According to Nihat Özön, this group, in fact, had incorporated the values of the little tradition and were consumers of urban popular literature. Yet, they could no more go to the coffeehouses to listen to *meddahs*.²⁷ By holding social gatherings at their *konaks* (mansions) where they did not forget to invite a *meddah* they contributed to the creation of leisure time.²⁸ This group partly broke off with the little community they had once belonged to but they also did not have a place for themselves among the great community since they had not internalized their values yet. In fact, the offspring of this new class would become very important since they were the ones who were caricaturized in late nineteenth century novels

Also, the new bureaucratic class was not like the previous centuries' ruling class. Increase in the scope and size of the ruling class brought along variations. They no longer comprised a monolithic entity; for example in the realm of literature while some of them preferred to cling to the old elite tradition some of them began to appreciate Western genres. Moreover, again people growing up with urban popular literature began to take place within the ruling class, too. Hence during the last quarter of the nineteenth century a potential reading public with urban literary tastes came into being.

The focus of this study will be this diverse group since Ahmed Midhat's aim was to enlighten this group and to contribute to the construction of the Ottoman subject by showing what the "real" West and Westerners were and how the ideal adequately-

²⁷ Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Türkçe'de Roman* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 1930), p. 136.

²⁸ Ibid.

Westernized Ottoman subject should be. In his inspiring article “Super Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century” Şerif Mardin asks if the singling out of the over-Westernized types for ridicule has deep roots in Turkish culture and gives an affirmative answer.²⁹ He argues that a folk theme “which was to have a stubborn life” emerged as a result of certain economic and social circumstances. The “little tradition” believed that newfangled Western ideas were of no benefit to the man on the street. Ahmed Midhat in the midst of different ideologies tried to teach the man on the street, or at least people incorporating the values of the little tradition, and inherited the conflict between them and the great culture, that the West was not bad at all and could provide benefit to them if it could be understood correctly and could be adopted through a selective process. Another camp that came mostly from the upper strata of society supported the adoption of a Western way of life and aimed to reach the level of Europe on certain issues such as women’s rights. Ahmed Midhat also addressed them, showing that the social order at home was much better than that of Europe and should not be abandoned in favor of the Western one.

Ahmed Midhat inherited a tradition which entailed a certain image of the West; a brief survey of this image until about his time showing how it had been shaped and constructed by certain political and social events will reveal the construction of “latent Occidentalism,” which can be considered a part of the Ottoman social tradition.³⁰ So the

²⁹ Şerif Mardin, “Super Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth century” *Turkey: Geographical and Social Perspectives* ed. Peter Benedict. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974), p. 412.

³⁰ F. Müge Göçek explains what tradition is through Shills’s definition. “tradition is that which is handed down –includes material objects, beliefs about all sorts of things, images of persons and events, practices and institutions. It includes all that a society at a given time possesses and which already existed when its present possessors came upon it [...] (Shills 1981:12). Social reproduction in a society entails the reproduction of tradition; yet every time tradition is reproduced, it incorporates new elements from the

first chapter will cover a time span of two hundred and fifty years, starting with the Tulip Era and finishing around the 1860s when Ahmed Midhat began to produce his first works. Later developments will be discussed as the background of the following chapters.

In the second chapter, the life and thoughts of Ahmed Midhat will be analyzed in the light of important incidents and people that had a direct influence on him. Also, literary trends and important cultural novelties that affected Ahmed Midhat's understanding and use of literature will be examined briefly.

The last chapter will focus on Ahmed Midhat's notion of civilization and the West and his portrayal of the Westerners in his novels, especially the female characters through whom he tried to give a message to the Muslim-Ottoman women who tried to start a proto-feminist movement.

environment and thus produces a new synthesis.” Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 157.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMAGE OF THE WEST AS A PART OF SOCIAL TRADITION

Until now several historians have discussed the *problematique* of Ottoman Westernization. A brief survey of the literature on the political, social and economic situation of the Ottoman Empire will give hints about the changing image of the West as its development was closely related to these alterations. Since the concentration of this thesis is on the second half of the nineteenth century, I will not be able to get into the details of the previous centuries. The story of Westernization will be discussed within the framework of the dichotomy between the “low” and “high” culture in which the great culture became the symbol of modernization, which was, by the way, believed to bring no benefit to the “little men” and to pose a threat to their established way of life with the novelties it brought along. Throughout this study I will limit myself to explaining the approach of the *reâyâ* to the reforms as an indication of dissatisfaction with the programs which they usually associated with submission to the West. However, in such an abridged account of 250 years it becomes impossible to avoid oversimplifications and generalizations, still, the essence of the argument will be preserved.

Although the proclamation of the *Tanzimat* edict (1839) can be considered as the beginning of a conscious process of Ottoman Westernization, the longer story can be traced back to the eighteenth century. Before turning to the West as the remedy to the stagnation of the empire, the Ottoman government tried to solve internally the increasingly difficult problems that plagued the Empire. The growing paralysis of the administration, economic difficulties together with population growth contributed to

social distress as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³¹ As a result of crises and military defeats that threatened the very existence of the Empire, reformers came up with new ideas. New policies were implemented by the sultans Osman II (ruled 1618-22) and Murad IV (r. 1623-40) and by the famous dynasty of grand viziers of the Köprülü family who served under Mehmed IV (r. 1648-87). However, as Cevdet Paşa pointed out,³² it would be more convenient to name these as restoration rather than a reform program, since these attempts were considered as no more than attempts to restore the inherited system of government and society that had worked successfully in the past.

Thanks to these efforts, some immediate difficulties were brought to an end but this success proved to be temporary since the same kind of problems would trouble the rulers later and on a larger scale. Moreover, the reformers did not understand that the Europe they were facing was far stronger than that which the great sultans of the past had defeated.

For the Ottomans, Westerners were either enemies (e.g. Austrians) or poor allies that were in need of the Ottoman Empire's might (e.g. France). Either way they looked down on them with a feeling of superiority. Niyazi Berkes claims that the West or the Westerner had a negative image which in fact was associated with the incorporation of the terms *frenk* (Frank) and *kâfir* (infidel) that were inherited from the Byzantine and Arab traditions respectively. Moreover, although both terms referred to the same referent, the use of the terms changed depending on the context, that is, *kâfir* was used in a religious context, and in other contexts, such as politics, *frenk* was preferred.

³¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, 6th ed., s.v. "Ottoman Empire."

³² İlber Ortaylı, "Cevdet Paşa ve Avrupa Tarihi," *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Sosyal ve İktisadi Değişim*, ed. Mümtazer Türköne (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 2000), p. 477.

The concept of '*kâfir*' (infidel) was established at the beginning of the sixteenth century by the rise of Arabian orthodoxy that divided the world into two: the Muslims and *kâfirs*. The model was completed with the concept of *frenk* (Frank) which was put forward by the Greeks.

During the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the West was equated with the "*frenk küffarı*" (Frank infidels). While the cultural affairs of the state (religion [sic.], science, literature) were in the hands of the *kâfir* enemies, the political affairs were in the hands of the *frenk* enemies, that is the Greeks of Fener. Because of the iron curtain built up by these two concepts, the Ottomans had hardly had any contact with the West until the eighteenth century. There was a total indifference towards the developments in religion, technology, economy and science.³³

Likewise, Halil İnalçık emphasized the negative image of the West: "Goods coming from the Christian world (or *kâfiristan* as they called Europe) were considered *makrûh* and the conservative circles interpreted imitation of Frankish people as blasphemy."³⁴ However, the Treaty of Karlowitz emerged as a turning point.

During the years of disasters and defeats between 1683 and 1699 a revolution in the mentality of the Ottomans took place. During this period, the Ottomans who disdained everything about Europe began to accept the West's superiority; thus the first psychological requirement for Westernization was fulfilled in behavior and mentality. [...] The first behavioral changes toward European culture took place after the Treaty of Karlowitz which certified Ottoman defeat against Europe.³⁵

However, the case cannot be that simple; we cannot take the Treaty of Karlowitz as a definitive clear-cut turning point. Several historians put an emphasis on the pragmatism of the Ottomans, which should have also revealed itself in this context. İnalçık believes in the division of elements of culture into religious-based ones and "neutral" ones. The neutral category includes techniques, technology and the positive sciences.³⁶ "Anything

³³ Niyazi Berkes, *Türk Düşününde Batı Sorunu* (İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1975), p. 176.

³⁴ Halil İnalçık, "Siyaset, Ticaret, Kültür Etkileşimi," *Osmanlı Uygarlığı*. Eds. İnalçık, Halil, Günsel Renda. 2 vols. (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2004), vol 1., p. 1049.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 1086.

³⁶ İnalçık does not forget to mention that technique or any commodity still has a cultural value and the user gets involved in a process of culturalization. Ibid., p. 1049.

from the production of artillery to coinage and customs administration was included in this category.”³⁷ During the classical period the Ottomans who had no fear of foreign powers did not refrain from importing elements of Western culture and adopted Western technology whenever they perceived it as beneficial. Even from the beginning they did not hesitate to embrace anything new that would be helpful in enhancing their power. Hence, it seems that there has been no problem in importing Western products or elements of culture as long as they belonged –or were thought to belong- to the neutral category. It looks as if they became aware of the cultural value of the imported products when internal tribulations worsened and the presence of the West or its representatives, whether local or foreign, began to be perceived as a threat to the established order.

The non-problematic period lasted more or less until the eighteenth century, when the balance of power between the West and the Ottoman Empire changed dramatically. It is not that the Ottoman Empire did not undergo changes; there were attempts at improvement but the West proceeded with drastic improvements that caused a change in the balance of power between itself and the rest of the world.³⁸ Fatma Müge Göçek explains why eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Western Europe often provided the model case for most social change analyses. According to her, political state-making in France and England, and the economic development of capitalism in England transformed eighteenth and nineteenth century Western European society. While capitalism mobilized the economic resources of Europe; political state-making provided it with a centralized, internally coordinated public organization that was in control of the major concentrated means of coercion, and the bourgeoisie as a new independent social

³⁷ Ibid., p. 1049.

³⁸ Edhem Eldem, “18. Yüzyıl ve Değişim,” *Cogito. Osmanlılar Özel Sayısı*, 19 (Summer 1999), p. 195.

group came into view to gain control over these political and economic developments. This new social era was constructed on a new image of society, an image physically represented in a novel material culture.³⁹

This new material culture was established on the concepts of civilization, space, and fashion. [...] The redefinition of the material culture fostered a new conception of fashion as certain artifacts (furniture, glass windows, clocks) produced and used in Europe came to be defined as 'European goods'. [...] This new fashion differentiated societies, defining those that set the tone and image of Europe while excluding others; it also gave an illusion of change, of progress, as one style replaced another. After 1700, keeping up with the times, being fashionable and modern by matching the fast pace of changing material artifacts, became an end in itself. France became the European center of high culture and fashion because it provided most of the elements of the new image of Europe. The French language became the medium of diplomacy, scholarship, letters, and polite society. France became a reference society by which to assess change in others. [...] England contributed to the reproduction of the new image of Europe by providing it with a new economic organization that mass-produced the new, fashionable material artifacts in large quantities.⁴⁰

By the eighteenth century when France and England both had begun to export their material image to other European countries, and overseas the Ottoman Empire with its vast market emerged as a proper customer for this package.

The Tulip Era (1718-1730)

Halil İnalcık points to the reform program of *Reisülküttab* Rami Mehmed Efendi as the first comprehensive modernization policy which could not be put into practice because of the 1703 revolt and the consequent overthrowing of the sultan.⁴¹ After that unsuccessful attempt, concrete steps towards modernization could be put forth during the so-called Tulip Era (1718-1730). The ruling elite understood the urgent necessity of the incorporation of Western science and technology into Ottoman culture, especially in the

³⁹ Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ İnalcık, p. 1086.

field of military technology. Also, under the leadership of Grand-Vizier Nevşehirli İbrahim Paşa, the regime while pursuing a policy of peace on the Western border, tried to expand diplomatic relations with Europe.⁴²

Even though the Tulip Era is known for the extravagance of the imperial court and the emergence of a Western-inspired, hedonistic culture, it would be unwise to disregard several breakthrough achievements such as the first Muslim printing press in the empire, and various innovations in the arts and urban design. In the context of the penetration of Western culture into Ottoman society, the printing press could be considered as the most important achievement of the era, but the reports of the first Ottoman embassies to the West can also be counted as influential tools in the introduction of Western culture. The Ottomans were not attentive to the developments in the West and faced its results in the eighteenth century. France, as mentioned by İnalcık, had become a prestige-culture for the ruling elite of the Tulip Era,⁴³ who, apart from beginning to emulate a Western way of life, tried to understand the reasons behind this progress. The best way to find out was to search for it at the heart of this civilization, so the first embassy to Europe was sent in 1720 to France, formally in order to settle some diplomatic issues but informally and more importantly to inform the government of the realities of France. The admiration of 28 Mehmed Çelebi for the beautiful gardens, palaces and order of Paris reflected the fascination of the ruling elite.⁴⁴ Reports of this kind could also reach a wider audience; the contact of the lower culture with the West remained on the battlefield and fed on “tradition” until that time, so these reports not only

⁴² Madeline Zilfi, "Tulip Era (Ottoman Empire)," *Europe, 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*. Ed. Jonathan Dewald. 6 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), vol.6, p. 78.

⁴³ İnalcık, p. 1050.

⁴⁴ 28 Mehmet Çelebi, *Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmed Efendi'nin Fransa Sefâretnâmesi*, ed. Beynun Akyavaş (İstanbul: Tercüman, 1975).

informed the ruling elite but also gave the larger public an idea of what the West was – thanks to the oral circulation of the sensational news they brought.⁴⁵

28 Mehmed Çelebi's report was neither the initiator of any reform program nor the first introduction of Europe. Apart from the adoption of some “neutral” elements, the West had already penetrated various subgroups of Ottoman society. İlber Ortaylı and Gilles Veinstein point to the limited relationship of some Ottomans with Westerners – generally travelers- which remained limited to individual contacts.⁴⁶ Ortaylı also highlights the already ongoing Westernization of the rich Greek Orthodox families who sent their children to Italy for education.⁴⁷ Apart from these few and personal relations, Westerners used trade to develop relations with the Ottomans.

İstanbul's commerce with Western Europe, predominantly with France, increased greatly in the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Göçek states that the consumption of Western goods and the adoption of Western forms in art and architecture would constitute the apparent boundaries of Ottoman Westernization;⁴⁹ however, they were first required to become a part of the social tradition in order to be considered as elements of a conscious Westernization. Yet this kind of change had to wait until the nineteenth century to become a reality. Becoming a part of the social tradition for these goods and forms could be possible only after they diffused into Ottoman society –not only the ruling elite-

⁴⁵ 28 Mehmet Çelebi's description of France as “heaven for infidels” is the most widespread reference used in the context of eighteenth-century Ottoman perception of the West.

⁴⁶ İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004). Gilles Veinstein, *İlk Osmanlı Sefiri 28 Mehmet Çelebi'nin Fransa Anıları, “Kafirlerin Cenneti,”* trans. Murat Aykaç Erginöz (İstanbul: Özgü Yayınları, 2002).

⁴⁷ İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ Fariba Zarinebaf, “Constantinople,” *Europe, 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*. Ed. Jonathan Dewald. 6 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), vol. 2. p. 42.

⁴⁹ Göçek, p. 37.

through the mediation of certain social groups⁵⁰, however, this could happen only in the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century only the elite could consume Western products, which was usually comprised of luxury items⁵¹ and this was not enough for any kind of diffusion into the larger public. The reason for foreign merchants' incapability of penetrating their goods beneath the society was their inability to "compete with the medium and low quality local goods which constituted the bulk of the population's consumption."⁵²

Manufactured textile goods constituted the majority of the imported products and Western European diplomats and merchants, who moved to the neighborhood of Pera (Beyoğlu) in the eighteenth century,⁵³ promoted these luxury items and similar high quality Western goods within the "polished face" of the West by preferring to use them.⁵⁴ They attracted more fascination by bringing artists, novelists and men of letters as their guests. Moreover these diplomats increased their fame and success by presenting vases, artillery and furniture to upper-class officials.⁵⁵ This kind of promotion method is noteworthy since foreign merchants could not have direct contact with consumers but could sell their goods through retailers who were members of the clothdealers' guild.⁵⁶ Also the social topography of the city restricted the intermingling of foreigners with the

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Edhem Eldem, "Istanbul: from imperial to peripheralized capital" in Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City between East and West* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), p. 181.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Veinstein, p. 19.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Eldem, "İstanbul," p. 182.

public. The formal compartmentalization of the population defined along ethnic and/or religious lines reinforced the limitation of mobility within the urban texture.⁵⁷

At the same time the biggest buyers of these luxury items, the ruling elite, began to pursue conspicuous life openly. The members of the dynasty, particularly Ottoman princesses like Fatma Sultan, daughter of Ahmed III and wife of İbrahim Paşa, built public parks and gardens. The famous atmosphere of leisure and festivity of the Tulip Era dominated the private and public lives of the Ottoman ruling class. The royal household took every occasion to celebrate publicly new victories in the Morea (1715) and Tabriz (1725), the birth and circumcision of Ottoman princes, and the weddings of Ottoman princesses.⁵⁸ There was also experimentation with European entertainment styles and clothing fashions.⁵⁹ Especially the return of 28 Mehmed Çelebi fed the court's consumerist appetites even more with luxury goods, reports on French manners, and drawings of palaces and waterworks. Some features of this pleasure culture were tried to be extended to the larger public through these amusement parks.⁶⁰ But a majority of the public could not enjoy this air of leisure and festivity and moreover did not like what they saw.

By the eighteenth century the distinction between the urban craft guilds and the Janissaries had already started to blur, a development that gave a different type of power

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 153. Yet, Eldem points to the gradual occupation of Pera by growing numbers of Ottoman "misfits" as a marginal but noteworthy development in terms of differentiation within the urban structure. "By the 18th century foreign ambassadors and their entourages were also acquiring land along the northern shores of the Bosphorus while Pera itself was attracting increasing numbers of Ottoman 'misfits,' such as European merchants or the recently formed Armenian Catholic population of the city. These relocations amounted to a gradual occupation of the 'no mans's land' on the periphery of the city by ethnically/nationally/religiously diverse groups whose common profile was essentially socio-economic.", p. 157.

⁵⁸ Zarinebaf, p. 43.

⁵⁹ Zilfi, p. 78.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

to the guilds.⁶¹ The guilds, as the most affected part of the society by the importation of Western goods and the ongoing financial weakness, had already expressed discontentment with the visible features of this new way of life, especially with the changes that Ottoman women introduced into their outdoor attire and with their increasing presence in mixed companies. Despite the sultan's few attempts to suppress the opposition, the regime's unpopularity increased during the late 1720s as the "conspicuous consumption" of the ruling class aggravated public resentment.⁶² The court's spending habits and social style became increasingly contentious as economic problems worsened and the empire became involved in a conflict with Iran.⁶³ When the empire suffered a military defeat on the eastern front and the government failed to act in 1730, there was a seditious uprising led by Patrona Halil and the regime was overthrown. The rebels, led by disgruntled janissaries and guildsmen, also destroyed the Sadabad palace in Kağıthane among others to express their resentment of ruling-class frivolities and the perceived decadence.

The pattern of diffusion of Western elements of culture, in this case goods, seems to be as follows: they were first introduced by foreign residents, non-Muslims, and Ottoman embassies, then the sultan and his household reproduced them through their consumption. However, Westernization gained meaning for the mass public when it was (re)presented in "visible" forms and when it was interpreted by Ottoman social groups. "The narrative of Westernization acquires analytical power only when it is situated in

⁶¹ Ernest Tucker, "Janissary." *Europe, 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World*. Ed. Jonathan Dewald. 6 vols.(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), vol. 3, p.336.

⁶² Mardin, "SuperWesternization," p. 413.

⁶³ Zilfi, 79.

relation to the Ottoman social structure and the agency of Ottoman social groups.”⁶⁴ So, what was visible to the public in this case was not interpreted in a positive way.

Not the majority, only the ruling class and the upper strata of the public, against whom there was already a great deal of hostility on the part of the subjects,⁶⁵ could enjoy the benefits of this new way of life, which was ascribed to the West. What the public had in hand were the traditional images of the West, i.e. *kâfir* and *frenk*, the importation of Western goods, a decline in their economic power, extreme consumption -especially of luxury items-, imitation of European court life and pleasures, change in the outdoor attire of women whose presence in the outdoors increased⁶⁶ -all of which were interpreted as signs of decadence. They revolted against these visible facts and associated all of them with the influence of the West which was interpreted as the source of evil. Şerif Mardin sums up this process:

The revulsion against the ruling classes came after a time of great economic distress among the craft (*esnâf*) classes of İstanbul. It took the form of an outbreak against the attempts by the Grand Vizier Damad İbrahim Paşa to introduce some forms of Western culture in the Ottoman Empire (1730).

Thus, a folk theme emerged which was to have a stubborn life: newfangled Western ideas are of no benefit to the man in the street. This might be called the “objective” content of popular revulsion against Westernization. But another, different aspect of this revulsion was the inability to fathom what else Westernization would bring with it and how much it would attack the values of the Ottoman community.⁶⁷

Despite frequent outbreaks of popular discontent, İstanbul continued to grow and attract rural migrants and Western visitors and merchants. However, Ahmed’s successor,

⁶⁴ Göçek, p. 43.

⁶⁵ Shaw, p. 158.

⁶⁶ Şerif Mardin makes a point that this “attitude is accompanied by a mention of the emancipation of women as having angered God, a theme that which later becomes standard in populist outbreaks against Westernization.” Mardin, “Super Westernization,” p. 422.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 413.

Mahmud I (r. 1730-1754) put an end to the Tulip Era's cultural openings.⁶⁸ Further attempts of "modernization" would have to wait until the reign of Selim III.

The Reign of Selim III

During the Tulip era some military innovations were introduced but they remained very limited. Throughout the reigns of Mahmud I, Mustafa III and Abdulhamid I the adoption of Western military techniques gained priority.⁶⁹ However, social unrest could not be brought to an end since during most of the eighteenth century the state was under extreme military pressure and in the second half, had to face financial distress as well.⁷⁰

Selim III (r. 1789-1807) also gave importance to the modernization of the army and was convinced that Western methods should be adopted. For this purpose, while still a prince he sought advice and assistance from King Louis XVI of France,⁷¹ and when he came to power he tried to renew the power of the empire through a European-style army. Selim's first act was to organize a special assembly of leading statesmen to discuss the empire's military and financial problems, and to request detailed reports on how to proceed with reforms. In accordance with the resultant *Nizâm-ı Cedîd* (New Order) program the piecemeal military and educational Europeanization that had started earlier was accelerated and formalized. He formed a new army corps, with a separate financial bureau to administer assigned revenues to support the attempt. Westernization began in the army but as İlber Ortaylı emphasizes military reforms could not remain limited to the

⁶⁸ Zilfi, p. 79.

⁶⁹ Abdullah Alperen, "Osmanlı'da Modernleşme ve Din," *Osmanlı*. Eren, Güler, ed. 6 vols (Ankara: Semih Ofset, 1999), vol. 4, p. 212.

⁷⁰ Donald Quataert, "Ottoman Empire: Overview." *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*. Ed. Philip Mattar. 4 vols. 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), vol. 3, p.1730.

⁷¹ Metin Kunt, "Selim III [1761–1808]." *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*. Ed. Philip Mattar. 4 vols.. 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), vol.3, p. 2009.

military realm; they would eventually extend to other areas such as medicine and engineering.⁷²

Another extension of a process begun earlier was that of diplomatic relations with European powers. Ambassadors had been sent to the leading capitals to gather information on European politics and international relations, and to study recent military and technological advances; from 1792 on the Ottoman government established permanent embassies in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg so that the empire could be better informed about European relations and could present its concerns directly.⁷³ All of these reforms are generally counted within the Westernization movement that would culminate with the *Tanzimat* movement but Eldem warns us to consider this “*Nizâm-ı Cedîd* movement of financial and military reorganization and Mahmud II’s efforts to increase the cohesion and effectiveness of Ottoman rule over the Empire [as representing] a conscious and resolute movement toward centralization that was in many ways more consistent with preceding policies.”⁷⁴

Despite these reform attempts, there was still no imminent benefit to the “little men.” Moreover one of the most powerful groups, that is, the Janissary corps, felt threatened by these modernization efforts, particularly with the foundation of the *Nizâm-ı Cedîd* army, which could not gain public support⁷⁵ and was associated with Westernization. It was not only the Janissaries who were discontented with the new way of functioning; the guilds were also exposed to the dominance of the foreign powers on the market. Until about 1750, the Ottoman economy is considered to have been relatively

⁷² Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, p. 44.

⁷³ Kunt, p. 2009

⁷⁴ Eldem, “İstanbul,” p. 197.

⁷⁵ Şerif Mardin, “Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 11, no. 3. (Jun., 1969), p. 273.

self-sufficient.⁷⁶ It imported comparatively little and exported a variety of textiles and other manufactured goods, both to the East and to the West. However, after 1750 a decrease in the export of many finished products was witnessed. According to Quataert, Ottoman industries received a rude shock from the competition of European manufactured goods. Ottoman textile manufacturers then restructured their enterprises along non-guild lines with unregulated production and lower wages, so most of the craft guilds lost power and ceased functioning.⁷⁷ Eldem also shows that beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, foreign elements gradually began to dominate the market of İstanbul.⁷⁸

Things did not go as Selim III had anticipated inside or outside the Empire, and from 1797 on the empire was involved in the European war when France began to take an active interest in the eastern Mediterranean, which reached its peak in Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. The Ottoman Empire was thus forced to accept support from Britain and Russia against its long-established ally France. The public, already feeling uncomfortable with the developments they attributed to Westernization, interpreted the French invasion as betrayal. According to Niyazi Berkes, "[t]he contention of the public that Westernization means betrayal and becoming *giaour* goes back to that period."⁷⁹

Also some of the reports of the embassies that were published during this period contributed to the cultural heritage. The report of Moralı Esseyit Ali Efendi who served as the Ottoman ambassador to Paris between 1797 and 1802 revealed interesting comments on French people which would take their place in the canon of latent

⁷⁶ Quataert, p. 1732

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Eldem, p. 184.

⁷⁹ Berkes, p. 18.

Occidentalism.⁸⁰ His portrayal of the French people, especially of French women, strengthened the power of the argument that Westernization, which would bring the emancipation of women, would anger God.⁸¹

By 1807 Selim found himself in a critical position. “Beset by foreign engagements not of his choice; unable to establish authority in the provinces, where political, religious and ethnic uprisings challenged his rule; and alienating large segments of İstanbul’s population by what seemed to be an overhasty attempt to Europeanize while European powers dominated the empire’s policies,”⁸² Selim was deposed in May 1807 after a popular insurrection –the *Kabakçı* Revolt- supported by palace attendants and out-of-favor officials.

Şerif Mardin considers the *Kabakçı* Revolt as possessing the same traits with the *Patrona Halil* Revolt. When he explains Cevdet Paşa and other nineteenth-century figures’ opposition to conspicuous consumption, he brings up the argument that it had indeed very deep roots and points to the “popular frowning” that revealed itself in the economic practices and ideologies of the guilds which were in fact affected by the values of the dervish orders. So what appeared as revolts against Westernization in fact implied an objection to the overriding of their values:

In the early years of the Ottoman Empire, outbreaks against the central powers were partly a defense of these and other “popular” values against the elite. But there is also a continuity in the pitting of these values against the elite which brings them into modern times. The revolts that have been characterized as revolts against Westernization all bear this populist stamp. Thus we find these traits in

⁸⁰ Maurice Herbet, *Fransa’da İlk Daimi Türk Elçisi ‘Moralı Esseyit Ali Efendi’ (1797-1802)*. tr. by Erol Üyepazarcı (İstanbul: Pera Turizm ve Ticaret A.Ş., 1997). However Herbet does not forget to remind us of the actual decadence of Parisian life during this period.

⁸¹ Mardin, “Super Westernization,” p. 422.

⁸² Kunt, p. 2010.

the Patrona Revolt (1730) and the Kabakçı Revolt against the reforms of Sultan Selim III (1807).⁸³

The Reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839)

After Selim III, Mahmud II carried on the reorganization program and achieved significant accomplishments. In fact, he is believed to be the initiator of a more concrete and real modernization. During Mahmud's reign, the Ottoman Empire continued its decline in relation to the West: its dependence on Europe increased, and it suffered military humiliation and territorial losses. But still his achievements are noteworthy. He revived the sultan's office and reformed and revitalized the central government. He tried to control the disintegration of the state and initiated a process of consolidation.⁸⁴ He especially focused on the centralization of government and supported the shift from scribal to civil service that began under sultan Selim III.⁸⁵

Mahmud II's first move was to negotiate and sign a concession known as *Sened-i İttifâk* with the *âyân* (provincial notables), granting them considerable autonomy in their vast domains in the Balkans and Anatolia. Apart from *Sened-i İttifâk*, important circumstances put Mahmud II in an inauspicious position. Wars with Russia (1806-1812, 1828-1829), the Greek Revolt of 1821, Muhammed Ali's assistance and the following uprising, the destruction of the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet in Navarino, all worked against Mahmud II.

In spite of these negative developments, Mahmud II resumed reform attempts, which also caused him to become a target of criticism. His innovations encompassed the

⁸³ Şerif Mardin, "Super Westernization," p.421.

⁸⁴ Avigdor Levy, "Mahmud II [1785–1839]." *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*. Ed. Philip Mattar. 4 vols. 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), vol. 3, p. 1466.

⁸⁵ Carter Findley, "Ottoman Empire: Civil Service." *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*. Ed. Philip Mattar. 4 vols. 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), vol. 3, p. 1734.

army, education and the bureaucracy, all of which caused a significant change in the basic fabric of the society, especially of İstanbul. After the demise of Alemdar Mustafa Paşa, who had brought Mahmud II to the throne but was killed as a result of an uprising, he ordered the closure and destruction of the bachelor's inns (*bekâr odaları*) which could be found in each major Ottoman center and had become "shelters for new migrants in the city, menial workers, petty entrepreneurs, and a variety of other marginal, low-income groups."⁸⁶ According to Karpāt, these inns were considered as centers of social unrest and protest against the established order.⁸⁷

Since early in his reign, Mahmud II introduced significant improvements in the military. At last, in 1826, his imperial decree announced the abolition of the janissary corps. This had an enormous impact on Ottoman society. "In practical terms, it meant that a large number of people lost the social status, the rank, and the possibility for concerted action that had been provided by this quasi-military organization."⁸⁸ The destruction of the Janissary organization enabled the sultan to act more freely in the reorganization of his army. An entirely new army was organized instead of the Janissaries and was trained by European officers according to Western models.

Further changes were initiated in İstanbul after the abolishment of the Janissary corps: the Bektaşî religious order was fused with the Nakşibendi orders and the Bektaşî leaders were exiled to Anatolia. Also the Sultan attempted to abolish the fireman units (*tulumbacı*) but soon was obliged to establish a new voluntary fireman corps because of damaging fires.

⁸⁶ Kemal Karpāt, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wisc: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 90.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 91.

In abolishing all the traditional institutions Mahmud II deprived the throne of its basic support: these institutions, together with the *millet* organizations of the non-Muslims, had insulated the sultan from contact with the population and protected him against direct challenge.⁸⁹

Historians also agree on the significance of the educational reforms made during this era. Like Selim III, Mahmud II had seen the need for secular education in certain areas. Apart from the foundation of the School of Military Sciences and the Medical School, students, for the first time, were sent to Europe. The Translation Bureau (1821) was founded; when it was understood that the dragomans (Greek translators) could not be trusted, the government felt obliged to train its translators itself at this office, where future reformers and ideologues would be trained. In addition to educational, military and bureaucratic reforms Mahmud II ordered the publication of the first official newspaper. One of the most important consequences of these reforms was that they contributed to the birth of a new group of “intellectuals” who would play important and decisive roles in the future reform programs. That is the reason why A. Hamdi Tanpınar evaluates this as the first step of embedding the Westernization attempt into society.⁹⁰

While modernization gained acceleration at the administrative level, it also became more and more visible for the man on the street. Westerners did not stop coming to İstanbul and the ruling class did not give up consuming Western goods after the Patrona Revolt. In terms of visibility A. Hamdi Tanpınar gives particular importance to the clothing regulations of Mahmud II and to the adoption of European institutions.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 92.

⁹⁰ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (İstanbul: Çağlayan Kitabevi, 2003), p. 67.

⁹¹ “Bunlar cemiyetin manzarasını, yaşayış tarzını değiştiren, taklid tarzında olsa bile yeni bir zihniyetin ve yeni modaların hayata girmesi neticesini doğuran hareketlerdi. Böylece o zamana kadar çok dar bir sahada yapılması düşünülmüş düzenleme işi birdenbire cemiyetin hayatında geniş bir değişiklik haline girer.” Tanpınar, p. 69.

Also, he points to the possibility of encountering Western style restaurants, coffee-houses and hotels at Beyoğlu by 1812.

Mahmud II's reforms did not remain unchallenged but oppositions did not take the form of public uprising since the public who witnessed the bloody suppression of the Janissary corps could not raise their voices.⁹² As mentioned above, clothing regulations gave a new image to the society but this new image did not please everyone.⁹³ Also his order of having his portrait hanged on the walls of all official bureaus was criticized.⁹⁴ Moreover, people got angry with Mahmud II because of the unfortunate political situation, and conceived the new regulations as a sort of submission to the Christian world. The public naming of Mahmud as “*gâvur padişâh*” (the infidel sultan) in fact, symbolizes the public's view of the reforms.

His forced reforms did not really endear Mahmud II to either Muslims or Christians; towards the end of his life he became very unpopular, and the country appeared to be militarily and economically weaker than it had been at the beginning of his reign in 1808.⁹⁵

The *Tanzimat* Period

After Mahmud II's death in 1839, his successor Abdülmecid picked up the pace of the reforms and with the help of his bureaucrats, declared the formalization of the reforms. “[Their] purpose was to establish the basis for the eventual creation of an Ottoman nation in which subjects would benefit from identical civil rights, automatically conferred with citizenship and not dependent on religious affiliation.”⁹⁶ Besides real change, a more organized and more conscious opposition to the consequences of these changes could

⁹² Ibid., p. 70.

⁹³ Donald Quataert, “Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29, no. 3 (Aug., 1997), p. 423.

⁹⁴ Karpas, p. 92.

⁹⁵ Karpas, p. 92.

⁹⁶ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (New Jersey: Syracuse U.P., 2000), p. 14.

come into being only after the declaration of the *Tanzimat* edict. The *Tanzimat* edict is considered as a major turning point since:

The simultaneous growth of nationalism in the Balkans and of European and Russian hegemonic interferences throughout the Empire gradually led to a shift from the pragmatic use of certain Western forms and methods to more radical transformations, and to the questioning of some of the fundamental structures of the state apparatus.⁹⁷

Although Abdülmecid was the sultan at the time, Mustafa Reşid Paşa was the man behind the edict. Actually, Mustafa Reşid Paşa did not remain an exception as Westernizing bureaucrats would continue to replace the sultans as the major forces behind the reform programs until 1878. In line with developments in most European countries, the scale, responsibility and sheer size of the government grew. By the century's end, the state had at least half a million civil servants,⁹⁸ who composed a social class on their own.⁹⁹

In fact the men of the *Tanzimat*, who are considered to be the most important factor in the application of the new system, -since they brought more radical solutions to the continuing problems- were the products of the previous reforms. Most of them received a secular education and worked in the post of Foreign Minister and in the Translation Bureau and some of them were sent to Europe by the government. Carter Findley emphasizes that at the end of the eighteenth century the *kalemiye* (scribes or men of the pen) was still insignificant and had the appearance of any guild; however, by the mid-nineteenth century this patrimonial officialdom began to assume the appearance of a modern bureaucracy.¹⁰⁰ This new active role was acquired thanks to their own assets. According to Mardin their practical knowledge of European affairs enabled them to deal

⁹⁷ Eldem, "Istanbul," p. 198.

⁹⁸ Findley, p. 1735.

⁹⁹ Karpat, p. 91.

¹⁰⁰ Findley, p. 1735.

with situations which the Sultan, brought up in the dim intellectual atmosphere of the Palace, was hardly able to cope with.¹⁰¹ In short, the power shifted from the palace to the Sublime Porte, which believed in the necessity of the adoption of Western institutions.

This new class of bureaucrats gradually constituted a class of *efendis* whom nobody could criticize or question. They also became the social symbols of Westernization¹⁰² since they formed the vanguard of change and modernization which was equated more and more with Westernization. However, this pro-West modernizing elite of the *Tanzimat* would not remain exempt from criticism forever. This new class of bureaucrats continued a life detached from the bulk of society and came up with salvation methods that would work against the immediate benefit of the public.¹⁰³ As they grew in power they developed a new line of promotion, starting from the Translation Bureau through the embassies to the post of Foreign Minister and ultimately the Grand Vizierate.¹⁰⁴ By maintaining this closed circle, they put both the masses and the young generation of bureaucrats who could not find themselves an appropriate place in this new line of promotion, in opposition to themselves.¹⁰⁵ Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats who had not been able to acquire wealth and position “accused the men of the *Tanzimat* of creating an aristocracy and of having forgotten the interests of the man in the street.”¹⁰⁶

Despite differences in their views on politics, society, and religion, the opponents who called themselves the Young Ottomans projected an Islamic modernist synthesis.

¹⁰¹ Şerif Mardin, “Ideology and Religion,” p. 200.

¹⁰² Karpas, p. 92.

¹⁰³ Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, “Osmanlı Aydını” *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*. Murat Belge et al. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985).

¹⁰⁴ Findley, p. 1735.

¹⁰⁵ Mardin, “Super Westernization,” p. 416.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Although they were in favor of Western political institutions, they opposed Western political and economic interference and the wholesale adoption of Western thought and culture. “Their thought was premised on the existence in Islamic political traditions of the concepts and institutions fundamental to a liberal political system based on representative principles.”¹⁰⁷ The group’s propaganda remained limited to a literate Turkish-speaking intelligentsia but still the movement is considered as the beginning of a campaign for social mobilization and the forging of a public opinion in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁸ According to Kayalı, their ideas appealed to disenfranchised Westernized groups, students, Muslim commercial associations, and religious conservative opponents of the *Tanzimat*.¹⁰⁹ In order to propagate their views they even introduced new genres and themes into Ottoman literature and pioneered journalism.

The Young Ottomans could gain support by using the tension between the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition in their favor. Although the society had got involved in an irrevocable process of Westernization, which slowly diffused into every walk of life, still hostility was preserved against the West. The indestructibility of latent Occidentalism together with aggravated economic problems, territorial losses and political incompetence contributed to this discontent which developed into a process of marginalization because of a new division that cut through the ruling class and most of society: the split between Westernists/modernists and traditionalists.¹¹⁰ Not surprisingly the great tradition appeared as the modernist side whereas the traditionalists constituted a major part of the little tradition.

¹⁰⁷ Hasan Kayalı, “Young Ottomans.” *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*. Ed. Philip Mattar. 4 vols. 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), vol. 4, p. 2405.

¹⁰⁸ Şerif Mardin, *Genesis of the Young Ottoman Movement*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Kayalı, p. 2406.

¹¹⁰ Eldem, p. 200.

Moreover, the great tradition seemed to be benefiting from these institutional changes which the little tradition approached with suspicion. According to Eldem, the rising powerful strata comprised of non-Muslim traders of the Balkans, the financial magnates of Constantinople, notables and landlords of the provinces, or bureaucrats of the central and provincial administration gaining access to large revenue generating estates, would be able to control market structures thanks to these institutional changes. “The process of modernization and standardization combined with the increasing interference of European powers could only result in an overall amelioration and stabilization of their economic activities.”¹¹¹

İstanbul, as the arena of conflict between the major forces, reflected this division into its topography. “While some of its parts adapted to the new functions and roles assigned to them, a great portion of the city, unable to conform to the new conjuncture, began to decay and stagnate.”¹¹² Şerif Mardin also mentions the physical segregation of the cultures:

The ecological aspect of the cultural clash in the Ottoman Empire seems to have something to do with this difference. In İstanbul, cultures are geographically segregated. On one side there is Pera, a place full of Franks, Levantines, stone buildings, non-Islamic customs and sin. On the other hand, there are the Moslem quarters of the capital where the neighborhood is the locus of a tight community marked by a pervasive togetherness.”¹¹³

By the 1850s, although the segregation was preserved, the physical distance to the West decreased; Beyoğlu came closer to the city¹¹⁴ and after the Crimean War (1853-56) the foreign population of the empire, especially of İstanbul, rose rapidly. Muslim subjects

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 202.

¹¹³ Mardin, “Super Westernization,” p. 409.

¹¹⁴ “Dolmabahçe sarayının yapılması ve hükümdarın orada ikameti üzerine müslüman İstanbul, Beşiktaş’tan yukarıya doğru müstakil bir semt gibi büyümüşü. Unkapanı köprüsü de yapılıncı müslüman hayatı iki koldan Avrupa taklidi bir küçük şehire benzeyen Beyoğlu’na yaklaşmıştı.” Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, p. 156.

going to Beyoğlu found the chance to observe and get involved in the Western life style there; they did their shopping from Western stores, went to the taverns, restaurants and theaters and began to imitate the Westerners.

These growing European and Levantine societies brought social services peculiar to European city life such as churches, schools, theatres, libraries, restaurants, beerhouses and the Ottoman upper class began to pay frequent visits to these places and imitate the *frenk* customs. [...] French became the *lingua franca* at Galata and a complete imitation of European life-style became a reality.¹¹⁵

This gradual development of the interest of the rising powerful strata for Western goods, and more importantly, culture, caused the association of certain Westernized parts of the city with them. Mardin also stresses the importance of this gradual diffusion of the Western way of consumption into this part of the society.¹¹⁶ Moreover, with the flocking of Egyptian Paşas and princesses of Turkish origin to İstanbul, İstanbul's upper class began to emulate their consumption patterns and the result was the conspicuous consumption of which Cevdet Paşa complained, and found detrimental to the economy of the state.¹¹⁷

Not only the members of the Little Tradition who did not develop an interest in European culture but also anyone from either group who could not –or did not want to– enjoy this new consumption practice criticized this new lifestyle as being degenerate, and the second generation of the *Tanzimat* emerged as perfect targets for this criticism since for most of this new generation Europeanization meant only aping the social mannerisms of the West.¹¹⁸ Ahmed Midhat, born into such a social milieu charged with tensions that

¹¹⁵ İnalcık, p. 1057.

¹¹⁶ Mardin, "Super Westernization," p. 410.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 412.

had long-established roots, tried to act as a bridge between the two groups by assuming the identity of an “intellectual” who understood the concerns of the “little community.”

CHAPTER 3

THE LIFE OF AHMED MİDHAT IN THE LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS

As much as the social milieu he was born into influenced his views, specific incidents and people also inevitably affected Ahmed Midhat's attitude and frame of mind. In this chapter I will first discuss the life and thoughts of Ahmed Midhat in relation to the Young Ottoman movement, and I will then concentrate on the developments that paved the way for the emergence of the Ottoman novel and that had a direct influence on Ahmed Midhat's style of writing.

Childhood and Early Adolescence

Ahmed Midhat's family had emigrated from the North Caucasus and had settled in Tophane in İstanbul. Ahmed (not yet Midhat)¹¹⁹ was born in Tophane in 1844, to this impoverished family. His mother Nefise Hanım worked as a tailor while his father Hacı Süleyman Ağa occupied himself in the sale of the clothes his wife made. In 1854 they went to Vidin to live with his step-brother Hafız Ağa, who worked in Midhat Paşa's entourage. Ahmed Midhat started to go to the local *sıbyân mektebi* (Quranic elementary school) there but had to continue his education in İstanbul, where they returned two years later upon his father's death. In 1857 he began to work as an apprentice to an *aktar* (dealer in spices) at the Spice Bazaar. During this period he began to take French lessons from a non-Muslim artisan (*esnâf*) in return for cleaning his shop. Due to this kind of early childhood and such acquaintances, Ahmed Midhat could internalize *esnâf* values that would enable him to develop an argument based on his popular origins.

However his education remained at a very basic level and he could improve himself only when they went to Niş in 1861, again to live with his brother Hafız İbrahim.

¹¹⁹ The name "Midhat" was given by Midhat Pasha.

Ahmed started to go to *Rüşdiye* (secondary school) there and graduated in 1864 when he was 20 years old. The same year he went to Ruse and found a job at the Office of Correspondence of the Danubian Provinces (*Tuna Vilâyeti Mektûbî Kalemi*) thanks to his brother.

Ruse

Ahmed Midhat's life took a new direction after they moved to Ruse owing to two important political figures who encouraged and sponsored him in his self-improvement. First he drew the attention of his brother's –later his own- patron governor Midhat Paşa, who advised him to continue his education at the *medrese* there and to find a way to improve his French. He listened to Midhat Paşa's advice but also began to work first at the Governor's office as a secretary, then at the newly-established local newspaper *Tuna*. In 1866 he was appointed to Sofia where he indulged in debauchery, which resulted in his family's forcing him to get married. After a short period of time he was called back to Ruse. However he did not stop pursuing a decadent life and this enraged his brother who at the end of a quarrel kicked him out of his house. This unfortunate event turned out to be a blessing one since the head of the Immigrants Commission (*Muhacirin Komisyonu reisi*) Şakir Paşa, who appreciated Ahmed's talent and intelligence, invited him to stay at his house. This offer can be considered as a turning point in Ahmed Midhat's life since Şakir Paşa –and his Rumanian wife- not only provided a shelter for Ahmed Midhat but also introduced him to Western civilization by opening their library to his use and by allowing him to join their salon-type gatherings. Şakir Paşa, recognizing Ahmed Midhat's assets, advised him to study and translate Western literature and offered his sponsorship in this challenge. For a while Ahmed Midhat benefited from his library and

patronage. In 1869 he became the head column writer of *Tuna* but had to resign after a short period of time since he chose to go to Baghdad together with Midhat Paşa's entourage. His experience in the Balkan province as a whole enabled him to mature and his ideas on concrete problems including the empire's existing problems such as nationalism, liberty and modernization acquired new depth. His improvement did not go unnoticed and Midhat Paşa appointed him to publish the local newspaper in Baghdad.

Baghdad

His life and experiences at Baghdad deserve special attention since this period played an important part in the formation of Ahmed Midhat's worldview and values. He was assigned to establish a printing house there in order to publish the local newspaper *Zevra*. He now became both the editor-in-chief and director of this recently established newspaper and the printing house. He was pleased both with his business and family life but this period gained importance not due to these successes. As Midhat and Şakir Paşas directed Ahmed Midhat's life into a new path, Osman Hamdi Bey and Muhammed Bakır Can Muattar contributed to the formation of his way of thinking and standpoint in life. Ahmed Midhat never stopped improving himself and kept on reading whatever he found. One of the guests of the social gatherings held at his house was Osman Hamdi Bey, who had spent eight years in Paris to pursue his education and provided Ahmed Midhat with first-hand information about Europe. He was the director of external affairs (*Umur-ı Hariciyye Müdürü*) in Baghdad and had attracted the attention of Ahmed Midhat since the beginning of their journey, especially with his peculiar habits such as taking photographs of anything that he found interesting. When Osman Hamdi Bey realized Ahmed Midhat's thirst for knowledge he reprimanded Ahmed Midhat for being

superficial. “If you want to extend your knowledge, I can recommend you some important books. Do not be parsimonious, spend your money on books that will expand your knowledge on certain issues; only then you can get involved in any discussion.”¹²⁰ Owing to this advice and to the books Osman Hamdi Bey ordered for him, Ahmed Midhat began to appreciate the West more and his knowledge of Western civilization increased.

He would very competently find the incomplete points in the things I do and would indicate the way to correct them. He himself had seen some important authors and artists and since he had been present in their close environment he would educate me about their ways of looking at literature.¹²¹

While learning about the West from Osman Hamdi Bey, Ahmed Midhat increased his knowledge about classical Islam with help from the renowned ex-mufti of Baghdad, Muhammed Feyzi ez-Zühafi. However his real illumination derived from the dialectical discussions with an eccentric character, Muhammed Bakır Can Muattar, whom he met coincidentally. This half-lunatic half-dervish like man enhanced Ahmed Midhat’s thinking. First he impressed Ahmed Midhat with his perfect knowledge of Arabic, Persian, English, Hebrew and Hindu, and then amazed him with his life story. This uncomfortable man had first converted to Protestantism since he had not been convinced with Shi’ism. He even went to India to study at a missionary school. However he was not satisfied with the teachings of Protestantism either and tried to find a meaning in Judaism—even becoming a rabbi (!). But again he was not convinced and showed a great interest this time in Zoroastrianism. As could have been guessed, he did not remain a Zoroastrian,

¹²⁰ Ahmed Midhat, *Menfa.Sürgün Hatıraları* [1293/1876]. ed. Handan İnci (İstanbul: Arma Yayınları, 2002), p. 40.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 41. “Yaptığım şeylerin noksanını bi-hakkın bulup ve gösterip ıslâhına delâlet eyler idi. Kendisi Avrupa’da birtakım büyük muharrirleri ve sanatkârları görmüş ve daire-i hususiyetlerine girmiş olduğundan bunların emr-i telifte hangi tarîki iltizam eylemiş olduklarını hikâye ile beni dâimâ irşâd eyler idi.”

and in the end finalized the circle by converting to Islam again. At the end of this spiritual journey, he became a "walking library" (“*ayaklı kütüphane*”) as Ahmed Midhat called him, and put this splendid library at his service. For the period he stayed there they talked about anything and everything. He advised Ahmed Midhat to read the Old and the New Testaments in order to grasp the meaning of the Koran correctly. He also gave lecture-like speeches to him on various subjects ranging from *tefsîr* (interpretation of Koran) to the history of religions or to Eastern and Western philosophy. According to Orhan Okay, this specific man played an important role in the widening of Ahmed Midhat’s vision, in his open-mindedness and his ability to “critique.”¹²²

Amongst such motivating and inspiring friends and mentors Ahmed Midhat ventured his first attempts at writing something other than his routine newspaper articles. His first work was nonfiction but he owed his nickname *Hace-i Evvel* to this book, which he wrote for the arts and craft schools Midhat Paşa had founded. His first work of fiction, namely *Kıssadan Hisse*, and the first 10 stories of his compilation *Letâif-i Rivayât* were also the products of this period.

Back to İstanbul

Ahmed Midhat’s life did not go as he had anticipated. After one and a half years in Baghdad his brother died and left the responsibility of the whole family to Ahmed Midhat. Upon this unexpected demise, he decided to leave Baghdad and to settle down again in İstanbul. Ahmed Midhat sent his family to İstanbul beforehand and lived in Baghdad for a while with his friends. After his return to İstanbul he was assigned to *Ceride-i Askeriyye* (Military Gazette) as head columnist but as it could be expected the

¹²²Orhan Okay, “Teşebbüse Sarfedilmiş Bir Hayatın Hikayesi,” *Kitaplık: Vesika-lık Ahmet Mithat Özel Sayısı*. 54 (2002), p. 132.

salary was not sufficient to afford the expenses of the whole family. Moreover he never wanted to get stuck in the *kalemiyye* since his ideal was to earn his money through his own job, particularly from book writing rather than journalism.¹²³ Hence he set up a primitive printing press at his own house at Tahtakale. Orhan Okay describes it as basically a family business since every member of the family took care of a part of the job.¹²⁴ Nevertheless it worked and grew. During this time he continued to write for other newspapers like *Basiret* and at the end of 1872 he moved his printing house to a larger place. Moreover his business grew enough to enable him to hire a few workers. Still he wanted to improve it more and did not miss any chance; he even ordered Latin fonts from France to be able to publish Monsieur Peraldi's newspaper *Takvîm-i Ticâret* (The Trade Annual) at his own printing house. After a short period of time he moved his more advanced printing house to *Hacopulo Çarşısı* (Hazzopoula Passage) in Beyoğlu and began to publish his own newspapers and journals. The newspapers *Devir* and *Bedir*, which were closed down after their first and thirteenth issues respectively and his periodical *Dağarcık* (The Pouch) were all published at this printing house. However, an article he wrote in *Dağarcık*'s tenth issue in 1873 caused a profound change in his life; he was sent to exile together with some of the Young Ottomans, namely Namık Kemal, Ebuzziya Tevfik, Menapirzade Nuri Bey and Bereketzade İbrahim Hakkı.

Ahmed Midhat as an Intellectual

As can be seen from his life story up until the exile order, Ahmed Midhat was not a stereotypical intellectual of his time. However before arriving at such a conclusion, we should first clarify what we mean by the term Ottoman intellectual, which, by the way,

¹²³ Midhat, *Menfa*, p. 44. "*İstanbul'a ne fikir ve mütâlaa ile gelmiş olduğumu yani muharrirlikte değil kitap yazmakta bulunarak o yolda ileriye gitmek gayretinde bulunduğumu arz eyledim.*"

¹²⁴ Orhan Okay, p. 134.

constitutes a topic of discussion of its own. As pointed out by several scholars, it would be wrong to think of an Ottoman intellectual in purely Western terms. Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay considers them not as intellectuals but as *münevvers* (enlightened) and highlights the differences between Western intellectuals and Ottoman *münevvers*.¹²⁵ He claims that as a product of the Enlightenment the Western intellectual was prominently an enlightened person unlike his Ottoman counterpart who worked primarily as an enlightener, with the self-appointed mission of reflecting Western sciences just like a mirror. In this context, the Western intellectual is perceived as a permanent student whereas the Ottoman *münevver* is identified as a permanent teacher who imports his curriculum from the West. Şerif Mardin, on the other hand, agrees on the distinctive quality of the Ottoman intellectual but also emphasizes the necessity of a critical discourse on culture in any discussion on the concept of intellectual. He claims that one can talk about the presence of this kind of critical discourse during the *Tanzimat* period but adds that it acquired an interesting nature since its promoters remained within the realm of the bureaucracy.¹²⁶ Figures like İbrahim Şinasi, who tried to bring a new dynamism to the system with their critical stand, came to the foreground as being the closest examples to the intellectual who internalized a critical discourse.

Mardin also draws attention to another intellectual attitude of the 1860s, that is, “encyclopedism” which gave less importance to critical discourse and came closer to

¹²⁵ Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, “Osmanlı Aydını,” Murat Belge et al., eds. *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985) vol 5, p. 55.

¹²⁶ Şerif Mardin, “Tanzimat Aydını” Murat Belge et al., eds. *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985) vol. 5, p. 47. “Devlet adamları içinde kendi toplumlarına kritik bakışta “aydın” niteliğine erişenler, kritik söyleme katılanlar göreceğiz. Madalyonun diğer yüzü ise “kritik söylem”in daha uzun zaman devlet memuriyetine muhtaç olanlarca şekillendirilmesidir.”

Kılıçbay's definition.¹²⁷ What they aimed at was to educate the society without challenging dominant values. Apart from these differences in attitude, the members of both groups shared some common features. If they were to be examined it would appear that they were members of the great tradition; most of them came from well-to-do families and received a proper education either formally at the newly established Western style schools, or informally at offices like the Translation Bureau or by attending saloon-type gatherings where they could improve themselves. Also most of them spent their lives in İstanbul, and usually in close relation to the Porte.

The previous chapter dealt with the social atmosphere of the capital when Ahmed Midhat came to İstanbul, but it would be meaningful to have a look at the most important intellectual group of the time to get a better grasp of Ahmed Midhat's place within this group.

It was hoped that after the declaration of the *Tanzimat* edict things would go right. However, during the 1850s instead of a recovery problems were aggravated and when the pressure both from foreign merchants residing in İstanbul and the Great Powers was added to the equation the Ottoman government felt obliged to issue another edict, the *Islahat Fermanı* (the Reform Edict), which opened the way to the Great Powers' interference in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁸ During the early 1860s the weakness of the Porte revealed itself further through events like the autonomy of Moldavia and Walachia, the revolts in Montenegro and the Lebanon crisis of 1860. Scholars emphasize

¹²⁷ "Aynı yıllarda oldukça farklı bir kültür birikimi yaratıyordu. Bu birikimi ortaya çıkaranları da aydınların arasına koymak mecburiyetindeyiz. Bu birikim 'kritik söylem'e çok daha az önem verir. Amacı, çok fazla 'zülf-i yar'a dokunmadan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'na 'faydalı' saydığı gelişmeleri yansıtmaktır. Bu söylem daha çok devlet katlarında yükselmiş olan Tanzimat öncülerince devlet adamları ciddiye alınarak yapılan bir katkıdır. Memur statüsünü önde tutan memurlar arasında yaygındır." Ibid.

¹²⁸ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (New York: Syracuse UP, 2000), p. 15.

the grumbling of many Moslems but an apparent protest came from the army officers and the *ulema*, who indignant at the loss of the empire's prestige and the extension of new privileges to the Christian population, attempted to overthrow the regime in what is known as the *Kuleli* Revolt of 1859.¹²⁹

Such an atmosphere of imperial weakness and dissatisfaction on the part of the subjects gave way to the foundation of a political group called *İttifâk-ı Hamiyyet* (Patriotic Alliance) which prompted constitutionalism.¹³⁰ This politically oriented group which was to be called the Young Ottomans is bound to have an important place in any account about Ahmed Midhat, first of all since he was influenced by their ideas at the beginning of his career as a novice journalist, and secondly since he came to be considered as one of them.

It would not be wrong to talk about the influence of this group on Ahmed Midhat in view of the fact that they used the press as a tool to propagate their ideas. In 1865, when Ahmed Midhat had just graduated from the *Rüşdiye*, they decided to take action against what they considered to be the catastrophic policies pursued by the government, and in order to realize their aims they took advantage of the power of the press. Namık Kemal was entrusted with the publication of *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* (The Illustration of Ideas) which had been founded by İbrahim Şinasi and had become an arena of critical discourse. Later on in 1867 they formed a new group which adopted the principles of reform mentioned in Mustafa Fazıl Paşa's letter to the sultan as its program.¹³¹ They even founded a newspaper called *Muhbîr* (The Informant) (published in London) as the mouthpiece of this new organization. In 1868 Namık Kemal started to publish another

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

¹³¹ Şerif Mardin. "Tanzimat Aydını", p.48.

newspaper called *Hürriyet* (Freedom). Later on in 1871 when he came back to İstanbul he published *İbret* (The Example) which harshly criticized the government of Mahmud Nedim Paşa.

So, until 1873 when some members of this group were sent to exile, they kept on propagating their reformist ideas through means like newspapers. Ahmed Midhat followed these publications and probably shared the Young Ottomans' concern at the disintegration of the empire.

Until I arrived at Ruse, I had no idea about what a newspaper is but not that I have not seen what it is! While I was in Niche, I used to see and even read the newspapers *Takvîm-i Vekâyi* and *Ruznâme-i Ceride-i Havadis* and afterwards *Tercümân-ı Ahvâl ve Tasvîr-i Efkâr* being brought by the post service. However, I could not make sense of the reasoning behind publishing such papers that does not look like a book or a letter or royal decrees. After *Mecmua-i Fünûn* was published, I was able to appreciate the contents. "This must be a publication that would talk about sciences." The thing I failed to understand was the newspaper. The introduction on the first issue of *Tuna* newspaper that was published in Ruse provided me with an idea about the contents of newspapers and the copies of the newspaper *Muhbîr* which was published in İstanbul increased my knowledge about this issue.

I realized that the newspapers were a means of obtaining up-to-date information for the public and I really liked the idea so I decided that simply just reading the papers would not be sufficient for me; I began to wish to be a part of this endeavor. In those days I was practically making a collection of *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* papers which were published by Kemâl Bey. His writing skills amazed me.¹³²

He was especially influenced by the enthusiasm they showed in their plea for freedom although he believed that these kinds of issues should not be discussed in newspapers.

When we heard that they founded a society called "The Young Ottomans" and that this society was providing some ideas related to freedom, I was did not know how to give my blessings to these people at whom I found the embodiment of the patriotic people living in Europe. I was in Sofia when the publication of *Muhbîr* started and I was in Rusçuk when the publication of *Hürriyet* started. I was ready to die for obtaining the copies of these newspapers.¹³³

However the presence of such an influence is not enough to jump to the

¹³² *Menfa*, p. 48.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

conclusion that Ahmed Midhat was a formal member of the Young Ottoman movement. It is true that he had been on good terms with Namık Kemal and was sent to exile with him. However, both his portrait as an intellectual and the solution he proposed to the ongoing problems did not fit into the picture of the Young Ottomans. Şerif Mardin lists the shared features of the members of the Patriotic Alliance as follows: a common knowledge of European civilization; equal concern at the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire; criticism of Âli and Fuad Paşas' personal rule, of their wrong policies from an ivory tower, and of their building an oligarchy of sycophants; and working at the Translation Bureau of the Porte.¹³⁴ Moreover they were the only ones who adopted a real critical discourse.

At first glance, Ahmed Midhat seems to comply with all these features: he knew about Western civilization, he was upset with the present situation of the Empire, he criticized the policies of Âli and Fuad Paşas. But there were still some essential differences that set him apart from them. First of all, although he was only four years younger than Namık Kemal, he was able to catch up with the discussion only after he came to İstanbul in 1871, at a time when Namık Kemal and his friends had already begun to propagate their ideas and to channel the discussion into a certain direction. Moreover, Ahmed Midhat had only a second-hand knowledge of Western culture and he had begun to study it at a relatively older age and had had to rely on his mentors' choices and randomly selected sources. He worked as a civil servant but never at an office like the Translation Bureau where one could find the necessary atmosphere to broaden one's horizon. He occupied minor posts in the periphery and could not get in touch with the "larger" political world of the Porte. In fact, he did not have such an ambition. He

¹³⁴ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, p. 11.

believed that civil service would bring no benefit to him or to the public that he desperately wanted to educate.¹³⁵ Also in spite of his criticism against Âli and Fuad Paşas, unlike the Young Ottomans he never nurtured a personal grudge against them. In fact this was practically almost impossible since he got involved with politics and social problems relatively late. Âli Paşa died two months after he came to İstanbul. Mahmud Nedim Paşa was the leading political figure of his time and Ahmed Midhat directed his criticism against him but still it was never based on any personal relation.

So although Ahmed Midhat rejected any political tone in his articles and described his initial sensitivity to the concept of freedom as childish, critics like Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar argue that he began to write under the influence of Namık Kemal and that his first articles clearly illustrated this influence.¹³⁶ *Devir* was closed down because of an article addressing Midhat Paşa, the Grand Vizier, in what was considered a “ferocious language.” *Bedir* was closed down for the same reason. Especially after Ahmed Midhat and Namık Kemal met in 1872, Ahmed Midhat began to undertake some of the technical management of *İbret* and joined the gatherings held at Namık Kemal's house at Beylerbeyi. He was not in total agreement with him but nevertheless was included in his group. His long discussions with Namık Kemal were highly political in nature.

We have been talking about politics only. When we think about the earlier times in the Ottoman history, we see that there was a time when the Sultans of the Ottoman Empire had the power in their hands and showed their might with their actions and; when valuable scholars such as Kara Halil and Kara Rüstem always regarded the sacred sharia laws and decrees while acting and; when they considered Islam and Christianity politically equal and were not hesitant in taking actions to support the two parties integration and

¹³⁵ *Menfa*, p. 47.

¹³⁶ Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (İstanbul: Çağlayan Kitabevi, 2003), p. 449.

development. It was these times when the Ottoman's achieved great success. On the other hand we would feel very sad when we think of the times in which murdering a great grand vizier was as if it was a simple matter and in the times bandits like the Celali's almost lead to the collapse of the Empire and in such a time seeing in all household of İstanbul from the Royal Palace to the poorest house would deal with tricks to hurt each other due to jealousy. This would hurt us deeply especially when we consider the darkness of general ignorance.¹³⁷

They agreed on the problems but they dissented on the solutions to these problems. If we rely on Ahmed Midhat's memoirs it can be seen that Ahmed Midhat had already made up his mind on the Young Ottoman movement when he was in Baghdad. "After a serious consideration of the publications of the Young Ottomans I could not find the things I had imagined in this society."¹³⁸ He decided that their weakness was their starting point, that is, the enmity they felt towards Âli and Fuad Paşas which caused them to deviate from the right path.¹³⁹ Yet, he still appreciated Namık Kemal and his friends' values and enjoyed having discussions with them. After those discussions he understood for sure that Kemal and he had different solutions in mind. Namık Kemal spoke in favor of a revolutionary change whereas he believed in an evolutionary process which should start with the enlightenment of the public.¹⁴⁰ Moreover he could not share Kemal's enthusiasm and unfounded optimism.

Kemal Bey tried to prove the way of getting rid of these inconveniences with a profound reasoning and courage. [...] When I looked at the situation of our homeland and unable to see anyone who would be willing to suffer the slightest discomfort and I thought that all this was in vain. The emergence of development of a nation requires education at the first place. [...] How can we explain the need for development to our people? First we will have to let them know this situation we are in a bad situation, won't we? How will they understand we are in fact in trouble? Of course, they will understand it by comparing better countries with the problematic ones. However, even those who are aware of the situation do not

¹³⁷ *Menfa*, p. 57.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*,

realize what the situation is really like. Our knowledge about Europe is even less than superficial. The worst part is that our people who only see the sins of Europe and who just suffered from difficulties hate even the good sides of Europe. What kind of a job you can do in such a country?¹⁴¹

After *Devir* and *Bedir* were closed down Ahmed Midhat started the publication of a popular scientific magazine *Dağarcık* (The Pouch) which was designed to enlighten the public on scientific matters in a simple language. According to Tanpınar, *Dağarcık* accurately reflects Ahmed Midhat's philosophy:

The easy, peaceful swaying of our author between the European science and history of philosophy that he has recently learned and the Islamic beliefs; his attempt at combining Lamarckism and the principles of Islam or even trying to relate it to the Koran and the hadiths; his views on class and cliques –“righteous poor” which can be inferred from his use of the terms such as "mutual aid and support" and "the rich and the poor" in his amazing articles shows the direction of our author's ideas.¹⁴²

However, some of his articles in this innocent journal were considered heretical by some circles.¹⁴³ Moreover, in such an environment, he could not remain apolitical and some of his articles were expected to carry slight political connotations. His articles on religion and commentaries on poverty, his references to Lamarck were not deemed appropriate matters to be discussed or even mentioned under Abdülaziz.¹⁴⁴

The formal reason for the exile order was based on his articles in *Dağarcık*, even though he refused the accusations. He was convicted of “harmful publication” (*muzır neşriyat*). As mentioned above, he was considered to be part of Namık Kemal's group and the informal accusation against this group was promoting the enthronement of the heir apparent, Murad. This claim might have been true for Namık Kemal, but not for Ahmed Midhat.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁴² Tanpınar, p. 449.

¹⁴³ Accusation of Hoca İshak Efendi. *Menfa*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁴ Tanpınar, p. 450.

If I had thought who would inherit the throne after Sultan Abdulaziz Han, I would not have felt so bad [...] after I resigned from my post as a journalist in *Ceride-i Askeriyye* I isolated myself totally from political world and thus I forgot about all the goals related to this issue. I wanted to live like an ordinary shop owner.¹⁴⁵

His exile helped Ahmed Midhat to write in a more consistent tone. He gave up even the slightest critical tone and acted as a pro-government, or more accurately pro-Abdulhamid writer. We cannot say for certain, but according to critics like Tanpınar and the colleagues of Ahmed Midhat, fear was the leading motive in this back-off.¹⁴⁶ In Rhodes Ahmed Midhat and Nuri Bey lived almost like real prisoners and went through hard times. In fact we can say that this experience caused him to find voice and a sense of a mission that would prevail over the rest of his life.

He did not cease writing during his exile which lasted three years and two months. He published a journal called *Kırk Ambar* as well as his first novels under the pen-name of his nephew Mehmed Cevdet. After the deposition of Abdülaziz and the consequent enthronement of Murad V, he was pardoned together with his friends and was allowed to come back to İstanbul. He caught up with his career where he had left off. The first thing he did was to write a memorandum, *Menfa* (The Exile) which is considered as a justification of his deeds before the exile. After that he published *Üss-i İnkılab* (Origins of the Revolution),¹⁴⁷ another controversial work of Ahmed Midhat written after the enthronement of Abdülhamid II and with the publication of this book on Ottoman history he drew a conclusive line between himself and the Young Ottomans once and for all.

¹⁴⁵ *Menfa*, p. 78.

¹⁴⁶ Tanpınar, p. 450. Münir Süleyman Çapanoğlu, ed. *İdeal Gazeteci Efendi Babamız Ahmet Mithat* (İstanbul: Gazeteciler Cemiyeti, 1964).

¹⁴⁷ Ahmed Midhat, *Üss-i İnkılab*. Ed. Tahir Galip Seratlı. (İstanbul : Selis Kitaplar, 2004). In this book, he described the political maneuverings that accompanied and followed the sultan's accession to the throne and the acceptance of the Constitution and, more importantly, justified the suspension of the Parliament.

Once he returned to İstanbul in 1876 he devoted himself exclusively to his civilizing mission and began to write on practically anything including politics, economics, pedagogy, history and so forth. At the same time, he preserved his identity as a journalist and printer. In 1878 he began to publish one of the most long-standing and popular newspapers of the Ottoman period, *Tercümân-ı Hakikat* (The Interpreter of Truth).

From then on, his life acquired the character of steady routine owing to the system he based it on. He became the most popular novelist and his publishing house *Kırk Ambar Matbaası* the most productive publishing house of the time.¹⁴⁸ He was favored by the Sultan Abdülhamid II and was appointed to certain official positions such as the directorate of *Takvîm-i Vekâyi* (The Official gazette) and the Imperial Printing House (*Matbaa-i Amire*), membership of the Sanitary Council (*Meclis-i Umur-i Sıhhiye*), and also as a professor of general history, history of religions and history of philosophy at *Dârülfünûn* (The University), *Medresetülvaizin* (The School of Preachers) and *Dârümuallimât* (The School for the Formation of Female Teachers). Apart from these administrative and intellectual occupations, he practiced what he always advised his readers: private entrepreneurship. He imported the first artificial incubation machine and modern bee-hive for his farm at the village of Akbaba, and also established a water company which had over fifty employees.

In 1888 he attended the Eighth Congress of the Orientalists at Stockholm as an Ottoman delegate and then found the opportunity to visit places he had already described in his novels. During his three month travels in Europe he visited Paris, Geneva, Stockholm, Oslo, Berlin, Munich and Cologne and wrote an extensive account of this

¹⁴⁸ Orhan Okay, p. 135.

journey.¹⁴⁹ However he began to lose his popularity during the 1890s and he did not write a single novel for thirteen years until 1911 when he published his last novel *Jöntürk* (The Young Turk), which faced harsh criticism.¹⁵⁰ The new generation who could produce more professional works of higher literary value came onto the scene and proved that the novels of Ahmed Midhat were not that good. In 1912 he died during his night watch at Darüşşafaka. He left over two hundred books in a wide variety of genres such as novels, stories, essays and plays.

So what kind of an intellectual was Ahmed Midhat? He adopted neither the encyclopedist nor the critical discourse approach. Surely he was influenced by both and shared some of their concerns. He believed in the need for change and innovation but he thought that the society was yet not ready and could not adapt to the intended pace of change. He referred to the Ottoman Empire in social Darwinist terms as a place that had “not yet approached the highest level in civilization.”¹⁵¹ In his view, Ottoman society should thrive towards this goal, but it should first learn what it is to be a developed country. The most obvious model for the Ottomans was Europe, but society at large could only see the bad sides of Europe and, therefore, pushed it aside.¹⁵² The result was the current situation and educated men like him had to do something to form the public. His bitter experience with the Young Ottomans proved to him that he should stay away from politics if he wanted to achieve his aim. The progressive ideologues, as Carter Findley calls them,¹⁵³ took constitutionalism as their symbol of Western modernity, whereas

¹⁴⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa'da Bir Cevlan*, (İstanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1307 [1890]).

¹⁵⁰ Up until then he had published more than 30 novels. See Appendix 1.

¹⁵¹ Carter V. Findley, “An Ottoman Occidental in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gulnar, 1889.” *The American Historical Review*, 103, no. 1 (Feb., 1998), p. 20.

¹⁵² *Menfa*, p. 58.

¹⁵³ Findley.

Ahmed Midhat believed that social, economic and cultural change should come before political transformations. Moreover, the point of convergence in the public controversy over modernization was its impact on particular changes in everyday life rather than political reforms. "Though the 'big stakes' were to be played in the political arena, it was at home that the revolution was to be lived in all its prosaic glory. The changes and crises felt in the family were, in this sense, microcosms of the larger crisis of civilizational metamorphosis."¹⁵⁴ In this sense he was closer to the encyclopedist approach but there was an essential difference that set him apart. Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay stresses the detachment as a distinctive feature of the intellectuals of the time.

The intellectual class always had an advantage in comparison to the Ottoman lay people who lack the awareness of citizenship due to "the sultan is the shepherd of the people view" of the Ottoman central administration. This "over all classes" approach combined with their self assigned role of educators lead to solutions "for the public, outside public, despite the public."¹⁵⁵

Ahmed Midhat tried to avoid this attitude in his approach to the public. Taking Şinasi as a role model, he never underestimated the public and tried to gain their support. He never missed a chance to stress being one of them and this is the reason of Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar's criticism and belittlement.¹⁵⁶ However, this was the main source he derived his power from. He came from humble origins and incorporated *esnâf* values. He shifted from the little tradition to the greater one but did not part with the values of the former. He knew, or at least claimed to know, the concerns of the modest folk and tried to educate them through both his fiction and nonfiction.

¹⁵⁴ Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family and Fertility, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), p. 239

¹⁵⁵ Mehmet Ali Kılıçbay, p. 56.

¹⁵⁶ Tanpınar, p. 449.

Developments in the Cultural Sphere

Literary Traditions

In the same way that Ahmed Midhat cannot be placed within a specific group of intellectuals, he cannot be associated with a specific literary generation. Before elucidating Ahmed Midhat's specific place in late nineteenth-century literary trends, we should first recall some of the important aspects of, and influences over, modern Ottoman literature whose birth is generally associated with the publication of the first novel *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* (The Love Between Talat ve Fitnat, 1872).

Ottoman literature diverged at an early point in time into two main trajectories of the elite/classical tradition and of the popular tradition which, in turn, were divided into subcategories within themselves.¹⁵⁷ The first one was mostly poetry but also included a subgenre of prose narratives. Its audience comprised the court, the court-dependent elites, the educated, educating and administrative classes, who had reached the required level of literacy and culture in order to understand and appreciate it. It was a part of the high culture but even among those circles it had a very limited audience since it adopted the genres, forms, themes and rhetoric of the Islamic Arabo-Persian poetic tradition and incorporated a heavy proportion of Persian and Arabic vocabulary. Prose was also “larded with poetic interpolations.”¹⁵⁸

The second main trajectory included popular stories that were recorded and read by storytellers, stories that were transmitted orally, and stories that have been adapted to serve specific purposes such as moral fables. Andrews describes the popular tradition as the literature of the village, the countryside and the lower classes; as a whole it “included

¹⁵⁷ Walter Andrews used two main divisions but Mustafa Nihat Özön puts forth a more detailed division. (1) narratives in verse of the classical “high” tradition; (2) prose narratives

¹⁵⁸ Walter Andrews, p. 82.

love songs, folk songs particular to various regions, the mysticism of villagers and nomads, songs of passages such as weddings and death, and a host of oral prose tales.”¹⁵⁹ The two literary traditions existed in isolation from each other, reflecting the wide gap between the great and little traditions. “To the nineteenth century intelligentsia, who as members of the urban elite inherited the great tradition, the oral narratives of the rural hinterland remained far too alien to be explored as sources that could be tapped in the process of literary innovation.”¹⁶⁰

However, the folk poet had a counterpart in the city in the form of the *meddah* (professional storyteller) “who enthralled audiences in coffeehouses, bazaars and taverns with a repertoire of tales in a variety of rhetorical styles.”¹⁶¹ This part of the popular tradition gains importance in the context of this thesis since “much of the popular tradition persisted substantially unchanged into the modern period, where it had a profound influence on the language, style and themes of modern authors and poets who turned from the elite tradition.”¹⁶² Nineteenth century intellectuals practiced within the cultural milieu to which they belonged so it was inevitable for them to use the language and culture of urban life, particularly of İstanbul, rather than to refer to the folk tradition, even if they claimed to pay attention to the public at large.¹⁶³ Therefore, it cannot be claimed that they did not inherit anything from the urban popular tradition, which constituted a dominant form of entertainment enjoyed by large segments of the urban population. While some stories in these categories fed on a variety of sources including

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ahmet Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel*. (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1983), p. 24

¹⁶¹ Walter Andrews. For a detailed analysis of the history and functioning of professional storytelling, see Fuad Köprülü *Edebiyat Araştırmaları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1966), pp. 361-412.

¹⁶² Andrews, p. 83.

¹⁶³ Ahmet Evin, p. 25

The Thousand and One Nights and love stories from the folk tradition, some were made up later and reflected the atmosphere of Ottoman urban culture.¹⁶⁴ They were supposed to be realistic or at least did not have the heroic elements of the legends of the oral tradition or “the frustrated, covert sexuality” of mystical allegories.¹⁶⁵ “They are mostly adventure stories, the protagonists of which belong to the urban middle classes and as such, they display a rudimentary form of realism in portraying the everyday lives of ordinary individuals.”¹⁶⁶ These stories were originally transmitted orally by *meddahs* but some, especially the most popular ones such as *Hançerli Hanım* (Lady with the Dagger), *Kalyopi’nin Sergüzeşti* (The Adventure of Kalyopi), *Letaifname* (Book of Comical Stories), *Cevri Çelebi Hikayesi* (The Story of Cevri Çelebi), *İki Biraderler* (Two Brothers), *Sansar Mustafa* (Mustafa the Weasel) and *Kanlı Bektaş* (Bloody Bektaş), were recorded on paper for the use of *meddahs* who would use this written version in public places or private parties. Recording, however, did not change the nature of these stories since nevertheless they were to be transmitted orally to an audience drawn from different classes.

As mentioned above, *meddah* stories deserve special attention since they anticipated in some respects the popular novels of the late nineteenth century; yet maybe more important than that, *meddahs* overcame a very difficult challenge: they performed in public places such as in coffeehouses or even on the street to the common folk, but also privately in the mansions of the elite and at the palace to the members of the high culture, thus breaking cultural barriers by offering the same type of entertainment to all. “In the Ottoman cultural context, in which the great and little traditions were

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Pertev Naili Boratav, *100 Soruda Türk Halk Edebiyatı*. (İstanbul: K Kitaplığı, 2003), p. 85.

¹⁶⁶ Ahmet Evlin, p. 28.

distinguished not only in terms of manners, aesthetics and literary form but also with respect to everything else including language itself, the ability to cut across those barriers was remarkable; the art of the *meddah* achieved an urban synthesis by discovering and elaborating on the urban taste.”¹⁶⁷ As a result they developed a peculiar narrative style, which retained the informality of conversational Turkish mingled with the refinements of the language as spoken in İstanbul. According to Evin, this distinctive style provided a lively and infinitely more adoptable model for the early novelists as opposed to the formal Ottoman prose.¹⁶⁸

As much as the novel fed on the popular tradition, improvements achieved in the areas of education, journalism and translation also paved the way for the Ottoman novel.

Education

Education came to the foreground since it was the most important means with which to train both the producers and the consumers of the new literary forms. The new education system was not established overnight; it gains meaning only when it is considered as an on-going process. In the classical Ottoman educational system there were three main types of schools –apart from the foreign and non-Muslim establishments. These were the *Enderun Mektebi* (Palace School), the *medrese* (religious schools) and the *sıbyân mektepleri* (Quranic elementary schools) controlled by the *ulema*. Also, well-to-do families hired *lâlas* (private tutors) for the education of their children. “On the whole, the demand for a more general education hardly seems to have been urgent during the period of Ottoman decline, and no national or even approximately modern school system

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

existed.”¹⁶⁹ However, new types of schools began to appear out of necessity in the military realm. Excluding the short lived military engineering school of 1734, the opening of the Naval Engineering Academy (1773) under the impact of the Ottoman-Russian wars of the late eighteenth century could be taken as the real beginning of modern military education.¹⁷⁰ It was followed by the establishment of an Army Engineering Academy (1793) since competence in engineering was considered indispensable for the modern army. Along the line of the engineering schools a military medical school (*Tıbbiye*, 1826) and a military veterinary school were founded out of necessity since the armed forces needed doctors and veterinaries. According to Frederick Frey, this initial phase first split and then eventually transformed the ruling elite.¹⁷¹ These academies were the first schools that were considered to be wholly independent of the *medreses* and most of their graduates joined the ranks of the bureaucracy and the military, which were “already at or near the heart of the power structure of the society.”¹⁷² For further enhancement of the army Mahmud II began to send military student missions to Europe and in 1857 the Ottoman School in Paris (1857-1874) was founded primarily for military students. However the duality of the system hampered these reforms at the level of higher education since the students entered these institutions without the necessary formation. So during the reign of Mahmud II special military preparatory schools were established.

Just as the government needed a modern army, it felt the need for a modern

¹⁶⁹ Frederick Frey, “Education. Turkey” in *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*. Ed. By Robert E. Ward, Dankwart A. Rustow. (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1964), p. 211.

¹⁷⁰ Cyril E. Black and L. Carl Brown, eds. *Modernization in the Middle East*. (New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1992), p. 127.

¹⁷¹ Frey, p. 211.

¹⁷² Frey, p. 212.

bureaucracy. The first important institution for training civil officials was the Translation Bureau (*Tercüme Odası*, 1821) which was founded to replace the old Greek dragoman, and to train translators. Together with the Foreign Office it became an informal school of civil administration. Yet it proved to be insufficient and the first secular secondary schools, which came to be known as *Rüşdiye* (Adolescence) schools, were founded in 1838 to train boys from the Quranic elementary schools for service in government offices with the purpose of putting an end to the old practice of scribal apprenticeship.¹⁷³

The men of the *Tanzîmât* also saw the need for a secular elementary school system since the establishment of a few *Rüşdiye* schools did not prove to be enough to compensate for the students' lack of basic formation. Yet, they had to find a subtle way to create a system of secular and utilitarian education as they could not afford to affront the *ulema* openly. The *sıbyân mektebs* serving as the basis of *ulema* power still taught the traditional subjects –at least in theory- and continued to monopolize elementary education for Muslims.¹⁷⁴

The first step toward an integrated system was taken in 1845, with the formation of the Council of Public Education (*Meclis-i Maârif-i Umûmî*) which brought forth a three-tiered educational system consisting of *sıbyan mektebi*, which were to be reformed, an intermediate level known as the *Rüşdiye* and a university (*Dârülfünûn*).¹⁷⁵ The implementation of the plan was not that successful and only the *Rüşdiye* schools became a reality. Although they soon settled into being nothing more than upper elementary

¹⁷³ Brown and Black, p. 127. For a further training of the civil officials a higher level of schools were set up; first in 1859 the School of Civil Administration (*Mülkiye Mektebi*) and then in 1868 Galatasaray Lycee were founded. They together did most to shape the civil elite of the late empire. The next important step in the establishment of an Ottoman school system was the Ottoman education law of 1869, which, this time, offered a five-tiered hierarchy. Adoption of the system remained rather slow but perceptible.

¹⁷⁴ Stanford Shaw, v.2, p. 106.

¹⁷⁵ Brown and Black, p. 128.

schools, they were considered to be the most important of the modern schools in that most of the educated Ottomans never went beyond them.¹⁷⁶

As can be understood from the brief history of educational reforms, the education system became more and more secular and the necessary steps were gradually taken to break the dominance of the *ulema* over education. The dichotomy between the great and little traditions was mentioned above; in the second half of the nineteenth century with the developments in education, a second division within the ruling elite between those who had received a modern secular education and those who had received traditional religious instruction was embedded into the framework. The criteria for initiation into the great culture had changed; emphasis was no longer on the classical languages of the Islamic world, but on French. The status and number of *medrese* graduates among the ranks of the bureaucracy gradually declined, and were replaced by the graduates of the new institutions where secular, Western-style curricula were adopted.¹⁷⁷ These changes played an important role in the emergence of the novel. First of all, the graduates of these secular institutions heralded the reform programs as the new style bureaucrats and they also became the ones who could put forth a critical discourse. Besides, these Western-style educated professionals began to read and appreciate Western literature, which showed quite different characteristics from the traditional literature of Ottoman high culture.

Moreover, these attempts at establishing a generalized education system increased the level of literacy and culture, which, in turn, would play a significant role in the consumption of the new literary products.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Shaw, p. 107.

Journalism

Newspapers complemented the educational reforms in the sense that they became a very effective means of public instruction. Mahmud II was the first Ottoman sultan who wanted to exploit the potential power of newspapers to project and inculcate state policies. He ordered the publication of the first newspaper in Turkish, the *Takvim-i Vekayi* (Calendar of Events, 1831) which appeared as a sort of bulletin.¹⁷⁸ Mustafa Reşid Paşa, ascribing more importance to it ordered a regular weekly publication of the newspaper and tried to use it to establish a link between the subjects and the government. It was used also as a means of instruction since it was considered as the only educating tool.¹⁷⁹ Kemal Karpaz also points to an unusual feature of this newspaper, which attracted readers and gave the press a high status: the sultan often wrote the leading article.

The publication of the news of the empire in this way soon became of universal attraction. The paper made its way to the coffeehouses, and the same Turk that I noticed before dozing half-stupefied with coffee and tobacco, I now saw actually awake with a paper in his hands eagerly spelling out the news. But the most usual mode of communicating it are the newsrooms, and a place is taken where those who wish to hear it assemble ...the attention paid [to the newspaper reader] is very different from that which I saw them give to a story-teller. There was no mirth or laughter excited, but all seemed to listen with profound attention ... the reayas of the empire soon caught the spirit of such a publication, and were delighted with the permission to imitate.¹⁸⁰

Ceride-i Havadis (1840) followed *Takvîm-i Vekâyî* as the first non-official newspaper run by an Englishman, William Churchill. *Tercümân-ı Ahvâl* (1860), the first private newspaper owned by Muslims was established by İbrahim Şinasi and Yusuf Agâh Efendi and is acknowledged to be the real beginning of Ottoman\Turkish journalism.¹⁸¹

The intelligentsia was aware of the role of the press as a disseminator of ideas and

¹⁷⁸ Kemal Karpaz, p. 95.

¹⁷⁹ İlber Ortaylı, p. 197.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Walsh, *Residence at Constantinople* quoted in Kemal Karpaz, 96.

¹⁸¹ Ahmet Evins, p. 48.

knowledge, and thanks to their efforts and desire to create a modern political community Ottoman journalism grew stronger. Concepts such as fatherland, nation, humanity, justice and freedom reached the public consciousness through newspapers before educational reforms even began affecting the masses.¹⁸² The novels of the didactic-realist movement, as Ahmet Evin calls it, between 1875 and 1893 were expected to play the same role as newspapers, that is educating and enlightening the masses. The simple language used in the novels was also inherited from the newspaper tradition. Journalists, especially Şinasi and his followers, felt the need to develop a language appropriate for expressing ideas clearly; “the early newspapers thus served as *ateliers* in which a new language was being created.”¹⁸³ Moreover, the fact that the early journalists were the forerunners of Western genres in literature reveals the impact of journalism on the Ottoman novel.

Translation

The activities in the field of translation are also considered important with respect to their contribution to the emergence of the novel. As will be recalled, translation studies began during the Tulip Era but the first literary translation from a Western language to Turkish coincided with the *Tanzimat* Period. These translation attempts did not start with the proclamation of the edict since the first products of the new system would start to bring about their works only in the 1860s. The precursor of this movement was again İbrahim Şinasi, who in 1859 published the translation of a compilation of French poetry, *Tercüme-i Manzûme*, which consisted of selections and excerpts from the works of a few French poets. This translation is considered the first to convey Western literary

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

aesthetics and taste into the Turkish language.¹⁸⁴ In the same year Yusuf Kâmil Paşa translated Abbé Fénélon's *Télémaque*, which was published again three years later due to its popularity. Although Yusuf Kâmil Paşa intended to give it the appearance of a political treatise the format of which Ottomans were familiar with, he had to abandon the conventional formality of high Ottoman prose for the sake of expressiveness required of fiction.¹⁸⁵ *Télémaque* became so popular that a second edition was published by Şinasi. Ahmet Evin explains the importance of *Tercüme-i Telemak* as "one is that it was the first translation into Turkish of an example of Western fiction. Although it would be an exaggeration to consider *Télémaque* as being representative of the European novelistic genre, it nevertheless provided an insight into the imaginary world of Western fiction."¹⁸⁶ Although it would be hard to determine the later editions, suffice it to say that for a long time it remained the most published and most read work in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸⁷

A more comprehensive understanding of the European novel evolved after the publication of other translations. In 1862, an abridged version of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* started to be published in a serialized form in *Ruznâme-i Ceride-i Havadis* under the name *Mağdurîn Hikâyesi*. A translation of *Robinson Crusoe* (*Hikâye-i Robenson*) followed *Les Misérables* and was published as a book in 1864. The popularity of these translations motivated a younger group of writers gathering around newly established newspapers and magazines.¹⁸⁸ Among the translators we can see to-be

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁸⁵ Özön, p. 144.

¹⁸⁶ Evin, p. 43. For a detailed analysis of the importance of *Télémaque*, see Şerif Mardin's *Genesis of the Young Ottoman Thought*, pp. 242-244.

¹⁸⁷ Özön, p. 147.

¹⁸⁸ Evin, p. 45.

novelists like Rezaizade Ekrem and Sami Paşazade Sezai and a glance at their choice of translations is enough to discern an interest for the Romantic Movement: Chateaubriand's *Atala* (1869), Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1870) and Dumas père's *Monte Cristo* (1871) were published as series in newspapers. Dumas père's *Pauline* (1871), René LeSage's *Le Diable Boiteux* (1872), Paul de Kock's *Monsieur Choublanc à la Recherche de sa Femme* (1873), Anne Radcliffe's *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1873), Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1875) and Xavier de Montepin's *Les Mystères de L'Inde* (1875) were published in book form due to a gradual shift in the publishing industry beginning in the early 1870s.¹⁸⁹

Ahmet Evin explains the underlying reason for these choices: apart from reflecting the formation of notions, expectations and attitudes concerning the novel, they convey the effects of the rise of commercial publishing and proposals for a new understanding of fiction.

The publication of such adventure and mystery novels as those by Defoe, Dumas, Radcliffe, and Montepin, regardless of the discrepancy of genre and literary value, followed naturally the publication of Eastern tales and *meddah* stories; the established audience for popular fiction assured their commercial success. These publications also helped further increase the audience and create the habit of reading for pleasure among the middle classes.¹⁹⁰

All of these developments in cultural life contributed to the formation of a novel type of reader. As mentioned above, as an outcome of the changes the reading public of the elite literature was split into two camps during the *Tanzimat* period. Those who had received a modern secular education began to read and appreciate Western literature and found themselves in the midst of a quarrel over traditional literature. Although they did not intend to dispraise traditional Ottoman literature they were nevertheless positioned as its

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

opponents.¹⁹¹ This new reading public also encompassed a larger public which was comprised of the slowly emerging middle class and of consumers of urban popular tradition. This second part of the reading public -or at least had the potential to become one since they were familiar with storytelling- could then turn into novel readers after an informal education. This class was familiar with the values of the little tradition but also displayed urban tastes. Mustafa Nihat Özön described this second class of readers as “a large body of people who were ahead of other uneducated groups by virtue of a broad vision and knowledge that was the result of being city-dwellers”¹⁹² While education widened the reading public, journalism and translation activities prepared the reading public for the coming literary genre, the Ottoman novel.

After seeing the popularity of translated novels, the intellectuals who were in the quest for means to educate and convey their messages to the public began to produce their own novels. They thought that through their authorial voices they would be able to sustain a paternal guidance which the public desperately needed in the absence of the incompetent sultans’ guidance.¹⁹³ According to Jale Parla, the earliest Ottoman novelists, who began to publish their works in the 1870s, were adopting a Western literary genre without abandoning their hegemonic Islamic epistemology. They were not aware of the socioeconomic and epistemological rupture that paved the way for the emergence of the novel in the West.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Especially Namık Kemal was involved in these kinds of quarrels. Another extension of this “modernist” vs “traditionalist” is the quarrel over the value and style of *Télémaque*.

¹⁹² Özön, p. 136.

¹⁹³ Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar. Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri*, 4th. Ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004)

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., “*Feodalizmden kapitalizme geçiş, burjuvazinin ve onunla birlikte bireyciliğin doğuşu ve ampirik pozitivistimin ortaya çıkışı gibi, romanda yaşamın nesnel bir biçimde yansıtılmasına yol hazırlayan gelişmeler henüz Osmanlı entellektüellerinin bilgi eşliğine ulaşmamıştır.*” Nüket Esen. “Bir Osmanlının Batı Romanına Bakışı” *Şinasi Tekin Armağan*.

Among the earliest novelists, Ahmed Midhat held a special place. Like other intellectuals he wanted to educate the public but he developed a more appropriate style to reach the public. According to his estimates the proportion of Ottomans who could read with comprehension was of one in ten and those who could write something and explain what they had written was of one in three thousand. He estimated that a popular novel could sell 1500, or at most 2500 copies over five years.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, we know that the literacy level reached over 5% (all over the Empire) only around the end of the century.¹⁹⁶ Considering these disadvantages he developed his own style which would overcome these impediments. First of all, he avoided lofty language and his defense of using a simple language went even beyond the suggestions of Şinasi and Namık Kemal who were the initiators of this movement.¹⁹⁷ Ahmed Midhat claimed that in order to reach the public one should address them in a language that all of them could understand, not only the educated ones.

Besides a simplified language, he adopted a *meddah*-like style to which the public, be it literate or illiterate, was accustomed. He wrote as if he was talking to his audience and also embellished his main story with unrelated sub-stories or information. Although these features are counted within Ahmed Midhat's weak points as a novelist, these are the characteristics of *meddah* stories, which the immature reading public knew and liked. Moreover, Ahmed Midhat found the chance to give direct information by exploiting this characteristic. He was aware of his works' low literary value but did not

¹⁹⁵ *Menfâ*, p. 47.

¹⁹⁶ Carter Findley, "An Ottoman Occidental in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gulnar, 1889," *The American Historical Review*, 103, no. 1 (Feb., 1998), p. 22.

¹⁹⁷ Tanpınar, p. 450.

care since he gave more importance to his mission. He believed that at such a time literary quality could be sacrificed to such a sublime mission.¹⁹⁸

Not only his style but also some of the themes he chose were drawn from popular stories. The theme of the degeneration of a fatherless young man would leave its mark on the *Tanzimat* novel but it should be remembered that it is the main theme of *Hançerli Hanım*. Ahmed Midhat did not find it inconvenient to adapt themes from the popular tradition or from the Western novels he had read. He was especially influenced by *Monte Cristo* and tried to write *Hasan Mellah* and later some other novels under its influence. He did not refrain from writing in imitation of the popular Western novels since his only concern was to get in touch with and educate the public; imitating these popular novels in a way guaranteed his popularity.

However, in order to convey his message to the public, and moreover, to see its implementation, he needed some kind of authority and power of influence. As a *meddah* his power would have been very limited, but he found another way to eliminate a *meddah*'s levity and lightness; by emphasizing his identity as journalist he gained the necessary solemnity. As mentioned above, the public had a very deep respect for journalists and Ahmed Midhat knew how to make use of this feeling. In the preface of his novels he directly addressed his reader as Ahmed Midhat and in the following chapters did not lose this authorial voice and did not give the narrator another identity; he kept on talking and giving messages as Ahmed Midhat the journalist, whom everyone knew very well.

¹⁹⁸ Çapanoğlu, 27.

CHAPTER 4

REPRESENTATION OF THE WEST IN THE WORKS OF AHMED MİDHAT

While his contemporaries discussed the adoption of Western institutions and its possible effects at the administrative level, Ahmed Midhat channeled the discussion of Westernization to its effects on the daily lives and habits of society with influential works such as *Felâatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (1876).¹⁹⁹

As mentioned in the previous chapter Ahmed Midhat was not comfortable with the current situation of the Empire and believed that the education of the public should be a priority. The public must be educated but the criteria should not be confined to reading and writing; their knowledge on a variety of subjects such as history, politics, and economics should be expanded and in this civilizing mission intellectuals should take the leading role since not everything can be expected from the government. This was the reason behind Ahmed Midhat's attempts to provide a kind of paternal guidance to the public through his publications of all sorts.

In our country people's level of understanding and evaluation of events is not enough. We have to treat them like children. We should look after them like fathers look after their children to keep them away from undesirable factors. In a similar vein, the government and intellectuals should protect our people from the destructive publications and ideas of the West.²⁰⁰

One of the areas in which the public needed a thorough tutoring was Westernization since it was clear that most of the public did not understand it correctly. Ahmed Midhat believed that as Europe was much ahead of the Ottoman Empire in terms

¹⁹⁹ Ahmed Midhat. *Felâatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*. Transliterated by Tacettin Şimşek. (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1997). Midhat wrote both fiction and nonfiction on this issue but in terms of ease of access to the reader, fictional works were probably more successful, first as they kept the attention of the reader via interesting stories and secondly as they were first published in serialized form in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* before being published in the book format. So, if a person from the lower classes could not or would not want to buy the book, he would probably have read or listened to the excerpts of stories at the coffeehouses.

²⁰⁰ *Menfa*, p. 50.

of material progress, Orientals had to observe Europe to reach their level of improvement.²⁰¹ However, most of the public did not like the idea of imitating the West, even if it remained within the technical realm, and preferred to evade the concept of Westernization. On the other hand, those who chose to adopt Western lifestyles got it all wrong and represented the West incorrectly.

How can we explain the need for development to our people? First we will have to let them know this situation we are in is bad, won't we? How will they understand that we are in fact in trouble? Of course, they will understand it by comparing the good sites with the problematic ones. However, even those who are aware of the situation do not realize what the situation is really like. Our knowledge about Europe is even less than superficial. The worst part is that our people who only see the sins of Europe and who have just suffered from difficulties hate even the good sides of Europe. What kind of a job can you do in such a country?²⁰²

A la Franca! We have been hearing this from so many people in the last thirty forty years. You would be surprised when you come to think especially about our ignorance in relation to the European manners and code of conduct that is meant to be indicated by the term “*A la Franca.*” Europe is not only very close to us, it is in fact inside us. Especially in our city; a few thousand European people reside here yet we are unaware of their code of conduct. Indeed they are not aware of the fine details of our code of conduct, too. However, we have the desire to imitate the Europeans in everything. Our desire to imitate things we do not know well enough leads us to imitate the negative sides of the European lifestyle and to ignore the positive sides.²⁰³

Westernization became a central issue in the second half of the nineteenth century and as the quotations above indicate Ottoman society was divided into two camps that Ahmed Midhat found detrimental to the whole society. This dichotomy cannot be called a simple traditionalist vs. modernist clash since there was no clear-cut division, even in the minds of the reformers themselves. At one end of the scale stood the supporters of Westernization who were in favor of the importation of all aspects of Western culture. It

²⁰¹ *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, p. 288. “Biz şarklılar maddi terakki için Avrupa'yı tettebbuya muhtaç ve mecburuz.”

²⁰² *Menfa*, p. 58.

²⁰³ *Avrupa Adab-ı Muaşeretini yahud Alafranga*, p. 59.

was mostly adopted by a limited number of the members of the upper class, who tried to imitate Europeans in every way. In opposition to them was the “traditionalist/anti-modernist” group who thought that these Westernization efforts would eventually cause the corruption of the society. They came mostly from the little community and the traditionalist circle of the great culture. These opponents of Westernization, who rejected anything about Europe, pointed at the super-Westernized dandies as evidence of potential degeneration. However, both groups can be considered marginal as most of the society did not develop such rigid attitudes. According to Ahmed Midhat, this confused majority should be involved in the process of a selective Westernization under the guidance of intellectuals like him.

As an intellectual, with the intention of convincing both sides, Ahmed Midhat represented the West in his books as much as he could. In those representations, in order to destroy both sides’ stereotypical images he tried to avoid presenting a totally degenerate or a perfect Western society.

Ahmed Midhat’s Europe and Ideal Civilization

Ahmed Midhat approached the issue of Westernization like a conservative modernist in line with the official policy. He did not believe in the wholesale adoption of Western institutions and culture and arrived at a contention that any civilization, be it European or Ottoman, could be divided into two separate parts, namely material (*maddi*) and moral (*manevi*). As a social Darwinist he believed in the progressive development of history and accepted the West’s higher level of civilization.²⁰⁴ However this higher level was achieved only at one realm of the two-folded civilization. Before he actually went to Europe, he had already carried out an examination of European civilization by reading

²⁰⁴ Ahmed Midhat. *Menfa*, p.58.

books on history, politics, economics or philosophy that would enlighten him about Europe and had arrived at the conclusion that Europe had made incredible improvements in the material realm which was the reason of its superiority over the rest of the world.²⁰⁵ However, its astonishing progress in the material sphere was in total contrast with the degeneration it went through in the moral realm. Therefore Ottomans should take Europe as a model only in the material realm as members of a far superior moral culture to Europeans.²⁰⁶ Moreover, this moral-material duality was parallel to Sultan Abdülhamid II's view that Western civilization consisted of "technique" and "idea," the former helpful to the Ottomans, the latter dangerous for ill-educated peoples who still needed paternal guidance.²⁰⁷

One of the methods that Ahmed Midhat employed in educating the public about the West was to portray Ottoman characters as ideal or negative examples of Westernization. This method will be discussed below but before that it would be better to elucidate what kind of an image of Europe Ahmed Midhat put forth in his works. *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, *Avrupa Âdâb-ı Muâşeretî yahut Alafranga*²⁰⁸ and *Ahbar-ı Asara Tamim-i Enzar*²⁰⁹ together with the stories and novels that take place in Europe²¹⁰ comprise an important part of the Occidentalism discourse that he developed during the discussions over Westernization.

²⁰⁵ Ahmed Midhat, *Üssî-i İnkılâb*. Ed. Tahir Galip Seratlı. (İstanbul : Selis Kitaplar, 2004), p. 62.

²⁰⁶ Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan* (İstanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Matbaası, 1307 [1890]), p. 1006. For the whole conversation between Ahmed Midhat and Sadullah Pasha, one of the most important political figures of the period, see Appendix 2.

²⁰⁷ Carter Findley, "An Ottoman Occidentalism in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gülnar, 1889", *The American Historical Review*, 103, no.1 (Feb., 1998), p. 23. Also, Sadullah Pasha's poem *Ondokuzuncu Asır (Nineteenth Century)* displays the same understanding, see Appendix 3.

²⁰⁸ Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa Adab-ı Muâşeretî yahud Alafranga*. 1312/1894. Ed. by İsmail Doğan and Ali Gurbetoğlu. (Ankara: Akçağ, 2001).

²⁰⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Ahbar-ı Asara Tamim-i Enzar: (1307-1890) Edebi Eserlere Genel Bir Bakış*. Ed. by Nüket Esen. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003).

²¹⁰ *Paris'te Bir Türk, Acaib-i Alem, Ahmed Metin ve Şirzad, Mesail-i Muğlaka, Demir Bey, Haydut Montari, Cellât, Cinli Han, Altın Aşıkları* all take place in Europe.

When these representations of Europe are brought together a complicated picture appears before us. Although he stressed that Europe should not be perceived as a monolithic entity since it was composed of different nations that were comprised of different socio-economic classes having different life-styles and codes of behavior,²¹¹ he did not refrain from attributing essential characteristics to each nation while neglecting the abovementioned variations; for example he did not hesitate to say that English people were, as a whole, reserved, sullen and acrid while French people were obtrusive and loquacious.²¹² Moreover, it seems that Ahmed Midhat believed in an all-encompassing quality that bound all Europe. When he talked about progress or degeneration, he did not distinguish between nations and referred to Europe as a whole.

Related to moral/material differentiation, Ahmed Midhat presented two Europes; the first one to be imitated and the second one to be avoided. If we explore the first one, advancements in the material area draw instant attention. He presented order as one of the common characteristics of the material progress of all Europe. Both in his imaginary and real trips he constantly emphasized how ordered the cities, gardens, and even villages were. If we think of the importance he gave to order and discipline²¹³ it would not surprise us that wherever he went the first thing he noticed was the order in general. Yet he was aware that this order could not be preserved without the efforts of people. He said that “No one in Europe could violate any part of any law”²¹⁴ and did not miss any chance to speak out his admiration for their respect for order.

²¹¹ Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa Adab-ı Muâşeretî.*, p. 60. “Halkın münkasım oldukları sınıflar ve hem çok hem de usûl ve âdâb-ı muâşeretçe pek mütehâlifdirler.”

²¹² Ahmed Midhat, *Acaib-i Âlem*, p. 119.

²¹³ According to Midhat, the biggest enemy of any state is disorder and indiscipline. *Üss-i İnkılab*, p. 45.

²¹⁴ *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, p. 468.

Apart from order he admired their advancement in other realms. He was charmed with factories and even visited them during his journey. He did not refrain from describing canals, bridges, buildings, hospitals, schools, universities, parks, transportation facilities, zoological and botanical gardens in every minute detail. He also compared these facilities to his home country and expressed his grief over their absence.²¹⁵ He was especially fascinated with the “palace of machines” which was an important part of the World Exhibition of 1889. The structure of the palace was mesmerizing²¹⁶ but what appealed to Ahmed Midhat was not the structure; he was enthralled with the inconceivable machines, especially the small ones that could be of use in Ottoman manufacturing.²¹⁷

This palace was the utmost expression of the West’s material progress,²¹⁸ but Ahmed Midhat’s admiration was not limited to the technical realm. Theaters, opera houses, museums, galleries aquariums, libraries were all that Ahmed Midhat wanted to see also in the Ottoman Empire. He conceived them as the epitomes of progress²¹⁹ but he was also aware that they preserved their importance due to the efforts of the people who showed the necessary respect for them.²²⁰ The appreciation of arts and sciences was another all-encompassing feature of all Europeans that Ahmed Midhat took notice of.

All of these detailed descriptions of the embodiments of progress portray a very positive picture of Europe and would help to prove how correct the supporters of Westernization were. Ahmed Midhat also did not object to, even encouraged the

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 311.

²¹⁶ Findley, p. 42.

²¹⁷ *Avrupa’da Bir Cevelan*, p. 658.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 656.

²¹⁹ *Acaib-i Âlem*, p. 119.

²²⁰ Ibid., p. 460.

emulation of these aspects of Europe, but he was attentive enough to notice the negative sides of the same civilization. He realized that despite all these improvements Europeans lacked the most important thing: morals. In this sense Ottomans were much luckier than them since Ottomans could catch up with material progress but Europeans could not compensate for their lack of morals.²²¹ Westerners, for example, could not comprehend the values of Islamic mysticism even if they wanted to and needed the guidance of an oriental escort in their quest.²²² In fact, Ahmed Midhat almost approached them as if they had lost their humanity. When he compared Russia and the Ottoman Empire with European countries he said that Russians were similar to Ottomans in terms of their sense of humanity (*hissiyât-ı insaniyye*) and claimed that apathy and selfishness were among the characteristic features of materially developed nations whereas Ottomans and Russians who were at the lower levels of material development displayed humanity and genuineness at higher levels.²²³ He gave different incidents as proofs of this finding: he cursed their aloofness when he had desperately wanted a cigarette but could not dare to ask anyone in Germany²²⁴ or when a passenger fainted on the ship and everybody just looked at her and only Ahmed Midhat helped the patient.²²⁵ He even related the establishment of charity foundations to this trait. Moreover Ahmed Midhat alleged that one of the basic rules of the European way of life was based on affectation.²²⁶ According

²²¹ *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, p. 771.

²²² *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, p. 225.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 359. “*Terakkiyat-ı medeniyye olan halklarda hodgamlık ve kayıtsızlık söz konusu iken, Osmanlı ve Ruslar gibi terakkiyat-ı medeniyyede aşağı mertebede olanlarda saflık insaniyetlik ziyadedir.*”

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

to him everybody was in a state of pretense and never reflected their real feelings unlike the Ottomans whose main characteristics included sincerity.²²⁷

As a result of this kind of portrayal, Ahmed Midhat came up with the description of the ideal civilization. It would embrace Western civilization's notions of progress, technique, industrial development, order, entrepreneurship, appreciation of the arts and sciences together with the moral values of the East such as sincerity, humanity, purity and godliness.²²⁸ So according to this formula both sides needed each other to achieve the highest level of civilization²²⁹ but Ottomans were a step forward for it was easier to realize a material recovery²³⁰ than to revive the lost spiritual values that were the *raison d'être* of a civilization.²³¹ Orientals just needed to master the positive sciences and inculcation of concepts like order, which would, in fact, come along with the first requirement. Other than this essential requirement, there could be no impediment to prevent them from creating the same impressive culture. In the end, they were just *kâgir* buildings and were much easier to build than to establish spiritual values. At this point, it would be helpful to recall Jale Parla's criticism about *Tanzimat* writers' lack of comprehension of the novel as a Western genre. She claims that the earliest Ottoman novelists, who began to publish their works in the 1870s, were adopting a Western literary genre without abandoning their hegemonic Islamic epistemology. They were not aware of the socioeconomic and epistemological rupture that paved the way for the emergence of the novel.²³² Actually, the same holds true for Ahmed Midhat's perception

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 232.

²²⁸ *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, p. 195.

²²⁹ Ibid., p.288.

²³⁰ Ibid., pp.662, 771.

²³¹ *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, p. 768.

²³² Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar. Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri*, 4th. Ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004). "Feodalizmden kapitalizme geçiş, burjuvazinin ve onunla birlikte bireyciliğin doğuşu ve

of Western civilization. Although he acknowledged that European superiority was the inevitable consequence of the progress they made in the arts and sciences,²³³ he never took the socioeconomic and epistemological rupture into consideration. Thus, according to him, there should be no problem for Ottomans in creating an ideal civilization provided that they imported the curricula of the West.

Novel Characters

Ahmed Midhat revealed the success of this idealistic formula through his novel characters who adopted Westernization at different levels. In Ahmed Midhat's novels, more than the plot or incidents, characters come into the foreground. By means of these characters Ahmed Midhat tried to show how an ideal man or woman should act and behave, and thus contribute to the process of identity formation. In his representation of the West he adopted two ways; he either used Ottomans who interpreted Westernization in their own way or Western characters who would show how Westerners (that some Ottomans were trying to imitate) actually live. Before coming to the second category we better have a look at the main features of the characters belonging to the first category for without recognizing these characters the second category will not be fully comprehended. In most of his novels Ahmed Midhat preferred to juxtapose two opposite characters and to present the differences in a comparative way. The most well-known examples are Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi through whom different life-style choices and their consequences were narrated in a humorous way.²³⁴

Ottoman Characters

ampirik pozitivizmin ortaya çıkışı gibi, romanda yaşamın nesnel bir biçimde yansıtılmasına yol hazırlayan gelişmeler henüz Osmanlı entelektüellerinin bilgi eşğine ulaşmamıştır.” Nüket Esen. “Bir Osmanlının Batı Romanına Bakışı” *Şinasi Tekin Armağan*. Bildiri.

²³³ *Üss-i İnkılab*, p. 104.

²³⁴ Ahmed Midhat, *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*.

The novel *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* has an important place in the history of modern Turkish literature as the characters that were depicted there would later become stereotypes. Felatun Bey as the son of a rich merchant inherits a fortune but cannot live up to his father's expectations. His father is a *nouveau riche* who wants to pursue an *a la franca* (European manner) life and wishes his children to be well-educated, "modern" and respectable individuals. However, as an uneducated man he cannot test out his children's level of education and can only provide them with a fancy life-style.

Our friend Mustafa Meraki Efendi was a man who enjoyed a European lifestyle. He was just like those European admirers of İstanbul some fifteen twenty years ago. He really liked that kind of life. In order to lead a European-style life, he had sold the kiosk in Uskudar, all the vineyards and orchards without trying to get their exact price since he had no financial problems. You can tell the degree of his admiration for European lifestyle from the stone building he had had built.²³⁵

Since he wants his children to have a modern education he sends Felatun to *Rüştiye* School and also hires a French tutor. However, Felatun's concept of being modern is limited to living up to the latest trends. Especially after his father's death, he begins to spend all his time in the Beyoğlu (Pera) district shopping, gambling and womanizing. With his superficial knowledge of the West he acts in contrast to Ahmed Midhat's formula. He tries to behave like Europeans but he only adopts their bad values such as pretension and fake courtesy; he does not develop an interest in intellectual or technical matters that should in fact be imported from Europe. Although his ridiculousness is quite apparent, it is also highlighted by juxtaposing his ignorance with the wisdom of Rakım Efendi, who is depicted as the ideal modern Ottoman subject. Rakım Efendi comes from humble origins just like Ahmed Midhat and appears as a self-made man who believes in the superiority of private entrepreneurship over civil service. He was raised by his nanny

²³⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

who even did extra work to be able to send him to school. He was a brilliant student at school but was not contented with the formal education he received at the *Rüşdiye* school and went on to improve himself on several issues including *hadith* (words of the prophet Muhammad), *tefsîr* (interpretation of the Koran), *fiqh* (principles of Islamic law), French, chemistry, literature, law, geography and so forth. After a short period of time working as a civil servant in External Affairs, he began to earn his living through translation and tutoring. The *leitmotiv* of his life is work and thrift unlike Felatun Bey, who indulges in conspicuous consumption.

With his extreme diligence and his governess' encouragement he tried to learn everything well. He reviewed *hadith*, *tefsir* and Islamic Canon Law. He examined *Risale-i Erbaa* and its explanations; he memorized selected verses in Persian and Arabic. He became fluent in French and educated himself in areas such as chemistry, law and geography. He read a great number of novels, theatre scripts, poems and other literary works in French.²³⁶

Felatun Bey would become the stereotypical super-Westernized dandy with all of his superficial knowledge, affected behavior and ludicrousness. By creating such a caricaturized character Ahmed Midhat expressed the larger public's disapproval of Westernization but putting such a positive character in opposition to him revealed Ahmed Midhat's endeavor to show the same public that Western culture was not the reason for Felatun Bey's degeneration; the same Western culture –if it could be comprehended correctly- would help another person to attain a remarkable position. Throughout the story the reader notices that Rakım Efendi is always the winning party while Felatun Bey finds himself in embarrassing situations. Rakım Efendi manages to find a way to internalize Western technology without sacrificing his Oriental values. “His values are a successful blend of Western cultural baggage and the views of the Ottoman lower middle

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

class among whom he continues to live even after his successes.”²³⁷ The juxtaposition of two different styles through these two characters shows the reader the right way to follow.

This juxtaposition would appear in Ahmed Midhat’s subsequent novels and always an ideal type like Rakım Efendi would come into the foreground. However, as Orhan Okay’s categorization indicates, Rakım Efendi was not the only type that Ahmed Midhat created.²³⁸ Okay puts forth four different Westernization-related categories that we can discern in most of his novels. The first category comprises old male *a la franca* characters –like Mustafa Meraki Efendi- who are the fathers of super-Westernized characters.²³⁹ All of them grew up in *a la turca* circles but yearn for an *a la franca* life. They try to make their wish come true at least for their children who constitute the second category. Dandies like Felatun Bey make up this category. They are the ever-criticized Westernized types who find their utmost model in Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem’s *Araba Sevdası* (1898). The protagonist Rakım Efendi shares the third set with Nasuh in *Paris’te Bir Türk* (*A Turk in Paris*, 1876), Resmî Efendi in *Karnaval* (*Carnival*, 1881), Necati Efendi in *Vah* (1882), Suphi in *Âcâib-i Âlem* (*Wonders of the World*, 1882), Şinâsi Bey in *Bahtiyarlık* (*Happiness*, 1885), Vahdeti in *Para* (*Money*, 1887), Mustafa Kamereddin in *Demir Bey* (1888), Ahmed Metin Bey in *Ahmed Metin ve Şirzad* (1892), Râsih Efendi in *Taaffüf* (*Chastity*, 1895), Abdullah Nahifî in *Mesail-i Muğlaka* (*Vague Issues*, 1898), Nurullah Bey in *Jön Türk* (*Young Turk*, 1910).²⁴⁰ All of them are presented as role

²³⁷ Şerif Mardin, “Super Westernization”, p. 406.

²³⁸ Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, p. 393.

²³⁹ Hüsnü Bey in *Açıkbaş* (1874), Mustafa Meraki Efendi in *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (1875), Bahtiyar Paşa in *Karnaval* (1881), Abdülcebbar Bey *Bahtiyarlık* (1885), Kazım Bey in *Jön Türk* (1910).

²⁴⁰ Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, p. 395.

models for the new generation who has to understand and apply true Westernization just like these characters.

And finally, female characters compose the fourth category but their only common feature is their femininity. Despite their minority in the novels they deserve to be examined in a broader light but since the focus will be on the western female characters we will touch lightly upon certain features of these characters. First of all, they do not constitute a homogenous group; they are divided into sub branches within themselves. The first group consists of old nannies, mothers or wives who display *a la turca* characteristics. They are not significant but they usually signify the sincerity and *naïveté* of the values of the little community. They can never be main characters but they help the protagonist to realize the existence of a certain life-style with its vices and virtues. Their ignorance is hinted through some of their reactions. Although they can do anything for a male character to receive a good education, they believe in the uselessness of education of girls.²⁴¹ They have internalized the traditional view that girls should stay at home and should learn things that would be of use in housewifery. So, despite their *naïveté* and humanity the new generation of female readers should not aspire to live up to the expectations of these kinds of characters.

The members of the second group resemble those of the first one in terms of *naïveté* and ignorance and avoidance of anything Western. However they differ from them in their choices; they prefer to improve themselves under the guidance of the male protagonist. Canan in *Felatun Bey ile Rakim Efendi* becomes an accomplished girl who manages to preserve her moral values while having a Western-style education. They are the closest examples of heroines who are open to novelties under the guidance of a male

²⁴¹ Nanny of Rakim Efendi in *Felatun Bey ile Rakim Efendi* and Hicabi's wife in *Acaib-i Alem*.

role model like Rakım Efendi, but it should be noted that except for Saniha in *Taaḫḫüf* (1895) it is hard to find the female counterpart of Rakım Efendi.²⁴²

Members of the third group are degenerate Westernized types,²⁴³ but their stories are not told in a humoristic style as it was the case with their male counterpart Felatun Bey. They usually belong to the upper-strata of the society and have the necessary means to receive the Western-style education which is sometimes limited to French and piano lessons. However, as they are not taught the moral values of their culture they act and criticize their own society just like any other Westerner who usually has a superficial knowledge of Ottoman society.

Western Characters

The number of Western characters depicted in Ahmed Midhat's novels is significantly more than that of any writer's work of his age. This was due to the importance Ahmed Midhat gave to Westernization. He always warned his readers of the negative outcomes of Westernization but at the same time showed that it was a reality of the age and in order to take place among the civilized countries they had to accept the way the Westerners had adopted without sacrificing their values. In line with this purpose Ahmed Midhat tried to depict Western characters as much as he could. Their first function is to act as tests to check the soundness of the Ottoman characters' Westernization. All in all, people imitated Westerners whose reaction to the Ottoman characters, be it *alafranga* types like Felatun Bey or role models like Rakım Efendi, would verify or disprove their level of Westernization. In *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, the English Ziglas family is on good terms with and praises Rakım Efendi very much both for his cultural accomplishments

²⁴² Okay, p. 397.

²⁴³ Ceylan in *Jöntürk*.

and his humanity. On the other hand they find Felatun very superficial, ridiculous and irritating. The same thing happens in *Paris'te Bir Türk*, in which most of the characters are French. These people admire and enjoy the company of Nasuh Efendi but cannot stand Zeka Bey who is another example of the Felatun Bey type. Even a newspaper publishes an article comparing these two radically different Turks living in Paris and commends the personality and behavior of Nasuh. In *Acaib-i Alem*, the heroine Miss. Haft is presented as an ideal woman with all her chastity and cultural level and she never approves of the excessive behavior of the Russian princesses who dare to act brazenly under the shelter of being Westernized. So as the examples show these Western characters were the decisive factors of true Westernization. Through their reactions they show that Westernization is neither conspicuous consumption nor behaving in a presumptuous manner nor insulting one's own culture and religion in favor of the West.

Also, in this second main character category an interesting difference from the first one draws attention. Unlike the first category, the male characters are not significant and heroines revealing sophisticated characters and occupying an important place in the Occidental discourse constitute the majority. Yet it should not be forgotten that there is a practical reason for this kind of difference. It was inconceivable for most of the reading public to accept the depiction of an Ottoman woman in a love affair, which is by the way, one of the requirements of a story.²⁴⁴ Moreover, this limitation was not only applied to love affairs, women's presence in mixed company and their relationships with men, except for their husbands, were considered unacceptable by most of society. So Ottoman Muslim characters, except for super Westernized degenerate ones, do not appear to be perfect options for heroines involved in any kind of relationship with men.

²⁴⁴ Ahmed Midhat tried to break this rule in *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek* (1875) but faced harsh criticism.

As mentioned above male Western characters do not attract attention as significant characters. They are created as humorous elements of the story. As they are minor characters they do not gain depth and just serve to highlight the superiority of the male protagonist. They are either clumsy, stupid and pretentious as Mr. James in *Paris'te Bir Türk* or conceited snobs. Almost all of them are prejudiced and the male protagonist shows them how an accomplished Ottoman is and how superior to all of them. This superiority is not limited to the moral realm; the hero can also beat a Westerner at an intellectual discussion over anything one can imagine, at a fight, at gambling, at manners and so forth.²⁴⁵

In comparison to their male counterparts, Western female characters display more variety and depth. The common feature of the members of this category is the freedom they enjoy. As they are not Muslims they are not supposed to act in accordance to *Sheriat* (Muslim religious law) and this gives a certain freedom to the characters. In *Acaib-i Alem* Miss Haft can go on a journey with Suphi and Hicabi without hesitation, or the French characters of *Paris'te Bir Türk* can talk on anything with Nasuh. Orhan Okay claims that for Ahmed Midhat the most important difference between the Oriental and Western women was freedom.²⁴⁶ However, Ahmed Midhat also pointed to the lack of shame as the cost of this freedom²⁴⁷ and tried to show that it is not an auspicious right after all. The example he gave was related to the latest trend of the age: the bicycle. Parisian women began to show an interest in riding this new vehicle but it was their costume that drew Ahmed Midhat's attention. According to him it was not an appropriate costume and Parisian women were exhibitionists. The fact these women could wear those costumes

²⁴⁵ The perfect example is Nasuh in *Paris'te Bir Türk*.

²⁴⁶ Okay, p. 161.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 162.

was one of the results of the freedom they were given. “So it is understood that Ahmed Midhat’s understanding of the freedom given to the Western women can be defined as a lack of decency derived from their desire to compete with men or seem beautiful to men.”²⁴⁸

This indecency is the most obvious outcome of the liberation movement in Europe in Ahmed Midhat’s depictions and reveals itself in certain occasions. He actually calls this indecency the lack of shame peculiar to women (*kadinlara mahsus hicap duygusu*). Because of its absence they could easily talk to men, smoke cigarettes, could not appreciate love and could not remain loyal to their lovers or husbands.²⁴⁹ Then Ahmed Midhat tries to answer the most important question: Are they happy? His answer is not affirmative and he tries to prove his belief not by directly stating it but by displaying it through examples and by making his Western characters confess it.

We will return to the category of Western female characters but first we must have a look at the internal situation and the demands of Ottoman women during the last decade of the nineteenth century as these demands influenced the creation of Ahmed Midhat’s Western characters. One of the most important issues that were discussed during this period was the problem of women in society²⁵⁰ but most of the writers’ focus was on the institution of slavery. They hardly questioned the demands and place of women in society. However members of a proto-feminist movement –or at least urban Ottoman feminist aspirations according to Zehra Arat²⁵¹- began to ask these kinds of questions. Yaprak Zihnioğlu traces the Ottoman women’s movement back to 1868 when

²⁴⁸ Okay, p. 163.

²⁴⁹ Ahmed Midhat, *Ahmed Metin ve Şirzad*, p. 312.

²⁵⁰ Şerif Mardin, *Super Westernization*, p. 403.

²⁵¹ Zehra Arat, “Politics of Representation and Identity.” ed. Zehra Arat. *Deconstructing Images of “The Turkish Woman”* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 10.

the letters of women readers began to be published in *Terakkî* (Progress), which drew attention with its policy on women issues.²⁵²

The foundation of the First Wave of Republican feminism is based on the Early Era's "Womanhood Ideal" and the feminism of the second Constitutional Era. Lead by proponents of the womanhood ideal in Ottoman society, the women's awakening and emancipation movement became a strong trend with the support of the Early Period of Ottoman-Muslim Women's movement (1868-1908). This "ideal of women" (*kadınlık mefkûresi*) described women's demand to be considered as human beings, to be able to participate in social life, to participate in public affairs as members of society, their wish to have a better social position and their suggestions for solutions. The Early Era was the phase which lasted about 50 years and in which the ideological accumulation for women's emancipation was created and in which women proved their power with their fight to be present in social life and in the press. Women's fight for emancipation was supported by the new generation of women and it continued in an increasing fashion in the Second Constitution Era (1908-1918) and in the National Struggle Period (1918-1922).²⁵³

Nineteenth century reforms that caused radical changes inevitably affected the Ottoman women who slowly began to contribute to public life through writing and publishing as it was the case with most societies.²⁵⁴

All these alterations were reflected upon the women who had the limited roles of mother and wife confined in the house and the women started to make demands in order to gain a different status in social life. The Press played the most important role in this process. In many of the newspapers of that era and especially in women's magazines women wrote articles on women's issues and expectations in order to increase the awareness of society and especially of women and they tried to prepare the women for changes that would bring about their demands. Moreover they organized conferences, founded societies and played active roles in these societies.²⁵⁵

The role of the press was a very important factor in this change; women's journals show that starting at the end of the nineteenth century, "upper-class women found the opportunity to articulate their demands within the context of the intellectual agenda and

²⁵² Yaprak Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap* (İstanbul: Metis, 2003), p. 21.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁵⁴ Nur Bilge Criss, "A Facet of Muslim Womanhood: The Turkish Case." Ed. Palmira Brummet, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (New York: SUNY Press, 2000), p. 241.

²⁵⁵ Zihnioğlu, 22.

the changes produced by the modernization process”²⁵⁶ but prior to that educational reforms helped to create a female reading public that was mature enough to understand and discuss these problems. Before secondary schools for girls were established in 1858, a midwifery program was introduced at the medical school already in 1842. Also, Midhat Paşa founded an industrial workshop in Ruse in 1860 in order to meet the clothing needs of the army. This institute later developed into a girls’ school of arts and crafts, graduates of which would work and show their presence in public life.²⁵⁷ The educational reforms providing basic public education began to cover girls too, and secular elementary education in *İnas İptidai Mektepleri* (Girls Elementary Schools) were followed by the admission of females to the *Rüşdiye* by 1862. As a part of the education campaign, the first *Dar’ül-Muallimat* (Teachers Training College for Women) was established to meet the need for female teachers at the schools for girls.²⁵⁸ Also, although the Hamidian period is famous for its censorship, Abdülhamid II made invaluable contributions to the women’s enlightenment by introducing advanced educational reforms that would improve women.²⁵⁹ Moreover, women’s issues were one of the rare subjects that were not disturbed by Hamidian censorship of the press, which must have eased women’s issues into public debate.²⁶⁰

The press was a perfect means for women to raise their voice and to articulate their demands. Due to these changes, it became possible to come across articles or letters written by women at the women oriented pages of some newspapers and journals. Yet it

²⁵⁶ Aynur Demirdirek, “In Pursuit of the Ottoman Women’s Movement.” ed. Zehra Arat. *Deconstructing Images of “The Turkish Woman”* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 78.

²⁵⁷ Zehra Arat, “Politics of Representation and Identity.” ed. Zehra Arat. *Deconstructing Images of “The Turkish Woman”* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), p. 7.

²⁵⁸ Criss, p. 241.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

should not be overlooked that “women who participated in this endeavor had been educated in various public schools of the reformation era and/or were daughters of reformist bureaucrats who had been educated at home.”²⁶¹

As it is mentioned above, *Terakki* was the first to reserve a place for the letters of the (mostly unanimous) female readers. These letters are considered important as they revealed the problems and demands of women.²⁶²

In the 104th issue of the newspaper an article complained about the awful state of the places reserved for women in the ships. The article which was signed “Three Ladies” also asked why women were looked down upon in this way although they paid the same fare as the men.²⁶³

As *Terakki* enjoyed popularity among women it published the first women’s journal *Terakki-i Muhadderat* (Progress of Women) in 1869 as its weekly supplement. Untitled letters of female readers criticizing and complaining about the present situation of women occupied most of the journal.²⁶⁴ According to Çakır, women were aware of the importance of education and most of the letters focused on this matter. It seems that they believed in the liberating and motivating force of education. In one of the letters the system was criticized:

“We need to know this well that neither are men created to be the servants of women nor are women created to be the concubines of men. Men can earn money to provide for themselves and us a life with their skills and abilities, then why cannot we have the power to obtain skills and knowledge? Do we not have the same type of hands, eyes, mind and similar means that those men have? Are we not human beings? Is it only because of our gender that we are in such a situation? No sane person would accept that. If such a claim was indeed correct, European women would have resembled us as well...”²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (İstanbul: Metis, 1994), p. 23.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 24.

Referring to European women was not a novelty; the feminist movement of Europe had already begun to be followed and in this journal information was given to a larger public with the intention of drawing attention to the struggle of Western women.²⁶⁶

The publication of women's magazines did not remain confined to this journal. In 1875 *Vakit yahud Mürebbi-i Muhadderat* (Time or Teacher of Women) and *Ayine* (Mirror), in 1880 *Aile* (Family) and in 1883 *İnsaniyet* (Humanity) began to be published and tried to inform the female population of society. All of these publications and the letters sent to them are sufficient to talk about at least a preliminary women's consciousness especially about the issues that concerned them. Obviously this consciousness was not prevalent in the whole society, it was probably limited to the upper-class women who were educated enough to follow, comprehend, and participate in the discussions on women.

The demands of women were various but discussions on education, employment, marriage, especially polygamy, and the changing attire were the most popular ones.²⁶⁷ The demand for education covered the appeal for an increase in the number of schools for girls and of the publications for women; they also reported the impediments on their way to improve themselves.²⁶⁸ According to Demirdirek, most of them agreed that they, as the ones responsible for raising children, should be educated in order to contribute to the nation's progress and development; yet they had further intentions.²⁶⁹

Women did not demand education only in order to contribute to the society by fulfilling their "duties" as good mothers and wives; the overall content and spirit of the writings suggest other reasons as well. The women emphasize and embrace education because they also believe that only through education can they establish

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 24.

²⁶⁷ Demirdirek, pp. 67-72.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 69.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 68.

a presence and encounter men for equality; as educated women themselves, they instinctively know that through education women can capture the sense of self-confidence that they have been lacking. [...] We can argue that the demand for education in a way is also a demand to have the right to enter into the other exclusive domain, work life.²⁷⁰

Their demand for education was not rejected for it was in line with the official policy which found the improvement in the education level of women beneficial because of the importance it attributed to women's duties as mothers of the future generations who had to be educated and cultured enough to develop the country. Yet, their demand for employment was not welcomed by various circles, since it meant the increasing presence of women outdoors. Women firstly asserted the need for such a right since there were lots of women who had to seek work outside the home because of necessity, including poverty, widowhood or orphanage. Also, as in all the other demands, they tried to justify this aspiration by emphasizing its usefulness and contribution to the society.²⁷¹

However, responses to their demands and to their free lifestyles were not affirmative. Some of the intellectuals supported their struggle; for instance Şemseddin Sami was the publisher and the editor of *Aile* and Ahmed Midhat came into the foreground with his invaluable support of their demand for education and employment, but the larger public did not agree with them. The increasing appearance of women in the outdoors infuriated the public who related this change to Westernization as it was the case in the *Patrona Halil* Revolt. They argued that this was against *Sheriat* and would anger God.²⁷² So, again in this issue we come across a divergence between the modernists and anti-modernists. Like in the other arguments the traditionalists pointed to super Westernized women as a consequence of Westernization. Especially in this issue

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 69.

²⁷² Mardin, p. 422.

the heritage of latent Occidentalism was exploited. It seems that 28 Mehmed Çelebi's remarks that Western women were everywhere in social life and Esseyit Ali Efendi's commentaries on a brothel as if it represented all Europe were not forgotten and took their place in the social heritage. In line with them Ahmed Midhat pointed to the West as the source of prostitution, which was in fact an unfamiliar concept for the Ottomans.²⁷³

As an intellectual showing interest in all the problems of society, Ahmed Midhat offered solutions to women's issues. Generally he was described as a supporter of women's activities but when Westernization and feminism diverged he employed interesting policies. He understood and indisputably supported women's demands for education; in *Felâatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* Rakım fell in love with his *cariye* (slave) Canan after she improved herself and became a sophisticated girl. However, Ahmed Midhat supported them as long as they remained within the limits that male guides, that is the Sultan and intellectuals like him, prescribed.

He was aware that the women involved in the discussions followed the developments in the West. Just like him, they underlined the fact that living in an Islamic society set different conditions for them. "When they discussed their demands within the framework of Islam, they provided supportive examples from '*asr-ı saadet*' (the age of happiness) the 'undistorted' days of Islam, but they refused to compromise."²⁷⁴ Yet, in spite of this emphasis on the "age of happiness" they kept on discussing women's problems, referring to the West. According to Orhan Okay, Ahmed Midhat's criteria for any women remained in the circle of decency, shame, and housewifery.²⁷⁵ Since Western women did not live up to his criteria they were in an inferior position. So, as a guide

²⁷³ Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, p. 579.

²⁷⁴ Demirdirek, p. 79.

²⁷⁵ Okay, p. 166.

Ahmed Midhat tried to show Ottoman women what kind of a life Western woman pursued and whether they really were in a better condition or not than the Ottoman women due to the freedom they enjoyed.

The importance and function of Western female characters gain meaning in this context. Through their portrayal Ahmed Midhat tried to give a message to the Ottoman men and women to be satisfied with the current policies of Sultan Abdulhamid II, who as the supreme guide of the nation provided incredible opportunities to women to improve themselves. Female subjects should in return have to be satisfied with these favors and fulfill their only and primary duties as mothers and wives. They should not want to have the same kind of presence in social life as Western women, who in fact, were in an inferior position. It was okay if they had to work because of necessity but they should be aware of their limits. In order to enforce his case, he portrayed Western women living both in their own countries and in İstanbul together with other Ottoman subjects. Through their portrayal he showed what spurious, unhappy and immoral lives they had to live because of the consequences of the same rights that some Ottomans demanded.

Roughly speaking, we can distinguish two different groups of Western women in Ahmed Midhat's novels. While the first group encompasses decent, upright women the second group is comprised of degenerate, immoral characters. As mentioned above, since they are not Muslims all of the characters in these two groups can act freely in mixed company and facilitate Ahmed Midhat's work as a novelist. Except for this common feature of liberalism, these characters differ in most of their manners.

The first group is small but is very important; the heroines of the novels mostly come out from this group. Miss Haft in *Acaib-i Alem*, the daughters of the Ziglas family

in *Felâatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, Polini, Madame Cartrisse and Virginie in *Paris'te Bir Türk* are some members of this qualified group. They are from different socio-economic classes, which determine some of their features. Miss Haft and the Zılgas girls are from the upper classes and that is why they are educated and sophisticated. This is important because due to these features they can draw the attention and win the friendship of the protagonist in the first place. If the heroines are from the lower classes as in the case of Virginie and Polini they win the favor of the heroes on account of their *naïveté* and chastity.

An analysis of the representation of Miss Haft and Virginie will give important clues about Midhat's views. Miss Haft is an educated English woman coming from a well-to-do family and wants to explore the world. That is why she goes all the way to Russia, but since her curiosity is a scientific one just like the protagonist of the novel, Suphi Bey, she does not stay in Petersburg or Moscow and wants to see the northern parts of Russia. In the beginning her femininity is not revealed at all and she gains the favors of Suphi and Hicabi due to her knowledge and intelligence. After she impresses them with her intellectual traits, Suphi and Hicabi take notice of her chastity and decency, especially when they have the chance to compare her with the Russian princesses who do not miss any chance to hit on Suphi and Hicabi. After spending time with Miss Haft and traveling to northern Russia, Suphi realizes that this "eccentric" creature is also a woman and falls in love with her. As they spend more time with each other it is understood that Miss Haft's ideas on the Ottoman people and Islam are based on false prejudices and misinformation. When Suphi and Hicabi tell her what Islam is and show her how Ottomans in fact are and live she renounces her biased point of view and begins to

commend Ottomans. She even writes her new ideas about Islam and Ottomans to her aunt back in England.²⁷⁶ After she accepts Suphi's proposal she even converts to Islam and becomes the ideal woman that Ahmed Midhat would like to see in his own society. She is educated, intelligent but at the same time chaste and decent and lastly a Muslim. However a very interesting comment attracts attention: Suphi and Hicabi think that Miss Haft is an exceptional woman because of her eccentricities and chastity,²⁷⁷ so it is impossible to think of Miss Haft as a representative of Western women even though she is one of the good examples.

The other important character is Virginie²⁷⁸, who unlike Miss Haft, is uneducated and whose living standards are very low. She is an orphan living at a pension with her little brother and sister. However she proves her chastity by pursuing a decent life. She was offered to earn money by being the mistress of a certain gentleman but she declined it without hesitation. Even when Nasuh tries to help her without any evil intentions she does not want to accept. In the end her decency is rewarded by way of getting married to Nasuh. However, she still remains very exceptional as there is no character like her in the novel. Only Polini seems like a decent girl but as she is ready to have an affair with Nasuh she cannot ascend to the position of Virginie. A significant remark on the absence of decent and chaste women in Paris is already made by Nasuh and Gardiyanski when they commend Madame Cartrisse –who by the way turns out to be not that chaste– because of her attitudes, especially because of her chastity; they state that it is an exceptional feature that is hard to find in European women.²⁷⁹ So these almost exemplary

²⁷⁶ *Acaib-i Alem*, p. 294.

²⁷⁷ *Acaib-i Alem*, p. 165.

²⁷⁸ *Paris'te Bir Türk*.

²⁷⁹ *Paris'te Bir Türk*, p. 39.

female characters are just exceptions and cannot represent the majority of European women, unlike the members of the second group.

Examples for the members of the second group are much more than for the first group and some of them can be listed as Madam Josephine in *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, the Russian princesses in *Acaib-i Alem* and Madame Trouville, Madam Garnold, Catherine, Mademoiselle Cartrisse, and M. de la Chaisne in *Paris'te Bir Türk*. They are not necessarily bad people trying to hurt the people around them. Some of them, especially Madam Josephine, Mademoiselle Cartrisse and Madam Garnold are likeable, nice people but they lack some important moral values; Josephine is a prostitute and Garnold does not hesitate to get involved in a love affair knowing that it will go nowhere. These traits are enough to place them in this category. Also, Ahmed Midhat created these characters from different classes; while Josephine is from the lower class, the Russian princesses belong to the aristocracy. So it is not about economic conditions or class-based values, it is about how they interpret the values of the society and contribute to it. The negativity of these characters is also highlighted with the choice of the protagonists; Nasuh never thought of marrying Garnold or the other characters, or Rakım Efendi never actually wanted to marry Josephine. Also their numerical superiority over the chaste characters implies that they comprise the majority of the European female population.

Similar to Orientalist discourse, Occidentalism gives importance to most of the Western women represented in these novels and allows an engagement in any social affair in these novels due to their sexuality. They are either officially prostitutes or mistresses, and all of them yearn for the friendship, not in an innocent way, of the Ottoman protagonist. The Russian princesses bluntly ask for Suphi's company and many

of the women characters in *Paris'te Bir Türk* admire and desire Nasuh and do not refrain from telling him this.

The reason for such immoral proposals and behaviors cannot be attributed to the nation-based essentialist characteristics that were mentioned above. The society and its social order affect these women's characters. They were born into a world that was endowed with the rights that Ottoman women seek -or would in the future seek as they point to Europe as an example; but these rights and the freedoms they enjoy do not make these women good or moral people; on the contrary these "privileges" cause their corruption. These women exist in society side by side with men and this leads to certain undesired consequences. They do not need and want the guidance of a male figure and the result is immorality. None of the characters except for Miss Haft and Virginie, who marry the heroes of the novels and convert to Islam, achieve total happiness, which is the ultimate aim of all people.

Ahmed Midhat thought that not only these specific characters but the situation of all society proved his point. In Paris, which was the center of material progress (*terakkiyât-ı medeniyye âleminin merkezi*),²⁸⁰ he could see the prostitutes, that is, the embodiments of corruption, everywhere. Moreover, he tried to support his argument with numbers; according to his studies thirty percent of the Parisian population was illegitimate, which indicated the collapse of the institution of marriage and family life, which in fact held society together and was the source of happiness.²⁸¹ Women as the basis of this institution gained importance because of their motherhood,²⁸² however due to the rights they were given and the male guidance they rejected they began to worry

²⁸⁰ *Avrupa'da Bir Cevlan*, 4.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 767.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 166.

less about their primary role. Certainly they were not the only ones to blame here; it was the system that caused such degeneracy and decadence. Actually, this part belonged to the moral sphere of European civilization that Ahmed Midhat tried to show should not be emulated.

It is interesting to note that most of the “bad” elements of the moral sphere of European civilization were related to women and their sexuality. It is true that Ahmed Midhat pointed to insincerity, obsequiousness, and aloofness as the bad features of Europeans but more than them the immorality of women attracts attention. Wherever he went, imaginary or actually, he did not forget to describe the level of prostitution, the baseness of certain theatres and amusement places which could also be observed in Beyoğlu, and the looseness that he could observe at almost every center of Europe. These were the actual aspects of the decline in morals (*tedenniyât-ı maneviyye*) that Ahmed Midhat often made reference to and they gained strength when the remarks of previous travelers or tourists to Europe were remembered. The last *touché* was made by referring to the prostitutes or “actresses” residing in Beyoğlu, as if they represented all European women. Just as Orientalists try to prove the moral deficiency of the East by emphasizing the indecency and sexual frustration of Oriental women, Ahmed Midhat, like his Iranian counterparts,²⁸³ tried to prove that the West was inferior to the East by describing the decadence of Europe, but only by pointing to the liberation of women, which he represents merely on a sexual basis. Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi explains the similar

²⁸³ For a detailed analysis see Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran. Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

attitude of eighteenth and nineteenth century Persianate “*voy(ag)eurs*” towards the Western woman (*zan-i Farangi*) as a method in their contests with Westerners.²⁸⁴

The travelers’ recounting of their self-experience provided the material for the formation of competing discourses on women of Europe. With the political hegemony of Europe, a woman’s body served as an important marker of identity and difference and as a terrain of cultural and political contestations. [...] For Iranian modernists, viewing European women as educated and cultured, the veil became a symbol of backwardness. [...] For the counter-modernists who wanted to uphold the Islamic social and gender orders, the European woman became a scapegoat and a symbol of corruption, immorality, Westernization, and feminization of power. In the Iranian body politic the imagined European woman provided the subtext for political maneuvers over women’s rights and appearance in the public space.²⁸⁵

As Ahmed Midhat stood in between the two groups –namely Westernists and counter-Westernists- he adopted both of the representations and used them in accordance with his intent. When he wanted to advise his readers to have and to make their daughters have education he emphasized the benefits and advantages of being educated and cultured. His presentation of Madam Gulnar who accompanied him during his journey in Europe is anything but praise of her as she was the proof of the success of his formula.²⁸⁶ She was the real version of Miss Haft and she was more beneficial to his purpose since she was real. He met her at Stockholm during the Orientalist Congress and she impressed him with her level of culture and her keen interest in Ottoman culture. Although she was a Russian princess she preferred to use an Ottoman pseudonym at the congress which she attended as a guest and hid her real identity. Ahmed Midhat, impressed by her traits, accepted her companionship during the rest of his journey and had the greatest time. They went to museums, theaters, operas and art galleries where she displayed her

²⁸⁴ Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, p. 54.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa’da Bir Cevelan*. For a detailed analysis of Midhat’s representation of Madam Gulnar see Carter V. Findley, “An Ottoman Occidental in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gulnar, 1889.” *The American Historical Review*, 103, no. 1 (Feb., 1998).

knowledge and sometimes acted as an instructor to Ahmed Midhat, who enjoyed it very much indeed. Throughout the travelogue Ahmed Midhat portrays this woman as an ideal in terms of education and implies that Ottoman women should aspire to be like her. Yet it should not be forgotten that Gulnar was not a real Westerner; she was Russian and had incorporated the moral values of the East. In a way she was the proof that an Oriental woman could be educated, cultured and decent at the same time.

However, Ahmed Midhat was aware of the dangers of Westernization and like his Iranian counterparts pointed to these dangers by representing libertine women. His portrayals cannot be conceived as a part of “the new erotic literature that constituted the uninhibited women of Europe as the locus of male sexual fantasies and arousal,”²⁸⁷ but it can be asserted that his successors took up his portrayals and brought them further and made up that new literature.²⁸⁸ Tavakoli-Targhi rightly recognizes these kinds of portrayals as “scapegoating of women”²⁸⁹ and it is clear that exploiting the so-called sexual laxity of Europeans –representing it as the result of the ultimate freedom given to these women- was a very useful method in the prevention of further claims of modernists that would result in the freedom of women that exceeded what the sultan bestowed upon them. So although Ahmed Midhat only transferred his observations to the reader in order to prove the *tedenniyât-ı maneviyye* of Western civilization, he caused the flooding back of latent Occidentalism. His portrayals inevitably recall 28 Celebi Mehmet’s or Esseyit Ali Efendi’s remarks on Western women and their portrayal of Europe as a “heaven for infidels.” As it was mentioned in the previous chapters these kinds of representations and their reception by the society was closely related to the internal dynamics of society; most

²⁸⁷ Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, p. 65.

²⁸⁸ As an example of this literature see Huseyin Rahmi Gupinar’s *Murebbiye*.

²⁸⁹ Tavakoli-Targhi, p. 70.

of the time the complaints of the “little society” were revealed in the disguise of an anti-Westernist attitude. Again finding themselves in the midst of changes they pointed to the West as the source of corruption, which revealed itself through the changing behaviors and demands of women. So Ahmed Midhat’s (almost) negative portrayal of Western women became a tool to be used in internal politics. Ahmed Midhat, following the path of Sultan Abdulhamid II as a conservative modernist wanted the Ottomans, as a whole, to be able to distinguish the good features of Europe from the bad ones and to be careful about what they were demanding; for example the abolition of polygamy could be a correct demand but the increasing number of prostitutes and mistresses in Europe showed that it was in fact an auspicious right as it would prevent these vices that were damaging society. Hence, Ottoman women should keep pursuing education but should always give priority to their home and family, recalling the comparative situation of European women who channeled their concentration to themselves due to the “freedoms” they were given (or earned) and ignored family life, which caused the collapse of the whole society.

Hence, it seems that Ahmed Midhat tried to convince both sides of the discussion through his representations which emphasized different aspects of the same society. He supported both groups as long as they remained within the boundaries drawn by the official policy which proved to be a pragmatist one. As a popular writer according to the standards of his age he claimed to address all layers of society including the members of the little and great societies; he, in a sense, showed the supporters of Westernization the potential negative outcomes of unbridled Westernization by pointing to the situation of libertine Western women and tried to convince the opponents of Westernization by

highlighting its benefits. Nevertheless he did not refrain from using the sexuality of women as a decisive part of his discourse.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Starting during the eighteenth century and gaining acceleration especially in the second half of the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire underwent a series of reforms. The Ottoman Empire recognized the flaws of the system as early as at the end of the sixteenth century and tried to put them into working order. As reformation attempts gave no result the Ottoman Empire turned its face to the West. Starting with the *Lale Devri* (Tulip Era) Western culture and its institutions began to be investigated. The official beginning of Westernization is accepted to be 1839, the date of the declaration of the *Tanzimat* (reorganization) edict. This reform program, seemingly a centralization effort, ultimately touched upon every area of political, social, cultural and economic life. The state-imposed reforms slowly percolated from top to bottom. Changes in the basic institutions of the Ottoman government were accompanied by corresponding alterations in the Ottoman social structure. During this long and slow process objections were raised by several groups who wanted to maintain the current social order. This conflict between the western and the traditional goes back to the dichotomy between the little and great cultures and was reflected in literature, especially in the novel form, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

While “Westernists” were in favor of the importation of the whole of Western culture the traditionalists contended that these Westernization efforts would eventually cause the corruption of society. The majority of the public remained in-between and was in favor of a selective Westernization. It is impossible to find a perfect representative of

this diverse group but Ahmet Mithat came into the foreground as the most appropriate spokesperson, producing both literary and non-literary works between 1870 and 1911.

Late nineteenth century intellectuals believed that the public had to be guided in the journey of Westernization, which was full of wrong and dangerous paths. However these intellectuals could not see anybody other than themselves to teach the public how to modernize without losing their “souls”. They acted as self-appointed guides in the construction of the modern Ottoman subject and by emphasizing their knowledge of the West they earned an authoritative voice. By portraying characters who adopted Westernization at different levels, they showed what would happen if the traditional values were lost: that is, complete tragedy.

Being the most influential of these authors, Ahmed Midhat acknowledged the superiority of the West but evaluated its progress in terms of “material” and “moral.” According to Ahmed Midhat, Europe was ahead of other cultures due to its technical advancement. As the subjects of a less materially developed state the Ottomans should emulate the West only in the technical arena. There is nothing to emulate or desire in the sphere of morality. In fact, Europeans should want to acquire the moral standards of the East. Hence, he proposed a synthesis which consisted of the Western technique and the eastern moral. Carter Findley rightly recognizes the similarity between Ahmed Midhat and Sultan Abdulhamid’s solutions, hence the current official solution.

During these discussions the place of women in society appeared as one of the most important problems. Writers such as Şemseddin Sami (*Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat*, 1872) and Nabizade Nazım (*Zehra*) criticized the situation of women but they mostly questioned the issue of slavery. At this point, Ahmet Mithat came into view as one of the

most important precursors of change in gender relations. The most central issue in the women's problem was education. Although since 1842 the government had introduced educational programs and opened new schools for girls, it had continued to be a problem. Both the sultan and the intellectuals supported the education of women and some Western women were considered as good examples, but only to a certain point.

As the products of the reformed education system women began to join the discussions pertaining to women such as the demands for education and employment, the illegitimacy or immorality of polygamy, and the propriety of women's concealment. Moreover, the constitutional reform of 1876 further facilitated such debates. As can be predicted, these kinds of liberation attempts were considered threats to the social order. The male authoritative voice allowed and even advised the improvement of women but only up to a certain point. These educated women were essential for the modernization program as mothers of the next generation; but their demand for more rights and freedom aroused concerns. As the constructionists of the modern subject, intellectuals tried to portray decadent Western women as the product of too much freedom. They implied that Ottoman women should be satisfied with their current rights since what they wanted or would want in the future would not bring happiness at all.

Although Ahmed Midhat tried to avoid generalizations, even he began to portray negative images of Western women. In *Paris'te Bir Türk*, most of the Parisian women that the protagonist meets appear as easy women if not immoral. A similar portrayal of Russian women draws attention in *Acaib-i Alem*. Moreover, he constantly reminds the reader of the enormous number of illegitimate children in Europe, which was of course considered to be a sign of degeneracy.

In short, it can be said that the presence and depth of Western characters increased in Ottoman novels probably due to the changing demographic and political situation after the Crimean War. The increasing presence of the West in all areas made the “intellectuals” acknowledge and appreciate the scientific and technological improvement of the West but they believed that the same West could also be the source of corruption. The Westernized type was created with the intention of showing what would happen if someone in this modernization process lost his or her “soul” or “essence” and surrendered to the West. So in this process one should be careful and wise enough to know which parts of the West to accept and which parts to reject. The limits of the modernization of women, who constituted an essential part of the Westernization project, became a problem by the end of the century and the insignificant but almost positive image of Western women in the novel genre began to be used more and more, losing its positive connotations.

To sum up, during the identity construction of Ottoman women, the negative image of the “other” woman is used in order to reinforce the aspired social order, and in the Ottoman argument, as was the case in Orientalist discourse, the sexuality and therefore the immorality of the “other women” are highlighted to make Ottoman women stay at home and to retain the balance between the opponents and supporters of Westernization.

APPENDIX 1

WORKS OF AHMED MIDHAT²⁹⁰

Kıssadan Hisse, 1287/1870 (Story)

Hace-i Evvel, 1287/1870 (School Book)

Durub-i Emsal-i Osmaniye Hikemiyatının Ahkamını Tasvir, 1287/1871 (Story)

Letaif-i Rivayat, 25 cüz, 1287-1312/1870-1894 (Story)

Kainat, 15 vols., 1288-1298/1871-1881 (History)

Hasan Mellah yahut Sır İçinde Esrar, 1291/1874 (Novel)

Dünyaya İkinci geliş yahut İstanbul'da Neler Olmuş, 1291/1874 (Novel)

Zeyl-i Hasan Mellah yahud Sır İçinde Esrar, 1292/1875 (Novel)

Açıkbaş Unvanıyla Bir Komeyayı Hâvîdir, 1291/1874 (Drama)

Ahz-i sar yahud Avrupa'nın Eski Medeniyeti, 1291/ 1874 (Drama)

Hükm-i Dil, 1291/1874 (Drama)

Hüseyin Fellah, 1292/1875 (Novel)

Yeryüzünde Bir Melek, 1292/1875 (Novel)

Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi, 1292/1875 (Novel)

Hokkabaz Kitabı, 1292/1875 (On magic)

Paris'te Bir Türk, 1293/1876 (Novel)

Menfa, 1293/1876 (Memoir)

Üss-i İnkılap I, 1294/1876 (History)

Üss-i İnkılap II, 1295/1877 (History)

²⁹⁰ This bibliography is based on Nüket Esen and Sabri Koz's studies. Nüket Esen, *Karı Koca Masalı ve Ahmet Mithat Bibliyografyası* (İstanbul: Kaf Yayıncılık, 1999). Sabri Koz, "Ahmet Mithat Efendi'nin Eserleri", *Kitaplık: Vesikalık Ahmet Mithat Özel Sayısı*. 54 (2002).

Süleyman Musli, 1294/1877 (Novel)

Kafkas (unfinished), 1294/1877 (Novel)

Çengi, 1294/1877 (Novel)

Zübdetü'l Hakayık, 1295/1877 (History)

Tarih-i Umumi I, 1295/1877 (History)

Üç Yüzlü Karı, Translation, Paul de Kock, 1294/1877 (Novel)

Tarih-i Umumi II, 1296/1878 (History)

Hilal-i Ahmer, 1296/1878 (History)

Medhal ve Tarih "Fünun-ı Coğrafya" 1296/ 1878 (History)

Ekonomi Politik, 1296/1879 (Economics)

Sevda-yı Say ü Amel, 1296/1879 (Essay)

Konak, Translation, Adolf Muçelburg, 1296/1879 (Novel)

Kamelyalı Kadın, Translation, Alexandre Dumas fils, 1297/1879 (Novel)

Derebeyleri, Translation, Victor Hugo, 1296/1879 (Drama)

Bir Kadının Hikayesi, translation, 1298/1880 (Novel)

Antonin, translation, Alexandre Dumas pere, 1298/1880 (Novel)

Bir Fakir Delikanlının Hikayesi, translation, Octave Feuillet, 1298/1880 (Novel)

Amiral Bing, translation, 1298/1880 (Novel)

Gabriel'in Günahı, translation, Charles Merouvel, 1299/1881 (Novel)

Peçeli Kadın, translation, Emile Richeborg, 1299/1881 (Novel)

Beliyat- Mudhike, 1298/1881, (Novel)

Karnaval, 1298/1881 (Novel)

Henüz Onyediyi Yaşında, 1298/1881 (Novel)

Nevm ve Halat-ı Nevm, 1298/1881 (Essay)

Acaib-i Alem, 1299/1882 (Novel)

Dürdane Hanım, 1299/1882 (Novel)

Vah!, 1299/1882 (Novel)

Müdafaa, vol. 1, 1300/1882 (Philosophy)

Müdafaaya Mukabele ve Mukabeleye Müdafa, vol. 2, 1300/1882 (Philosophy)

Merdud Kız, translation, 1300/1882 (Novel)

Lülü-i Asfer, translation, Georges Pradel, 1301/1883 (Novel)

Orsival Cinayeti, translation, Emile Gaboriau, 1301/1883 (Novel)

Volter Yirmi yaşında yahut İlk Muaşakası, 1301/1884 (Novel)

Esrar-ı Cinayet, 1301/1884 (Novel)

Cellad, 1301/1884 (Novel)

Fürs-i Kadimde Bir Facia yahud Siyavuş, 1301/1884 (Drama)

Çengi yahud Daniş Çelebi, 1301/1884 (Drama)

Çerkes Özdenleri, 1301/1884 (Drama)

Hüsrevname, translation, Ksenophon, 1302/1884 (Novel)

Hayret, 1302/1885 (Novel)

Müdafaa, vol. 3, 1302/1885 (Philosophy)

Mufassal, 1303-1305/1885-1887 (History)

İlhamat ve Tagligat, 1302/1885 (Psychology)

Kamere aşk, translation, Paul de Kock, 1303/1885 (Novel)

Alayın Kraliçesi, translation, 1303/1886 (novel)

Beşir Fuad, 1304/1887 (Monograph)

Schopenhauer'in Hikmet-i Cedidesi, 1304/1887 (Philosophy)

Musahabat-ı Leyliye, 1304-1307/1887-1890 (Essays)

Sihri-i Siraci, 1304/1887 (On Cinema)

Hulasa-i Hümayunname, translation, Beydeba, 1304/1887 (Novel)

Papastaki Esrar, translation, Leon de Tinsau, 1305/1887 (Novel)

Bilgiç Kız, translation, Hector Malot, 1305/1887 (Novel)

Terbiyeli Bala, translation, Hasan Ata b. Mehmed, 1305/1887 (Novel)

Demir Bey yahud İnkişaf-ı Esrar, 1305/1888 (Novel)

Fenni Bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları, 1305/1888 (Novel)

Haydut Montari, 1305/ 1888 (Novel)

Medrese-i Süleymaniye, 1305-1306/1888-1889 (School Book)

Nedamet mi? Heyhat!, translation, Emile Aufer, 1306/1888 (Novel)

Gürcü Kızı yahud İntikam, 1306/1889 (Novel)

Arnavutlar Solyotlar, 1306/1889 (Novel)

Müntehabat-ı Ahmed Midhat, 1306-1307/1889-1890 (Compilation of articles)

Alksandr Stradella, translation, Friedrich von Flotow, 1307/1889 (Novel)

Odolf Hisarı, translation, Anne Radcliffe, 1307/1889 (Novel)

Rikalda yahud Amerika Vahşet Alemleri, 1307/1890 (Novel)

Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan, 1307/1890 (Travelogue)

Paris'te 30000 Budi, 1307/1890 (Philosophy)

Ahbar- Asara Tamim-i Enzar, 1307/1890 (Criticism)

Hallül Ukad, 1307/1890 (Answers to reader questions)

Ben Neyim?, 1308/1890 (Philosophy)

Sanatkâr Namusu, translation, Octave Feuillet, 1308/1890 (Novel)

Sid'in Hülasası, translation, Pierre Corneille, 1308/1890 (Drama)

Müşahadat, 1308/1891 (Novel)

Edvar-ı Askeriye, 1308/1891 (On Military)

Zabit, 1308/1891 (On Military)

Hayal ve Hakikat, (with Fatma Aliye Hanım) 1309/1892 (Novel)

Ahmed Metin ve Şirzad yahud Roman İçinde Roman, 1309/1892 (Novel)

Seyyadane Bir Cevelan, 1309/1892 (Travelogue)

İstibşar, 1310/1892 (Philosophy)

Muhaberat ve Muhaverat, 1311/1893 (Correspondence)

Fatma Aliye Hanım yahud Bir Muharrir-i Osmaniye'nin Neşeti, 1311/1893 (Monograph)

Beşair-i Sıdk-ı Nübüvvet-i Muhammediye, 1312/1894 (Philosophy)

Avrupa Adab-ı Muaşeret-i yahud Alafranga, 1312/1894 (Savoir vivre)

Taaffüf, 1313/1895 (Novel)

Niza-ı İlm ü Din, 4 vols., 1313-1318/1895-1900 (Philosophy)

Gönüllü, 1314/1897 (Novel)

Said Beyefendi Hazretlerine Cevap, 1314/1897

Mesail-i Muğlaka, 1316/1898 (Novel)

Altın Aşıkları, 1316/1898 (Novel)

Hikmet-i Peder, 1319/1898

Çocuk Melakat- Uzviye ve Ruhiyesi, 1317/1899

Ana Babanın Evlad Üzerindeki Hukuk ve Vezaif, 1317/1899

Peder Olmak Sanatı, 1317/1899

Jön Türk, 1326/1910 (Novel)

Tarih-i Umumi, 1328/1910 (History)

Tarih-i Edyan, 1329/1911 (History)

APPENDIX 2

A Conversation between Ahmed Midhat and Sadullah Paşa

Gerek taamdan evvel ve gerek bilhassa sofrâ başında Avrupa'nın terakkiyâtına ve oralara nisbetle inşâât ve intizamâtça bizim tehirâtımıza ve bizde dahi o intizâmâtı vücûda getirmek için lâzım gelen tedâbir ve teşebbüsâta dair pek çok teati-i efkâr ederek irâd buyurdıkları mülâhazâtı o kadar doğru buluyor idim ki zaten irfan ve hizmetle müştehir olan o büyük adamın bizim tanıdığımız zamanlara nisbeten daha ne derecelerde tezyid-i hikmete muvafık olmuş olduklarına hayran kalıyor idim. [...]

Sadullah Paşa- Bizim için henüz Avrupa'yı beğenmek mi beğenmemek mi lazım olduğu bile tayin ve hükm olunmadığından kâh Avrupa'yı kâh kendimize numune-i terakki addederek bâlâyâ çıkartırız. Kâh kendimizi dev aynasında görerek Avrupa'yı ehemmiyete bile şayan bulmayız. Bu ifrat ve tefritin her iki ciheti de ziyanlıdır. Asıl maharet bu babda Osmanlıların ittibâ' etmeleri lazım gelen tarîk-i evsât⁰ ve sevabı bulmaktır.

Yollu idare-i efkâr buyurdular ki bilahare Avrupa'nın terakkiyatını maddi ve manevi olmak üzere ikiye taksim edişim ve terakkiyat-ı maddiyesini kemal-i hayretle taklide mecburiyetimiz ile beraber terakkiyât-ı maneviyesinden ictinaba lüzum görüşüm işte müşarünileyhin bu sözü üzerine ta'mîk-i fikirden neşet eylemiştir.

Hakikat! Enzar ve efkâr-ı Osmaniye'miz Avrupa'yı beğenib beğenmemekte bir asra karib zaman mütereddid bulunmuş. Cennetmekân Sultan Selim-i Salis hazretlerinin velayet-i ahd ile henüz kafesde bulundukları zaman Avrupa'nın bazı usulünü kabul edib etmemek meselesi meydana çıkmış. Aglebiyet bunun aleyhinde bulunub pek az hakikat

beynan leyhinde imişler. O zamandan bu zamana kadar bu mesele hal olunamamış. Ben halletmiş iddiasında bulunamaz isem de zan ederim ki meseleyi hal-i katiye tekarrüb edebilmişimdir.

Avrupa'nın terakkiyât-ı maddiyesi denildiği zaman yalnız âli binalar muntazam caddeleri maişet-i mütemeddineleri falanları göz önünde tecelli etmekle kalmaz. Her millet kendi müessesât-ı ilmiyye ve sanaiyesini ve asar-ı tarihiyyesini vesairesini kütüphanelerde müzehanelerde heyâkel-i umumiye vesairede o kadar güzel ve mükemmel koleksiyonlar ile zabt ve tahkim etmiştir ki ulum ve fûnun ve edebiyat ve tarih güya apaşıkarcı tecessüm ederek birer mevcudiyet-i maddiye peyda eylemişlerdir. Terakkiyat-ı maddiye'nin bu cihetleri bizde fıkdan-ı küllî halindedir. Her şeyi yeniden yapmak mecburiyetindeyiz. Cümlemiz elbirliği ile pek çok seneler çalışır isek ancak biz dahi o esere iktifaya başlamış sayılabiliriz. Avrupa'yı geçebilmek muvaffakiyetini evladımız değil ahfâdımız için düşünür isek belki de yine isti'câl etmiş sayılırız. Zira muvaffakiyet-i mezkûrenin mevkuf aleyhi olan milyonları bulmak mahal olmamakla beraber mesâî-i mütemâdiye ile emrarı lazım gelen senelerin adedi herhalde şayanı-ı ehemmiyet bir mikdara varacaktır.

Ama terakkiyat-ı maneviyesine gelince gerek bu seyahatnamemde işaret ettiğim ve gerek Tercüman-ı Hakikat gazetesine derc olunan bendlerde gösterdiğim vecihle bizim için Avrupa'nın terakkiyat-ı maneviyesini arzu eylemek medeniyet-i kadimemizin ve diyanet-i islamiyemizin bizde peyda eylediği maneviyatı feda demek olacağından buna vicdanımız bir vecihle rıza göstermez. Zira Avrupa'nın maneviyatı ekseriyat üzere esas-ı ma'yûbeyeye mübtenî olduğundan onlar memduhiyetimizce bizim maneviyatımıza kıyas bile kabul edemez.

APPENDIX 3

ONDOKUZUNCU ASIR²⁹¹

Erişti evc-i kemâlâta nûr-i idrâkât
Yetiştî rütbe-yi imkâna kısım-ı mümteniât

Besâit oldu mürekkeb, mürekkeb oldu basît
Bedâhat oldu tecârible hayli mechûlât

Mecâz oldu hakîkat, hakîkat oldu mecâz
Yıkıldı belki esâsından eski mâ'lûmât

Mebâhis-i felek ü arz ü hikmet-ü kimyâ
Değil vesâvis-i ezhân ü vehm ü temsilât

Mesâil-i nazarîye tecârib oldu sened
Erişti hadd-i yakîne fuzûl-i zanniyât

Ukûl-i zâhire sâid fezâ-yı ecrâma
Kuvâ-yı câzibe kanunu pâye-i mirkat

Nüfûs-i fakire nâzil kaarere-i arza
Delil-i mebhas-ı tekvîn defâyin-i tabakât

Havâ vü berk u ziyâ vü buhâr ü mıkânât
Yed-i tasarruf-ı insanda unsur-ı harekât

Ziyâ hayâlen iken şimdi bilfiil sâî
Zılâl zâil iken şimdi zîver-i mir'ât

Sadâ hesâb-ı mesâfâtta muhbir-i sâdık
Buhâr zulmeti tenvîrde ebda'-i âyât

Cihât-ı erbaaya berk nâkil-i ahbâr
Buhâr bahr ü ber üstünde Hızr-ı nakliyyât

Tefâhur eylemesin mi bu asr a'sâra
Kısalttı bu'd-i mekân u zamânı muhteriât

Ne kaldı çeşme-i hayvan ne dâru-yi Suhrâb

²⁹¹ Sadullah Paşa, “Ondokuzuncu Asır” in Mehmed Kaplan, *Şiir Tahlilleri* (İstanbul: Anıl Yayınevi, 1958), 54.

Ne kaldı nusha-i efsûn ne hükm-i tılsımiyyât

Ne kaldı sa'd-ı tevâli' ne kaldı nahs-i kırân
Ne kaldı reml ü kehânet ne kaldı cıfriyyât

Ne var hümâda saâdet ne var şeâmet-i bûm
Mukayyed asl-ı irâdâta cümle me'culât

Ne atlas âlemi hâmil ne Zühre fâil-i küll
Değil ukûl-i Felâtun usûl-i tekvînât

Ne kaldı zann-ı tenâsüh ne kaldı nâr-ı Mecûz
Değil ukûle ekânîm kible-yi hâcât

Esâs-ı hikmet-i asr oldu vahdet-i Bâri
Taammün eyledi aslû'l-usul-i mû'tekadât

Bulur gider cihet-i vahdetin umûm milel
Vücûd-ı vahdeti müsbit olunca mâkulât

Hudud-i hakk u vezâif muayyen ü sâbit
Ne kaldı cebr ü tegâllüb ne kaldı keyfiyyât

Hukuk-ı şahs ü tasarruf masûn taarruzdan
Verildi âlem-i umrâna başka tensikat

Ne Amr Zeyd'in esîri ne Zeyd Amr'a velî
Müessis uss-i müsâvâta nass-ı mevzûât

Münevver eyledi ezhânı intişâr-ı ulûm
Mükemmel eyledi noksân-ı feyzi matbuât

Megârib oldu dirîga metâli' -i irfân
Ne kaldı şöhet-i Rûm u Arab ne Mısr u Herât

Zamân zamân-ı terakki cihân cihân-ı ulûm
Olur mu cehl ile kaabil bekâ-yı cem'iyyât

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ABSTRACT

THE IMAGE OF WESTERN WOMEN IN AHMED MİDHAT'S DISCOURSE ON WESTERNIZATION

Fatma Betül Cihan

The aim of this thesis is to explore the role of Ahmed Midhat in the process of the identity formation of late nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. It will be claimed that one of the means employed in that endeavor was “Occidentalism” discourse in which Ahmed Midhat preferred to represent the Western social order via fictional Western characters in order to give the message that Ottomans should be content with their social order at home. Discussion will be carried on taking the history of Westernization, the background of modern Turkish literature, and the life and thoughts of Ahmed Midhat into consideration. The primary sources used for this thesis mostly comprise Ahmed Midhat's novels, his *savoir vivre* study on European manners and also his untransliterated travelogue of 1050 pages.

ÖZET

AHMED MİDHAT'IN BATI SÖYLEMİNDE BATILI KADIN İMAJI

Fatma Betül Cihan

Bu tezin amacı, geç-ondokuzuncu yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu kimlik oluşturma sürecinde Ahmed Midhat'ın oynadığı rolü araştırmaktır. Tezin iddiası ise, bu süreç içerisinde kullanılan araçlardan birinin Oksidantalizm söylemi olduğudur. Ahmed Midhat, okuyucularına mevcut sosyal düzenden memnun olmaları gerektiği mesajını vermek için Batı sosyal düzenini kurgusal Batılı karakterler üzerinden temsil etmeyi tercih ederek Oksidantalist bir söylem oluşturmuştur. Tartışma, Batılılaşma süreci, modern Türk edebiyatı tarihi ve Ahmed Midhat'ın yaşamı ve fikirleri göz önüne alınarak yürütülecektir. Bu çalışma için kullanılan ana kaynakların büyük bir kısmını Ahmed Midhat'ın Avrupa'da geçen romanları, Avrupa adab-ı muaşeretini üzerine çalışması ve henüz Latin harflerine geçirilmemiş Avrupa seyahatnamesi oluşturmaktadır.

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