# Blue Dreams, Black Disillusions:
# Literary Market and Modern Authorship in the Late Ottoman Empire

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## Abstract

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Why would a successful young novelist write the story of a failed poet told from the point of view of a sympathetic narrator, and why would this failed protagonist then become a role model for the next generation of litterateurs? Focusing on the last decades of the nineteenth century, this dissertation explores the ways in which a set of contextual factors, such as the proliferation of printing technologies, the rise in literacy, governmental efforts at standardizing education and the emergence of journalism as a professional field, impacted perceptions of authorship in the Ottoman imperial capital, thus changing the definitions of success and failure in the field of literature.

Using one of the most controversial literary texts of the time, Halit Ziya's *Mai ve Siyah*, the story of a "failed" poet, as a gateway to the emotional states of *Servet-i Fünun* writers, a leading - albeit small - group in the literary debates of the time, I argue that the effort at regulating the realms of education and publishing by the palace during the second half of the century had the unintended consequence of encouraging a more individual engagement with the written text, thus creating young litterateurs who yearned to align their artistic production with their own aesthetic inclinations and to express their existential dilemmas in the face of a changing world, not only through the texts they

wrote but also through the outfits they sported and places they frequented. This went hand in hand with the new possibility, created by journalism as private enterprise, of making money outside the realm of the state or the protection of a powerful patron while producing literary texts, an unprecedented prospect for Ottoman litterateurs, one that also challenged the foundations of the 'official slavery' system where wealth and status were to be endowed solely by the sultan, and solely at his pleasure. This dissertation thus demonstrates the strong repercussions this period had for generations to come, setting new terms for literary production, publishing and journalism.

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*For my grandmother*

*Kamuran Seviner*

*Babaannelerin en tatlısına, sevgi ve minnetle...*

## Introduction

In his memoirs entitled *Kırk Yıl* (Forty Years) where he narrates the first forty years of his life, the well-canonized novelist of the late-nineteenth century Ottoman Turkish literature, Halit Ziya (Uşaklıgil, 1866-1945) recalls an important realization he has had as a young man and an aspiring writer: "I understood, for the first time that these [writing] skills can be turned to money. Alas! I was not a dreamer but I had not yet experienced life either. Thus came to me the idea of starting a magazine in Izmir."[1] This early realization, which comes with a retrospective caution, was in and of itself telling of the transformations pertaining to what it means to produce literature in the Ottoman context, and of the shift from traditional patronage relations toward individual enterprise.

Halit Ziya was, in fact, a member of the first generation of litterateurs who associated their professional identity exclusively with the private publishing world, unlike their immediate predecessors who came of age within the bureaucratic structure. He was twenty-four years younger than Namık Kemal, twenty-two years younger than Ahmet Midhat Efendi and nineteen years younger than Recaizade Ekrem. By the time he was born, the Ministry of Public Education and the first municipality in Istanbul (*Altıncı Daire-i Belediye*) had been functional for nine years, the first government-owned newspaper for thirty-five years, the first private newspaper owned by a foreign national for twenty-six years, and the first private newspaper owned by a Muslim Ottoman subject for six years. The first regulation of the publishing industry (*Matbuat Nizamnamesi*) was

[1] Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, *Kırk Yıl*, (İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2008), 205. (All translations from

thus issued two years before his birth, to be tightened further by the Grand Vizier of the time, Ali Paşa, three years later. When he was three years old, in 1869, The Regulation of Public Education (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi*) came into effect, seeking to centralize and standardize education across linguistic and religious borders; Taksim Bahçesi in Beyoğlu and Millet Bahçesi in Çamlıca were opened shortly after in 1869 and 1870 as the first public parks in the imperial capital; the first underground railway system (Metropolitan Railway of Constantinople) was constructed between Galata and Pera in 1875 when he was nine years old. The same year, Ahmet Midhat Efendi, the "writing machine" of late Ottoman literature published his milestone novel *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, where the protagonist Rakım is contrasted with the antagonist Felatun to warn about the dangers of excessive westernization. These events, perhaps seemingly unrelated, point to a large scale effort in social change, which proved formative in the personal and professional formation of Halit Ziya's generation and produced a new type of litterateur in the 1890s, one that wrote, dressed, and behaved differently.

As a member of this generation, Halit Ziya was of the first people who engaged with and reflected on the nature of this very change through their work. Having started his literary career in İzmir during the 1880s, he permanently moved to the imperial capital in 1893 and shortly thereafter began to serialize *Mai ve Siyah* (Blue and Black) in one of the progressive journals of the time, *Servet-i Fünun* (Wealth of Sciences) in 1896. The story of a failed poet by the name of Ahmet Cemil, the novel traces some of the promises and challenges the new field of publishing presents, the first associated with the color blue and the second with black. As a young middle-class Muslim man, Ahmet Cemil discovers western poetry at an early age, and develops a strong desire to become,

not only an innovative and successful poet but also the owner of a lucrative publishing house. Driven with these desires, committed to hard work, yet pulled back by a lack of finances and a dim-sighted and overly conservative group of literary men, he fails to navigate the many requirements of surviving this environment and ultimately finds refuge in a self-inflicted exile to the arid eastern lands of the empire, while his wealthier best friend Hüseyin Nazmi heads to Europe for a prestigious diplomatic post.

There are some intriguing characteristics to this novel, suggestive of Halit Ziya's realization of the very changes taking place in the field of literature. First and foremost is the impact the fictional poet Ahmet Cemil had on the non-fictional poets upon the publication of the novel, not just in terms of his innovative views on poetry but also (and more so) in terms of the way in which he presents himself in public through his general demeanor, his outfits and places he frequents. The discrepancy between his presented failure and his impact on the next generation of poets raises the question: Why did Halit Ziya tell the story of a poet through the lens of a sympathetic narrator (rather than a judgmental one, like, for example, that of Ahmet Midhat's *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*) and why did his protagonist become an icon despite his failed attempt at becoming both a famous poet and a wealthy publishing house owner? What kind of contextual transformations took place to cause a shift in the definition of success?

Zeynep Uysal and Jale Parla provide some preliminary answers. In her book *Metruk Ev: Halit Ziya Romanında Modern Osmanlı Bireyi* (Abandoned House: Modern Ottoman Individual in the Novels of Halit Ziya), Uysal observes that what she terms the "*Servet-i Fünun* generation" differs from their predecessors, the *Tanzimat* generation, in that they were born into reformation movements rather than taking active part or

witnessing their implementation, and thus their perception of the world around them is inevitably different from those who did.[2] Adding to this observation, Parla suggests in her study on Turkish Künstlerromane, *Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başkalaşım* (Author and Metamorphosis in the Turkish Novel), that the source of tragedy in Halit Ziya's novel is the protagonist's "betrayal" of the poetic art for the sake of monetary gain. "What is interesting here," she argues, "is the unprecedented emphasis on the role of entrepreneurship in success, unlike the importance granted during previous decades to employment in state offices or family inheritance."[3] Yet, according to Parla, the novel shows that the effort of combining art and capitalist ventures is categorically doomed. While it is possible to challenge Parla's Bourdieusian observation, since Halit Ziya seems to endorse his protagonists' bilateral endeavor till the very end, the shift from state service to private enterprise marks this generation. Since the publishing field became largely separated from the state and the involvement of the Muslim subjects of the empire became commonplace (through examples set by first Şinasi, then Ahmet Midhat Efendi), it had begun to feature in the aspirations of young people who desired to work in intellectual fields, trumping bureaucratic endeavor as a good life prospect. Thus entered Turkish-speaking Ottomans into publishing and book trade thus far largely dominated by other *millets* or foreign nationals.

Motivated by these initial questions triggered by Halit Ziya's *Mai ve Siyah* and the discussions that unfolded following its publication, this dissertation investigates the impact of the modernization efforts in education and publishing on the Ottoman intelligentsia, particularly on the concept of authorship, during the last decades of the

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[2] Zeynep Uysal, *Metruk Ev: Halit Ziya Romanında Modern Osmanlı Bireyi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 30.

[3] Jale Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başkalaşım* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 64.

nineteenth century. I pose the following questions, from the more general to the more specific: How can we grasp the nature of the relationship between the Ottoman integration into the global capitalist modernity and the transformation in the dynamics of literary production? How did this new literary market produce new figures, such as the journalist, the publisher, the novelist, and the editor; and how did these new actors affect what it meant to be an author? What did it then mean to practice literature? How would one recognize a litterateur during the 1890s in Istanbul? As such, this project is a contribution to the rich literature on authorship studies. In the words of Andrew Bennett, "asking 'what is an author?' is intimately related to the question 'what is literature?' [...] attempting to answer one question helps us to think about the other."[4] Through a study of the structural transformation that took place during the late nineteenth century in the Ottoman context, I aim to historicize the emergence of the modern Ottoman author, with comparison to earlier practices of producing literature and with reference to what is to come afterwards, in the Constitutional Period as well as following the foundation of the new Turkish Republic.

I argue that the last decade of the nineteenth century points to a significant shift away from as well as changes in courtly affiliations and structures of patronage as part of larger transformations in Ottoman society. As efforts at standardizing and centralizing education during the last half of the century and the consequent proliferation of individually-owned textbooks led to a transformation in the practices of textual engagement, rendering them more individual than communal, young litterateurs began to see literature more as a means of individual expression rather than a way of catering to the whims of a patron or operating within a limited reservoir of images and

[4] Andrew Bennett, *The Author* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 118.

predetermined expressive possibilities. This went hand in hand with the proliferation of printing technologies, and the emergence of journalism as a profession, encouraging young people of letters to seek entrepreneurial endeavors in this sector instead of working in the realm of bureaucracy or other positions within the state. The new individual that emerged as a result of these developments not only approached literary production in a different way than before, but also presented himself differently in the social sphere through his socialization patterns, and physical presence in the public sphere. This points to the emergence of the modern author in the Ottoman context, as,

> an individual who is responsible for or who originates, who writes or composes, a literary text and who is thereby considered an inventor or founder and who is associated with the inventor or founder of all of nature, with God (with God-the-father), and is thought to have certain ownership rights over the text as well as a certain authority over its interpretation.[5]

The modern author as such points to the separation of the bureaucratic realm from that of intelligentsia, loosening the mid-nineteenth century equivalence between the two, during which time cultural elites were also, almost always, scribal officials.[6] The modern type of administration that sought to replace cultural traditionalism and patrimonial officialdom thus gave rise to the formation of a new sphere of intellectual activity outside the realm of the state.

Products of a series of reformations in the realm of education, the new generation of intellectuals defined themselves less as subjects of the sultan as private individuals. What Carter Findley terms 'official slavery' – "that those who enjoyed power, and thus also wealth and high status, should do so – not as members of social entities that

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[5] Ibid., 7.

[6] Carter Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 37.

controlled their own status and identity, independent of the state – but solely as agents of the sultan and solely at his pleasure" thus largely came to an end.[7] In the reduced presence of traditional patronage relations, and the increased prominence of a non-governmental publishing, the field of literature inevitable began to look different; as books became ubiquitous commodities, the identity of the author became more important. Cynthia J. Brown makes a similar argument in her study of the advent of print in late medieval France, that "as books came to play an increasing role in the developing capitalist system, authors sought more control of their writing, participating more actively in their publication and seeking greater identification with their own words."[8] As such, authorship is a historically specific phenomenon, marking the shift from anonymity, dedication to a patron, and a highly intertextual yet limited expressive repertoire towards individual expression, aspiration for originality and lexical innovation.

Foucault argues in his famous lecture entitled "What is an author?" that the modern author is different than its premodern counterpart in that its conception is ingrained with an absence of anonymity; even when the premodern auctor is mentioned by name, he represents something other than himself, he is the representative of a discourse more than an individual.[9] Similarly, while premodern Ottoman poets did attain personal fame, gaining the favor of the patron, and consequently a respectable rank as well as financial advantages was their ultimate aim. With the proliferation of printing and the subsequent widening of the reading audience during the 1890s, the literary field

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7 Ibid., 42.

8 Cynthia J Brown, *Poets, Patrons and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 5. Walter Ong also argues that the physical properties of the book as object generates an illusion of a thing apart, limiting the assumptions of intertextuality more common to the oral and/or manuscript cultures (Ong 1982: 133).

9 Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, and Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 149.

began to gradually feature individuals who made a career of writing, not (just) in order to gain approval from sources of political power, but to establish and demonstrate a sense of individual identity[10]. As Bourdieu argues, the type of capital desired by the modern author does not always need to be economic but could often be of merely aesthetic nature.[11]

With his entrepreneurial enthusiasm and stamina, Ahmet Midhat Efendi presented, for an Ottoman Muslim, one of the first examples of a writing and publishing career outside the realm of the state.[12] In his meta-novel *Müşahedat* (Observations) where he inserts himself into the storyline as narrator-protagonist, he complains that while Europeans who do not possess family wealth contribute to the development of their countries by opening factories and companies, people in Istanbul only desire to work for the state.[13] Elsewhere in his treatise on the "love of work," he underlines once again that it would be a mistake to think of civil offialdom as the only type of work to aspire to for well-educated young men, clearly expressing his preference for private enterprise and even going as far as comparing monthly incomes of various state officials and tradesmen to prove his point.[14] Even though *Servet-i Fünun* writers often fell away from (and at

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[10] Bennett emphasizes that "historians tend to agree that the emergence of this sense of authorship is a function of, and reflected in, changes to the legal status of published writers, changes which are in turn a consequence of the burgeoning culture of print (Bennett: 2005, 50). In the Ottoman context, Findley observes, "[t]he administrative and intellectual elites began to differentiate, far more than in the past, as the rise of journalism and a publishing industry made possible literary careers independent of imperial patronage or official appointment (Findley: 1989, 175).

[11] For what Bourdieu calls "the economic world reversed" to happen, authorship needs to become somewhat financially viable, which is not always the case in the 1890s imperial capital, as I will elaborate on more in detail in Chapter 2 (Bourdieu: 1996). See for example the introductory quotation in this chapter.

[12] Findley: 1989, 175.

[13] Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Müşahedat* (İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2006), 133.

[14] Erol Ülgen, *Ahmet Mithat Efendi'de Çalışma Fikri* (İstanbul: Ahilik Araştırma ve Kültür Vakfı Yayınları, 1994) 59.

times, in conflict with) Ahmet Midhat's legacy in terms of their approaches to literature, he was perhaps the single most influential figure in opening up new ways of being in the field of literature. As the first representative of this new work ethic, he initiated what was to become an increasing professionalization of literature, seeing pleasure in work, not just for the imperial subjects but also for the sultan himself. In *Sevda-yi Sa'y ü Amel* (Love of Effort and Work), he praises Abdülhamit II for his hard work and he emphasizes the connection between work and pleasure in a report he wrote for the sultan: "What is the need to search for pleasure elsewhere," he asks, "is there a bigger reward for a ruler than gaining the appreciation of his subjects through hardwork […] for this is the permanent kind of pleasure."[15] Although Ahmet Midhat bases his opinions on the teachings of the Qur'an, arguably in order to gain credibility, his views resonate with an unequivocally bourgeois worldview. As Franco Moretti underlines, "[t]he creation of a culture of work has been, arguably, the greatest symbolic achievement of the bourgeoisie as a class."[16] Usefulness, industry, efficiency and seriousness of the work, combined with the thus derived pleasure are the major factors motivating Halit Ziya's financially disadvantaged protagonist to cling onto his dreams and to believe that he can attain a higher living standard via this profession if he kept working hard at it.

The co-existence of the desire to become a poet and an entrepreneur in the publishing sector was a result of the near simultaneous turn towards Europe culturally and economically: the turn toward private enterprise was accompanied with an increase in the number of translations from European (particularly French) literatures and an

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[15] Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Sevda-yı Sa'y ü Amel* (İstanbul: Kırk Anbar Matbaası, 1879), 8; Ülgen: 1994, 9.

[16] Ahmet Midhat Efendi: 1879, 61; Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (New York: Verso, 2013), 43.

unprecedented emphasis on teaching French following the education reforms that allowed a high number of Muslim subjects to become fluent with the language. The consequent proliferation of tasks in the world of publishing and the increased presence of European trends in literature led men of letters to simultaneously get involved with both the artistic and administrative tasks in this sector. This inevitably transformed the ways in which authors approached their own texts and those of others. Cynthia J Brown observes,

> The perception of one's own text as a profitable end in itself on the open market, rather than merely as a source of economic gain through a court appointment, necessarily modified a writer's relationship to his work […] Authors' writings had become a marketable commodity outside the courtly circle of wealthy benefactors, and new participants in book production – the printer, the publisher, and eventually a different, more expanded reading public – came to play a role and affect authors' involvement in determining the physical and literary makeup of their books.[17]

For Ahmet Midhat, the most significant consequence of this was a change in the type of audience for literature. Having designated himself as a teacher of the masses, Midhat could easily see the two (i.e. profitability of literature and the possibility to reach previously unavailable groups) as mutually reinforcing and equally beneficial. For *Servet-i Fünun* writers, the relationship between these two was slightly more problematic; precisely because of the phenomenon Bourdieu terms the reversal of economic worlds, where economic gain is insufficient if not undesirable and the value of the literary work paradoxically comes from the fact that it can only be appreciated by a limited number of people who are equipped with the necessary training and aesthetic appreciation. Yet, in the lack of family funds, litterateurs had to rely on jobs in related fields and/or cater to the

[17] Brown: 1995, 2.

tastes of a larger reading public (through popular stories, translations of dime novels, etc), often against their personal inclinations (as in the case of both the fictional Ahmet Cemil and the non-fictional Halit Ziya).

In any case, in a new literary market where the traditional patronage structure was less popular than ever, and where political powers had to change their strategies to "control" the literary production, strategic self-presentation in the public sphere became crucial to the success of writers, as authorial identity moved to the center stage. Bolstered with the advent of photography, and developments in image printing technologies, the name of the "modern author" became associated with his portraits, penetrating the audience's consciousness through their personal presence just as much as through their work.[18] Clothes they wore, accessories and hairstyles they sported, and places they frequented were thus carefully selected, as they were seen as part of their intellectual and artistic oeuvre. Litterateurs and intellectuals could recognize and "read" each other through these signs as well as their literary texts to form interests groups and pick their loyalties in a field torn across ideological and aesthetic inclinations. In her analysis of the Romantic period, Elizabeth A Fay terms this phenomenon "the portraitive mode" and argues that this mode "capitalized on the identification of "self" with the substantial and visible body, with a locatable "I" that sees and that sees itself reflected in its world."[19] Similarly, in *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's*

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[18] Speaking from the context of late-medieval France, Cynthia J Brown observes that the craft of the author was changed by the advent of print, and asserts she found "evidence of an increasing use of self-promotional strategies – such as more author-centered images, more prominently publicized names, more directly accessible signatures, and a more author-identified narrative voice – which underscore the author's development from conventionally medieval secondary stance to a growing authoritative presence (Brown: 1995, 7).

[19] Elizabeth Fay, *Fashioning Faces: The Portraitive Mode in British Romanticism* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2010), 6.

*Poetry*, Marlon Ross observes that Romantic poets are driven to a quest for self-creation and self-comprehension that is unprecedented in literary history.[20] This was very much the case for the writers of *Servet-i Fünun*, who gathered together as a result of this new ability to read each other in the public sphere and formed lasting bonds through a shared approach towards what both literature and litterateurs should look like.

With an interest in this point of transformation in Ottoman literary history, this dissertation analyzes the *Servet-i Fünun* group, the heart of the Edebiyat-ı Cedide (New Literature) movement through the life and work of Halit Ziya, a novelist and one of the leading figures of the group. The first chapter, entitled "The New Rules of Art: Hamidian Publishing Scene during the 1890s," lays the political background, particularly in relation to the reformations of education and publishing, both during the last decade of the century and before, as well as to the development of journalism in the imperial capital. It thus seeks to engage with the question of why the majority of activity in the field of publication during the nineteenth century occurred under the rule of Abdülhamit II, also known as the "paranoid censor." The second chapter, "Modest Means, Grand Ambitions: Individualization and Its Discontents," looks at the changes in the patterns of inter-authorial socialization, with the emergence of print capitalism and the subsequent formation of a new literary market where traditional patronage relations lost some of their predominance and where authors often found themselves in a double bind between a promise of extraordinary success/recognition and the danger of failure/ridicule in an environment where they had to navigate both their artistic urges and the demands of the market. The third chapter, entitled "Adorning Authorship: Clothing, Furniture, and the

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[20] Marlon B. Ross, *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 22.

Commodification of Intellectual Lifestyle," analyzes the ways in which the individuality that emerged as a result was expressed in the outward appearance of intellectuals and the function of consumerism in the expression of authorial identity. The fourth and final chapter, "Performing Authorship: Urban Spaces of Meeting, Observation and Display," investigates the role of the urban space in the performance of the carefully created public personas and parallels developments of urban transformation (such as the construction of public parks and public transportation) with the transformations in the patterns of authorial socialization. With this four-part structure, the project aims to provide a link between *Mai ve Siyah* and the context it came out of in terms of the changing practices of producing literature and the impact of these changes on the definitions of authorship.

**The relationship between text and context: the case of *Mai ve Siyah***

It has been common practice among late-Ottoman historians to approach the first novels of Ottoman literature as factual reservoirs through which to understand the society of the time. While this approach has already been criticized and challenged, it still stands that the text and the context that it comes out of are closely connected.[21] Contemplating the relationship between the literary text and the social reality of its composition, Peggy Kamuf underlines that literary theory takes fiction seriously by engaging its fictionality, that is, the emptiness of its referentiality. "A fiction refers to nothing that exists," she

[21] For example, in the *Cambridge Companion to French Novel*, Timothy Unwin warns that novels can be both invaluable and extremely tricky as sources of historical inquiry. He explains, "the novel maintains in most cases a peculiarly powerful relationship with the real, partly because its form is extensive and because it operated typically in a mode of verbal profusion (unlike poetry which, typically, is intensive and operated in a mode of verbal economy). It often speaks of a world which is recognizable, indeed verifiable, to the point where there is possible confusion of the fictional and the real" (Unwin: 1997, 6).

explains, "it refers, but nothing in existence."[22] Andrew Bennett adds to this, stating that literature suspends reference to real life while depending on it; he suggests, "perhaps we should say that you cannot make general statements about literary texts, that you cannot generalize from them, and that you must." [23]

Speaking from the perspective of a context-informed approach to textual studies, Marxist critic Franco Moretti suggests that the parallelism needs to be drawn between new cultural forms and new class realities, or the tempo of story telling and the new regularity of existence.[24] Text and context interact in complex ways to influence each other and transform ways we perceive the world around ourselves. In *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*, Anthony D King conceptualizes the link between the two as mutually influential, in a way that "culture in its sense of art, literature, film, practices of representation of all kinds, both draws from and participates in the construction of culture as a way of life, as a system of values and beliefs which, in turn, affects culture as a creative, representational practice, we can bridge what is often a gap between these differential meanings."[25] The emergence of the novel in and of itself signals a shift in what is perceived as literature, and thus a shift in the perception of time and space. The ever-elusive relationship between text and context was somewhat stronger when the novel as the modern narrative genre par excellence first emerged; in its earlier manifestations, the author is arguably less dissociated from the narrative voice, as exemplified through Ahmet Midhat's work in the Ottoman context. Most, if not all, of his

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[22] Peggy Kamuf, "Fiction and the Experience of the Other," in *The Question of Literature: The Place of the Literary in Contemporary Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 157.

[23] Bennett: 2005, 126.

[24] Moretti: 2013, 3.

[25] Anthony D King, *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 2.

work features a highly involved and moralizing narrator, who is the spitting image of the author himself. Cynthia J Brown makes a similar observation, stating that a more author-identified narrative voice is typical of the earlier phases of modern authorship.[26] This is partly because the novel, unlike the more lyrical texts, is employed to engage in either a criticism of the current social situation or a commentary on how it should be mended, according to the author/narrator. In his book on authorship, Andrew Bennett generalizes this statement to also include the twentieth century; incorporating observations by Raymond Carver and Charles Taylor into his argument, he suggests, "[a]lmost every major writer of the twentieth century seems to have produced a memoir or literary autobiography."[27]

The link between text and context is arguably stronger in the case of *Mai ve Siyah*, which is a *Künstlerroman*, a novel about an artist. The story takes place on the Babıali Avenue, near *Servet-i Fünun* headquarters where Halit Ziya wrote and serialized his novel; the antagonist of the story is named Raci, arguably after Muallim Naci, who is known to have had an antagonistic relationship with Halit Ziya and his like-minded colleagues until his death in 1893, the year Halit Ziya moved to the imperial capital. Even though the search for direct correlations between Naci and Raci is bound to produce speculative results at best, this connection remains important in terms of the relationship between reality and fiction.[28] In *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark: Edebiyat ve Endişe* (Blind Mirror,

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[26] Brown: 1995, 7.

[27] Bennett: 2005, 71. A writer himself, Carver argues that most writers (at least the good ones) make some use of their own lives; Charles Taylor adds, "most art in the twentieth century has itself for its subject, or is on one level a thinly disguised allegory about the artist and his work" (Carver: 1988, 16; Taylor: 1989, 481).

[28] In her book on the Künstlerromane of Turkish literature, entitled *Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başkalaşım*, Jale Parla suggests that by writing a novel where the narrator approves of his poet-protagonist rather than judging him, Halit Ziya wished to present his work as the first

Lost Orient: Literature and Anxiety), Nurdan Gürbilek calls attention to the centrality of literature during the process of Turkish modernization, particularly in relation to its ability to tell the story of anxieties, desires and potentialities. She suggests, "the story told in a literary work is, at the same time, the story of its composition."[29] Agreeing with the general arguments on the helpfulness of literature in understanding the society and the culture it is a product of, Gürbilek states that this connection between literature and society is there not so much because literary texts provide us with cultural and social documents, but rather because of their ability to showcase the existential anxieties that have already been smoothed over or excluded already from the daily life, from politics, ethics, or religion and their bravery to include and tackle the incertitudes brought about by modernization.[30] Coming full circle to the criticism of the ways in which social historians utilize literary texts (in narrative genres, in particular), one can then argue that the assumption on literature's ability or aim to exactly mirror its context remains naive at best.[31]

What this means for *Mai ve Siyah* (the text) and the literary market / publishing industry (the context) is that one must go beyond looking for factual information in the text about the context. In other words, while drawing direct parallelisms between the personalities of Raci and Naci might not lead us anywhere significant, the novel is still an

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*Künstlerroman* in Turkish literature (Parla: 2011, 64).

[29] Nurdan Gürbilek, *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark: Edebiyat ve Endişe* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2004), 10.

[30] Ibid., 16.

[31] Gürbilek illustrates this naiveté in the context of early Ottoman novel by drawing attention to the abundance of fictional female readers in these novels; she remarks that if we were to take the works of fiction at face value, we would have to wrongly assume that many women had already become readers at this point in history, whereas, this abundance has just as much to do with the struggle to create this very reality as with the concern to reflect an existing one (Ibid., 23).

invaluable clue to grasp the true nature of the emotions, frustrations, desires and viewpoints that being an author entailed at this period of transformations. Ahmet Cemil is an important fictional figure because of his tragic struggle between optimism and pessimism, desires and frustrations, and between idealism and economic determinism, a struggle that does tell a great deal about the context without scholars having to look for sociologically significant data. This approach also helps connect the text into global textual networks through an analysis of expressive commonalities that point to similar ways of perceiving and experiencing the world. For example, Robert Finn positions *Mai ve Siyah* in the larger category of "romantic novel of dissappointment," pointing out to this very struggle between desires and disappointments, also seen in the Parnassian poetry, particularly in the work of Sully Prudhomme who also used the colors blue and black to represent these contrasting emotions.[32]

Literature has been central in Ottoman modernization, not just because of the nature of the literary texts produced but also because of the central position of the creators of these texts as actors of change. Speaking about the earlier generation of bureaucrat-intellectuals, Carter Findley points out that "the domain of *adab* helped to launch Ottoman westernization, and thus define the area of cultural conflict in the nineteenth century."[33] The first generation of bureaucrat-intellectuals were indeed instrumental in the creation and implementation of laws and regulations, either through advocacy or through the situation they have created for the government/palace to act on. While writers of *Servet-i Fünun* are known to be significantly less "politically-involved" in the scholarship, partly because of the well-known censorship regime of Abdülhamit II

[32] Robert P Finn, *The Early Turkish Novel, 1897-1900* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 1984), 151.
[33] Findley: 1989, 51.

and partly because of their (perhaps consequent) aesthetic penchant, suggesting an abrupt dissociation from politics would be unconvincing. Rather, their contribution to the realm of "politics," largely understood as "public life and affairs involving matters of authority and government," penetrated into the psychological realm, with intellectuals living the dilemmas and anxieties of the political and social transformation on a more individual level. Using psychoanalysis and the study of emotions, Orhan Koçak argues that the common distinction between "interior" and "exterior," that is, between the "personal" and the "political," or between the "emotional" and the "intellectual" is a faulty one, particularly in reference to *Servet-i Fünun* litterateurs, who arguably experienced the social and cultural transformation more deeply than their predecessors.[34] They were not only members of the generation that made private entrepreneurship in the literary field a popular prospect for the intellectuals of the time, but they also were very expressive of their innovative – and at times, controversial views on aesthetics and literary language.

For example, Ahmet Midhat's reaction to and criticism of their approach towards literature launched one of the most extensive and famous literary debates of the nineteenth century, known as *dekadanlar tartışması* (decadents debate), where the Mithat indirectly accused poets and novelists of *Servet-i Fünun*, including Halit Ziya (particularly in reference to *Mai ve Siyah*), of using unintelligible language with the sole aim to sound novel and western, thus likening them to the 'decadents' of French literature. Though a relatively small and limited group, the *Servet-i Fünun* writers have been very influential for the literary field, not just during the time when they were active but well beyond, into the republican period. It is thus useful to emphasize here that this

[34] Orhan Koçak, "Kaptırılmış İdeal: Mai ve Siyah Üzerine Psikanalitik Bir Deneme," *Toplum ve Bilim* 70 (Güz 1996), 95.

project is not all inclusive in terms of its focus; the field of literature in the Ottoman imperial capital is undoubtedly much larger, much more multi-layered (culturally and linguistically) than *Servet-i Fünun* and its immediate surroundings, yet it still has a claim on the general trends that were beginning to happen in literature, as it takes, as its subject matter, a group with a particularly large 'impact crater'.[35]

**History of modern Ottoman-Turkish literature: A review**

Nineteenth century Ottoman-Turkish literature has already been studied extensively from multiple disciplinary perspectives. I observe four main disciplinary/methodological orientations, which I will talk about in detail in this section to locate my project within the existing scholarship. The first category I have identified is made of literary histories structured around a particular author, mostly produced in the Turkish academia during the twentieth century; the second includes social histories that look at literary texts (particularly novels) as sources of information about the social context they come out of; the third category pertains to the scholarly work done mostly in the Euro-american institutions with a more textual approach that do not take as much interest in the contextual dynamics. Finally, the fourth category includes works that tackle the nature of the text-context relationship and the mutual relationship of impact between literary text and society, which is where I locate my own work.

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[35] The study of the literary field in the late-Ottoman period has thankfully become increasingly more inclusive of the literary production by various ethnic groups and in various imperial languages. Among the leading efforts toward this direction is the volume edited by Altuğ and Uslu, entitled *Tanzimat ve Edebiyat: Osmanlı Istanbulu'nda Modern Edebi Kültür* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014).

**1) Author-centric literary histories**

There has so far been an extremely limited number of works that tackle the authorial networks of the post-Tanzimat Edict literary field. Surprising as this may be given the fact that the nineteenth century is one of the most extensively studied period in the Ottoman literary scholarship, the lack mainly stems from the fact that scholars in this field have traditionally produced monographs on a single author, whose life would often be described in isolation from his/her contemporaries and from the cultural environment s/he was a part of. Alternatively, literary debates of the time have been analyzed through a meticulous identification of all relevant primary sources, yet without much reference to the larger sociopolitical context in which they took place, nor much reflection on their significance and repercussions for the directions literary production would take thereafter.[36] As invaluable as these works are otherwise, their oversights make it challenging to grasp the nature of authorial networks, and thus the big picture of what is conventionally termed "Tanzimat literature," in terms of the intergenerational interactions, networks of affiliation, relationships between authors in the imperial center and the ones in the provinces, and finally, the impact of contextual transformations on the literary field (and vice versa). A periodization that does not necessarily engage these transformations thus continued to be taken for granted, obscuring the connections between the nineteenth century and both earlier centuries and the republican period.

[36] For the first type of scholarly work, see, for example, Cemil Yener, *Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil* (İstanbul: Toker Matbaası, 1974), or, Ömer Faruk Huyugüzel, *Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2004). For the second type, see, Fazıl Gökçek, *Bir Tartışmanın Hikayesi: Dekadanlar*, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2009), or Fevziye Tansel, "Muallim Naci ile Recaizade Ekrem arasındaki münakaşalar ve bu münakaşaların sebep olduğu edebi hadiseler," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* (İstanbul: Osman Yalçın Matbaası, 1953).

One reason for the lack of interest in the context was arguably a justifiable attempt to retrieve and preserve the rich Ottoman literary archives in the wake of the Alphabet Reform of 1928, and make it accessible to generations who are not familiar with the Arabic script. Influenced by this early-republican effort of recovery and categorization (see for example work by Mehmet Fuat Köprülü (1890-1966) or Ali Nihat Tarlan (1898-1978)), the succeeding generations continued the tradition of author-centric, philologically-oriented and largely descriptive studies; all the same, scholars like Cevdet Kudret (1907-1992), Mehmet Kaplan (1915-1986), and later, Orhan Okay (b. 1930) and İnci Enginün (b. 1940) produced impressive archival research that recovered and rendered pre-republican literature into modern Turkish.[37] This archival sensibility is central to the study of Ottoman literature, as İnci Enginün rightfully observes, since more literary works surface from the depths of the archives and become available for analysis, the general look of the period will inevitably transform. Yet the lack of interest in the context had some negative effects on the later generations of scholars who worked on Ottoman-Turkish literature in Turkish academic institutions: when these attempted to make the connection, they did it from the perspective of social historians (whom I will talk about in the next section) and thus subscribed to a mono-directional pattern of influence between context and text, from the former to the latter. For example, in his study of the *Servet-i Fünun* group, Selçuk Çıkla conceptualizes literature as something that merely reflects society and lacks the power to change it; he states, "the function of

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[37] For more on the alphabet reform in Turkey, see Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Nergis Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). The effort to recover and transcribe works of Ottoman literature is still a valuable and very much needed effort today, as exemplified in a transcription workshop led by Fatih Altuğ (Osmanlı Roman ve Hikayesi Atölyesi, Bilim ve Sanat Vakfı): http://bisav.org.tr/sabit.aspx?contentid=107.

the novel genre is not to direct life but only to reflect it."[38]

Recently, works by younger scholars began to challenge the philological approach by introducing the context into the study of literature. Among such works is the aforementioned volume edited by Fatih Altuğ and Mehmet Fatih Uslu on the literary field of the Ottoman imperial capital during the nineteenth century. Entitled *Tanzimat ve Edebiyat: Osmanlı İstanbulu'nda Modern Edebi Kültür* (Engl. Tanzimat and Literature: Modern Literary Culture in the Ottoman Istanbul, 2014), the volume incorporates articles on the literary production in different languages and open up pathways for a more inclusive study of the literary field in the city with a care for the interactions between various linguistic and ethnic communities.

In a similar vein, the author-centric monographs published during the 2000s in Turkish began to go beyond the description of author's life and works, to establish the complex relationship between the literary texts and the social context. One such example is the work of Zeynep Uysal, who, in *Metruk Ev*, traces the emergence of the modern individual in Halit Ziya's novels. Treating his oeuvre as a coherent whole, Uysal argues that the author "always tells the story of intense desires" and the tension between desires and reality. She thus points out to how "the house," that is, the private sphere becomes the ground where political tensions are located during this time, challenging the argument for the lack of social/political involvement in the writers of this generation, and linking literature with the perception of the world, rather than using fiction as a reservoir of information.[39] She also connects Halit Ziya's individualistic protagonist with their counterparts in other literatures, such as Goethe's *Faust*. As such, she contextualizes the

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[38] Selçuk Çıkla, *Roman ve Gerçeklik Bağlamında: Kültür Değişmeleri ve Servet-i Fünun Romanı* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2004), 52.

[39] Uysal: 2014, 13-15.

tragedy, often seen in Halit Ziya's work, of individuals who prove unable to reach a compromise between their desires and what society allows.[40]

**2) As if traveling in time: Social historians discover fiction**

As mentioned earlier, historians of the late Ottoman Empire also took an interest in literary texts, arguably because the newly emerged narrative genres (as opposed to the traditionally more predominant lyric genres) proved too attractive to pass as stories that told what life looked like at the time. The above-mentioned centrality of litterateurs in initiating social and political transformation added to the charm of these narratives, as their writers were mostly the initiator of reforms and/or more progressive members of Ottoman society, especially during the few decades following the declaration of the Tanzimat Edict. In his study of the nineteenth century intellectual history published in 1966, Hilmi Ziya Ülken (1901-1974) draws attention to the fact that, when Ottoman intellectuals were negotiating their own positions towards Islam on the one hand, and western civilization on the other, they often expressed themselves through the medium of literature at least as much as through philosophical treatises.[41]

Writing with the centrality of literature in mind, Şerif Mardin (b.1927) considers the contextual material provided by the late nineteenth-century novels as an invaluable source to understand what the lives of the Ottoman elite were like during this period. In his famous article published in 1974, entitled "Super Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century," he states, "[the novel] genre which developed in the Ottoman Empire beginning with the 1860s is a *mine of*

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[40] Ibid., 63; 182.
[41] Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi* (İstanbul: Ülken Yayınları, 1979), 212.

*information* about conditions that existed in upper class circles in Istanbul at the time."[42] Yet, even though the novels of the time did indeed provide insights into the kinds of transformations occurring at the time, it was not so much through an unmediated reflection of facts but rather through a representation of and insight into changes in perception and emotion. About four decades later, Carter Findley, historian of the late-Ottoman bureaucratic class, provides a more nuanced approach towards the utilization of literary texts as sources of historical information. In *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity*, he observes, "[a]s I began to read literary works of different periods in my search for cultural history, a revelation rewarded me. […] It would enrich my study, I realized, to focus on one or a few works from each period, using them to *open a window on life at the time*."[43]

Findley's major advance over Mardin is his view of literature and "the imaginative realm as the primary site for the construction of new images of modernity, images that inspire efforts reshape workaday reality accordingly."[44] In other words, he perceived literary texts as providing and reflecting a 'reservoir of possibles', or ways of thinking that pertain to periods in which they were written, rather than as simply mirroring reality. Literature is not about what is, but what is conceivable, desired or not desired; it is about belief, perception and potentialities. In addition to tackling the ever elusive relationship between text and context, historians of Ottoman culture also point to the relationship between narrative fiction, literacy and modernity as a measure of societal

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[42] Şerif Mardin, "Super Westernization in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century," in *Turkey: Geographic and Social Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 401.

[43] Carter Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 3.

[44] Ibid., 3.

change; in *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic*, Fortna observes, for instance, that "when and why reading ceased to be a privileged phenomenon and became instead a popular one is central to the shaping of the modern world, central in fact to what it means to be modern."[45] It is thus important to look at literary texts, not just because they give us a glimpse of what is deemed possible but because they also had an impact on an increasingly large readership by suggesting new possibilities and thus initiating further change.

**3) Comparative perspectives: Turkish literature in the Euro-American academy**

In the last few decades, with the increased presence of Turkish literature in Euro-American academia, one can talk about laudable efforts to integrate the study of Ottoman and Turkish literatures into the field of comparative literature and thus to look at it in comparison with and in the context of larger global literary debates. This particular scholarly orientation partially appropriated the observations made decades ago by writer/literary critic/professor/bureaucrat Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962), who, writing at the same time with Köprülü and Tarlan, perceived the late-nineteenth century Ottoman literature as the story of an anxiety that stemmed from a sense of dissolution and nothingness. In other words, Tanpınar has argued that, as litterateurs and intellectuals of the time became aware of the inadequacies of their own culture in comparison with a much more apt West, the subsequent identity crisis marked this period in various ways. Adopting a perception of this period (i.e. the nineteenth century) structured around this crisis, Tanpınar concludes that Ottoman (and Turkish) literature is one that should (and

[45] Benjamin Fortna, *Learning To Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2.

did) take the West as a new literary model in order to become modern, and that this necessity caused it to be an inevitably unoriginal (and thus a lesser) version of its Western/European counterparts.

Following this argument, his successors conceptualized Ottoman modernization in terms of an epistemological gap between Islam and modernity; Islamic modernity, to them, was a remote possibility, if not an oxymoron. Traditional literary structures were to be rid of in order to "become modern," and yet what is to replace them was bound to be an imitation, and to suffer from a categorical belatedness and unoriginality. For example, Berna Moran (1921-1993) starts his account of the history of Turkish novel by arguing that, unlike in the West, the emergence and development of the genre in Turkey did not happen in a 'natural' and 'intrinsic' fashion, but was rather 'artificial' and 'external'. Early generations of Ottoman novelists set out to translate and then to imitate western novels, which rendered the first Ottoman novels "ill-fitted, primitive, and childish."[46] Less than a decade later, Jale Parla makes a similar introduction to her book on the epistemological foundations of the nineteenth century Ottoman novel, situating East and West as ahistorical and rigid entities, with Islam belonging to the former. She then argues that, Ahmet Midhat and Namık Kemal, who argued that Islam does not necessarily create an obstacle for progress, were living in an illusion.

Kemal's objections to Ernest Renan's lecture entitled "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" (delivered at La Sorbonne in 1882) are, according to her, overenthusiastic and aggressive. Parla does not historicize or engage with Renan's claims on Islam and modernity, nor does she seek to incorporate, into her analysis, the well-known efforts to design an Islamic modernization in other parts of the Middle East, as exemplified in the efforts of

[46] Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış I* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983), 25.

leading figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. She observes instead, "the fact that Renan's terminological particularity is completely misunderstood by Namık Kemal is an excellent proof of the epistemological discrepancy between the writers." (Tr. "Terimler üzerinde Renan'ın titizliğinin Namık Kemal'ce anlaşılamaması, iki yazarın aynı sorunsala tümüyle değişik epistemolojik açılardan baktığının en iyi göstergesidir.")[47] In her MLA book on the Turkish novel, Azade Seyhan speaks from a similar stance, reminding us of Victoria Holbrook's comments on the republican silence about the Ottoman cultural heritage as well as on the disinterest in the Euro-American academia on Middle Eastern literatures in general. Holbrook had referred to Ottoman lands as "an exclusively sociological area where humanities never happen," and argued, "[a] marvelous maze of absences is point of departure for writing about Ottoman literature in the United States today."[48] While these scholars have made tremendous contributions to the representation of Turkish literature in the Euro-american academia, their discourse mostly operated on the unproductive concepts from belatedness and originality, conceptualizing modernity as something flowing from Europe eastwards.

Writing exclusively on the Ottoman novel, scholars like Ahmet Evin and Robert Finn, adopt a different approach. Published in 1983 and 1984 respectively, Evin and Finn had one peculiar commonality in that they both produced only one monograph each on the subject: Ahmet Evin later turned to political science as his main disciplines, and Robert Finn served as a United States Ambassador in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. They are, in other words, "the odd-ones" of the field of Ottoman literary

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[47] Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990), 48.

[48] Azade Seyhan, *Tales of Crossed Destinies: The Modern Turkish Novel in a Comparative Context* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2008), 3.

studies, without loyalties to any particular scholarly group, which allowed them to have a fresh gaze and textual meticulousness. Evin's major contribution in *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1983) is that, like Findley who speaks from field of history, he makes an attempt to understand the nature of the connection between text and context. He, albeit passingly, draws attention to the expansion of literature with the changes in educational policies and analyzes, for example, the novels of Ahmet Midhat Efendi, to draw conclusions about his views on capitalism.[49] Finn's book, entitled *The Early Turkish Novel, 1872-1900* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1984), on the other hand, introduces the psychological dimension of Ottoman capitalist/materialist modernity into the study of literary texts. It is through this psychological sensibility that he saw the connection of *Mai ve Siyah* both to its local literary past and to the global literary trends it was a part of.[50] In fact, his psychoanalytical approach of Ottoman novels would influence Parla's reading in her seminal *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri*, published less than a decade later in 1990.

**4) Understanding Ottoman modernity: a more integral approach**

The perceived gap between Islamic culture and modernity and the consequent belatedness argument that marked the introduction of Turkish literary studies into the Euro-american academia was challenged by the next generations of scholars (like Nurdan Gürbilek, Hülya Adak, Orhan Koçak, Nergis Ertürk and many others), who wrote both in Turkish and in English for a variety of audiences. These scholars sought to establish the

[49] Ahmet Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1983), 47; 111.
[50] Finn: 1984, 115.

relationship between text and context in more sophisticated ways than their predecessors, perceived modernity as a phenomenon that can be experienced in various ways rather than one that flows from the center into the periphery. In her article, "Dandies and Originals: Belatedness and the Turkish novel," Nurdan Gürbilek argues, for example, that the critical tradition that sees Turkish literature as a realm of lack and absence operated in two seemingly contradictory manners: "The first one assumes that what is original is elsewhere ("outside," namely the West)," she observes, "while the second insists that we do have an authentic literature and a genuine narrative thought but in order to appreciate it we have to leave aside all those lifeless imitations and snobbish efforts related with the West."[51] Literary historians and critics oscillate between these two extremes that are in effect two different manifestations of the same problem of over-assigning value to the sloppy concept of originality, instead of perceiving modernity as a collective phenomenon that affect the psyches of its participants in geographically-specific ways while still maintaining major global parallels and interconnections, thus operating through a structural interdependence between the different societies and cultures that have been part of it.

In line with this conceptualization of modernity, Hülya Adak suggests that global literary studies must take a closer look into different national literatures in order to turn back and criticize itself and its biased views of the "third world." She underscores the need to challenge the direct reflection of the developmental pattern of Western genres onto other literatures and the need to instead come up with new ways of thinking that would cast non-western literatures as belated or unoriginal. In order to achieve this goal,

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[51] Nurdan Gürbilek, "Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness and the Turkish Novel," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102/2-3 (2003), 600.

Adak recognizes the need to incorporate more theoretical insight coming from outside the Western academia. "[I]f we want literary studies to go global," she remarks, "we must listen to Third World literary criticism not just to grasp the historical and cultural context of the national literature in question (inviting Third World critics in as native informants) but also to understand this criticism's comparative modus operandi, its dialogue with the theories of the Euro-American academy (and with comparative analyses of works in the Western literary canon."[52]

In addition to the call for a centerless literary scholarship where both texts and theoretical approaches come from around the globe, some of these scholars call attention to the centrality of emotions in times of transformation and thus emphasize the significance of literary texts in initiating/substantiating change by evoking a certain set of emotions. As a member of this group, Orhan Koçak is the first to explicitly draw attention to emotions as a gateway to understand Ottoman modernity, especially in relation to *Servet-i Fünun* writers. He argues, in "Kaptırılmış İdeal: *Mai ve Siyah* Üzerine Psikanalitik Bir Deneme" (The Ideal that Slipped Away: A Psychoanalytical Essay on *Mai ve Siyah*), that the larger cultural issues resulting from Ottoman exposure to modernity and the West are analyzed merely on the level of 'thoughts' and 'opinions' and most scholars faultily assume that emotions did not have an impact on these thoughts.[53] Koçak also notices the emotional tension in *Mai ve Siyah* that stems from the gap between the relatively limitless possibilities provided by the emerging capitalist structures and the limits imposed on these possibilities by the economic difficulties on the ground. He argues that the intense desires triggered by this modern condition render the

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[52] Hülya Adak, "Exiles at Home: Questions for Turkish and Global Literary Studies." *PMLA* 123 no: 1 (2008), 24.

[53] Koçak: 1996, 95.

ideals in the novel even more absolute, indispensable and inalienable.[54] Zeynep Uysal further engages with this desiring modern individual that appears in *Mai ve Siyah* in her monograph on Halit Ziya.

The register of emotions, sensibilities and ways of perceiving the world is truly where the contribution of literature to a particular society and to the world lies; and the relationship between text and context need to be constructed with the society's emotional registers in mind. As Gürbilek rightfully remarks, literature is not important because it provides cultural or sociological documents, or pushes the limits of the language but because it showcases the hesitation, the anxiety that is so much more easily glossed over in or removed from other areas such as religious belief, political struggle, ethical values, or even daily life.[55]

For example, challenging Şerif Mardin's reading of the presence of the dandy in Tanzimat novels as a reflection of reality, Gürbilek argues that the reason for this overwhelming presence is the very anxiety causing an internal dilemma: "the writer's anxiety of trying to deflect criticism likely to be directed to him towards someone else, towards a more exaggerated and caricaturized figure and thus to conceal his own vulnerability: I am not the dandy; the other is."[56] In a similar vein, in her comprehensive analysis of what she calls the communications revolution in Turkey, Nergis Ertürk criticizes the Eurocentrist critical practice, which conceptualizes the Turkish modernization essentially as a mimesis of Occidental modernity. She instead argues that looking at the very structures of the language allows us to go beyond and against the "conservative identarian vehemence of the abstraction 'modernity [that sees]'," and thus

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[54] Ibid., 110.
[55] Gürbilek: 2004, 13.
[56] Ibid., 55.

to render visible the "structural violence of the modern, in its abstraction of fixed and individualized "pure" identities."[57] Through an analysis of Ahmet Midhat's works, Ertürk remarks that the new language that emerged along with the novel genre in the Ottoman Empire sought not so much to represent an outer reality as to constitute "a mediation through which one indistinguishably found oneself simultaneously in the world and in the text."[58] She thus sheds light to the terms under which language and literature were indeed very central to Turkish modernization, challenging the views that perceive "third world literatures" as mere national allegory (as in the case of Fredric Jameson), or as symbolic cultural capital, and "thereby [reduce] the literary to a second-order aesthetic category."[59] This is particularly useful to the studies on *Servet-i Fünun*, like this dissertation, since the literary output of this group has often been read as purely aesthetic and thus not political.

**Politics of the apolitical: My contribution**

Situating itself within the last group in terms of its general approach, this project investigates how the litterateurs of the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine were different in comparison to their immediate predecessors and how their new approach to their environment and their work in turn fundamentally altered the nature of the relationships in the literary world of the imperial capital near the turn of the twentieth century. Also known as *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* in the scholarship, the "literary movement" created around this group has traditionally been perceived as the first aesthetically-inclined modern endeavor, thus praised for its literary qualities, yet often seen as disconnected from and

[57] Ertürk: 2011, 157.
[58] Ibid., 165.
[59] Ibid., 184.

even embittered towards the social and political transformation unfolding around them. *Servet-i Fünun* thus came to be equated with being apolitical, partially because the bulk of their literary production occurred during the rule of Abdülhamit II, who is deeply associated with a harsh censorship regime. This is an unfortunate reductionism that prevents us from understanding the social, cultural and emotional transformations that this movement was a part of, in relation to the field of literature and to the society at large. As Orhan Koçak underlines, "Edebiyat-ı Cedide moved away from superficiality, as it took, as its subject matter, this very superficiality and alienation. This was the case in all Halit Ziya novels, particularly in *Mai ve Siyah*."[60]

*Mai ve Siyah* was indeed a turning point in the history of modern Ottoman literature in that it exposed some of the central vulnerabilities that intellectuals struggled with during the last decades of the nineteenth century. While Zeynep Uysal studies this novel and Halit Ziya's work in general via the concept of individualism that emerged through a close reading of his oeuvre, I seek to expand on her work by investigating the concept of authorship, integrating the immediate context in which the modern individual became possible and how it, in turn, influenced the later generations. As such, my work speaks to various fields of literary scholarship including authorship studies, studies on Bildungromane and Künstlerromane, history of printing and publishing, as well as studies on emotions and literary modernity.

[60] Koçak: 1996, 94.

# Chapter 1:

## The New Rules of Art:
## Hamidian Publishing Scene during the 1890s

> Abdülhamit never became our friend [*bize yar olmuyordu*] because he did not receive the special services he expected from *Servet-i Fünun*. The sultan was training another journalist who published with pictures [*başka bir resimli gazeteci*]. And that was Baba Tahir, who had been acting like a brigand on the Babıali slope for more than five years. […] Baba Tahir, who received undercover support from Abdülhamit, started to gain fame around Babıali. Even though his magazine *Malumat* had been indefinitely closed by the Directorate of the Press (*Matbuat Müdürlüğü*) three or four times because of his transgressions, it would be reopened again the next day thanks to a remittal by the Grand Vizier.[61]

These are the words of Ahmet İhsan (Tokgöz), founder of *Alem Matbaası*, the publishing house that put out the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine, one of the most significant literary periodicals of the time by any measure. *Alem Matbaası* ranked as the seventh most prolific publishing house (for literary works in Turkish) of the 1800s even though it had been operational for only the last decade of the century; it constituted a leading institution in new printing technologies (particularly concerning images) and the birthplace of the *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* (the New Literature) movement, whose members were extremely influential in shaping the major literary discussions of the time. [62] It also received a prize

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[61] Ahmet İhsan Tokgöz, *Matbuat Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 1993), 67-9.

[62] *Alem Matbaası* was founded in 1890 and the publication of its periodical *Servet-i Fünun*

in the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.[63] As an entrepreneur in this burgeoning field, Ahmet İhsan is, however, endlessly frustrated with the preferential treatment on the part of the palace and the consequent unfair competition between different publishing houses, as illustrated in the quote above.

Writing from the republican 1930s, Ahmet İhsan entirely disengages himself from all things Hamidian, as the period had by then already codified as one of strict state control, censorship and utter tyranny, repeating the earlier Western European accounts produced to delegitimize Abdülhamit II's regime and bolstered by the general anti-Ottoman discourse of the young Turkish Republic.[64] While his reaction is neither surprising nor unique to him, he was far from isolated from the power dynamics between the palace and the world of publishing; he received funds from the palace and related institutions, became often involved in negotiation with different censors and even sent spy reports to the palace.

This chapter scrutinizes the complex nature of this relationship between the palace and the publishing world in general, and *Alem Matbaası* in particular, with an aim to lay out the contextual background that made the composition and serialization of *Mai ve Siyah* possible. I argue that the ambiguity deliberately designed into the state regulations in the field of education and publishing (fields related to the management of culture) in order to provide a leeway for more arbitrariness, in effect provided a new kind

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started the following year; it was not, however, until Recaizade Ekrem joined Ahmet İhsan's team that it became a literary (or rather, literature-heavy) magazine. For more, see Ahmet İhsan, *Matbuat Hatıralarım*.

63 Orhan Koloğlu, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türkiye'de Basın* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1992), 46.

64 Some examples of this are Paul Fesch, *Constantinople aux Dernier Jours d'Abdul-Hamid* (Paris: Librairie des Sciences Politiques et Sociales, Marcel Riviere, 1907) and, Sir Edwin Pears, *Life of Abdul Hamid* (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1917).

of freedom for literary producers, in that they could, for example, engage in negotiation with censors, or open themselves up to a variety of educational experiences thanks due the inter-ethnically more permeable character of the system. This new room for movement (literally and metaphorically) created not only the vibrant literary scene in which a provocative meta-novel like *Mai ve Siyah* could be published but also provided role models for generations to come. To understand the relationship between the palace and the publishing house, the tripartite analysis in this chapter centers on **(1)** the educational system which the young writers of the time, like Halit Ziya, emerged out of, **(2)** the establishment of journalism as a profession and its impact on the dynamics of literary production, disrupting traditional relationships of patronage and the predominance of conventional genres, **(3)** the regulations on publishing, their day-to-day implementation and the set of negotiations therein, in a period where the palace and the publishing house "needed each other," or in other words, were firmly engaged in a structure of mutual benefit.

**Standardized education and the emergence of a new individual**

While scholars have already extensively talked about the individual/reflexive inclinations of *Servet-i Fünun* writers in comparison with the previous generation of ardent social reformers, they usually explain it with the harshness of Abdülhamit II's censorship regime. This is a well-established yet skewed argument, which entirely ignores the conditions in which this generation grew up, making then possible a set of personal habits

that transformed into new ways of perceiving and producing literature.[65] The most remarkable of these habits was a novel type of reading, i.e. the individual consumption of a wider variety of texts, enabled by the increased facility of book ownership, a key feature of the new education policies that created Halit Ziya and his contemporaries.

When it comes to the transformation in the education system in the Ottoman Empire, what remains significant beyond the discussion of whether it was successful or not in accomplishing the inaugural intentions of the state, is a cross-religious permeability that allowed an unprecedented level of variety in individual experience of primary and secondary education, following the implementation of new state policies during the nineteenth century, particularly the Regulation of Public Education (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi*) of 1869.[66] Given the fact that a major intent of the change in education policies was to create centralized unity and standardization, the creation of further diversity and amplitude of choice may have been perceived as an unwelcome side-effect on the part of the policy makers.[67] Regardless, this new systemic porosity,

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[65] For instance, Selçuk Çıkla observes that, because *Servet-i Fünun* writers had to operate under Abdülhamit II's oppressive regime, they are unexceptionally seen as people who wrote about the private sphere, family life rather than the streets and the political life in the empire. "Unlike the intellectuals of *Tanzimat*, whose interests are shaped around social and political matters," he argues, "*Servet-i Fünun* intelligentsia was more inclined towards art and philosophy." (Çıkla: 2004, 35)

[66] This regulation was an extremely important turning point in the history of Ottoman educational modernization. In fact, in his book entitled *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908*, Selçuk Akşin Somel suggests that "[o]ne could consider the period between 1838 and 1869 as the early stage of Ottoman educational reforms, where reform measures were taken on individual basis or without considering the administrative, financial and professional aspects as a whole. The Regulation of Public Education, on the other hand, would provide a legal and institutional framework for Ottoman public education that would last until the Young Turk period. (Somel: 2001, 51)

[67] Somel conceptualizes the nineteenth century Ottoman policies on education as a failure in general, "since structural factors such as chronic weakness of finances, the inability to formulate an ideological synthesis of Islamism and modernism as well as ethnic heterogeneity constituted the main obstacles of this educational reform project of authoritarian-Islamic modernization." (Ibid., 13)

which could escape scholars who focus on the state intentions rather than the outcomes and individual experiences, provided an opportunity, for Muslim and non-Muslim subjects alike, to attend schools that were formerly limited to specific religious groups.[68] In "Education and Autobiography at the End of the Ottoman Empire," Benjamin Fortna draws attention to "the range of educational options available in this period, e.g. public and private, state and non-state, foreign and domestic, formal and informal (e.g. home schooling), ethnically or religiously segregated and mixed, single sex and coeducational, etc.," all under the large umbrella of the newly-founded Ministry of Public Education (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nezareti*).[69] Enabled by the post-Reform Edict (*Islahat Hatt-ı Hümayunu*) secularizing tendencies of the above-mentioned regulation, students and parents could now pick and choose among a larger diversity of educational options with differing curricula, and still remain within the realm of state-regulated institutions. This very phenomenon of large-scale secularization and centralization allowed, for example, Halit Ziya to attend the Armenian Mechitarist School in İzmir, despite considerable criticism from fellow Muslims towards the Uşakızade family, as the only Turkish/Muslim

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[68] The schooling options were significantly more limited for Muslim subjects prior to the eighteenth century. Somel observes that, with the exception of the Court School at the Topkapı Palace (*Enderun Mektebi*), the training center for Janissary novices (*Acemi Oğlanları Mektebi*) and government bureaus that trained novices in the art of literary style (*kitabet*), Ottoman education consisted mainly of religious schools. These exceptions, however, were not open to common Muslims during the heyday of the empire. "The pre-modern Ottoman-Islamic school system," he argues, "was oriented towards the teaching of religious knowledge with only very little worldly and practical educational content" (Ibid., 15).

[69] Benjamin Fortna, "Education and Autobiography at the End of the Ottoman Empire," *Die Welt des Islams* Vol. 41, Issue 1 (Mar., 2001), 1-31. The Ministry of Public Education was founded in 1857, "due to the need of coordinating the increasing number of government schools more effectively" and to better supervise "non-Muslim and foreign educational institutions." Somel argues that "the foundation of the ministry was a major institutional step toward the secularization of public education." (Somel: 2001, 8) This institution eventually assumed the additional role of regulating and implementing state censorship during the rule of Abdülhamit II.

student at that particular school.[70]

For the young Halit Ziya, the single-most fundamental reason for attending a non-Muslim educational institution was to get a better education in French language and literature. Before enrolling in the Mechitarist School, he attended *İzmir Rüştiyesi* for a brief period, while taking French lessons from a foreign lawyer, and began translating novels from French shortly thereafter.[71] His disillusionment with the *rüştiye* education, which was not up to par with his enthusiasm to learn more about Western cultures, does

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[70] L Sami Akalın, *Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil: Hayatı, Sanatı, Eserleri* (İstanbul: Varlık Yayınevi, 1962), 5. Given the extreme uncommonness for a Muslim child to attend a missionary school in the empire, this critical behavior is not surprising at all. In fact, Muslim children would later be officially banned from attending missionary schools in the vilayet of Aydın. (Deringil: 1998, 117) However, the fact that it had become possible, at this time, for a Muslim child to attend a non-Muslim school is very significant. The Mechitarists were a congregation of Benedictine monks in the Armenian Catholic Church, initially established in the early eighteenth century in Sebastia (today's Sivas) by Abbot Mechitar. For more information, see Kevork Bardakjian, *The Mekhitarist Contributions to Armenian Culture and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Harvard College Library, 1976), and Gürsoy Şahin, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Katolik Ermeniler: Sivaslı Mihitar ve Mihitaristler, 1676-1749* (İstanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2008.)

[71] Earlier in life, Halit Ziya had enrolled in Fatih Askeri Rüştiyesi, a military middle school that was founded during the rule of Abdulaziz in 1875, after having briefly attended a district school by the name of *Mercan Mahalle Mektebi*, and another one in Saraçhane (District of Fatih) in Istanbul. (See: Ömer Faruk Huyugüzel, *İzmir'de Edebiyat ve Fikir Hareketleri Üzerine Araştırmalar.* (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür Yayını, 2004), 150). *Mahalle mektepleri* (district schools) were common establishments throughout the empire, teaching literacy to children from four to seven year old, through the reading of the Qur'an. In his monograph on Halit Ziya, Sami Akalın notes that, as a young child, Halit Ziya was attracted to the idea of enrolling in a "new style" school, rather than continuing with the district school he was initially a student at. Arguing that *Mercan* was too long a commute, he eventually enrolled himself in the school in Saraçhane, a decision that was, to his fortune, accepted by his parents. Akalın is impressed with Halit Ziya's agency and assertiveness at such a young age, and emphasizes the infrequency of such disobedience for that particular period. (Akalın: 1962, 3-4.) In line with the young Halit Ziya's preference for the new style schooling, Benjamin Fortna argues that the modern school "had the advantage of state initiative and state finance, which would operate as constants throughout the period from the mid-1880s onwards." He adds, "[i]t therefore also controlled the discussion and could portray the old schooling as outmoded and moribund in the reading materials disseminated to students." (Fortna: 2011, 54.) To explain the ease with which Halit Ziya was admitted to the new school, Akşin Somel observes that this event happened in 1870s "when new types of schools [still] had an insufficient number of pupils, thus seeking any additional pupil. Thus, Uşaklıgil was registered as a pupil of this school without being asked for consent from his parents, or for identity papers. (Somel: 2001, 257)

not mean, however, that schools that were most typically attended by Muslim students were not introduced to Western curricula. To the contrary, the pervasiveness of French language as a school subject across all educational institutions was a consequence of the 1869 reformations, designed by the French Minister of Education Jean Duruy himself.[72] Halit Ziya's decision becomes then more telling of this new preponderance of individual decisions and the ability to design one's own educational path. As Fortna argues, the slightly different options available to most students were so diverse that it created a "near-random quality of the individual trajectories," and even when formal rules prevented access to certain schools for Muslim students, "these could sometimes be circumvented, by a petition or the interference of a well-placed relative."[73] Family was indeed influential in shaping the nature of students' schooling, and sometimes had to face with consequences: Halit Ziya recalls in his memoirs, that his grandfather once received a group of messengers reporting harsh criticism from the neighborhood for the child's enrollment in a Christian school, and was even accused of blasphemy.[74]

In addition to making for cross-religious and cross-lingual interaction possible, standardized education brought about a crucial habit into the lives of young pupils that transformed the ways in which they interacted with the written text: the school textbooks, as the backbone of the new schooling, helped set up a system that facilitated faster production of printed material, required book ownership, and thus rendered interaction

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[72] Somel: 2001, 4. In fact, one of the motivating factors for reforming Muslim schools was to catch up to the quality of foreign schools in which Muslim children could now enroll. "The final aim of the Ministry of Public Education was to leave no Muslim pupil in foreign schools." (Ibid., 204)

[73] Fortna: 2011, 11 and 16. Unlike Halit Ziya, who spent his late teens in İzmir, Ahmet Cemil- the protagonist was a student of *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* in İstanbul, following a more typical educational path (for a Muslim subject) in *sübyan mektebi* (elementary school) and *askeri rüştiye* (military middle school), Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 47-52.

[74] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 195.

with books a predominantly personal relationship, which then affected the practices of studying and reading, making them more solitary than ever.[75] The initial acquaintance with books at school introduced young students to books as objects that can be owned, cared for and displayed. This was in stark contrast with earlier instructional practices that relied more on the oral transmission of information. The intimate relationship between the readers and their printed texts (mostly books) thus became the defining characteristic of modern consumers of literature.

Not surprisingly, then, a new addiction to books as objects and (by extension) to reading simultaneously overtook many young people including Halit Ziya during this time, and ironically, often took valuable time from schoolwork. There appeared more and more "readers become enamored of reading, sometimes even to the point of distraction."[76] Book ownership was an essential dimension of Halit Ziya's engagement with literature, a main factor that further nourished his love for reading. He recalls in his memoirs that he started at an early age to collect books and periodicals, which he treated with utmost care, not just because of their sheer content but also because of their value as personal belongings. He would diligently have his books and collected articles bound and keep them in order, savoring every moment of his interaction with them.[77] This

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[75] Selçuk Akşin Somel points out to the fact that while "prior to the Tanzimat-period there were no school textbooks in the modern sense," "[d]uring the Hamidian period all levels of schools as well as most of the curricula were covered by regular textbooks, signifying the settlement of this practice. In fact the tendency of the Hamidian regime to establish efficient control of course content at all levels of educational institutions within the Ottoman borders accelerated the promotion of textbooks" (Somel: 2001, 189). Textbooks were not only critical for students' relationship to the printed text, but also "writing them was an important stimulus to authors. The remarkable growth of the state school system in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods created demand for a wide range of texts (Fortna: 2011, 202). An illustration of this phenomenon would be the central role of Recaizade Ekrem's *Talim-i Edebiyat*, originally written as a textbook for secondary education, in causing a series of lively literary discussions.

[76] Ibid., 211.

[77] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1): 93. Books as one of the objects defining writerhood will be scrutinized in

relationship to books as objects that are selected, collected and owned by him and him only constituted, from early on, a particular type of relationship to the act of reading, which was now conceptualized, more than anything else, as a personality-defining habit, much like book collecting. In fact, Halit Ziya points to the fact that being a book collector not only fed into his enthusiasm for literature, but it also help expand his repertoire of read texts. "My increasingly high enthusiasm for reading could not be satisfied just with novels any longer," he reminisces, "I started to order every single book I had heard about."[78]

It is through this infatuation that the young Halit Ziya was soon introduced to the prominent writers of the earlier generation, such as Namık Kemal, Abdülhak Hamit, and Şemsettin Sami, whose works were now carefully shelved next to Ahmet Midhat, his childhood apotheosis, to enrich his Turkish literary collection.[79] Those were soon complemented by books written in French and translations of works from Western literatures; as a matter of fact, as he kept on adding to his personal library, the sole limit seems to have been of financial nature. He confesses, "I did not have any guide in selecting these books, I was solely governed my whim and monetary restrictions."[80] While the lack of necessary finances seems to be the biggest issue for the young book-enthusiast, the support of his grandfather and mother proved instrumental in collecting reading material, along with Halit Ziya's stong-willed forbearance in not purchasing the much desired confectionary, sorbets, cigarettes, and neckties. This newfound addiction for reading would take him from prominent Ottoman authors of the time, to French

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greater detail in Chapter 3, "Objects and Spaces that Make an Author: Commodification of Intellectual Lifestyles."

78 Ibid., 153.

79 Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1): 183.

80 Ibid., 184.

literature through the works of Jules Verne, Louis Figuier, and Camille Flammarion, provide him refuge at times of emotional difficulty and would eventually give him incentive to write his own texts. "Thus I began to experience my own writings," the author later states in his memoirs, "such audacity at that age was a folly that could only be excused at that time."[81]

This novel intimacy with books as privately owned objects led to the personalization of the literary consumption. Reading consequently became a solitary activity where the literature-lover would sit in his personal study room and "curl up" with a book to spend hours on his own. As Fortna observes, "this period witnessed the emergence of a new type of reading. The old reading dispensation, a world of low rates of literacy, the predominance of manuscripts, "high" literature and religious texts and communal reading, was rapidly yielding to a system of rising readership, popular literature and individualized consumption of reading material.[82] Orhan Koçak also emphasizes the development of a new type of private sphere during this time, as the abundance of texts accompanied with an atmosphere of political turmoil in the social realm turned intellectual activities from politically-charged social performances to privately-enjoyed personal pleasures.[83] Quoting Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, the prominent early-twentieth century novelist and literary scholar, Koçak argues that, particularly with the novels of Ahmet Midhat Efendi, there appeared a leisurely reading time that stemmed, "not from a sense of duty, but from a sentiment of escapism." He observes,

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[81] Ibid., 185, Halit Ziya describes his personal study/library as a refuge where the distress and suffering of the outside world cannot enter. "Inside my library all the outside pain ceases," he recalls, "I would see all the sadness, tiredness, the pessimism that would draw me close to a decision of leaving everything behind and taking off, all of that to become startled and come to a halt" (456).

[82] Fortna: 2011, 209.

[83] Koçak: 1996, 109.

"the purification of reading and culture from politics, and its imitation to the realm of relaxation was a condition that already existed within the lives of Servet-i Fünun writers, *even before* the political prohibitions became harsher."[84]

Paralleling Halit Ziya's early life experiences, an equally intimate relationship with texts can be traced in his protagonist Ahmet Cemil's first acquaintance with literature; to be more specific, first Ottoman classical and then Western poetry. The story of his friendship to Hüseyin Nazmi is woven together with their shared fascination with literature and reading; this shared experience does not make it any less personal or intimate for either one of them; rather Halit Ziya uses this connection to give us a sense of just how close the two are: "they were classmates; both boarding students, these two young hearts who were away from their families then developed a close friendship and a commonality in their desires and opinions. […] First their interaction was limited to an exchange of feelings; but then... when their young minds started to grow and when they really understood what they read, then emerged a reading madness (*mütalaa cinneti*) in both. They wanted to read everything they could lay their hands on, with an appetite particular to those that just discovered something."[85]

Ahmet Cemil and Hüseyin Nazmi read historical texts for a while, then gave up, since they deemed the school readings sufficient within that field; plus they did not want to channel their intellectual energies into history, "the graveyard of times past." They still wanted to dream but not appear it; then, as they started the "literature track" at school, they found what they were looking for: poetry. In short, although they may not have been

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[84] Ibid., 109. As a "teacher of the masses" par excellence, it is somewhat ironic that Ahmet Midhat's work paved the way for a socially disinterested and non-didactic literary movement like *Servet-i Fünun*.

[85] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 53.

too selective initially, certain preferences began to emerge after a certain level of familiarity with literature, and more specifically poetic art. They first read old *divans*, researched Fuzuli, Baki, Nef'i, Nabi and Nedim. While impressed with some of these at first, they soon became unsatisfied as their souls remained unshaken by their lingual musicality (*lisan musikisi*) and verbal magnificence (*elfaz tantanası*).[86] Their discovery of French poetry via the randomly discovered work of contemporary French poet Edmond Haraucort started a process of transformation in their literary trajectory.[87] Not knowing where to start first and scared of what they might find, Ahmet Cemil became soon deeply touched by the macabre tone he found, "unable to look away as if his entire spirituality was melting away under the sorrow of this poem."[88]

The particular sensations that emerged from this intimate/personalized kind of engagement with literary texts encouraged Ahmet Cemil to develop an equally individualized type of literary self-expression, thus a new type of poethood for the Ottoman context. In other words, the individualization of his reading practice, in comparison with earlier generations, led him, along with other (and non-fictional) aspiring writers of his time to approach the act of literary creation as an autonomous rather than communal act. "Ah, I feel so much and I fail to analyze it properly," he confesses to Hüseyin Nazmi, "There, – he pointed to his brain – I feel something there, but it slips out of my fingers like fleeting images in a dream." The difficulty of writing stemmed from the fact that those new sensations, experienced through an unprecedentedly personal engagement with literary texts needed equally new styles of

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[86] Ibid., 55.

[87] Edmond Haraucourt, 1856-1941. The particular text they discovered was *L'Ame Nue* (The Naked Soul), published in 1885 (Ibid., 57).

[88] Ibid., 58.

expression; and expressing them was of vital significance. “If only I knew what I wanted to write, if only I could see it described in front of me, then I think I could die; I could eternally close my eyes as a man who wholly took his share in this life.”[89] Having sensed the connection between being a good poet and a sensible, well-educated and profuse reader, he burned his old drafts written in “old-style” prior to his discovery of Western literature and immersed himself in Goethe, Schiller, Milton, Hugo, Musset and Lamartine.[90]

Like his protagonist Ahmet Cemil, Halit Ziya's literary trajectory followed a pattern where he first experimented with local prose fiction, then to the French “serialists” (feuilleton novelists) such as Alexandre Dumas, Eugène Sue, Frédéric Soulié and Paul Feval.[91] As he made his way through those authors, the urge to write his own literary texts overtook him and he decided to adopt writing as a profession.[92] At the age of sixteen, he sent his first article to the *Hazine-i Evrak* magazine in İstanbul. Entitled “Deniz Danası” (Sea Cow), this scientific article, loosely translated from the work of French scientist Louis Figuier's (1819-1894) *Tableau de la nature: La vie et les mœurs des animaux: Zoophytes et mollusques* (first published in 1866, Turkish title: Elvah-ı Tabiat) was followed by others including “Uyku nedir?,” (What is sleep?) also loosely

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89 Ibid., 62.

90 The lack of satisfaction this generation experienced with Ottoman classical poetry and the possibilities it granted them would soon translate into a complete lack of interest, manifest in the immediately following generation. For example, Hüseyin Cahit (born in 1875) clearly stated, in an interview with Ruşen Eşref Ünaydın, that he has nor any knowledge nor opinion on the “old literature.” “I have not read it, I do not know it,” he states, “I am by no means indebted to old literature. I believe that, in comparison, I am much more indebted to French literature” (Ünaydın, *Diyorlar ki*, quoted in Selçuk Çıkla: 2004, 268).

91 In “Gerilere Doğru,” (Uşaklıgil: 2005 (2), 31).

92 As Carter Findley argues, the profession of literary writerhood became a distinct option, a career track independent of bureaucratic posts. “The administrative and intellectual elites began to differentiate, far more than in the past, as the rise of journalism and a publishing industry made possible literary careers independent of imperial patronage or official appointment” (Findley: 1989, 175).

translated from another book from the same author.[93] Soon after these first attempts at publication, while he was still working in his father's carpet shop, he was encouraged by his French teacher Pierre Vasel to experiment more with the short story genre and put together a list of major works in French literature for systematic self-education in this domain. Thus delving deeper into the world of French fiction, Halit Ziya's new fascination inspired him to consider publishing his own literary magazine in İzmir. *Nevruz* was thus established in March 1884, under the leadership of (the then seventeen-year-old) Halit Ziya and his friends Tevfik Nevzat and Bıçakçızade Hakkı, as the first non-governmental literary/scientific magazine in İzmir.[94] *Nevruz* was soon to be followed by the longer-lived *Hizmet* (est. 1886) where he established himself as a short story writer and novelist.[95] The emergence and proliferation of journalism as a profession provided both role models and plenty of reading material for the young Halit Ziya, making these early career moves possible. In fact, the unprecedentedly large reservoir of texts available

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[93] The first article appeared in *Hazine-i Evrak* in March 3rd, 1883 (Huyugüzel: 2004 (2), 151; Akalın: 1962, 6). The latter article was published by the official journal of Aydın province, which was launched in 1869. (Uşaklıgil, "50 yıl evvel yazıya nasıl başladım?" *Son Posta*, nr. 4488, 6 Şubat 1943.) Huyugüzel observes that we unfortunately do not have copies of this journal any longer, except for a few articles. (Huyugüzel: 2004 (2), 56.)

[94] *Nevruz* was printed in İstanbul and distributed in İzmir. A fellow İzmirite Ubeydullah Efendi, who was publishing the *Haver* magazine with Beşir Fuad at the time, helped Halit Ziya and his friends with the printing process in İstanbul (Huyugüzel: 2004 (1) 19; 2004 (2), 153). The poetic prose pieces were mainly inspired by Mustafa Reşit, whose magazine, *Envar-ı Zeka* (Lights of Intellect) featured some literary translations by Halit Ziya in the beginning of 1884 (Huyugüzel: (1), 57). Despite some of the major differences of opinion between him and Tevfik Nevzat (because the latter had a penchant for Eastern cultures whereas Halit Ziya was a "Westernist"), the *Nevruz* crew went on to produce twelve issues until August of the same year; Halit Ziya published poetry translations there, as well as short pieces of poetic prose, which were to become a fad, much to the displeasure of traditionalists (Huyugüzel: 2004 (2), 152).

[95] Because neither Tevfik Nevzat, nor Halit Ziya had reached the appropriate age to hold publishing rights, the typesetter Şerif Efendi was chosen to be the concessionaire (Akalın: 1962, 8). Halit Ziya serialized his first novels, *Sefile* (1887), *Nemide* (1888)*, Bir Ölünün Defteri* (Diary of a Dead Person, 1890)*,* and *Ferdi ve Şürekası* (Ferdi and Company, 1892), and also many other short stories and non-fictional pieces on literature in this magazine.

for reading in Turkish was largely a product of journalistic profession, carried to its early peak by Ahmet Midhat Efendi, who constituted a major force in the transformation of the existent relations of literary sponsorship and in the shifting of popularity towards narrative genres.

**Journalism, literary patronage and the narrative-turn**

The development of journalism was instrumental in shifting the relations between the sponsor, the producer/author and the audience/reader of literature during the last decades of the nineteenth century. It did this by providing a new venue (i.e. the newspaper and the periodical) through which writers could reach audiences and audiences, for their part, could respond to the material published. This resulted in two major developments, formative of the context in which *Mai ve Siyah* was serialized: first, it facilitated a narrative/prosaic turn, i.e. a proliferation of narrative genres (such as the short story and the novel) at the expense of the lyrical, and a proliferation of prose at the expense of poetry; second, it moved the production of literature further away from the court by establishing it as a profession separate from the realm of the state and the bureaucracy and by crafting a new audience for it (along with the above-mentioned educational reforms).

The emergence of the newspaper and journalism in the Ottoman Empire surely began before Ahmet Midhat appeared, earlier in the nineteenth century; yet Ahmet Midhat stands as a deeply transformative figure in this field, as a prolific writer with an

acutely entrepreneurial spirit.[96] Nicknamed a "forty horsepower writing machine, Ahmet Midhat Efendi was, without a doubt, one of the most influential figures for the young readers (and future writers) of the time.[97] In the words of Ahmet İhsan, who was born in the same year as Halit Ziya, Ahmet Midhat was the archetypal figure of a social/cultural guide for the Turkish youth of the period, and his newspaper constituted "the *qibla* of aspiring writers," particularly the ones who sought to produce literature "in novel ways."[98] A fellow *Servet-i Fünun* author, Hüseyin Cahit (Yalçın, 1875-1957) similarly notes that already at six or seven years old, he had sensed that Ahmet Midhat's writings were creating a novel approach to literature, leaving Cahit's old-fashioned parents in frequent disagreement with his general attitude as to what constitutes a literary text. The young child, on the other hand, took the prolific novelist as a role model for his future writerly self, and noted that he saw himself "among Ahmet Midhat Efendi's loyal readers."[99] Halit Ziya himself recalls years later in one of the retrospective short stories he wrote a few years prior to his death, that Ahmet Midhat's *Letaif-i Rivayat* series were

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[96] For more on this, see Orhan Koloğlu, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Türkiye'de Basın* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1992); Hasan Refik Ertuğ, *Basın ve Yayın Hareketleri Tarihi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Gazetecilik Enstitüsü, 1970); Server İskit, *Türkiye'de Matbuat İdareleri ve Politikaları* (İstanbul: Tan Basımevi, 1943); Hıfzı Topuz, *100 Soruda Türk Basın Tarihi* (İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınları: 1973).

[97] Findley: 1989, 175. Born in 1844, approximately two decades before Halit Ziya, Ahmet Midhat Efendi's meager background and the early death of his father forced him into professional life at a very early age. Following an apprenticeship at the Spice Bazaar, he moved to Vidin (in today's Bulgaria) to live with a brother who worked as a borough administrator, and later graduated from a *rüştiye* in Niş (in today's Serbia). Throughout his life, he worked as a scribe, journalist, newspaper director, instructor (of history, philosophy and religion), trader/businessman, machine operator, translator, typesetter, farmer, and in various administrative positions in a series of (governmental and private) institutions (Ülgen: 1994, 4).

[98] Tokgöz: 1993, 32.

[99] Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1975), 15.

instrumental in his development as a future novelist.[100] The magnitude of his impact was mostly due to the accessibility of his prose, his insatiable curiosity about a variety of subjects, and his prolificacy as a writer. On his own language, he wrote, "I have not written anything which might be called "literary." This is because at the period I wrote my works, the part of our population uninterested in literature consisted, without exaggeration, of ninety-nine percent. My goal was to speak with the majority, to try to illuminate them, to be an interpreter of their problems."[101]

The concern to reach a large audience constituted a major cause for a turn towards narrative prose, initiated largely through the work of Ahmet Midhat. While poetry still was the prestige genre; *hikaye*, a term that encompassed both the short story and the novel began to have the upper hand in terms of production and circulation rates.[102] This transformation sits at the center of the plotline in *Mai ve Siyah*, a novel about a poet. The first scene in *Mai ve Siyah* that displays all members of the *Mir'at-ı Şuun* having a celebratory dinner at Tepebaşı Bahçesi, Ahmet Cemil delivers an enthusiastic if slightly embittered tirade on the future of poetry and poetic language. "If only you knew what kind of language poetry needs! Such a language..." he tries explaining, "I don't quite know what to liken it to… One that is as eloquent as an orator-like soul, one that would serve as an interpreter to the heart's various delicacies, to the depths of mind, to excitement and anger, one that would cry along with our soul, with the same mourning grief."[103] The description of this ideal language goes on for another while and constitutes

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[100] In "Gerilere Doğru," (Uşaklıgil: 2005 (2), 31).
[101] Kamil Yazgıç, Ahmet Midhat Efendi (İstanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1940), 13, Robert Finn's translation.
[102] See Günil Özlem Ayaydın Cebe, "19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı Toplumu ve Basılı Türkçe Edebiyat: Etkileşimler, Değişimler, Çeşitlilik" Ph.D. dissertation (Ankara: Bilkent University, 2009).
[103] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 23.

one of the most central parts of the novel; yet, not a great deal of attention seems to be paid to the curious fact that this pioneering text of the nineteenth century, a fictional treatise on poetry is itself a novel.

As somebody born into this transition period, Halit Ziya showcases the telltale signs of this "genre shift": he wanted to become a poet and when this dream did not materialize, he was slightly heart-broken though comfortable in identifying himself as a novelist (*hikaye-nüvis*). He explains his early days: "I was at such an age that, as the springs of that age passed with the excitement particular to lovers, I too was caught up in a crisis of excitement, so much so that it even gave me attacks of delirium that made me compose *ghazals* and other types of verse."[104] Thus he decided to write poetry, only to have his younger uncle Süleyman suggest that he better "just give up," and his friend İzzet Bey remark with blunt sincerity, "you can never become a poet. You should be satisfied with prose..."[105] His later experience with prose poetry (*mensur şiirler*) could be seen as much a transitioning phase between poetry and the novel as the manifestation of an innovative curiosity and consequent drive in bending genre rules.[106] In the end,

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[104] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 194. While it can be argued that Halit Ziya's initial attraction to poetry can be explained by the persistence of poetry as "the most literary genre" during this period, an equally plausible argument would be that young and excited people are universally drawn to poetry because of its lyrical and verbally economic character, making it seem as a text that is easy to write in its simplicity. Everybody thinks they can do it, often with catastrophic results.

[105] Ibid., 191-2.

[106] Another and more destructive blow of criticism comes a bit later from Muallim Naci, who responds to an early prose poem by Halit Ziya entitled Aşkımın Mezarı (the Tomb of my Love) with a demeaning and deriding commentary, as he publishes it in Tercüman-ı Hakikat. "To look for love in the graveyard is to look for life in the death," comments Naci, rather banally, according to Halit Ziya, who, as a young man, could only bite his lips with fury in response. This initial irritation and grudge would later intensify and pave the way for his self-positioning alongside Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem, Muallim Naci's "archenemy" within the literary debates of the time, even prior to Halit Ziya's move to İstanbul in 1893, when he was still writing in İzmir in the *Hizmet* magazine during the late 1880s. Recaizade's earlier support when Halit Ziya was first experimenting with the poetic prose genre (*Mensur Şiirler*) further strenghtened these ties of mutual appreciation between the young author and his more-

however, the young Halit Ziya decides to settle in his literary career as a novelist and short story writer. "[I realized] I had to become a story writer (*hikaye-nüvis*) only. Otherwise I would surely have the same fate with those who could not become anything because they wanted to be so many things all at once."[107]

The appropriateness of this decision given his success in his later career notwithstanding, the "failure" to become a poet becomes a trope in Halit Ziya's life, humiliating him at multiple instances. An early manifestation of this can be found in a letter addressed to Ahmet İhsan right before the serialization of *Mai ve Siyah*, which the latter published as part of his introductory praise to the novel. Referring to *Mai ve Siyah* itself, Halit Ziya wrote a few months prior to the start of its serialization: "I cannot comprehend how you can spare a place for my story in your magazine that is a seat of beauty (*cilvegah*) for exquisite works. I am afraid Halit Ziya will remain rather dull, rather black next to Fikret and Şahab, who shine like two radiating stars in the arms of Master Ekrem's glowing genius." It is no coincidence that the two names Halit Ziya cites in his letter are both poets, given the continued prestige of the genre.[108]

Despite this lingering prestige, limits of representation in poetry were increasingly falling short of the new readership's demands for stories they can relate to, for which

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experienced role model and mentor, foreshadowing future alliances within the literary world of İstanbul. The letter that Recaizade sent to the *Hizmet* office was published with the title of *Taltifname* (Letter of praise) in the issue that was published in February 2, 1887 (nr. 24), as a response to many criticizing comments Halit Ziya had been receiving at the time. (Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 192; "Elli Yıl Evvel Yazıya Nasıl Başladım" *Son Posta,* nr. 4488, February 6, 1943; Cemil Yener: 1959, 15; Huyugüzel: 2004 (2), 19, 58, 157.

[107] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 186.

[108] Ahmet Cemil bears significant resemblance to Tevfik Fikret, although it would be difficult to argue that the protagonist was intended to be an exact fictional reflection of the real life poet. One of the clearer references is embodied in the existence of the sister Ikbal who is abused and driven to death by her husband. Similarly Tevfik Fikret's sister, Sıdıka Hanım died because of her husband's abuse, leading him to write a poem for her, entitled *Hemşirem İçin* (For my sister).

prose fiction proved to be a more appropriate genre. As Timothy Unwin argues, "the novel maintains […] a peculiarly powerful relationship with the real […] because it operates typically in a mode of verbal profusion (unlike poetry which, typically, is intensive and operates in a mode of verbal economy). It often speaks of a world which is recognizable, indeed verifiable, to the point where there is possible confusion of the fictional and the real."[109] With the structural transformation in the representation of reality in literature, poetry as a traditional/classical form had started to lose the social ground on which it operated as a mode of literary production with immediate relevance to people's lives.[110] This trend was such that prose was slowly starting to be at the center of literary debates as well, often leaving some of the more old-fashioned participants perplexed at what to think. Halit Ziya explains,

> after awhile, attacks were directed towards prose and found a favorable ground there to exert their violence. Indeed the language of the prose that had emerged during that period did not look like anything that came before. It resembled neither Sinan Paşa's *Tazarruat*, nor Akif Paşa's *Tabsıra*. A group had emerged, which spoke with a language that open the flag of rebellion against all the commands of that sacred law […], against the methods of eloquence and rhetoric (*fesahat ve belagat*) and whatever esteemed and respected form there was, already established in the language.[111]

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[109] Unwin: 1997, 6.

[110] As Jocelyn Sharlet points out, "[p]oems are not just exchanged *in* patronage relationships: they provide a commentary *on* them" (Sharlet: 2011, 45).

[111] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 654. We see a similar experimentation with language in the case of Ahmet Cemil's poetry as well. The narrator reports that "[h]is work progressed very slowly. After weeks of reading, analysing and thinking, he could only form about twenty lines of poetry... Ah! Were he to write *ghazals* instead, and to understand poetry like anyone else did, he would make twenty *ghazals* out of these twenty lines. At some point, he found language too narrow. He was persistent that one needed new words in order to express new ideas. […] He hungrily consulted dictionaries; he was mesmerized at the things he found as he turned the pages. Why were these forgotten in the corners of wordbooks? He made many beautiful discoveries"

Given the above-mentioned developments in education and journalism, it is thus no coincidence that, much like Halit Ziya and his real-life contemporaries, the fictional Ahmet Cemil and Hüseyin Nazmi were initiated to the world of literature via prose fiction even though they still looked up to poetry as the most noble of genres. Interestingly, however, Ahmet Cemil's ultimate failure in poethood, ingrained in the readers' minds through the image of his burning poem in one of the story's final scenes, stems from an inability to reconcile his innovative ideas about literature with poetry, whose main operating principles have been so firmly rooted in a set of artistic traditions that belonged to a pre-modern mindset that a literary work that tried to combine the two ended up creating more controversy than he could handle. The burning of the poem, as a representation of the rather bitter acceptance of poetry's near-bankruptcy in regards to possibilities for innovation, could indeed be read as a metatextual wink at Halit Ziya the novelist for having chosen a more appropriate medium for his innovative ideas.

During this period, the novel was in fact becoming *the* realm of literary innovation. As Selma Baş and other scholars point out, when poets sought to introduce new form and content, they found it more difficult to strip themselves off of a set of deep-seated habits and beliefs.[112] The new prose fiction was, on the other hand, the "unsoiled ground" of the new and exciting. Halit Ziya notes in his memoirs, that even Recaizade Ekrem, who would rather be categorized as poet, dramatist and literary critic tried his hand at novel writing and wrote *Araba Sevdası* (A Carriage Affair).[113] In addition to its much greater potential for formal and stylistic experimentation, the novel as a narrative

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(Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 176).

[112] Selma Baş, "Batıya Hayran Bir Neslin Romanı: Servet-i Fünun Romanı" *Turkish Studies* 5/2 (Spring 2010), 316.

[113] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 717.

genre lends itself better to the telling of the stories that were relevant to authors (and readers) of the time, stories that helped voice the various manifestations of the Ottoman experience with modernity and with the increasing cultural (as well as political and economic) influence of the West.[114] Consequently, the generation immediately following that of Halit Ziya's seems to be significantly less interested (and thus, less knowledgeable) in poetry and classical poetic tradition. In fact, Mehmet Rauf, who is about a decade younger than Halit Ziya, rather sincerely states in his memoirs that he has never had a real familiarity nor a connection with poetry. "Still today," he adds, "I confess that I only read verse by looking at the meaning and style; I do not really understand meter (*bahirler ve vezinler*) at all."[115]

As the storyteller par excellence, Ahmet Midhat Efendi also had a dismissive attitude towards classical poetry and perceived it as the unwanted remnant of the past. His dismissal of Muallim Naci, Ahmet Midhat's son-in-law, from his position as the editor of *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*'s literary section, illustrates this stance; an event Ahmet İhsan narrates in his memoirs:

> The door of the room opened with a squeak. A man with a red beard

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[114] Orhan Koçak, along with many other scholars, connects the proliferance of the novel genre to the fast emerging capitalist market economy, which he defines as "a world defined by the unbridgeable cliff between the intention and the consequence, by the discrepancy between the form/promise of equality and comparability, and essential inequality, by the contradiction between the infinite abundance of possibilities and the insufficiency of concrete opportunities" (Koçak: 1996, 110). Despite the existence of the above-mentioned conditions that enabled the emergence of the novel genre in the Ottoman context, Selçuk Çıkla emphasizes, through a reference to Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, that "the first *truth* that needs to be taken into consideration when thinking about the Turkish novel is that it was not born through a natural progression of the already existing forms of narration in this country and that it happened through a wholesale abandonment of this local tradition and the building of an entirely new one. The novel genre comes to us from outside." Tanpınar, 'Roman ve romancı üzerine notlar', *Türk Dili* Roman Özel Sayısı, C. XIII, S. 154, (Temmuz 1964), 652, quoted in Çıkla: 2004, 39.

[115] Mehmet Rauf, *Edebi Hatıralar* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 1997), 35.

> and red eyes appeared. Ahmet Midhat roared from inside the room:
> - Brother, don't come here any more. It would be in vain. *Ghazals*, parallel poems (*nazire*), young boys (*gulam*, *çar-ebru*), wine cups (*bade*), wine bearers (*saki*)... I fired all these things along with Naci. Our door is not closed to the poetry of old times. Whatever you have to say is useless!
> In his publishing house, people called Ahmet Midhat just "Efendi," and everyone knew whom that means.[116]

Though one can question the accuracy of this particular scene, remembered more than three decades later, Ahmet Midhat unquestionably constituted one of the most iconic figures in the field of publishing. His stance towards journalism and his work ethic is thus worth further scrutiny.

As a self-made man in journalism, one of the major themes in Ahmet Midhat's work (fictional and non-fictional) is a passion for work itself. It is through this love and belief for work, his entrepreneurial spirit that he found success outside the more popular realm of bureaucracy and government professions. In one of his letters written to Muallim Naci, he explains, "I do not want to spend a single idle minute. I work. I love work and its monetary benefits. Those who see how much effort I spend for five or ten kurush pity me. But this effort is my pleasure."[117] To him, the love for this attempt and the willingness to brave through the challenges is the key to success, whether in government service or elsewhere, even though he himself prefers non-government/entrepreneurial professions where financial benefits are higher.[118] As a matter of fact, even though he maintained good relationships with the palace, his stance towards work provided a major inspiration for younger generations to found their own

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[116] Tokgöz: 1993, 38.
[117] Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Muhaberat ve Muhaverat*, (İstanbul: Ark Kitapları, 2011), 174.
[118] For more on this preference, see Ahmet Midhat Efendi: 1879, 59.

publishing houses as well as other private businesses. In his metafictional novel *Müşahedat* (Observations), he writes, "[in Europe], even intellectuals who do not own land start their own trading companies and bring the fortune of the world to their home countries, whereas in our Istanbul, such ideas did not emerge yet. […] Everybody has their eyes set on government jobs and they do not know of any other means of earning a living."[119] This standpoint towards his work enabled Ahmet Midhat to make the production of literature into a private business, moving it away from the bureaucratic realm. In that respect, he provided a significant role model for young people, not just as a writer but also as an entrepreneur, showcasing such unprecedented possibilities for the Turkish-speaking Muslim populations of the imperial capital. As Ahmet İhsan recalls, thus far, most people involved in the private realm of publishing and book production were Armenians: "They were brothers from Kayseri; Kaspar, Ohannes, Kirkor had three shops; Aleksan and Arakel were the two most famous ones."[120] He thus devoured the newspapers and novels written in Turkish but with Armenian letters, until he gained proficiency in French. In this environment during the 1880s, Ahmet Midhat proved to be an invaluable yet intimidating figure. "Every time I saw him, I thought I needed to go kiss his hand," he narrates, "I would go up to the door of his business on the Ebussuud Avenue, […] but I wouldn't be able to gather enough courage to walk through the dark and narrow door of the building."[121]

This new profession Ahmet Midhat designed for himself in the junction of literature and business often created confusion in the minds of his contemporaries. One such instance was a semi-fictional encounter he had with Refet, one of his characters in

[119] Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Müşahedat* (İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2006), 133.
[120] Tokgöz: 1993, 34.
[121] Ibid., 37.

*Müşahedat*, where he presents himself as a *yazıcı* (writer/copyist) as opposed to *yazar* (writer/litterateur). The first term is rather obsolete today beyond referring to the printing machines, while it was the term he coined before *yazar* became a term to refer to litterateurs, replacing the more common *edib*. Unsurprisingly, Refet is confused with this term, and assumes that he is a "petition-writer" (*arzuhalci*), literate men who would have booths on the street to help other folks with their personal letters or petitions addressed to various government offices. "No sir," Ahmet Midhat replies, "I am not a petition-writer. I write newspapers, books and such."[122]

The private enterprise of journalism/publishing provided him with a decent level of financial stability, even in the face of censorship and political instability. The ever-confident entrepreneur thus wrote,

> Even if I did not yet become a popular writer in Istanbul, would I ever be unemployed? But I do not know anyone who would have me as a protégé. I may then not be able to find a government job. No matter. I have my own craft and it is printing and publishing. I know all of its aspects from typesetting to machine operating. I am not lazy. I am not helpless. If I cannot make a living in Istanbul, then no one can.[123]

In a similar vein, Ahmet İhsan keeps his publishing business afloat during the harsh period of censorship by printing a series of passports issued by the palace. Despite the relative financial stability, however, the printing profession had still not garnered enough social acceptance during the 1880s and 90s. In his memoirs, Ahmet İhsan recalls one such moment when he tells his grandmother that he wants to become a publishing house owner. She, on the other hand, had different dreams about his grandson's future, and

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[122] Ibid., 59.
[123] Ahmet Midhat Efendi: *Menfa* (İstanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2013), 38.

wanted to see him as a glorious district governor. “I cannot possibly describe the look of deep surprise on her face,” he recalls, “her joy was completely gone and she looked stupefied. She shrieked with displeasure: 'Oh my God, what am I hearing in my final years in this world? Is this a sign of the upcoming doomsday? So, you will be a tradesman, my son. Ah, my efforts are wasted! Who marries their daughter to a lowly trader?”[124]

In spite of this lack of prestige of the publishing business in the eyes of the more conservative older generations, the journalistic profession that emerged out of this sector had an indispensable role in society of disseminating information and thus influencing the public opinion. This was particularly crucial for Abdülhamit II who had noticed the significance of public opinion both at home and abroad for the survival of the empire, and for the legitimacy of his rule.

**Abdülhamit and the publishing enterprise: a relationship of mutual benefit**

Much like the generation of litterateurs who were in their late thirties at the turn of the century, Abdülhamit II was a product of this particular juncture in history. Born in 1842, he ascended to the throne in the tumultuous year of 1876, upon the deposition of Murad V's very short reign that lasted just over three months. Local scholarship dating as early as 1910s, conceptualized the Hamidian period as one of strict state control and censorship, repeating the Western European accounts produced to delegitimize Abdülhamit II's regime, a phenomenon that continued well into the republican period as it was fitting for the nationalist tendency to despise everything that had to do with the late-

[124] Tokgöz: 1993, 29.

Ottoman period.[125] This discourse of oppression, corruption and despair fails, however, to account for the liveliness of the literary scene in Istanbul during his reign.

As far as publishing is concerned, state control and censorship surely started prior to this period. The state newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* appeared in 1831, during the rule of Mahmud II, in the words of Server Iskit, to "prevent internal gossip."[126] This was followed by the establishment of the first private newspaper in 1840 by an Englishman, William Churchill. State orders on publishing houses started to be passed as early as 1854 and 1857, mostly concerning books rather than periodical publications; yet there still had not yet emerged enough momentum in the sector to require a systematic set of regulations. The government continued to deal with the press on an ad-hoc basis until 1864, when *Matbuat Nizamnamesi*, the first comprehensive set of laws on publishing, was issued, defining the mission of the newly founded Directory of Publications (*Matbuat Müdürlüğü*) and the scope of limitations imposed on the future enterprises. By then Agah Efendi and Şinasi had already started publishing their weekly (1860, later semiweekly), and Şinasi had also founded *Tasvir-i Efkar* newspaper (1862). This set of regulations were to be significantly tightened a few years later in 1867, with the ensuing *Kararname-i Ali*, crafted by the Grand Vizier of the time, Mehmet Emin Ali Paşa, known for his involvement in the Ottoman Reform Edict of 1856.

However, as mentioned earlier, private journalistic enterprise really took off during the late-1870s when Ahmet Midhat brought his business model and work ethic into the world of journalism and periodical publications. The government publication *Takvim-i Vekayi* had stopped its publications in 1878 on the grounds of offending the

[125] See, for example, Iskit, 1939; Solok, 1977; İnuğur, 1982; Kabacalı, 1990; Koloğlu, 1992; Topuz, 2003.
[126] Iskit: 1943, 14.

legitimacy of Abdülhamit's rule during a time of political distress, which allowed more private endeavors to fill in this vacuum. Takvim-i Vekayi remained closed until the early 1890s and was closed again a year after it became operational in 1891.[127] The regulations of the late 1860s remained in place, though further clarified and expanded with the Printing Houses Regulation (*Matbaalar Nizamnamesi*) of 1888. The regulations contained articles about book publishing and the importation of foreign printed material and followed its predecessors in that it left the terms of control for the newspapers more ambiguous. As Ebru Boyar argues, "[t]he rules of censorship were not fixed, and this flexibility created an ambivalence that kept every writer and publisher on his toes. The censors interpreted the regulations according to their own perception of threat, and so day-to-day running of the press thus depended on the atmosphere of the moment."[128] The Commission of Investigation and Inspection (*Encümen-i Teftiş ve Muayene*), founded in 1881 to implement censorship against publication deemed harmful to the government, was responsible for all publications, excluding daily papers that went to the Directorate of Publications (*Matbuat Idaresi*) to be inspected.[129] The censorship became even stricter after 1894 when another set of regulations were introduced.[130]

Censorship and tyranny seem to be the defining features of this period, particularly after 1890. What happened with periodical publications was that the owner would make two copies for everything to be published and send it to the mansion of the censor (which would be the Director of Publications) with the porter for him to read it,

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[127] Süleyman Kani İrtem, *Abdülhamid Devrinde Hafiyelik ve Sansür: Abdülhamid'e Verilen Jurnaller* (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 1999), 209.
[128] Ebru Boyar, "The Press and the Palace," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 69/3 (2006), 422.
[129] Server İskit, *Türkiye'de Neşriyat Hareketleri Tarihine Bir Bakış,* (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1939),100.
[130] Ibid., 86.

get rid of or change the offensive parts or ban some articles altogether from publication.[131] The fear of the censor had already become a natural part of the life of a litterateur, as early as 1880s. One such example in Halit Ziya's early career pertains to the time when he serialized a story entitled *Bir Muhtıranın Son Yaprakları* (The Last Pages of a Diary), an early manifestation of his interest in authorial reflexivity, and hence a precursor to *Mai ve Siyah*.[132] Written in the form of a diary, this was the story of an aspiring poet by the name of Necib, who ultimately fails to stay productive and become successful in the world of publishing because he has proved unable to think pragmatically, unlike and despite his cousin who tries to pull him out of his desperation but cannot prevent his being consumed with a deep existential crisis and consequent death. The story was in fact so gloomy and hopeless that it would easily draw attention to its writer and make him the object of criticism, censorship and other government sanctions. On this note, Halit Ziya recalls that, towards the end of the story's serialization, he received a panicked note from his friend Abdülhalim Memduh, which read: "Have you lost your mind? If you want to commit suicide, it is easier to put a bullet into your brain. Do you want to live a life of misery in exile? What are those things you wrote? You defamed the country, you defamed the government, you defamed the entire world..."[133]

Even though Halit Ziya escaped censorship in this case, arguably because the story was published in Izmir and not in Istanbul, he is caught by the system a few years later, after he moved to the imperial capital: his *History of Sanskrit Literature* caused him an unpleasant visit to the palace where the charges were initially dropped and he was sent

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[131] İrtem: 1999, 230.

[132] *Muhtıra* was serialized in *Hizmet* from August to October 1887, and published as a book by Mihran Matbaası in İstanbul in 1888, ten years before the serialization of *Mai ve Siyah*, when Halit Ziya was only twenty years old.

[133] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 326. This story has not yet been rendered in modern latinized Turkish.

back home; yet, the frustration and disgust with Abdülhamit's living quarters and his regime in general would clearly mark the rest of Halit Ziya's career, particularly when he started writing *Mai ve Siyah*.[134] His experience in the palace shows that, while firmly in place throughout the entire rule of Abdülhamit, the implementation of censorship was subject to enough oscillation to prevent the unequivocal identification of any coherent structure. Instead, the practice was associated, perhaps rightly so, with the personalities of the individual censors authors and publishers had to deal with.

The ambiguity was even more prevalent in the control of newspapers and periodicals, which was under the responsibility of the Directorate instead of the much-feared Commission, responsible for books and short treatises. One of the most prominent figures of censorship for periodicals was Hıfzı Bey, the Director of Publications during the early-1890s, responsible for *Servet-i Fünun*. Having to walk the delicate balance between the impositions by the palace, his own personal view of things and the demands of the publishing house, he nonetheless constituted an indispensable assistance behind the flourishing of the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine, and hence the movement of New Literature (*Edebiyat-ı Cedide*). Halit Ziya recalls that, even though he never openly admitted it, "Hıfzı Bey was a close friend of us. He even proved to have the courage to take responsibility for our transgressions in the execution of his profession. If he had combined the requirements of his job with a dislike of new literary movements, then the New Literature would have died while still in cradle and that would be a day of celebration for our opponents."[135] However, despite his liking of the New Literature, Hıfzı Bey did have to become harsher in his execution of the censorship, as the

[134] Akalın: 1962, 11.
[135] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 665.

regulations were further tightened in 1894.[136] An additional difficulty for the censors was that publishers often had recourse to the palace in the event that they were dissatisfied with the decision of the censor. In that case, the sultan would be treated as if he were an arbiter, rather than the very source of the censorship, and the perceived flaws of the system would by no means be associated with him.

Though it was common practice to retroactively demonize Abdülhamit's handling of the press and blame all negativity to the underlying structures of censorship in the histories and memoires written in the 1930s and 40s, it would be naïve to code the literary producers as passive victims of the sultan's tyranny. As a matter of fact, most publishers including *Servet-i Fünun*'s very own Ahmet İhsan, are known for having sent spy reports to the palace with the expectation of material or non-material benefits.[137] These people would surely find it necessary to conform to and even feed the major tenets of Abdülhamit's structure with the imperative to survive in an already unforgiving environment; yet, given the centrality of the press in creating and disseminating information (including the political gossip and the rumor against the palace), the relationship of dependence between the press and the palace was fundamentally mutual. As Boyar rightfully argues, "[t]he sultan […] needed the press as much as the press needed the palace for its survival. This meant that the relationship between the palace and the press were not based merely on oppression by the political power, […] [i]t was a mutually beneficial arrangement – although the character of this relation cannot be

[136] Ibid., 665; Irtem: 1999, 231.

[137] Boyar: 2006, 427. In fact, Cemil Yener argues that Ahmet Ihsan was protected by people who were very close to the palace and occassionally received money from the sultan's private funds (Yener: 1974, 9).

described as a relationship between equals."[138] Abdülhamit, a sultan who is best known in his extreme care in regulating the image of the empire and the opinions about it both at home and abroad, thus went to great lengths in maintaining an intricately balanced relationship with the press, and used the means it provided to disseminate precisely the kind of information that would benefit and strengthen his rule in the eyes of Ottoman subjects as well as foreigners.[139]

As mentioned earlier, the emergence of journalism as a private enterprise meant that the control on the part of the palace needed to be attuned and re-attuned carefully and continuously in relation to the demands of the reading public and the general inclinations in the field of publishing – hence the deliberately ambiguous nature of the regulations, particularly in regard to newspapers and periodicals. Abdülhamit knew that this balance must overrule; otherwise, it would tip and produce catastrophic results against his sovereignty. Benjamin Fortna draws this picture of delicate balancing as follows:

> New career paths, new economic and social opportunities arrived with the spread of print literature. In the Ottoman/Turkish case, these changes chiefly benefited the state. After all, it was the government, first Ottoman and then Republican, which played the chief role in the expansion of literacy. But the lead that it thus garnered for itself was not unassailable. In part because of the state's reliance on the private sector for producing the high volume of material upon which its educational apparatus depended and in part because of the relative maneuverability of the independent operators, it soon became apparent that individual voices were going to make themselves heard - and seen - through the medium of print.[140]

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[138] Ibid., 425.

[139] For more on Abdülhamit's policies pertaining to imperial image management, see Deringil, *Well Protected Domains: Ideology and Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909.*

[140] Fortna: 2011, 156.

One of the ways in which Abdülhamit sought to manage the press was in the form of financial support that would enable the publishing houses to catch up with the technical innovations available, and thus to render newspapers more effective venues of propaganda dissemination. For example, he would send to periodicals like *Servet-i Fünun*, photographs from European newspapers of various atrocities and crimes abroad in order to respond to criticism from local and international sources on what is happening within the empire.[141] One such picture featured the killing of blacks in the United States, a response to the European reaction against the execution of a eunuch following a murder in the Ottoman palace.[142] The palace provided the financial assistance in the acquisition of the technical equipment that would enable the publication of these photographs, which the house could then use for their own purposes, giving them a great advantage in increasing sales using visual material.

Abdülhamit also supported publishing houses via different forms of regular payment. In İrtem's rather cynical words from the republican 1940s, "[he] knew that money was a magical and magnetic matter," and thus used the palace's various resources to manage the press.[143] The subsidies that the palace granted varied from newspaper to newspaper, with the amount itself being a variable that depended on the general behavior of a given newspaper at a particular time. In a similar vein, while most subsidies came from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Dahiliye Nezareti*) funds, Ahmet Midhat's *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* was paid from *Hazine-i Hassa*, the sultan's privy purse, more in line with previous forms of court patronage, arguably to because of the journalist's emotional

[141] İrtem: 1999, 238.
[142] Boyar: 2006, 424.
[143] İrtem: 1999, 15.

proximity to the sultan himself.[144] While one could speculate on whether these subsidies were sufficient on their own to help the publishing houses survive, they continued to be given out until the end of the Hamidian era. To be sure, literary patronage on the part of the palace has already been a device of control and management prior to this period; yet with the emergence of journalism as a full-blown profession and a private enterprise, the existent mechanisms of control pertaining to the dissemination of texts and information in general had to be altered to find new ways to manage the relative freedom of movement for the producers and disseminators of this information. Obtaining the sultan's "grace" was, after all, no longer a major aspiration, at least for a considerable number of writers at the time.[145] His presence in the realm of cultural/literary production had rather become that of an unwelcome and frustrating censor with whom one nonetheless needed to negotiate, and possibly use to one's advantage.

This shift of perception towards the figure of the sultan is manifest in an instance where a friend of Halit Ziya suggests he write a novel particularly for Abdülhamit's reading pleasure. "You must have heard the sultan has a taste for detective stories," he

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[144] Boyar: 2006, 429. On this issue, Ahmet Ihsan recalls that *Servet-i Fünun* might have been the first magazine receiving a subsidy from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, implying that while all newer periodicals were funded by the Ministry (from 1890s onwards) while the more established *Tercüman* continued to receive its funds from a more traditional source (Tokgöz: 1993, 62).

[145] While the importance of the individual as an artist was particularly emphasized within this generation, the distancing of educated imperial subjects from the palace was already underway since the mid-century. Şerif Mardin points out, "Şinasi [1826-1871] is unanimously considered by historians of Turkish intellectual history the first outstanding advocate of Europeanization in the Ottoman Empire. However, none of these historians explicitly takes up one of the characteristic features of this contribution, namely, that Şinasi was the first *private* exponent of such views. Up until Şinasi's time, schemes of modernization that had been thought of had been the result of an official concern with reform" (Mardin: 1962, 256). This transformation from state bureaucrat to literary man culminates in *Mai ve Siyah*, which Jale Parla establishes as the first *Künstlerroman* in Turkish literature. Parla argues that the aesthetic subject in Turkish novel is founded in the persona of Ahmet Cemil the poet (Parla: 2011, 18).

says, “why don't you write one and we could present it to him. There is no doubt that you would be generously recompensed for it.” Halit Ziya recalls this moment a few decades later with the following thoughts:

> Compensation? A high rank, medals, gifts, and even a nice position in the palace, these things can be attractive for an inexperienced young boy. The issue of receiving a high rank title, above all, was an internal wound of mine. The petition to grant me a second rank, signed by the mayor of İzmir at the time, Halil Rıfat Paşa, had resulted only in the granting of a fifth rank because of a law that the Grand Vizier Cevat Paşa had approved shortly after. It looked like I was the only man with the fifth rank in this world where the high ranks were pouring down on people like rain. That stayed on me like an embarrassing stain. Nuri Bey's suggestions must not have seemed too strange to me, because I did want to find an appropriate topic; if I had, I could have written a detective novel just to entertain Abdülhamit. I wonder, if Nuri Bey had repeated his offer, if I had written that novel, how differently would the fate of my life have materialized? A human being is, after all, just mud inclined to be shaped by such transformations in the mold of events... Who knows?...[146]

It is clear from his rumination decades later that the attraction of rewards come from the fact that others possess similar or better ones, in other words from a comparison with fellow litterateurs rather than from the credibility of its grantor. As I will elaborate in further detail in the next chapter, the center of the system of prestige and reputation in the field of literature had, during this time, shifted from the patron to the fellow; the gifts from the sultan – whatever form they may be in thus only mattered so far as others did or did not have them.

Given this context, it is not surprising that the nemesis from the introductory

[146] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 555.

quote of this chapter and the editor-in-chief of the *Malumat* magazine, Baba Tahir, turned the granting of the palace favors into a business. Prompted by Abdülhamit himself, this favored man and the holder of a first degree rank was entitled to grant awards and gifts to publishing house employees of various type and order, an informal executive power which he then used to receive monetary gain from any potential grantee.[147] The dynamics of power between different publishing houses, exemplified in this instance, was then a major determinant of success (or rather, the ability to survive) for each one of them. As a matter of fact, the competition between publishing houses and periodicals started as early as 1860 when the editor of the *Ceride-i Havadis*, a daily paper published by an Englishman, wrote a piece blaming Şinasi's now well-canonized play *Şair Evlenmesi* (Marriage of a Poet) as a "tale for hags," shortly after its serialization in *Tercüman-ı Ahval*, a rival newspaper. To this, the latter responded with a list of the three existent newspapers, emphasizing the fact that it is the only one that is entirely non-governmental and published by Muslim Ottoman subjects, thus entirely sponsored by its owners (this was prior to palace subsidies).[148] Ironically, the sultan was often used as an arbitrator, as in the case of frustration with censors, among different competitors to regulate the conflict, which often ended up getting too personal.[149] Nonetheless, this adversity was often fruitful; in fact, recalling the formative years of the *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* (New Literature) movement, Ahmet İhsan observes that the group emerged out of a concordance of opinion against Baba Tahir's misdeeds, his lousy understanding of journalism and the harsh personal attacks.[150]

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[147] Tokgöz: 1993, 67.
[148] İskit: 1943, 12.
[149] Boyar: 2006, 429.
[150] Tokgöz: 1993, 69.

**Conclusion: context for a new type of author**

Contrary to the established opinion on the Hamidian era, this period was one where the conditions of the modern literary production have matured to the extent of allowing more private enterprise, a more centralized and standardized education that encouraged (and even required) the private ownership of printed texts, and the genre shift that resulted from the new modes of reading encouraged by this educational system, which Abdülhamit himself was a product of – particularly given his penchant for detective stories. What emerged consequently was, in the words of Ebru Boyar, "a press which functioned in a symbiotic arrangement with the palace, from which both benefited, the palace gaining a means of spreading propaganda and controlling image, while the press gained material and financial support, thanks to the projection of the palace, as immunity from mass competition."[151] The image management, both at home and abroad, was crucial at the time for the survival of the empire, and so was the restructuring of the educational system to create the professions that an integral engagement with global trends necessitated. The structure thus provided for the new generation of literary producers also allowed, however, fundamental criticism of the imperfections of the new system itself and urged for directions that created controversy in the field of culture and literature. Driven by an urge to comment on the outdated conceptions of literature as well as on the limitations of the censorship, Halit Ziya's writing of *Mai ve Siyah*, a criticism of the field it came out of, was one such example. The next chapter looks more closely into the dark and apocalyptical tone of this novel to understand what it meant to be a litterateur in this world of new possibilities that were nonetheless shadowed by

[151] Boyar: 2006, 432.

ambiguous yet omnipresent state control and the lingering presence of more traditional ways of producing literature.

## Chapter 2:

## Modest Means, Grand Ambitions: Individualization and its Discontents

> He was a mere twenty-two years old. Such an age, such a delicate period of youth that the mind was still in a bright world of fantasy, under the diamond rains of an illuminated sky, not fallen yet into the dust, like a bird with broken wings; the eyes were luminous with the lights of a horizon of reverie, not having noticed yet that a dark corner was about to appear behind a curtain; he was immersed in the dreams of a bright and cheerful morning, not having yet understood that, far far away, hidden in a distant horizon, were sinister clouds, ready to pour onto the sun of hope. Only twenty-two years old, his entire existence awaiting the realization of a single dream... To become a famous man of letters, known by everyone, to reach the peaks of this literary world in order to handle the pains of which he had to poison his own life, and to carry his name to such heights that... He was unable to find a limit to this imagined rank; he would then feel ashamed for having been carried away this much with the desire of self-exaltation. Becoming a writer, gaining fame, haven't these been his only thoughts in years?[152]

As a thirty-year old Halit Ziya embarks on the writing of *Mai ve Siyah*, the story of a budding poet by the name of Ahmet Cemil, and his first novel to be serialized in an Istanbul journal, he sets the stage early in the text for the ultimate disillusionment, suggesting the inevitability of a tragic failure for the young protagonist. The above

[152] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2) 39.

passage from the third chapter of the novel is indeed one of the first and most marked hints to an inescapably bitter future, yet unknown to the inexperienced Ahmet Cemil, but painfully foreseen by the insightfully pessimistic narrator. The latter, as if it were the former's future ego, retrospectively lamenting the irretrievable loss of good prospects for its younger self, both sympathizes with the young man's hopes for the future, and points to the low likelihood, if not impossibility, of their realization.

However, despite this initial hint at a bleak future for Ahmet Cemil, one still has considerable difficulty in perceiving the young poet as a failure, as he is never chastised nor parodied by the narrator, who instead empathizes and commiserates, blaming the inescapability of external conditions, at least just as much as the protagonist's inability to tackle them. As the quote above shows, Ahmet Cemil could not really have contributed much to his own failure except through his naiveté and lack of experience, as, unlike the narrator, he was not yet aware of "the dark corner" that was about to "appear behind the curtain," those "sinister clouds, ready to pour onto the sun of hope," or the inevitable and immutable social and economic conditions that surround him and inform the ways in which his personal and professional future would unfold. In other words, his potential "failure," as suggested by the narrator, would result from a certain kind of interplay between external factors and his reactions to them, rather than his intrinsic and unchanging character traits. More importantly, the narrator remains compassionate with the protagonist all the way until the end of the story where an embittered Ahmet Cemil leaves Istanbul in utter disillusionment, showing the readers that, despite the novel's dysphoric closure, his was a journey worth taking – and, evidently, worth writing about.

This sympathetic stance towards his protagonist on the part of Halit Ziya in *Mai*

*ve Siyah* dramatically differs from how the young West-leaning intellectual had thus far been portrayed in Ottoman Turkish fictional texts during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century by prominent novelists, such as Ahmet Midhat Efendi and Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem, who rather scolded, ridiculed and parodied the young fictional litterateurs or lettered bureaucrats for being excessively vain, self-centered and poorly-equipped – intellectually and emotionally, to lead a fulfilling professional and personal life.[153] The stark difference raises the question: Why would a young novelist like Halit Ziya, who had moved to the imperial capital from the more provincial port-town of İzmir a few years earlier in 1893, write a sympathetic story about a failed poet as his inaugural İstanbul novel, instead of, perhaps, a moralistic parody of a wealthy scribal office employee in the tradition of his literary predecessors and mentors? And, more importantly, what can the ways in which the struggles of Ahmet Cemil the poet is portrayed in *Mai ve Siyah* tell us about the transformations in the very experience of Ottoman cultural/literary modernization during the last decade of the nineteenth century, for the generation of authors born during the 1860s, who, in turn, deeply impacted their late-imperial/early-republican successors.

Following an analysis laid out in the first chapter, of the publishing house, its connections with the pre-existing systems of literary patronage and the transformations in the educational system, this chapter investigates the position of men of letters as producers of cultural/literary content in the literary magazines published by those houses, and how this relatively new outlet for literary texts informed the ways in which poets and

[153] Some prominent examples of this type of protagonist include Ahmet Midhat Efendi's Felatun Bey in *Felatun Bey ve Rakım Efendi,* published in 1875, Recaizade Ekrem's Bihruz Bey in *Araba Sevdası* (A Carriage Affair), written in the 1880s but serialized in 1896, and Hüseyin Rahmi's Şöhret Bey in *Şık* (Chic), serialized in 1888 and published as a book in 1889.

novelists interacted with each other, with their readership and their texts. I argue that, the discrepancy in authorial sympathies towards the Westernized young men of letters as protagonist stems from a realization, on the part of Halit Ziya, of a fundamental structural transformation in the literary field, which caused a *double-bind* for its participants, one that his protagonist Ahmet Cemil was certainly suffering from: a promise of extraordinary success, recognition and fame, paired with the danger of a great failure and ridicule. With the increased presence of the publishing house as a venue for the publication of literary texts, an unprecedented realm of possibilities for individual style and artistic self-expression became conceivable. Not only were literary texts relatively freed of the predominance of the Ottoman classical imagery with the impact created by French literature, but also the figure of the sultan had lost a considerable part of his power as the patron of arts and receiver of poetic praise.[154] This enabled authors to re-conceptualize the working principles of Ottoman Turkish literature in accordance with their current aesthetic sensibilities and the demands of a new body of readership, a product of standardized education policies. The newly emerged freedom had, however, a flip side: Without a hierarchical structure centered around a powerful figure, inter-authorial competition for recognition, prestige and monetary gain became more fierce,

[154] One of the first instances of this transformation can be discerned in the introduction to Namık Kemal's 1876 novel *İntibah* (Awakening) where he apologetically dismisses his habit of alluding to the classical imagery. He asserts that he cannot help thinking about the nightingale as soon as he mentions the rose, mainly because of his strong affiliation with and his training within what he terms the "oriental imagination." Yet, he has also come to know that the nightingale "is not in love with the rose," and has perhaps never been. In other words, he reduces this old metaphor to a simple misperception of the world, and makes it irrelevant/outdated by dropping the rose out of the equation and replacing it with a new and different concept, that of "freedom." The initial reason for this rejection seems to be the urgent need for clarity of message, since the most important role of literature for Kemal's generation was to educate the masses. As Ahmet Evin rightfully observes, "[t]he emerging populism of the era required a clarity of the message, and therefore, not only the language but the very intention behind the early Turkish novel had to clash with the Neoplatonism of the classical Ottoman allegory […]" (Evin: 1983, 49)

bringing along a higher potential for frequent personal attacks and ridicule while, on the other hand, the promise of social mobility through individual hard-work and persistence often paled in the face of financial incapacities of publishing houses, requiring authors to resort to family funds, or in its absence, to write texts that would sell more but that remained outside the realm of their literary tastes.[155]

There is already scholarly convention on *Mai ve Siyah*'s position as one of the first literary texts that could capture the complex emotional conditions of its time. Based on the endorsement of a failed protagonist by the author/narrator, the effervescent reactions the novel received following its publication and the hindsight provided by having witnessed Turkey's early-twentieth century journey with literary modernity, scholars across disciplines highlighted Ahmet Cemil's particularity and the ways in which his character diverged from the earlier representations of "the intellectual" in the Ottoman Turkish novel.[156] For example, Orhan Koçak argues that this was the moment when the impact of the transformations caused by modernization was first acknowledged to be not limited to social realm but also leaving strong imprints on individual psyches. "Is the

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[155] Competition and ridicule surely existed among litterateurs prior to the nineteenth century within the patronage system but at least there was a center to the system. Jocelyn Sharlet argues in *Patronage and Poetry in the Islamic World*, that the premodern patronage system was a flexible one often based on the contingency of individual relationships: "Uncertainty was a feature of the flexibility of patronage, and this flexibility facilitated social mobility. As a result, the contingency of individual relationships is not only a risk that can be handled, but also a benefit that can be enjoyed." (Sharlet: 2011, 4) While this may be the case, the fact that there was a center to the system created at least a discursive unity to this flexible system, which in turn rendered the competition less fierce and/or destructive.

[156] Some examples of this convention can be seen in Şerif Mardin's "Super Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century," where he argues that Ahmet Cemil "is a much more serious Bihruz who understands the West, but [his] disgust with his environment is taken seriously," (436), in Selma Baş's "Batıya Hayran Bir Neslin Romanı: Servet-i Fünun Romanı" (326), Selçuk Çıkla's *Roman ve Gerçeklik Bağlamında: Kültür Değişmeleri ve Servet-i Fünun Romanı* (108), and in Nurdan Gürbilek's *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark: Edebiyat ve Endişe* (162) where all three draw attention to the shift from comedy to tragedy in the treatment of the Western-educated protagonists.

internal world of the individual a space that is completely isolated from the problems of the society," Koçak asks, "does 'the individual in society' not have an internal space?"[157] As a matter of fact, Halit Ziya's most significant contribution was to carry the social anxieties of the modernizing Ottoman urban society into the psychological realm of his personages, to admit and underscore this link between the social and the individual.[158] Rather than projecting his anxieties onto his "despicable" and highly caricaturized fictional characters, Halit Ziya makes his novel a venue through which this anxiety can be, not displayed and dismissed, but rather owned and understood as a condition that haunts all men of letters participating in the literary field rather than the fate of a few misadjusted fools.[159]

The realization of the double bind and the appropriation of the anxiety it brings along were particular to this generation. As mentioned earlier, the young litterateurs of the 1890s constituted the first generation in the Ottoman Empire born into an already

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[157] Koçak: 1996. Similarly, in *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark*, Nurdan Gürbilek makes an effort to understand "how the issues that have been discussed through concepts like Westernization, national culture, cultural identity, etc. became internal/personal anxieties." "Instead of explaining the authorial psyche through national-cultural issues," Gürbilek states, "I try to underline how this overwhelming communal anxieties transformed into individual/psychological states, and how the consequent torment deeply impacted attempts of narration" (Gürbilek: 2004), 9.

[158] Orhan Koçak argues that the faulty distinction between the social and the individual, between the intellectual and the emotional has been repeated many times by various literary critics and theorists. They therefore start out with the incorrect assumption that problems created by the process of modernization are merely intellectual and they do not affect the realm of emotions, whereas in reality most "ideas are built with active help from fears, desires, as well as from self-defense devices and blindnesses of the ego" (Koçak: 1996, 95). In a similar vein, in *Cold Intimacies: the Making of Emotional Capitalism* where she associates the advent of capitalism with an intensely specialized emotional culture, Eva Illouz argues that "[f]ar from being pre-social or pre-cultural, emotions are cultural meanings and social relationships that are inseparably compressed together," and that "through emotion we can enact cultural definitions of personhood as they are expressed in concrete and immediate but always culturally and socially defined relationships." (Illouz: 2007, 3).

[159] In her analysis of anxiety in literature, Gürbilek sets this quality as one of the most important criteria against which to measure a good novel. "A good novelist," she argues, "is one that does not insist in seeing the innate child [of modernity] in himself, in other words, one that is not able to console himself with this lie for an extended period of time" (Gürbilek: 2004, 49).

ongoing modernization process. Raised as bibliophiles in a standardized education system where they could learn French in addition to Arabic and Persian, have access to a wider variety of genres, be more exposed to Western literary works (either in translation or in the original), and spend time alone with their own books in the privacy of their secluded study rooms, they grew up to project these new characteristics of textual engagement from the realm of reading to that of writing. Consequently, they have come to perceive literary production as *an extension of the solitary self, the autonomous expression (and thus re-creation) of the artist as an individual,* and a good literary work as one that is written free from external formal constraints. This was in contrast with some of the earlier literary practices that constituted of adroit literary maneuvering within a cultural tradition where the reservoir of available imagery, rather than an existential urge at self-expression determined the outcome.[160] The possibility of artistic self-expression thus became an attractive prospect for aspiring writers during this period, fueling the "blue dreams" of their youthful enthusiasm, as hinted at in the title of Halit Ziya's novel.

**"Clawing my mind to be born":**
**The existential importance of artistic self-expression**

The theme of *Mai ve Siyah*, a literary work about a man of letters, displays the extremely

[160] As a result of this phenomenon, which can be called a limitation *only* from a modern point of view (thus only anachronistically), poets relied on an abundance of highly-coded literary devices that not only limited the size of the audience that could "decode" these literary pieces, but also made it very indirect. This indirectness of expression also stemmed from the nature of the pre-modern patronage relations. As Jocelyn Sharlet observes, "skills in refined rhetoric in patronage are about telling people what they want to hear, or telling them what they do not want to hear in a tactful way. The importance of indirect expression for safe and successful patronage is a factor that shapes the use of refined rhetoric." Sharlet, 30.

reflexive tendencies of this generation of authors, for whom writing was an extension of their selves as well as an act that creates that self. In a posthumously published short story entitled "Gerilere Doğru," an old Halit Ziya meets his youth in a nostalgic trip to his hometown of İzmir. The young Halit Ziya, unable, naturally, to recognize him, tells him about his dreams about founding a literary magazine, a newspaper and becoming a well-known writer, with timid enthusiasm. The ways in which he conceptualizes his dreams clearly shows that writing, for him, is more than just a profession, the manifestation of an existential urge of self-expression. "Novels, stories," he explains, "while writing them I want to lavishly pour parts of my soul into it. Today I am like boiling water that cannot be held in a container."[161]

A similar impulse constitutes the driving factor for the thirty-year old Halit Ziya when he embarks the writing of *Mai ve Siyah*. Having moved to İstanbul from İzmir a few years earlier in 1893, Halit Ziya felt ever so strongly about the promises and challenges presented to young writers who wanted to make a name and be successful in this literary world. In his memoirs, he writes:

> For quite a while, I have desired to write a story, all for myself, without any intention of having it published. The protagonist would be a young poet whose mind and soul were brimming with unrealizable desires. If, while describing this poet, it was necessary to aptly articulate the mischief and corruption in the air he was breathing, one would have to employ a cautious language to capture of the evil acts of the time. However, in a period that, looking at any word and the meanings that it may suggest, fancied skewers of transgression that would poke it in the most diseased areas of its troubled soul, it may have been dangerous to even have a writing of this sort in one's possession. Besides, the subject had such

[161] Uşaklıgil: 2005 (2), 37.

> potential for expansion that I could not bring myself to restrain it within the narrow limits of a short story. All the same, I found myself having already written a few pages of it.[162]

Unsurprisingly, the kinds of reactions Halit Ziya received both during the writing and after the publication of *Mai ve Siyah*, point to the fact that the concerns raised within the plot of the novel were perceived to be extremely relevant to the psychological states of fellow writers, regardless of whether or not they agreed with Halit Ziya's general opinions on literature. As literature was becoming a platform for the autonomous artist to express his personal emotions and concerns, young readers/thinkers of his generation were indeed starting to feel the drive to write down and share these emotions and concerns with others who can understand and compassionate. The possibility of artistic self-expression constituted, as mentioned earlier, the first aspect of the promised potentialities in the literary field of 1890s, the first one of the "blue dreams," as it pointed to a literary field that is unprecedentedly free of a fixed reservoir of images, stylistic devices and themes available to litterateurs within the realm of literary acceptability. A novel that takes this very phenomenon as its subject matter would surely excite many young intellectuals during this period. In fact, reminiscing one of the earliest "public readings" of parts of the novel to a group of friends visiting him from his hometown of İzmir, Halit Ziya describes that, while all were listening in a state of mesmerized calm, "Halil's trembling voice tore through the silence. 'If I wasn't embarrassed to do so,' he said, 'I would kiss you now'."[163]

*Mai ve Siyah*'s relevance to this condition is twofold, in that it is not only deeply connected to his author's self-conceptualization as a participant in the literary field but

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[162] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 572-3.
[163] Ibid., 574.

also is the story of this very connection between authors and their work. In fact, we see the irrepressible need to communicate the inner sensations of his soul in Ahmet Cemil's story as well. “I don't know if I am sick or what,” the young poet explains in agony early on in the story, “If only I knew what I wanted to write; if only I could see it pictured, described in front of me, then I think I can die; I can close my eyes thinking I am a man who had his share in this life.”[164] The same sensations continue further into the novel, when an Ahmet Cemil who now started to write his poetic masterpiece fantasizes about the moment of its publication. “I will become an entirely different man when this poem is published,” he thinks to himself, “I believe that the fairy of fame will throw herself at my worn-out and defeated feet; all of a sudden, I will see myself exalted, and only then will I be able to say that I am somebody in this world.”[165]

In order to attain this goal of artistic self-expression, one certainly needs to work hard and show considerable stamina; yet the nature of the hard work devised here is impacted by yet quite different from the previous generations, whose views are epitomized in the views of the famous Ahmet Midhat Efendi. In *Muhaberat ve Muhaverat*, he writes that he does not want to spend a single idle minute. “I work. I love work and its monetary rewards. Sometimes people see me work so hard for five or ten kurush and they pity me. But this occupation is my pleasure.”[166] With this particular way of looking at work, Ahmet Midhat constituted an influence in that he provided a role model for them as somebody who had writing as his career and who carved out this space for himself through an entrepreneurial wit and belief in industrious devotion. Fortna emphasizes that, Ahmet Midhat's “colossal literary output, stretching to as many as 150

[164] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 62.
[165] Ibid., 135.
[166] Ahmet Midhat Efendi: 2011, 174.

books, was such that he earned a very good living as an author of novels and short stories. Certainly it amounted to a massive leap up the socioeconomic scale from his rather humble origins as the son of a poor Istanbul draper."[167]

Ahmet Midhat conveys a similar message in a letter to his son, telling him that it is the discomfort of being treated poorly that gave him motivation to work his way out of the conditions he was born into. He expresses gratitude to his first master in the herb and spice business for beating him up so much, as that allowed him the necessary pain to create the need to search for means of social mobility, which he found in hard work.[168] While Ahmet Midhat's personally-drawn career path was an invaluable source of inspiration for Halit Ziya and his contemporaries, the writing career was more than just a happy endeavor that would bring them money and better life standards. This was, rather, a welcome side effect of producing their art, a process that often is miserable in and of itself because of the torments of the creative process, a condition that does not seem to inflict Ahmet Midhat himself.

In contrast with Ahmet Midhat's conceptualization of "the writing business" as a venue where one can move up the social ladder while educating the masses through a series pleasurable easy-reads, Halit Ziya perceived it as a realm of aesthetic experimentation and self-reflexivity. The emphasis on the author as the creative agent for this generation, manifest in Halit Ziya's (and his protagonist Ahmet Cemil's) frequently expressed desire of putting their signature under something worthy, reflects a global literary tendency where autonomy is praised over communality and acknowledgement over anonymity. In her edited volume entitled *Marketing the Author: Authorial Personae,*

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[167] Fortna: 2011, 203.
[168] Yazgıç: 1940, 7.

*Narrative Selves and Self-fashioning*, Marysa Demoor underscores the fact that, in the late nineteenth century Britain too, the authorial identity became so central to literature that "agents increasingly began to sell authors first, and their books second."[169] This close connection between the author and his work is manifest in Ahmet Cemil's obsession with his poem in *Mai ve Siyah*. "He was excessively preoccupied with this poem," the narrator explains, "he would be mad at himself, upset to find his expressive abilities inferior to his emotions, often willing to blame this inferiority on language itself, and sometimes growing tired of life with a languor that stems from an inability to capture the vague colors that fly in his mind like dubious dreams. Ah if only he could give form to this poem!..."[170]

Positive recognition and fame were expected outcomes for someone who could successfully "give form" to their personal ideas using the language in a creative manner. When they failed to appear, the lack was perceived to be a result of outdated views on the part of most critics rather than of the intrinsic (in)abilities of the author. While Ahmet Cemil's ultimate disillusionment with an environment dominated by old-fashioned values causes his leaving the profession, the fame that was brought to the author Halit Ziya upon the publication of his novel is described with similar vocabulary. The author of *Mai ve Siyah* seems to continue to regret the birth of his novel even decades after its publication, even though it had brought him the fame he has associated with good authorship. Hence the question: Why would he regret the appearance of a text that had a particular connection to his authorial persona with a subject matter especially dear to his heart? I

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[169] With reference to Foucault's lecture "What is an author?," Demoor adds that he "too is puzzled by the fact that whereas anonymous literary texts had been acceptable in previous centuries this had changed radically to the extent that today 'we cannot tolerate literary anonymity'" (Demoor: 2004, 5).

[170] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 130.

argue that Halit Ziya's discourse of regret appeared as an afterthought during his post-republican career (particularly present in his memoirs) rather than a reaction synchronous to the publication of the novel, which was written, not to avoid controversy but precisely to create it.

**A(n un)welcome controversy: Reactions to *Mai ve Siyah* and rethinking literature**

Halit Ziya's prominent discourse of regret around the publication of *Mai ve Siyah* is barely convincing to be taken at face value. He did, after all, transcribe his own novels (including *Mai ve Siyah*) into modern Turkish after the Alphabet Reform of 1928, simplified the language and rendered them intelligible to contemporary readers. In other words, he spent considerable effort to rescue them from post-imperial oblivion, a successful endeavor considering how well canonized his works are today. More importantly, however, this intriguing discrepancy between his superficial remorse and more profound attempt at preserving *Mai ve Siyah* gives us a major clue to the second aspect of the potential promised within the literary field, the second and last positive aspect of the above-mentioned double bind: Even though he was sure to create controversy, Halit Ziya decided to put his novel in dissemination, precisely because he believed in the potential of the literary field as a platform that could generate useful literary discussions, which would eventually lead to substantive change. In other words, one of his main motivations in writing *and* getting this novel published was precisely to provoke the participants of the field, some of whom would be personally offended by the contents of the text, into engaging in a enthusiastic, perhaps fierce, but ultimately fruitful

discussion on the direction literary production will take in the Ottoman context. While a deep anxiety stemming from having the ground pulled from under their feet marked the Ottoman nineteenth century and afflicted literary/intellectual circles, it was also fraught with countless possibilities for innovation. The superficial remorse can be thus read as a retroactive disclaimer, one that is only half sincere. *Mai ve Siyah* was really intended as a provocative manifesto where Halit Ziya insinuates new ways of thinking about literature, reaching out for meaningful challenge that would ultimately engender and firmly establish the much-desired innovation and a new-found harmony with global (particularly, Western) literary trends.

While he welcomed the participatory richness of this platform where new ideas could be born amidst various reactions and spirited participation from all ideological and otherwise perspectives, Halit Ziya certainly had his own ways of envisioning the literary field and his own opinions about the state of affairs at the time. In his memoirs, he describes the prominent style of "literary criticism" of the period with disapproving aversion:

> In the times when our generation was bourgeoning, criticism and objection ("*tenkit ve itiraz*") had only to do with the word (*lafiz*), the form (*şekil*); those who called themselves critics were like ants that gnaw on whatever they find about any literary work, drift it left and right to finally try and bring it all the way to the little holes of their perception. Hurrying with greed, like hungry men who come across plunder... "*Abes* rhyming with *kes*, how can that be? One is written with the Arabic letter *se*, the other with *sin*, how can these two words of entirely different composure possibly pair up?..." The entire army of ants would then hasten and gather around these questions. Before they even discussed these to a conclusion, they would go onto attacking a new form of verse, and would swarm

> around that. "Such a bizarre poem!.. Not a *ghazal*, nor a stanza; it resembles neither *ruba'i* (quatrain) nor *şarkı*, […] this must be a new invention by the imitators of Europeans/the French, yet another blasphemy committed against literary blessings..." They particularly liked to tear prose texts into pieces, but could not even find the strength to look for what's under the pit they dug out. They had never seen any examples of proper criticism, never even imagined the existence of another intellectual and artistic world outside books of rhetoric.[171]

In this quote Halit Ziya is clearly referring to one of the distinguishing debates of the late-nineteenth century literary field, on what constitutes an acceptable rhyme. The discussion between the two groups led by Recaizade Ekrem and Mehmet Tahir (Baba Tahir) stemmed from the fact that in Ottoman Turkish, certain identical sounds are represented with different letters (the "s" sound, for instance, could refer to "se" ث "sin" س or "sad" ص), as Arabic sound patterns are not followed exactly. The *abes-muktebes* debate, named after the words that generated the disagreement, reinforced the dualism already underway between poets and literary critics.[172]

The above-detailed type of conservative literary critic, of whom Halit Ziya clearly had an unfavorable opinion, expectedly appears in the novel to preempt a certain set of predicted reactions which its author deemed to be representative of a largely bankrupt

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[171] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 656-7.

[172] The poem that triggered this debate was by a young poet by the name of Hasan Asaf and entitled *Burhan-ı Kudret* (Proof of Strength). Following the appearance of the poem in *Malumat*, Mehmet Tahir, the owner of the magazine himself criticizes Hasan Asaf on the grounds that the rhyme scheme in the following couplet is inacceptable: "Zerre-i nurundan iken *muktebes* / Mihr ü mehe etmek işaret *abes*." The young poet responds arguing that he had heard of similar rhyme schemes with mismatched letters yet matching sounds in the work of Recaizade Ekrem. An offensive article by Mehmet Tahir ensues where he personally attacks Ekrem, who then responds to the accusations in the article, further endorsing Asaf's poetry (entitled "Sanat Müşkil ise de Muaheze de Asan Değildir," - [Art may be difficult but criticism is not easy either], published in *Malumat* on December 26th, 1895). More poets then join the debate, ultimately increasing the popularity and acceptability of such rhyme schemes (Parlatır: 1985, 123; Yener: 1959, 8).

approach towards literature: Raci, the officiously conservative poet, Ahmet Cemil's co-worker and archnemesis, presents immediately unlikeable characteristics. Interestingly, however, Raci speaks very little throughout the story; it is through Ahmet Cemil's rather disgusted commentary that we learn about his views on literature. "You do not understand what kind of trajectory poetry is following these days," the protagonist snaps at him, "two evils, craft and adornment (*sanat ve ziynet*), are now pestered on the unadulterated language that carried forth Fuzuli's sincere and pure poetry; nothing else is left in our tongue; such things were uttered that their owners would rather be called jewelers than poets. If you were to hold it from one end and shake, nothing but rocks would drop."[173] Ahmet Cemil thinks Raci lacks the necessary intellectual skills to comprehend this discussion, and that he could never become a good poet.[174] This character, clearly cast in order to represent an altogether unrighteous character – he also drinks a lot and mistreats his wife, is often read as an allusion to late Muallim Naci (1850-1893) among literary historians, perhaps because of the ease of nominal association. Even though he himself had passed away three years before the serialization of the novel, Naci had created a group of followers who made an effort to carry on his poetic legacy.

**Networks of mentorship and the Servet-i Fünun group**

Halit Ziya's efforts to introduce himself to Ekrem and gain his endorsement paid off soon after, when Recaizade sent a letter to *Hizmet*, expressing appreciation of his prose poems

[173] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 21-2.
[174] Ibid., 27.

(*Mensur Şiirler*). A correspondence thus started between the two; further collaboration ensued, at a time when Recaizade wanted to gather the like-minded youth together to help gain support in the field and to generate desired change.[175] The intergenerational linkages were more central than ever to the literary field during this period of transformation where divergence in opinion among different parties impelled more established members of the field to actively seek out a younger support base and guide them as mentors. Unlike in the *medrese* tradition of the pre-modern educational system where students sat and learned along with a mentor at religious schools, during this period the real networking was happening outside the border of educational institutions. Even though seniors in the field such as Naci and Ekrem taught at modern schools (such as *Mekteb-i Sultani*, *Mekteb-i Mülkiye* and *Mekteb-i Hukuk*) and published textbooks that fueled literary debates, the publishing house had now become *the* venue where the mentor-student relationships really formed and flourished.[176] Knowing this, Ekrem recruited Tevfik Fikret, a student of his from *Mekteb-i Sultani* (Galatasaray Sultanisi) to join him in

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[175] Cemil Yener: 1974, 15. Some years later, Recaizade would also want to publish *Sefile*, Halit Ziya's first novel as a book in İstanbul. Even though the publication of the novel as a book was aborted by the Encümen-i Teftiş ve Muayene on the grounds that this story of a young Muslim girl who fell into the world of prostitution and moral degradation was inacceptable for distribution on the grounds that it was against Islamic law (*şerait-i islamiyeye mugayereti hasebiyle*), this relationship established between Recaizade and Halit Ziya would prove to be extremely instrumental for his later career. (Akalın: 1962, 8). The letter that Recaizade sent to the *Hizmet* office to praise *Sefile* as a novel was published with the title of *Taltifname* (Letter of praise) in the issue that was published in February 2, 1887 (nr. 24), as a response to many criticizing comments Halit Ziya had been receiving at the time.

[176] For instance, Recaizade initially wrote *Talim-i Edebiyat* during the early 1880s as a textbook for students of *Mekteb-i Mülkiye*, but the book went on to initiate many of the above-mentioned debates, as he included more works from innovative poets such as Abdülhak Hamit and did not spare too many pages to more strict adherents of Divan poetry. Recaizade was indeed a significant instructor, not just for aspiring writers but also for regular readers. Mehmet Rauf writes that his most remarkable impact was on the readers: "he heightened the level of readers' taste with his gracious and pleasant works, and taught them what serious and real literature is. This is an important service and no one has been as successful in this as Ekrem Bey has" (Mehmet Rauf: 1997, 77).

the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine and help him form a group of young writers with innovative ideas about literature. The publishing house, owned by Ahmet İhsan, was transformed, in 1896, into a locale where a strong voice opposing Mehmet Tahir's *Musavver Malumat* and Naci's ideas was formed.[177]

A new community thus came into being, one that would be instrumental in conceptualizing a modern Turkish literature not only at the turn of the century, but also for decades to come.[178] Halit Ziya defines this community in his memoir as follows:

> The group that came to be called *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* (New Literature) was made of members that were raised in different professions, under diverse conditions and that lived varied lives. Yet an initially invisible resemblance of opinions that nonetheless increasingly made itself felt and, like a spider working in the dark, it would slowly stick its net onto the old building that was called the literary world. Thus came a day when the members forming this group naturally came together without any previous discussion, with an already established certainty that they will become and remain forever friends through the proximity of their thoughts and conscience.[179]

The terms of this proximity were largely founded on a convergence of taste in literature and an inclination to take Western literary forms as models.[180] He explains that, before

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[177] Çıkla: 2004, 268; Yener: 1974, 8. With Namık Kemal in exile in Magosa and Abdülhak Hamit in Europe, Recaizade did not have the kind of immediate support he would have liked to continue participating in these debates. Recaizade was a student and follower of Kemal; the latter left his beloved *Tasvir-i Efkar* paper to him as he had to flee to Paris in 1867 (Parlatır: 1985, 2).

[178] Akalın: 1962, 11. After the reformation of *Servet-i Fünun* as a literary magazine, an enthusiastic Recaizade almost immediately started the serialization of his only novel *Araba Sevdası* that he originally wrote during the late 1880s.

[179] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 578.

[180] Halit Ziya explains that the members of *Servet-i Fünun* group "liked and remained distant from the same things" (Ibid., 677). Earlier on he had further clarified the nature of their aesthetic preferences: "The East could not offer them the literary bowl of intoxication, they

them, Turkish literature had already started leaning towards the West, but in very small capacity: "Five to ten pages from Jean Jacques Rousseau, a few tales from La Fontaine, a piece from Volney [Comte de Volney a.k.a. Constantin François de Chassebœuf] found in a collection of articles for educational purposes, […] formed the entirety of benefits taken from the West."[181] The formation of this community not only speeded up the penetration of Western literary texts into the Ottoman Turkish literary universe, but it also provided the nurturing ground where writers can share their work with each other. For instance, in his memoirs, Mehmet Rauf, Halit Ziya's younger friend, recalls with pride that the latter would generally read his stories to him prior to publication.[182]

The nurturing character of Ahmet İhsan's publishing house and the mentorship of Recaizade Ekrem provided Halit Ziya with a friendly environment that could support him and his views even in the face of potentially harsh criticism and even personal attacks. He therefore decided to take the opportunity upon being informed that the serialization columns just became available in Ahmet İhsan's illustrated weekly magazine *Servet-i Fünun*, to which he had thus far been contributing with short pieces and translations. Thus began, on June 4, 1896, the serialization of *Mai ve Siyah*, which, in his own words "has been clawing his mind in awhile with an irrepressible need to be born," with a praising introduction by Ahmet İhsan himself.[183]

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found it in the West. And once they have found it, they started quaffing it and have become drunk with it, as it were" (Ibid., 633).

[181] Ibid., 633. Selma Baş also quotes Hüseyin Cahit who stated that "literature in the Western sense of the word starts with *Servet-i Fünun* in our country. It is only then that our literature became European and civilized" (Baş: 2010, 317).

[182] Mehmet Rauf: 1997, 27.

[183] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 700. This date corresponds to 23 Mayıs (May) 1312 in Rumi, and 22 Zilhicce 1313 in Hijri calendars (273th issue of *Servet-i Fünun*). Ahmet İhsan wrote: "Halit Ziya Bey is among such writers that, once you see their signature under an article, your heart is immediately filled with the reasurance that you will read something beautiful. The refined author produces his works in an extremely meticulous and cognizant manner; makes them into

Ahmet Cemil's working conditions in the fictional publishing house were however harsher than his creator's, illustrating the fierce competition that dominated the literary world at the time, to the exception of a few emotional shelters, like the *Servet-i Fünun* headquarters.

**The lonesome A. Cemil:**
**Competition and the literary field as a "dinner table of wolves"**

Unlike a luckier Halit Ziya, his protagonist Ahmet Cemil was mostly devoid of a supportive environment, perhaps because the novelist's views of the support available were more pessimistic at the time of *Mai ve Siyah*'s composition when such a community had not been fully formed yet. This risk of feeling lonely in the middle of a potentially antagonistic environment was a part of the "black dangers lurking in the background," as this chapter's initial quote illustrates; the emphasis on individuality encouraged competition and fueled emotions of envy and jealousy, resulting in episodes of personal attacks and ridicule. The opinions (often flimsy in nature and driven by grudge) of fellow litterateurs had now become more important than ever.

The only person who could understand Ahmet Cemil's emotions (albeit only partially) in the face of a hostile literary world was Hüseyin Nazmi. In more than one instance, the young poet reiterates the unique place his friend holds in his heart as a confidant and editor, in the midst of an otherwise hostile world. "He would not read those to anyone else but Hüseyin Nazmi," the narrative voice explains.[184] Later on, when faced

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pleasurable reads; well-read folks/intellectuals (erbab-ı mütala'a) is always mesmerized by the talent of his heart in dissecting psychological states."

[184] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 176. "They didn't find the pleasure of sincerity they had in each other's

with ruthless criticism, Ahmet Cemil thinks to himself in agony: "at this moment, how much he needed Hüseyin Nazmi!.. He was sure that only he could understand him. If he were here this minute, he would feel great consolation from just crying out this four-columned poison by his side."[185]

Halit Ziya himself also experienced such harsh personal attacks and was negatively affected by them even though he was part of the supportive environment of the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine. He notes in his memoirs that *Mai ve Siyah* would later cause him to "taste acrid poisons and experience hours of remorse as if it were one of the greatest sins of [his] life."[186] He was not alone in finding himself the addressee of harsh personal attacks. In her article about the Naci-Ekrem debates, Fevziye Abdullah recounts that most discussions were ones that "*did not stem from a serious divergence of opinions*, but were rather based on personal reasons."[187] Even among the writers of *Servet-i Fünun*, such tendencies were present; Mehmet Rauf recalls that as a chief editor, Tevfik Fikret clearly encouraged competition among the contributors to the magazine.[188]

One could argue that competition is a very old phenomenon that surely existed prior to modernity. However, as Jocelyn Sharlet argues, pre-modern competition in the literary field sought to reinforce patronage structures instead of highlighting poet's

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company in anybody else's friendship" (Ibid., 220).

[185] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 308.

[186] Ibid., 574. Of these, he only mentions Sadri Ethem's criticism, when he described *Mai ve Siyah* as "a more obscure riddle than the hieroglyphs that fill Sultanahmet Square." However, referring to criticisms arguing that *Mai ve Siyah*'s prosaic style rich in unintelligible metaphors is entirely irrelevant to local culture and lifestyles, Orhan Koçak draws attention to how those critics (both H.Z.'s contemporaries and republican literary historians) did not notice the irony in their own critique: "Would it be possible," he asks, "for a novel that manages to be a model for an entire generation, to influence their ways of perceiving, thinking and behaving, not to have touched a certain core, not to have provided an answer to a social-cultural need?" (Koçak: 1996, 97).

[187] Fevziye Abdullah: 1953, 159, emphasis mine.

[188] Mehmet Rauf: 1997, 42.

individuality. "Competition does not disrupt patronage, it defines it," she observes, "[a] king should promote a minister, distinguish him from his peers in his clothing, mount, procession, seating, and titles, and should not listen to opponents and gossips, since the minister is inevitably envied."[189] In a society where the monarch had lost some of his political power, the nature of competition was altered accordingly, where peers had more influence than they did before.

This also meant, however, that writers had a different type of agency in controlling their reputation in the field. They often had recourse to self-exaltation as a response to personal criticism. One such example was Muallim Naci who established a system of self-glorification in the form of a magazine column that was almost exclusively devoted to parallel poems (*nazires*) written by his proponents for his poetry.[190] This strategy helped Naci establish himself as a "poetic leader," during and after the time when he served as the editor of *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*'s literary section. In fact, he had become so influential in some circles that he was nearly deified following his death.[191] This was a modern phenomenon in that "snobbism requires concrete equality. When individuals are inferior or superior to each other, we find servility and tyranny, flattery and arrogance, but never snobbism in the proper sense of the word."[192] Because Naci was

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[189] Sharlet: 2011, 24.

[190] These *nazires* for Naci's poems were composed by a number of different poets including Hersekli Akif Hikmet Bey, Üsküdarlı Nedim, Mehmed Emin, Mehmed Celal, Şeyh Vasfi, Ahmet Hamdi, Ali Ferruh, Ahmet Cemal, Feyzullah, Menemenli Tahir, and even Namık Kemal, to name a few. Sometimes he even composed *nazires* for his own poems. (Fevziye Abdullah: 1953).

[191] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 626.

[192] Rene Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 70. Girard argues that "[d]emocracy is one vast middle-class court where the courtiers are everywhere and the king is nowhere" (119). In a similar vein, Orhan Koçak reminds his readers that "following the French Revolution, and the spread of the idea of equality, the [social] distances cease to be unsurmountable, everyone could now aim for everyone's position; anyone could become anyone's god" (Koçak: 1996,

technically just as vulnerable to criticism and ridicule as any other poet, he created a self-imposed value system where he cast himself as a person of higher status in the field of literary production, through his knowledge and aptitude in local poetic traditions, as well as Arabic and Persian languages. It was thus no coincidence that he chose to utilize a classical device of intertextuality in order to reinforce his status as an acclaimed poet. Such navigational aptitude on the part of poets notwithstanding, some debates turned so excessively personal, offensive and unproductive that participants had to ironically call for the intervention of the sultan to restore the order.[193]

This competition expectedly stirred jealousy and envy.[194] Halit Ziya bitterly recalls the predominance of these emotions in the "world of publishing." "Everyone was jealous of everyone," he explains, "one can say that everyone was waiting for each other to fall down on the Babıali Avenue, between the few Armenian bookshops on this tiny road."[195] The state of the publishing world is quite similar in his fictional account where the antagonist Raci is characterized by envious tendencies. From the beginning of the novel, he is described as someone who wants a world where only he can write the best kind of poetry and not anyone else. Ahmet Cemil condescendingly remarks that Raci can only admire dead poets, "those who transcended our world, who are now free from competition, as they have withdrawn from the literary market."[196] In fact, a profound

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[193] Parlatır: 1985, 122.

[194] In *Envy: Theory and Research*, Richard H. Smith defines this emotion as follows: "Envy is a feeling of pain a person experiences when he or she perceives that another individual possesses some subject, quality or status that he or she desires but does not possess. When the envious person is unable to obtain the desired object, quality, or status that individual usually hopes that the envied person will lose the desired thing and may even conspire to make that happen (Smith: 2008, 18).

[195] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 571.

[196] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 28.

feeling of envy towards one another was a general tendency among writers, poets and cultural producers at the time, as can be observed in Ahmet Cemil's descriptions of the emotional texture in the world of publishing. “One does not doubt that he can only really be appreciated by those that are outside of his profession,” he observes, “his friends loved him, but who knows about the kinds of enmity and envy hidden in their affection. Those who praised him today would surely laugh at him were he to write something that would cause him to fail.”[197] Much later in the story when Ahmet Cemil's successful poetic performance is received with general praise mixed with some jealousy (most of which unsurprisingly comes from Raci), he reacts to negative remarks more than the positive ones. For instance, when Mazhar Feridun Bey suggests that he read “only the critiques of his poem that are written by his friends,” Ahmet Cemil does not respond in words but with a surprise-filled gaze that said, “Could one ever have friends in the world of publishing? Would these people ever genuinely applaud a friend?”[198] Another remark by a fellow poet, Dilaver Bey, hints at the fundamental function of envy and jealousy to the workings of the new system: He almost matter-of-factly suggests, “I think you should be happy that you are being envied this much.”[199] The sign of success was in fact the existence of envy in others for one's work.

In his memoirs, Halit Ziya recalls instances that evoke similar emotions in the non-fictional world of publishing in the turn-of-the-century Istanbul. Writing with lingering contempt almost three decades later, he describes envious folks as “a flock that cannot bear the success of others and cannot digest their own inability to reach the same rank as theirs,” as people who “don't refrain from showing their own shameful greed to

[197] Ibid., 28.
[198] Ibid., 309.
[199] Ibid., 308.

the extent of spitting the poison of their jealousy onto the skilled youth that rose to brilliance. […] Some of them even did so much as to push those they envied into the evil tricks and intrigues of the palace, or to make them victims of Abdülhamit's paranoid thoughts."[200] To be sure, Halit Ziya was very much a part of this structure of envy, despite his performed dislike of it, even many years later. His intensive focus on the very emotion demonstrates its centrality in his life even though he was nearly not as open about his own envious tendencies as an American novelist of a few generations later, Gore Vidal, who openly confessed, "[e]very time a friend succeeds, I die a little," and who stated that "[i]t is not enough to succeed; others must fail."[201]

Vidal certainly stands as an honest exception in relation to authorial envy, as the emotion is traditionally one that would be kept a secret. For instance, Ahmet Cemil who is cast as a protagonist rather than an antagonist in *Mai ve Siyah*, would naturally have to hide his own antagonistic sentiments towards Raci. Not surprisingly, he pretends that he does not understand the reason why he must criticize him: "Do they give him money to do this," he asks, "does he become a doubly better poet when he convinces people that we utter bad poetry? Do I force him into silence when I utter poetry? […] He should do the same. Do I say anything when he does?"[202] The series of rhetorical questions remain suspiciously unanswered. In fact, Ahmet Cemil is far from immune to his cultural environment; he does object, criticize and even ridicule Raci from the beginning of the novel. Later, right before the scheduled performance of his finished poetic masterpiece, a telling moment of embarrassment that resulted from a sudden awareness of his own antagonism and lack of empathy towards Raci acutely reminds him that he is not exempt

[200] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 572.
[201] Smith: 2008, 151.
[202] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 125.

from the emotions he accuses others to have. When his desire to invite Raci to the performance is met with surprise, with Hüseyin Nazmi asking "Raci?! What are you going to do with him?", Ahmet Cemil blushed with the realization that dreaming about Raci's jealousy of his poem made him ecstatic.[203]

In his memoirs, Halit Ziya makes a similar effort at isolating himself and his own group from such sentiments of envy, jealousy, competition and rivalry. This effort, shared and reiterated by a few of his co-workers who also wrote memoirs during the 1930s, has such prominence in the text that reinforces the ubiquity of these emotions, despite the author's claims otherwise. Halit Ziya proudly and unyieldingly emphasizes the utter lack of competition and jealousy within the *Servet-i Fünun* headquarters. "People who really knew us did not doubt for a second the complete absence of this emotion [among us]. Whenever one of us successfully published a work, it would become not only an individual success but that of the entire group."[204] Similarly, Mehmet Rauf recalls in his memoirs that a potentially serious disagreement between a fellow writer and co-worker by the name of Ahmet Hikmet and himself was quickly resolved thanks to their congenial surroundings.[205] The undue underscoring of the hospitability in their working grounds serves to further reiterate the hostility of the cultural field at large, presenting it as a merger against a more individualized and aggressive world that does no longer provide the reassurance of a powerful and well-admired sultan-patron. As a matter of fact, problems arose when writers changed or otherwise betrayed their loyalties to a given publishing house, or other types of communities formed around similarity of literary taste, or ideological inclination. Ahmet Rasim's joining *Malumat*, Baba Tahir's literary

[203] Ibid., 249.
[204] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 683.
[205] Mehmet Rauf: 1997, 85.

magazine, for instance, produced bitter emotions in Halit Ziya, and he would remember years later the shadows cast not only on the professional but also personal relationship between the two.[206]

**Sixteen pages for forty kurush:**
**Inaugural inequalities and ways to cope with financial hardship**

While the inter-authorial hostilities rendered a more democratic literary field an anxiety-inducing environment, financial difficulties often created an obstacle for young poets without remarkable family funds. In contrast with the patronage system where wealth is by definition unstable, transient and often dependent on the patron's whims, there was, as mentioned above, the promise of a sufficient monetary gain through hard work and stamina.[207] However, inaugural inequalities stemming from a discrepancy among family funds available to writers and poets continued to impact the possibilities available to each one of them. As Fortna observes, "[i]n terms of social background, economic status, and cultural milieu, these individuals defy easy categorization."[208] Yet, variations in their financial ability at the start of their career seem to have generated a remarkable dissimilarity in the nature of their experiences.

One such phenomenon is central to *Mai ve Siyah*'s plot: the friendship between Ahmet Cemil and Hüseyin Nazmi illustrates the significance of existent funds to an intellectual's success in the world of literature. Naturally, the prospect of becoming a true artist, free from the mundane hurdles of the publishing field was certainly more likely for

[206] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 535. Ahmet Rasim (1864-1932) was one of the most prolific writers of his generation, who gave detailed accounts of the daily life in İstanbul.
[207] For more on the premodern patronage relationships, see Sharlet: 2011, 176.
[208] Fortna: 2001, 5.

the latter, who lived in a large family mansion in Erenköy, compared to Ahmet Cemil who resided in a modest house in Süleymaniye. As a matter of fact, upon the death of Ahmet Cemil's father, when he began to really feel his own financial limitations, Hüseyin Nazmi provoked bitter emotions in him because he constituted an ideal he may never attain. To him, Hüseyin Nazmi was happy precisely because he did not have to think how to make it to the next day financially without letting his family starve. The unattainability of such a lifestyle for Ahmet Cemil and the accompanying sentiments of envy and shame gradually drew him apart from his friend; he would, for example, often refrain from visiting him at this mansion fearing that his friend would think he came to ask for money. Hüseyin Nazmi unexceptionally paid for the books and magazines they acquired, since "in contrast with Ahmet Cemil's almost always empty pockets, his were always full or near-full."[209] As a result, he often failed to show empathy towards Ahmet Cemil's troubles, reducing the impossibility of compromising his artistic urges and lack of appropriate finances to a mere "temporary problem" that he could easily deal with by putting a little more work in the publishing house. "What you need to do is quite simple," he would say, "first to tell all that childishness and poetic thoughts to stop, then to accept life with all its reality, and to work hard if you must do so."[210] He also frequently welcomed Ahmet Cemil's enthusiastic speeches about future success in the literary field with an evident level of sympathetic cynicism. While not quite sure about the reasons of his pity, Hüseyin Nazmi was also aware of the ultimate unattainability of his friend's life goals. In fact, the narrator observes, "he knew very well his dreams were always shadowed by an undeniable reality. That is why, as Ahmet Cemil spoke, he could not

[209] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 57.
[210] Ibid., 74.

help but mutter, 'Oh, poor child!'"[211]

The dramatic discrepancy among the two friends stems from an unprecedented dependence on the part of the cultural production on the larger market dynamics – one that acts unequally on different participants according to their monetary starting point, as becoming a litterateur, while an increasingly attractive prospect for young men, still failed to provide complete financial security without recourse to supporting funds.[212] This inequality, by no means specific to the Ottoman context but rather a product of capitalist modernity, often divided (or rather scattered) cultural producers along a spectrum at the two extremes of which were (1) the 'artist' who comfortably expresses his creative urges without having to think about having ends meet, and (2) the proletarian of the publishing field who writes to sustain himself and provide for the family, and who thus produces the kinds of texts that the market requires him to produce. As a matter of fact, the dramatic contrast between Ahmet Cemil and Hüseyin Nazmi can be traced to the non-fictional realm. One such example was the editor-in-chief of *Servet-i Fünun* and famous poet, Tevfik Fikret, whose father served as a governor in the Arab provinces, and who therefore received fifteen golden coins a month from him and lived in an elegant mansion in Aksaray. His lifestyle was quite similar to Hüseyin Nazmi's, in that he did not have any financial hardship and could thus allot most of his time to writing his own poetry. In his memoirs, Ahmet İhsan, the owner of *Servet-i Fünun,* confesses that he had always asked himself: "Could Tevfik Fikret insist in his hyperbolic behavior if he were not living

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[211] Ibid., 135.

[212] In his memoirs, Halit Ziya recalls his excitement about the prospect of turning his literary production into financial income prior to his own bitter realization that sustaining a steady income that way would be nearly impossible. "I was not naïve," he observes, "but I had not fully experienced life either," (Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 205).

in such prosperity? I have been – and still am, unable to answer this."[213]

This was certainly a valid question to ask, particularly considering the fact that, when family funds were non-existent, litterateurs often had to take on additional jobs elsewhere to survive, which involved spending considerable number of hours in government offices or teaching/mentoring jobs. Halit Ziya himself worked as a teacher at the *İzmir İdadisi*, an employee at the Ottoman Bank's local branch in the same city, as a translator at the Department of Foreign Affairs, and as the head scribe in İstanbul's Régie (administration of the Tobacco Monopoly) and other odd jobs in order to sustain himself and his family when the income from his art failed to do so.[214] At times, literature and publishing as professional fields became so unbearably disadvantageous to one's financial situation that one even had to quit entirely. One such example is the case of one of the employees of the fictional *Mir'at-ı Şu'un* magazine in *Mai ve Siyah*, the editor-in-chief Ali Şekip who decides to quit the profession altogether to open a stationery store. This seemingly bleak outcome did however make him happy, a sentiment that overtly comes across in his following statement: "I've had enough of being a writer; I will work as a tradesman from now on. I would much rather provide paper and pen to other writers than dashing out my brains to provide a few columns of texts that would only make thousands of men yawn every day. […] I've begun to abhor the smell of ink. I am tired of writing like a machine, hoping that I will catch the owner in the right mood so that I can pry a lira or two out of his hands."[215]

Despite his own dreams of writing and publishing his poetic masterpiece and of thus gaining fame as a poet, Ahmet Cemil sympathizes with Ali Şekip's decision. "If he

[213] Tokgöz: 1993, 85.
[214] Akalın: 1962, 10; Yener: 1974, 17.
[215] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 233.

doesn't desire to acquire fame," he thinks to himself, "I suppose store ownership may be a better option than remaining a writer."[216] One reason for that thought was certainly the fact that cultural/literary production also became a sort of trade during the period when the old patronage relations had mostly lost their attraction with the rise of journalism, except that it was one that did require excessive effort while not paying as well. The emergence of journalism as a professional field allowed writers to stay within the confines of the publishing house and keep working for the weekly magazines where they also have their literary work published, but instead to produce other types of texts, such as translated news pieces from foreign newspapers, translations of non-fictional/scientific articles, or of popular short stories and novels in order to fill the columns of the magazine, as part of their positions as an employee of the house. While the flourishing of journalism paved the way for a proliferation of literary texts during the 1860s and 70s, by the 1890s the blurred boundaries between journalism and literature started to be seen as a source of annoyance and frustration by litterateurs who felt like their aesthetic concerns were often overwritten by the requirements of the publishing house, which were based on the tastes of the audience.

In contrast, in *Mai ve Siyah*, hard work and entrepreneurial endeavors are only exalted as false desires that are bound to end in an existential emptiness. Shortly after his father's death, we see Ahmet Cemil full of hope and enthusiasm about what hard work can bring along. He tells his mother, "I have to work so I can become somebody, dear mother; if I challenge myself enough now, I surely will have a comfortable life later on... […] You would be proud seeing your son as a publishing house owner, wouldn't you?"[217]

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[216] Ibid., 233.
[217] Ibid., 88.

He believed that all his dreams would come true were he to work as hard as he could, only to be gravely disappointed at the end of the novel, when his hard work and stamina failed to bring him success in the literary field. One reason for this disappointment was the blurred boundaries between the above-mentioned categories of the artist and the proletarian-journalist, the former expressing his aesthetic urges, the latter writing away columns of simple text to make a living and to educate masses. As Alpay Kabacalı argues in *Türkiye'de Yazarın Kazancı* (Engl. Authorial Income in Turkey), it was very hard, if not impossible, to conceive literary production as independent of journalism during the time of the emergence and early proliferation of print capitalism in Turkey. While this proliferation and the consequent multiplication of resources rendered the field of literature as one that made available many opportunities for creativity, the actual attainability of what was promised called for a set of above-mentioned preconditions, such as adequate family funds or availability of a well-paying side job that would allow one to avoid the often dull, repetitive and low-paying workload required to be a full time employee at the publishing house.

Similarly, the distinction between high and low literatures, between what is aesthetically innovative and what caters more to popular tastes, unsurprisingly manifested itself both in the fictional and real world, even though it was not nearly as big a concern a few decades ago when accessibility was deemed to be far more important than artistic value.[218] As a matter of fact, one of the most telling moments in *Mai ve Siyah* storyline is when we see Ahmet Cemil struggling to translate a favorite poem of his by Lamartine.

[218] In his memoirs, Halit Ziya distinguishes what is artistic (sanatkarane) from what it is not, though without necessarily positioning these two categories along a hierarchical line. To him non-artistic were "texts concerning with political and sociological issues, mathematics, philosophy, history and law, as well as vaudevilles, and detective stories like Sherlock Holmes, Arsene Lupin, and Pinkerton," Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 463.

The translation work, though intellectually and artistically fulfilling, requires extreme meticulousness; it progresses slowly and with difficulty; it only pays forty kurush for sixteen pages. Sweating under İstanbul's summer heat, Ahmet Cemil feels crammed in his little room, unable to recall his happy childhood in their family house any longer, while trying to soothe his overworked mind daydreaming about a wealthier future when he would translate Lamartine or Musset, not for the main purpose of monetary gain, but for his own personal pleasure. His frustration expectedly grows deeper upon learning that publishing houses and book sellers are not interested at all in a translation of Lamartine, instead they hand him a French dime novel entitled "Daughter of a Thief" to translate.[219] Ahmet Cemil's dreams of producing the kind of literature he would like, be it in translation or his own authentic pieces, seems then to be further destroyed, as he would not only not be paid enough, but he would also have to translate fiction that he would not even read himself.

To make things even worse, he faces more challenges as he submits his first translations to a book seller on the Babıali Avenue, creating further disappointment and financial hardship: "He continued to translate. Time passed but he still could not get any money for his work. At some point, he managed to receive a hundred kurush from the bookseller through some embarrassed insistence. The license to publish the story was finally acquired and it was going to be published as one fascicle per week, since the lack of funds held the publisher from doing it faster. This meant that he would be earning two mecidiyes (forty kurush), which would have to be pried out of the hands of the book seller, who would unwillingly give it to you after you had to ask for it eight or ten times. You will never receive a satisfying bulk of money, at times, even lose more than you can

[219] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 81.

gain."[220] Overall, this prospect was not only intellectually and artistically unsatisfying, but also economically daunting for many aspiring talents who struggled to make a name in this field.

**Conclusion: (re)defining success and failure**

In light of the intertwined net of opportunities and challenges that faced the young litterateurs during the last decades of the nineteenth century, it becomes all the more difficult to assess *Mai ve Siyah*'s ending, where all that was left of Ahmet Cemil consisted of a soulless body in ruins, "with sunken cheeks and lips curved down with the pain of his self-mourning."[221]

Unlike his recent fictional counterparts, like Bihruz and Felatun, Ahmet Cemil defies easy categorization as a failed poet and a symbol of ridicule, a difference that reflects a telling discrepancy between Halit Ziya's views on literary success and that of his predecessors (and mentors) such as Ahmet Midhat (Felatun Bey's creator) and Recaizade Ekrem (Bihruz Bey's creator). In fact, Ahmet Midhat had cast Felatun into the story only as an antagonist whose failure is not only an indisputable fact but also an indicator of the protagonist Rakım Efendi's exemplary lifestyle and a warning sign of what might ensue if one is carried too far in their admiration of Western cultural imports, from clothing items to mannerisms and, more importantly, literary taste. Recaizade's approach to this prototype of a newly conceptualized intellectual is slightly different in that he casts the still very much parodied character as his protagonist, hinting at the

[220] Ibid., 83.
[221] Ibid., 385.

impossibility to dissociate himself as a late-nineteenth century Ottoman litterateur, from the cultural shift underway. Despite the parody, the relative lack of judgment on the part of the narrator insinuates that the problem of stylistic exaggeration (in literature, clothing, etc) can be as much a reflection of a conservative assessment on the part of the more traditionally inclined literati as an empirically observable phenomenon. In that sense, it is as much a parody of Bihruz himself as it is of a popular novelist like Ahmet Midhat Efendi, who in his simplistic approach to literature, can only formulate his opinions through cardboard types (rather than well-developed characters), a page-turner type of narrative (rather than one that is rich in detailed descriptions) and an overtly didactic or moralizing tone.

While Felatun Bey is certainly portrayed as a failure, and Bihruz Bey as a despicable character despite his central position in the storyline, Halit Ziya's Ahmet Cemil is neither a caricature, nor an unproblematic success story like Ahmet Midhat's well-lauded Rakım Efendi.[222] As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, *Mai ve Siyah*'s narrator compassionately accompanies him all the way till the end of the story when Ahmet Cemil embarks in a self-imposed exile towards Yemen, implying that perhaps a smooth trajectory towards success was not necessarily a praiseworthy accomplishment in a literary field ridden with confusion and conflict in regards to definitions of literary worthiness, during a period where the audience was expanding and diversifying in terms of their taste. Ahmet Cemil's failure to cater to a series of

[222] In fact, while Ahmet Mithat Efendi and (even more so) Recaizade Ekrem were very influential figures for Halit Ziya's literary career, his take on prose fiction is not entirely identical to theirs. While being a firm admirer of Recaizade, Halit Ziya nevertheless states in his memoirs that Recaizade's novel was much longer than it needed to be, and argues that *Araba Sevdası* could have communicated its main intentions within half of its original length (Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 717-8).

diversified preferences, from a tendency towards popular fiction with simple prose and action-focused narrative to a conservative conception of poetry where new imagery is still, to a certain extent, received with raised eyebrows, serves as a criticism of a lack of consistent aesthetic criteria in the literary field, as well as a warning for young litterateurs to brace themselves for the variety of overstated opinions stemming from this lack.

This feeling of discouragement in the face of an unsympathetic field lingers on throughout Halit Ziya's literary career. The conversation between the young and old Halit Ziya's in "Gerilere Doğru" is illustrative of his weariness caused by "literature." "I am truly disgusted of writing," he explains, "just think about it, a profession I have been doing for sixty years now. […] I used to write with such excitement and joy when I was young, expecting a spiritual reward for each and every text. I felt a certain kind of happy levity when I finished each test, like a bird getting ready to take off. This is not the case any more. Writing is almost akin to torture."[223] A similar mental exhaustion stemming from a lack of appreciation (at least to the degree he would have liked) by fellow writers can be traced in Ahmet Cemil's mental process, particularly following his poetic performance. "Reading?.. He hated all of that now," describes the narrator, "those poems, those dear books were all pseudo-poems, fake wisdom by men who aren't yet overwhelmed by life."[224]

Despite the gloomy tone that predominates the end of both *Mai ve Siyah* and Halit Ziya's life, neither the novelist nor his poet-protagonist is cast as true failures. Rather, their self-inflicted lack of success points to their own disappointment with a literary field that is not yet ready to appreciate the real worth of their work. The absence of such

[223] Uşaklıgil: 2005 (2), 29.
[224] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 370.

appreciation is implied early on by Raci, who commented, "not everyone has to praise *Gencine-i Edep*'s chief editor [referring to Hüseyin Nazmi]. Even though you understand each other's work, I don't see it as a necessity for others to appreciate it like you do."[225] Soon after, Ahmet Cemil reiterates his solitude in a largely unsympathetic environment: "His friends are undoubtedly to be found in this garden, only partially visible to him at a distance. Why would he go there? […] Isn't he utterly alone in this world, distant from everyone?"[226] This distance becomes not only a medium of self-protection but also self-exaltation; not being understood by the majority was indeed a good thing, and pointed to a higher position in the hierarchical structure of the literary value system. This phenomenon is also reflected, from a slightly different angle, in Ahmet Cemil and Hüseyin Nazmi's timid but enthusiastic approach towards French poetry. When they first take a compilation in their hands, they were "confused about where they had to start. They were scared of not understanding it."[227] Having already positioned it above what they are more familiar with in the literary hierarchy, French poetry automatically invokes intimidation, reinforcing the argument that not being understood could well be a sign of literary worth.

Yet, this did not mean that either Ahmet Cemil or Halit Ziya, as well as writers of his generation lacked a desire to have their work understood. In their embrace and exaltation of their own obscurity in the eyes of the readership, they also yearned to be apprehended and appreciated, a situation that reflects the double bind that began to haunt the modern litterateur at this particular juncture, and around which this chapter revolved. The anxiety of not being understood is in fact easily observed both in their novels and

[225] Ibid., 18.
[226] Ibid., 37.
[227] Ibid., 57.

memoirs. In *Mai ve Siyah*, Ahmet Cemil's unease in relation to the potential reaction of his audience is clear prior to performing his poem when he thinks, "if only the fear of not being understood and appreciated was not there."[228] In a similar vein, Mehmet Rauf recalls Halit Ziya's deepest fears in his memoirs, "the first was not to be understood and the second to continue producing literary works unaware of one's own failure. […] You must let me know, if this situation were to become real for me."[229]

The litterateurs of the late-nineteenth century Ottoman Turkish literary scene were walking the tight rope where the tension between their own aesthetic preferences and those of an increasingly larger and more diverse audience worked to transform the dynamics of literary production from a poetic-performative realm to one of prose and individual reading, from a traditionally local or localized imagery to a brand-new figurative reservoir and set of stylistic inclinations. Meanwhile, the discrepancy in literary tastes constituted a two-sided coin where a lack of understanding could serve both as a point of pride for innovative writers despite their desire to reach larger audiences, and also one through which writers on the more conservative side of the scale could criticize them for not being transparent or accessible. In the words of Mehmet Rauf, Halit Ziya's close friend and apprentice, "all dissenters repeated the same refrain over and over again: 'We don't understand it, we don't understand it.' […] 'They steal it; they translate it from French.' […] 'They are ruining the language.'"[230] These debates, enabled by the physical venue of the publishing house, as well as the published medium of the weekly literary magazine, illustrate the variety of views on how good literature must be during this particular juncture where a plethora of texts were being published and

[228] Ibid., 128.
[229] Tokgöz: 1993, 30.
[230] Ibid., 47.

circulated despite the censorship. Having readily available media with considerable readership to express their views would prove to be a significant force catapulting transformation in a literary field where thus far only the wealthiest and the mentally strongest could safely afford to be obscure or experimental in their literary endeavors in the face of harsh financial difficulties of an emerging literary marketplace and a predominant tendency toward attacks of ridicule in a significantly less hierarchical system of literary criticism. These challenging yet potentially fruitful tensions between the blue and the black, the promises and the dangers, the experimental and the popular, the local(ized) and the foreign were also contested in the ways in which litterateurs carried themselves and performed their public personas through extratextual style items, to which I now turn.

# Chapter 3

## Adorning Authorship:
## Clothing, Furniture, and the Commodification of Intellectual Lifestyle

One of the central scenes in *Mai ve Siyah* details Ahmet Cemil's fantasies of becoming a renowned poet and acquiring the ownership of a successful publishing house. His innovative ideas on poetry aside, this particular dream sequence is interestingly predominated by a detailed description of the physical qualities of the yet non-existent publishing house, of the carriage he is going to be riding there, and finally, his own appearance as a turn-of-the-century poet.

> "An elegant apartment – he even had a detailed picture drawn in his mind - in a convenient location on the Babıali Avenue, say, near one of the intersections in Sirkeci; a small carriage, with just one horse... What's the need for excessive flamboyance? Then, he will start wearing glasses, too. He attached particular importance to the wearing of glasses. Each morning, he would take off from his house in Süleymaniye... No, they would sell that house; another one, somewhere else; he had not quite decided in which neighborhood... He would get on his carriage, and would order with a military-like voice: - To the publishing house!."[231]

Although this dream never materializes, it remains a major force in how Ahmet Cemil's aspirations of becoming a successful and famous poet enfold, eventually preparing the almost forcedly tragic ending of the novel. In fact, following Ahmet Cemil's seemingly victorious performance of his poetic masterpiece towards the end, the decisive blow

[231] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 89.

determining his perceived failure comes from his fellow poet and archnemesis Raci, who, in an attacking piece in a newspaper, heartlessly criticizes, not so much his poetic style, but his appearance, clothing and demeanor. This article, setting its tone with a title featuring double question and exclamation marks ("A Literary Performance??!!"), describes Ahmet Cemil's physical appearance with a decidedly sarcastic and ridiculing tone, mocking his hairstyle, the way he moves his head and arms, in short, his entire presence during the performance.[232] Disillusioned with the literary field and its prospects, Ahmet Cemil then gives up on the initial dream, burns the only copy of his poetic masterpiece, and decides to leave Istanbul with his mother, for a place as dry as his heart and mind; in the closing scene of the novel, we see him set sail for the empire's arid Eastern lands.

Having witnessed the passing of his loving father, faced jarring economic difficulties, been disappointed in his romantic life, remained curiously lethargic in the face of his sister's unhappy marriage and her consequent death, Ahmet Cemil's reaction to Raci's criticism may seem overdone on the part of Halit Ziya. The question thus arises, of why all these elements that have no immediate connection to the actual practice of literary craft are deemed to be fundamental to the protagonist self-conception as a successful litterateur, so much so that they constituted points of vulnerability that accounted for the young poet's self-inflicted tragic fate. I argue, in this chapter, that external appearances, such as clothing items, hairstyles, accessories, as well as the ownership of a set of objects, such as books, bookcases, writing desks, became unprecedentedly significant and constitutive of the authorial identity for the literary men of Halit Ziya's generation. Taken as indispensable tokens of individual choice, the subtle

[232] Ibid., 306.

set of signs created through the acquiring of particular commodities pertaining to a larger intellectual/artistic lifestyle were now part of the unwritten requirements to survive and ensure the careful construction of the right public persona to lead oneself towards success in the literary field. One thus needed to not just spend unwisely and buy expensive clothing items, or pieces of furniture chosen randomly, but rather select a set of objects that would establish a seemingly effortless presence and authorial charisma. In other words, while a larger variety of commodities were increasingly available to a larger body of customers in the Ottoman imperial capital, a realization accompanied this new availability, on the critical nature of the meticulous selection of these commodities to create desired effects in the public sphere. This realization rendered choices pertaining to outwardly self-fashioning so critical to the definition of the literary individual that attacking an author's appearance meant attacking the author's personality, hence Ahmet Cemil's rather stark reaction to Raci's ridicule.

This emphasis on the public image in the field of literature was certainly not particular to Ottomans. As Marysa Demoor observes in her edited volume, *Authorial Personae, Narrative Selves and Self-Fashioning, 1880-1930*, the last decades of the Victorian era were marked by a similar concern for authors "to control their public image by creating a self that would help them to do just that."[233] Writing during the early half of the century in France, Honoré de Balzac testifies to the importance of public appearance, particularly for artists, as he argues that "[n]egligence of clothing is a moral suicide."[234] The performative nature of this type of authorship was reinforced by general

[233] Demoor: 2004, 6.

[234] Honoré de Balzac, *Treatise on Elegant Living* (Cambridge, MA: Wakefield Press, 2010), 69. Interestingly, Balzac (1799-1850) disagrees with Rousseau (1712-1778) who argues about half a century earlier, that luxury brings inequality and moral corruption, indicating a generational difference that can be observed, say, between Halit Ziya and Ahmet Midhat.

developments in the arena of visual arts and technologies, such as the increasing popularity of theater, the emergence of photography, cinema and new techniques for printing images, in European as well as in the Ottoman urban centers. The penetration of these technologies into the realm of the personal marked a new phase in Ottoman modernization with Halit Ziya's generation of intellectuals in that the thus far separate realms of technics and ethics, of technology and personal behavior were starting the merge vis-a-vis the Western impact on Ottoman urban fabric. In other words, as Western cultural influence increasingly became an integral part of the societal transformation in urban centers in addition to imported technical innovations, the realm of morality, thus far carefully protected from foreign interference, started to be transformed as well, as aesthetic preferences provoked by a desire to consume personality-building commodities overrode former personal loyalties. As Robert Finn observes in *The Early Turkish Novel 1872-1900*, Ahmet Cemil's struggle throughout the novel occurs "on two main levels: the economic and the aesthetic."[235] It is hence no longer surprising to witness Ahmet Cemil easily forgo his beloved sister's well-being and happiness by marrying her off to the son of a businessman publishing house owner, only to regret not being able to provide her with a proper wedding with a sumptuous gown, a nicely decorated house and other adornments.[236]

In her analysis of the role of consumable products in the Romantic period, Elizabeth Fay terms this phenomenon, particular to the late-nineteenth century, where commodities and private property defines authorial identity, the "portraitive mode."[237] In a literary environment where the figure of the author became central to the expense of

[235] Finn: 1984, 116.
[236] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 189-90.
[237] Fay: 2010, 1.

anonymity, and where practices of emulation, collective creation of texts and intertextual referencing occurred less and less frequently, one had to present an attractive self to make one's literary output just as attractive. "The encouragements were clear," Marysa Demoor observes, "let your readers know the man, the writer, the literary lion, and they will buy your books."[238] This emphasis on the author as individual and his physical appearance stemmed from a series of larger social and economic changes that occurred in the nineteenth century and that brought about a new commercial culture: new global trade arrangements, expansion of overseas markets, innovations in merchandising and window-displays. Speaking of the British context, Elizabeth Fay observes that "[s]hopping was made more alluring by the adaptation of the […] retail system developed for goods imported by the East India Company […]. Added to these was a burgeoning of the middling classes whose appetite for consumer goods drove the market."[239] As a result, social differences were not only made visible but also constantly maintained and reproduced by the display of clothing and other consumable goods.[240] As Balzac argues from nineteenth century France, "[i]t is […] no longer a minor thing to scorn or adopt the short-lived dictates of fashion, for *mens agitat molem*: a man's mind can be known by the manner in which he holds his walking stick."[241]

While the Ottoman state may not have been in an equally advantaged economic position as its European counterparts, a similar penchant for consumerism can be

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[238] Demoor: 2004, 42.
[239] Fay: 2010, 7.
[240] Brett Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress, and Consumer Culture in Britain, 1860-1914*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 163. In the words of Balzac, "The moment that two books of parchment no longer stand for everything, when the natural son of a millionaire bath attendant and a man of talent have the same rights as the son of a count, we can no longer be distinguished by anything but our intrinsic value. Differences have vanished in our society: all that remain are nuances." Balzac: 2010, 23.
[241] Balzac: 2010, 25.

observed during the nineteenth century imperial capital among the upper classes, particularly following the flow of wealthy *pashas* and their wives from Egypt following the Crimean War (1853-6) and their habits of conspicuous consumption.[242] Paired with a similar flow of capital into the local market by European soldiers during the war and the increasing availability of foreign newspapers, İstanbul became a new center where Western tastes and products could be displayed and diffused across communities. In his article addressing the impact of novel consumption practices on the shaping of modern social identities in the late Ottoman Empire among the Christian Orthodox, Greek-speaking groups, Haris Exertzoglou argues that, "although middle-class groups did not nurture strong class allegiance, because they were mainly involved in the politics and social life of the communities whose faith they shared, they appropriated common cultural patterns and developed comparable business strategies."[243] As this cross-communal tendency for Western consumer goods disseminated further during the later decades of the nineteenth century, consumerism became one of the major markers of social status in Ottoman urban centers.[244]

Artists and litterateurs participated in this environment where survival-based

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[242] Many local sources extensively talk about this phenomenon, among which are Cevdet Paşa's *Ma'ruzat* (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1980, 7) and Reşat Ekrem Koçu's *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1958, 136).

[243] Haris Exertzoglou, "The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender, and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centers During the 19th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35/1 (2003), 78. In the same article, he reports that "European imports during the 1840s was sustained by the introduction of free trade in 1838 and the lowering of import tariffs. Except for two short periods in 1879-81 and 1896-97, imports during the 1840-1913 increased at an annual rate ranging from 4.4 to 6.4 percent. The value of imports in the same period grew from 4,926 million pounds sterling in 1832 to 37,666 million in 1911" (Ibid., 80).

[244] In "Super Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the last quarter of the 19th century," Şerif Mardin argues that by stepping outside the societal norms through consumerism, "the heavy spenders of the Tanzimat alienated both the traditional upper and lower strata of their society" (Mardin: 1974, 423).

needs were overwritten by self-defining desires in relation to objects and spaces, in their own peculiar ways. Just as certain commodities marked a certain social status, a particular set of commodities defined and fueled fantasies of authorly success. More importantly, their chosen objects allowed these people to create the ever so subtle ways through which they can be "read" and *read others* in the public sphere. In other words, the items that the men of letters owned and chose to display while accompanied by their peers carefully gave away their loyalties, whether it is to a religious, ethnic/national, class-based or otherwise-driven group, as well as their individual aesthetic preferences, emotional states and character traits. The radical transformation of male dress codes in the empire and abroad universally facilitated this process. To be sure, clothing regulations were still very much in place as a tool of state control over the subjects; yet, the unprecedentedly homogenizing tendencies of the new laws across Europe and beyond left more room for individual subtleties.[245] In a similar vein, Balzac observes in France that "[a]lthough we now nearly dress in the same manner, it is easy to pick out in a crowd, in an assembly, at the theater, or on a stroll, the main of the Marais, of the faubourg Saint-Germain, of the Latin quarter, or of the Chaussee-d'Antin; the proletariat, the proprietor, the consumer and the producer, the lawyer and the serviceman, the man who talks and the man who acts."[246] As a matter of fact, the new consumer culture functioned in such a way that would force its participants in a constant observation of the visual and bodily cues to evaluate and categorize each other.

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[245] Donald Quataert underlines the centrality of clothing regulations in the sultan's effort to control and reshape Ottoman society. The particular law implemented by Mahmud II in 1829 "sought to replace ancient community and occupational signs of differentiation by dress with a homogenizing status marker – the fez – that placed the state at the center of Ottoman life as the sole remaining arbiter of identity" Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829," *IJMES*, 29 (1997), 403.

[246] Balzac: 2010, 67.

In a world where performativity and appearance became central to authorial identity, and where authorial identity, in turn, became central to the value of the literary work, it is no wonder that autobiographic narratives increased in popularity among writers of this generation. This was in fact a textual extension of the urge to render oneself legible in meticulously curated ways, a phenomenon that urged Halit Ziya to interrupt a streak of gloomy love stories and to write a "portraitive novel" closely related to his own life like *Mai ve Siyah.*[247]

The display of the self as a legible body was not limited to the individual but could be observed on the level of state, particularly in terms of how it sought to be perceived internationally. Just as venues such as theaters, ballrooms, promenading places and parks were becoming locations where individual bodies were displayed, world expositions proved to be places where state identities were rendered visible to the international, particularly Western, gaze, through a carefully chosen set of visual artifacts. As Selim Deringil observes in *Well Protected Domains*, the protection of a positive image abroad became a central concern for the Ottoman government, particularly during the last few decades of the nineteenth century, under the rule of Abdülhamit II.[248] In order to challenge and transform the image of the "exotic East," and to become a member of the civilized family of nations, the Ottoman government not only engaged in an extensive policy of image management through participation in world fairs and international

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[247] There are numerous scholars attesting to the textual dimension of this phenomenon, including Tita Chico who argues in "Languages of Appearance," that characters in eighteenth century British novels often understood each other through a particular type of language that puts emphasis on the connection between clothing/body and emotional states, and Brent Shannon who observes that the novel is a genre which by definition, "unceasingly [records] manners and appearances, and endlessly 'read' the meaning of manners." Tita Chico, "Languages of appearance," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Volume 41, Number 2, (Winter 2008), 266; Shannon: 2006, 133.

[248] Deringil: 1998, 135.

congresses, but also collected articles from foreign newspapers to control the state image abroad, and administered a series of domestic policies ranging from standardized ceremonies, the building of statues, and the increased visibility of the sultan's monogram.[249]

Despite the much larger relevance of image management and of appearances to this period, scholarship tended to look at the topic predominantly through the lens of women and sexuality, mainly because of the nature of association between women and commodities; the female sex has historically been considered more prone to conspicuous consumption. In fact, the consuming man is often perceived as a glitch in the system, an effeminate male, hence the rather ruthless caricaturization of the *züppe* figure in contemporary Ottoman novels as a man who is not strong enough to resist the disrupting and potentially catastrophic impact of Westernized-consumerist lifestyle.[250] Being lured by the shiny world of conspicuous consumption meant, for many during this period, an inability to effectively manage finances and to find the necessary time to engage in the intellectual activity that would effectively navigate the Ottoman society through the process of Westernization.[251]

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[249] See Benjamin Fortna, "The reign of Abdülhamit II," in *Cambridge History of Turkey, volume 4*.

[250] As mentioned earlier, famous examples of the caricaturized dandy in Ottoman novel include Ahmet Midhat Efendi's Felatun Bey in *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem's Bihruz Bey in *Araba Sevdası*, and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's Şöhret Bey in *Şık*. However, this cautionary mockery was certainly not limited to non-Western social spheres, even though these needed to also tackle the fact that the source of the consumerist influence was foreign. Shannon observes, for example, that in Britain, too, "[s]ocial commentators […] regularly warned against the transgressive dress of effeminate-dandies and flashy youth" (Shannon: 2006, 30).

[251] Again, conspicuous consumption had a very similar connotation in the European societies. Balzac lists the dangers of dandyism as follows: "In playing the dandy, a man becomes a piece of furniture for the boudoir, an extremely ingenious mannequin that can sit upon a horse or a couch, that bites or sucks on the end of a walking stick by habit – but a thinking being... never!" (Balzac: 2010, 58)

Regarding the relationship between young male intellectuals and commodities as presented in the Turkish novel, Ahmet Cemil constitutes a significant turning point. For him, commodities and fashion work quite differently compared to his fictional predecessors in that it occurs effortlessly, without taking the narrative foreground or working as a sign of his intellectual inability or the superficiality of his knowledge. To the contrary, a carefully managed and only subtly implied centrality of commodities allows Halit Ziya to put his protagonist in a leadership position in literary/poetic innovation, embracing rather than rejecting the importance of appearance, but only to the extent which it bolsters the authorial identity. In that sense, Ahmet Cemil's lifestyle and artistic aspirations are in line with Balzac's elegant living, as, unlike the predecessors, fashion signifies something beyond itself for him. "The man who sees fashion in fashion is a fool," Balzac observes, "Elegant living excludes neither thought nor science: it sanctions them. It must learn not only how to enjoy time, but to employ it in accordance with an extremely high order of ideas."[252] In that sense, Ahmet Cemil subverts the stereotypical association in the Ottoman Turkish narrative prose where any attention paid to clothing and personal style had to be read either as an unwelcome side effect of the penetration of Western technologies into the Ottoman society that threatens the integrity of local culture, or a vain endeavor that stand in contradistinction to much needed intellectual reflection, which would insure the survival of core Ottoman values. His engagement with his own appearance in the public sphere does not hinder his literary/intellectual activities; to the contrary, it stimulates them.

Unlike his predecessors with exaggerated sartorial preferences, Ahmet Cemil's

[252] Ibid., 58.

deep care for personal style seems to occur in a rather effortless fashion.[253] As a result, none of his friends and co-workers quite knows why they are drawn to his particular authorly aura, as "they waited in respectful silence and awe, as he was starting to speak."[254] Even as he loses himself in a passionate speech about the future of poetry, his arms move, or his hair frame his face in such a particular way to augment the impact of his words, and the others listen, "numb with excitement […] and mesmerized by the magnetic forces oozing from this young orator."[255] It is then no wonder that Ahmet Cemil, albeit a mere fictional character, had a tremendous impact on the real poets of the next generation, who tried to imitate his physical appearance in order to succeed in their literary endeavors. A closer analysis ensuing in this chapter of how his physical appearance and personal surroundings are described in the novel will shed light onto how Halit Ziya, and many others along with him, envisioned the modern Ottoman author.

**Dressing the author: clothes and accessories that make an intellectual**

In his memoirs, Halit Ziya recalls a rather awkward moment during a gathering in the home of a notable figure in İzmir, Menekşelizade Emin Efendi, where he meets Fevzi Efendi, a religious school graduate of about his age, wearing a turban and a religious gown. Unexpectedly for him, however, he starts talking to Halit Ziya in French.

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[253] What Shannon observes in the eighteenth-century England is useful here, to conceptualize the difference between Ahmet Cemil's approach to fashion and that of his fictional predecessors: "An essential difference – instinctively and effortlessly understood by the true gentleman – existed, therefore, between his tasteful conformity to society's currently acceptable sartorial conventions and the effeminate dandy's or crude masher's fanatical aping of the latest mode from Paris's preposterous haute couture" (Shannon: 2006, 35).

[254] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 19.

[255] Ibid., 22.

Dumbstruck with the unforeseen mismatch between his addressee's looks and skills in a Western language, the latter is unable to fetch an answer and carry the conversation on in French. Later, they explain to him that this person learned the language from a French railroad officer while in Manisa, in exchange for Turkish classes; he was such a fast learner that he then made his way to İzmir and was now about to go to İstanbul to enroll in school. This seemingly trivial event leaves a significant imprint on Halit Ziya's mind. "I could not sleep that night until sunrise," he bitterly recalls, "the religious man kept speaking to me in French and I was gasping silently, unable to respond. Meanwhile a hammer was continuously pounding in my head. He is going to İstanbul to study. And I, what am I doing?"[256] This awkward encounter and the ensuing emotional distress, remembered as vividly about half a century later, clearly illustrates the role and meaning of physical appearance in the intellectual world for Halit Ziya's generation: precisely because such "mismatches" (i.e. Islamic religious attire paired with an exquisite knowledge of French, attributed to a secular Western type of training) were made possible by the recently increased accessibility of Western cultural imports (such as language, literature and arts), the connection between one's physical appearance and cultural orientations became more organic, and such new transgressions were deemed to have a more subverting impact on the viewer. Unlike a generation earlier, clothing was no longer an infallible sign of one's ascribed identity, or a superficial addition to one's public persona, but rather a fundamental part of the wearer's personality and a set of signs through which his chosen loyalties and aspirations could be read. Hence the devastating impact on the author of meeting a man who wore religious clothing while he spoke impeccable French. It simply did not fit.

[256] Ibid., 214.

In this momentary assumption on the part of the author lies his divergence from the earlier novelists for whom, putting on Western-style secular clothing was either an abandonment of morality for consumer goods (exemplified in Ahmet Midhat Efendi's Felatun Bey), or a token of superficiality and lack of intellectual depth (exemplified in Recaizade Ekrem's Bihruz Bey). Unlike previous fictional characters in the Ottoman novel that are either judged or mocked, Halit Ziya's well-endorsed protagonist Ahmet Cemil suggests that appearances are indeed central to one's identity as an author and intellectual, and that they need to be put forth in very particular ways to generate the right kind of message about one's identity. In other words, in Halit Ziya's fictional universe, the external "shell" of an author is almost equally important as his intellectual "substance," but not at the expense of it, unlike the cases of Felatun and Bihruz, who showcase the most expensive versions of the time's sartorial trends, while they do not know a thing about literature. Dreams of being a successful poet must, for that reason, include a carriage, a nice office space in a wealthy neighborhood and, appropriate clothing that would disseminate an unequivocally intellectual aura, and, of course, glasses.

As do his dreams, Ahmet Cemil's coming of age story also includes sartorial moments that prove very influential to his perceived identity as a young boy. One such moment features him as a teenager, proudly sporting the uniform of the military school in which he just enrolled. "A different, bigger school this time, and [he] even gets to wear an official uniform; he assumed the significance of a little soldier."[257] The standardized clothing for schools thus not only flattened social differences but it also helped pupils feel more engaged with school activities and larger aims of the educational enterprise, such as formation of new citizens. More importantly, however, an organic connection between

[257] Ibid., 49.

clothing and personal aspirations was established early on for Ahmet Cemil, who would then either follow or transgress sartorial regulations to create his own personal style and thus express his loyalty to diverse groups (formed around age, education, personal interest, etc). In fact, by the time he reaches high school, he takes on a more serious aura, no longer excited by the prospect of becoming a soldier, but still devoting a similar level of care to his clothes and physical appearance. In other words, the specifics may have changed but the fundamental importance of creating the appropriate look remains. What complemented his position as a scribal office worker was no longer a uniform and a cherished school bag, but rather a set of books loosely wrapped in newspaper and nonchalantly tucked under his arm.[258]

In *Mai ve Siyah*, clothing is not only used to construct Ahmet Cemil as a character, but also to effectively depict settings and emotions evoked by these settings. This utilization is best illustrated in a central scene of the plot, about two thirds into the novel, when Ahmet Cemil is finally ready to perform his poetic masterpiece in front of a group of fellow men of letters. The men sitting in the room are put forth with their peculiar personalities and emotional states, which are in turn communicated through the intricate details of their physical appearance and sartorial preferences: İlhami Efendi's sensitive personality, his tendency to speak in poetry is reflected in his eye-pleasing blonde-red beard, which he caringly combed using his tortoise comb he carried everywhere he went, his hand movements enriching the poetry in his words. On a separate corner, Süleyman Vahdet Efendi's mellow demeanor is reinforced with a sartorial connection unknown to the twenty-first century reader; he always wore his fez tipped towards the scruff and folded the legs of his trousers even in the driest of weather

[258] Ibid., 52.

conditions. Finally Hasan Latif Bey's (nicknamed Victor Hugo) wealthy family background and his unquenchable thirst for western literature is revealed through his silk lined overcoats, elegant shoes made by Herald, and finally, books, magazines and newspapers in French and German, which he always carried under his arm.[259] Sartorial details are embedded in the storyline to tell the reader about the nuanced personality and mindset of each and every character, in an ever so subtle yet effective manner.

It should thus come as no surprise that, in her book on Halit Ziya's novels, literary historian Zeynep Kerman argues that he is the first one to pay a very close attention to and meticulously describe his characters' clothes.[260] While Kerman takes this care to be a token of his general orientation towards Western culture (and she is certainly right), it is more than that. Halit Ziya is perhaps the first novelist in Ottoman literature to have noticed the centrality of choices pertaining to one's physical appearance and the surrounding objects to the emotional state of fictional characters. More importantly, however, it is in his novels that, for the first time, descriptions of clothing are frequently featured without being too obvious, but rather staying in the background as if they were mere trivia. Indeed, literary historians would be more likely to cite, for instance, Ahmet Midhat's *Felatun Bey ve Rakım Efendi*, Hüseyin Rahmi's *Şık*, or Recaizade Ekrem's *Araba Sevdası* as the nineteenth century Ottoman novels where clothing has a central position in the storyline, much more than *Mai ve Siyah.* It is precisely in this seemingly trivial position that Halit Ziya's sartorial references become more powerful: Clothing is no longer a pronounced narrative tool to express concern, contempt, or ridicule for badly westernized characters, but rather a subtle albeit omnipresent device to reveal the

[259] Ibid, 251-3.
[260] Zeynep Kerman, *Uşaklıgil'in Romanlarında Batılı Yaşayış*, (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2008), 145.

innermost traits. In their sartorial choices, Halit Ziya's characters are not awkward or misinformed, rather clothes are presented to be an effortless, natural extension of self, whatever the constitution of that self might entail.

This effortlessness also constitutes the key to making appropriate sartorial choices, as Brett Shannon argues, "good dressing is […] to carry your clothes *as if* you did not give them a thought."[261] The concealment of the thought process that went into selecting the right clothing then becomes crucial, as the proliferation of choices to create increasingly more nuanced impressions on the viewer renders the process more time and energy consuming. Yet, unlike Recaizade Ekrem's Bihruz Bey who spends hours in front of his mirror contemplating and studying his clothed self, Ahmet Cemil acts as if everything happens just naturally – his outfit, his hairstyle, the way he moves his hands could not have been otherwise; his tastes and manners are intrinsic to who he already is.[262] To be sure, Bihruz Bey and Ahmet Cemil (and many other fictional examples of "the dandy/*züppe*" in the nineteenth century Ottoman novel) had a significant commonality in that they were all misfits and even rebels for their time. They all represent a new cultural happening that is in discord with some of the traditional (literary and otherwise) values of the time. Yet, Ahmet Cemil's rebellion against an inconsiderate and overly conservative view of culture and society is fully endorsed by the author, Halit Ziya, who gives the message that Ahmet Cemil's character represents how things are going to be in the literary/cultural field in the years to come, rather than constituting a

[261] Shannon: 2006, 37, emphasis mine.

[262] Balzac observes, "[t]he most essential effect in elegance is the concealment of one's means," and that "[s]tudied elegance is to true elegance what a wig is to hair," (Balzac: 2010, 46 and 58).

fleeting anomaly, like his fictional predecessors.[263]

Conspicuous consumption of clothing items was no longer an activity to condemn, or an unwelcome privilege that threatened to morally degrade the wealthy, but one that is possible (albeit to various extents) for everyone who is interested in an aesthetically informed display of the public self. As a matter of fact, even though Ahmet Cemil comes from a poor family, he feels entitled to try to acquire a set of "necessary items" to the construction of his desired intellectual identity – his lack of monetary resources is further reinforced by the existence of his wealthy best friend Hüseyin Nazmi, who possessed goods to which he did not have access. Yet, despite the tragic ending of the novel, Ahmet Cemil is justified in his aspirations in that he becomes a role model for the following generation of litterateurs, who not only sympathized with the challenges he faced but also envisioned a similar professional trajectory for themselves, in spite of the risks it entailed.[264]

Ahmet Cemil's divergence from the more commonly encountered version of the *alafranga* men, the westernized male intellectual in the public sphere, is apparent in his contradistinction with the "three types of *alafranga*" Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar describes in the introduction to his 1908 novel *Şıpsevdi*: the first type being a man who comes from a wealthy family, who learned French as a child, lived comfortably all his life, and probably traveled to Europe to live there for a while; the second category comprising men who married a westerner and moved to Beyoğlu. Finally, the third would be a man whom

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[263] The impact is already apparent in Mehmet Rauf's (1875-1931) penchant for clothes and shoes, which Halit Ziya affectionaly recalls in his memoir decades later (Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 821).

[264] This stands in contrast with mid-nineteenth century sensibilities, where "[s]pending on luxuries or, even worse, borrowing to spend on luxuries was announced as an indication of individual immaturity and lack of virtue," and "[t]he image of the irresponsile individual was contrasted with that of the self-restrained person whose financial position was secured by refraining from reckless consumption," (Exertzoglou: 2003, 84).

one would be likely to encounter in Beyoğlu and who could be easily spotted thanks to the extremely high-collar shirts he wore. “His long-skirted frockcoat, swirling out, as he sometimes turned around himself with bubbly joy, his close-fitting pants, pointy-toed shoes, elegant umbrella, all of those show him to be a in craze with the fashion trends of his time;” Hüseyin Rahmi observes, “everything he wore trespass the limits of decency; it would be too tight, too loose, too short, too long, too thin, too thick, but never normal.”[265] The first two types almost never appear in the fiction of the time; the third type has, however, many a representation in the novels of the time with the easily stereotyped characteristics of his sartorial choices, including many of Hüseyin Rahmi's own protagonists. Ahmet Cemil, nonetheless, does not match any of these categories. He is the first example, in the long lineage of fashion-conscious male protagonists, who defies the above-detailed structure, signaling a deeper acceptance of new ways of being, some seven decades after the establishment of the new clothing regulations in the early nineteenth century.

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Transformations in male clothing during the period of modernization go back to the reign of Mahmud II (r.1809-1839); with the regulations enacted during this period, one

[265] Gürpınar: 1964, 30. In her article entitled “Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Değişen Moda Anlayışının Edebiyata Yansımaları (1860-1923),” Meral Demiryürek informs that the word *alafranga* starts to appear in Ottoman dictionaries from the 1890s onwards. In the dictionary he authored and published in 1895, Mehmet Salahi defines the word as follows: “From Italian. A person who imitates Europeans or who displays the behavior and habits of Europeans/the French (*Frenk*),” (Demiryürek: 2010, 1012). The third type of *alafranga,* featured in a number of novels published in the late nineteenth century, shops at Tailor *Mir*, a status symbol of the time, sports freshly ironed shirts, newly molded *fezes* and glasses he probably does not need, dangling off a golden rope around his neck.

witnesses a trans-communal homogenization in men's clothing. As a result, religious and ethnic differences (which are ascribed at birth) were replaced by economic or educational dissimilarities, regarding what gets displayed through clothing and sets people apart in the public sphere.[266] In other words, while clothing was always significant as a visual manifestation of social status in the Ottoman Empire, the set of criteria through which differences were read changed dramatically with these clothing regulations of 1829 that sought to create a new Ottoman identity and citizenship visually more compatible with the West.[267] Frock coats (first *İstanbulin*, then *redingot*), trousers and *fez* replaced traditional dress and headgear, and were "made compulsory by law for all male citizens, soldiers and bureaucrats."[268] As Quataert remarks, the regulation "sought to replace ancient community and occupational signs of differentiation by dress with a homogenizing status marker that placed the state at the center […] as the sole arbiter of

[266] The significance of clothing as a visual manifestation of social status in the Ottoman Empire was not exclusive to the nineteenth century. Indeed, even though clothing constitutes a certain visual language, i.e. a decodable system of signs embodying the priorities of the state and the reactions of its 'subjects' in most societies, sartorial distinctions seem to be more central in the Ottoman context than in other cultures in reproducing the hierarchical/paternalist structures. As Madeline Zilfi points out, "Ottoman administrators remained attached to the principle that stable social hierarchy was and had to be reinforced by visual compliance." In other words, the established visual/sartorial language made it possible to classify and categorize different social, ethnic and religious groups throughout the imperial history, where "Ottoman urbanites expected to be able to judge from the clothing of a man which walk of life he belonged to." From the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent onwards in particular, state regulations gained a central role in serving as a means of visual distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Archeologist and historian Matthew Eliott even furthers this claim by arguing that similar measures were taken "from the early Abbasid period onwards and paid most attention to headgear, sometimes requiring differences in form but more often in color." In short, dress was one of the main and most significant social markers in pre-nineteenth century Ottoman urban society, which served to form, preserve and render visible the hierarchical structures (Zilfi, "Whose laws? Gendering and the Ottoman sumptuary regime" 140; Faroqhi, "Introduction, or why and how one might want to study Ottoman clothes" 15; Eliott, "Dress codes in the Ottoman Empire: the case of the Franks," 105, in *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity*).

[267] Donald Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829," *IJMES* 29 (1997), 420.

[268] Jennifer Scarce, *Turkish Fashion in Transition.* (London: Costume Society, 1980 2.) Also see Reşat Ekrem Koçu's *Türk Giyim, Kuşam ve Süslenme Sözlüğü*.

identity."[269] As a result, male clothing has become a field where small (and often non-subversive) interventions into the new sartorial rules were made in order to display their tastes enabled by different type of educational and economic backgrounds, hence Hüseyin Rahmi's three types of *alafranga* men, or the meticulous description of the fictional poets attending Ahmet Cemil's poetic performance, and sporting very similar clothes while differing tremendously in small details. In this generation, blunt sartorial generalizations and cultural stereotypes of the decades directly following the clothing reforms gave way to more subtle and nuanced ways of expressing one's taste (such as the quality of fabric, details pertaining to ornamentation, the angle at which a particular clothing item or accessory is worn, and so on), hence self-designed social identity. Young men of letters (of Halit Ziya's generation) rushed to department stores and tailors in Beyoğlu and assembled outfits that would not only reflect who they were (young urban intellectual men) but also who they yearned to become. More importantly, they did this with a pretended nonchalance, as if it did not matter, as if it were a superficial addition to their identity, precisely because it was so central to it.[270]

While the near-invisibility of Ahmet Cemil's care for fashion as a factor defining his authorial identity caused it to receive less attention than Halit Ziya's other novels (such as *Aşk-ı Memnu*, where female clothing was the focus of the author's attention),

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[269] Quataert: 1997, 403. This replacement, of course, was not without problems. The homogenization of the headgear, in particular, was met with negative reactions among the Muslim lower classes that were unwilling to let go of the visual manifestations of their religious "superiority" over non-Muslims. The reluctance among those groups made the transition to homogenized European-style clothing more difficult.

[270] Some of the most famous and prestigious tailors of the time include *Terzi Mir*, *Cottereau*, *Botter*, *Canbedenyan*, and *Altın Makas*. (See, Demiryürek, 2010 and Reşat Ekrem Koçu, 1969.) This became such a profitable profession that local tailors followed the lead of the European dressmakers established in İstanbul, and made fortunes by selling their own westernized designs, (Exertzoglou: 2003, 80).

fashion has an equally central impact on the character construction in *Mai ve Siyah*. The connection between desires, dreams and clothes is as present for Ahmet Cemil in *Mai ve Siyah* as it is for Bihter in *Aşk-ı Memnu,* albeit in a slightly different way: Ahmet Cemil may not want the mahogany boats, fabrics, jewelry and so on, but he lusts after the kinds of commodities that would not only reinforce his identity as a young poet but help catapult him towards the kind of success he is dreaming of.[271] They both are symbols of a radical transformation where clothes and other consumable goods were no longer just valued for their function or their role in denoting social status, but much more in their ability to channel fundamental human emotions, such as love, desire, envy and jealousy. Their external appearance was in fact a thing of their innermost sensibilities; in that, they are true fashionists. As the editors of the volume *Fashion in Fiction: Text and Clothing in Literature, Film and Television* observe, "[f]ashion has its own set of reliable companions such that, if they disappeared, fashion could not be. They inspire, support, and vitalize each other in a crossing relationship that is symbiotic, flexible and constantly changing. These companions are our dreams, desires, and idealizations."[272] In light of this observation, it is much less odd to think of the indispensable connection, say, between Ahmet Cemil's dreams of becoming a successful poet and that of wearing glasses even though his vision was perfectly healthy. His decisions pertaining to physical appearance were made according to a system of conventional signs connoting intellectualism and a certain aesthetic sensibility, rather than a care for function or ease of utilization.

In addition to defining Ahmet Cemil as a litterateur and public persona, clothes

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[271] Fashion and textile historian Charlotte Jirousek rightfully asserts that "the idea of fashion is often dismissed as the frivolous preoccupation of the vain, but dress is in fact a part of everyone's daily life, with deeper significance of self and culture," (Jirousek: 2000, 231).

[272] McNeil, Karaminas and Cole: 2009, xv.

are also used in the novel as vehicles of emotion. This function is particularly notable in his platonic involvement with Lamia, Hüseyin Nazmi's little sister. The young man becomes aware of and declares his love for her to the readers, through a description of her clothes, symbolizing Lamia's emergence as a young woman for the first time, as opposed to the young girl he has come to know. "Today Lamia was standing before him under her black chador, pinned to the top of her head with a pearl pin, her veil revealing some of her curls, her delicate fingers in black leather gloves, playing with the tassel of her elegant long-grip umbrella." The young woman, with her stylish appearance, instantly arouses unexpected emotions in Ahmet Cemil.[273] "Look, I beg you, something is pouring out of these black eyes, shining behind her ebony hair and black chador; one would say, such black light that embraced and burned his body like a dizzying air of vehement, fiery passion, a caressing fire, like a hot kiss..."[274] The centrality of clothing in this particular description surely intends to awake sensual feelings in the reader pertaining to Lamia's budding sexuality, but it also highlights the financial promises inherent in a potential marriage with Lamia: a matrimonial link to Hüseyin Nazmi's family would readily make available all the otherwise inaccessible goods that would allow him to construct himself as a poet.

It is also telling that this poetic encounter took place, not in the lyrical background of Istanbul's promenade parks, but in Bon Marché, the mecca of commodities and a new type of spending in the imperial capital, where Ahmet Cemil loves to spend his idle hours. "After coming out of *tünel* [Istanbul's first subway tunnel located near Galata], he wanted to wander in Beyoğlu a bit like a vagabond, take his time in front of the shop

[273] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 203.
[274] Ibid., 206.

windows, browse new books here, neckties, collars and handkerchiefs there, these fashion fabrics, all these little nothings that please the heart."[275] It would appear that the aesthetics of consumerism, of the department store have replaced previous sources of aesthetic pleasure in providing the visual elements that enable lovers to express their poetic affection. Lamia proves to be a perfect fit in this picture as not only a provider of aesthetic pleasure through her fashion sense but also as a link to her family funds. As a matter of fact, his emotions for Lamia, growing in an awkward pace at his moment of utmost financial desperation and culminating in total romantic disillusionment with her engagement to someone else, are presented as a failed transaction between Ahmet Cemil and Hüseyin Nazmi, rather than a sentimental story; his emotions stay superficial through and through, his real focus on his financial and professional rather than romantic dreams.

While Lamia and her clothes symbolize the dreams and potentials inherent for social mobility not only in the literary field but also in the world at large, the mockery directed at his own sartorial choices constitutes a constant reminder for him of the existence of hostility. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, most of the personal attacks Ahmet Cemil's archenemy Raci launched against him revolves around his choices pertaining to physical appearance, providing the protagonist's most vulnerable spot against ridicule; his clothes, hairstyle, his gait and all the other carefully curated aspects of his public persona as a young poet were targeted by Raci to undermine his self-confidence, and in these attempts he has been successful.[276] These personal attacks resonates with some of Halit Ziya's own personal experiences, where he was the object of humiliating comments about his approach to personal style.

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[275] Ibid., 200.
[276] Ibid., 124 and 305.

As an author who extensively employed commodities to communicate emotions and psychological modes in his novels, he himself had a lifelong penchant for fashion, clothes and household items. In his memoirs, he bitterly recalls that, as a young man and a budding litterateur, one of the most difficult decisions he had to make involved the channeling of his funds for neckties towards the purchase of more books.[277] The fascination with neckties is significant, because, as Demiryürek argues, accessories were particularly central to a western-style outfit, along with other essential accessories such as the walking stick, the monocles, the pocket watch and gloves.[278] Easier to carry around and display as needed, these items became the most notable tokens of a westernized young man. Halit Ziya's interesting dilemma between the style items that would ensure that he be read as a "west-leaning/progressive intellectual" and the books that would equip them with the knowledge that would make him an intellectual is illustrative of the centrality of clothing to the making of authorial identity for this generation.

Doing justice to this very dilemma, one of Halit Ziya's first translated pieces, which he published in *Nevruz* while he was still in Izmir, was a translation from the French scientist Louis Figuier (1819-1894) entitled "Dressing Table" (*Tuvalet Masası*), a series of articles on the objects of grooming that could be found on a dressing table, such as sponges, brushes, perfume, combs and so on, introducing his audience to the western trends of personal hygiene and care at the time.[279] The first article of the series, marking

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[277] According to Reşat Ekrem Koçu's *Türk Giyim, Kuşam ve Süsleme Sözlüğü*, neckties (*boyunbağı*) came into fashion following the Crimean War of 1853 and was taken to be one of the symbols of fashion among young men during the 1860s and 70s. Koçu adds that members of the more conservative circles associated neckties with overwesternization and refrained from using it (Koçu: 1969, 44).

[278] Demiryürek: 2010, 1017.

[279] These articles were taken from Figuier's *Le Savant du Foyer, ou Notion Scientifiques sur les Objets Usuels de la Vie* (Paris: Hachette, 1862).

the beginnings of his interest in physical appearance as well as one of the first attempts at introducing western-style grooming to Ottoman society, was received with a kind of mockery similar to Raci's ridiculing of Ahmet Cemil's appearance. Halit Ziya recalls that he found himself the addressee of rather immature jokes, with people saying things like, "since I started wiping my face with a sponge, my face looks so much brighter," or "I cannot decide whether I should use a comb made of tortoise shell or ivory," and that he tried to laugh it away even though he was furious inside.[280] An old local lawyer he was acquainted with took the mockery further, using Halit Ziya's innovative ideas about personal care to take revenge for the rocky relationship he had with his family. Even though he never confronted him and responded back, out of respect for his age, Halit Ziya's comments on him showcases his contempt towards this man; he utilizes the trope of personal hygiene to criticize him and his personality: "There was surely no dressing table in this man's home," he notes, "and he only combed his ever filthy hair when he visited the barber. One cannot even imagine him ever washing his face."[281]

Even though personal grooming constituted one of the first themes through which Halit Ziya experienced personal attacks and ridicule, the issue was so omnipresent a decade later in the imperial capital that one could not just make fun of it any longer. Urban Ottoman men cared for their hair, beards and moustaches like they never did before. An increasingly large number of barber shops, called "perukar" instead of "barber," to indicate their familiarity with the new hairstyles targeted young men as their customers, with their upscale shops conveniently located close to a "fez blocker" so that

[280] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 222.
[281] Uşaklıgil: 2005 (2), 22.

the customers have their headgear ready when they are done having a haircut.[282] As a fictional character, Ahmet Cemil emerges from this type of environment where hairstyling for men already had connections to a new (and more westernized) way of being in the public sphere. When he appeared as a charismatic protagonist, the detailed descriptions of his physical features were designed to be telling of his stance in the literary field as a young poet who successfully disagreed with some of the literary conventions of his time. As he combed his fingers through his long hair (unusual for the time) and criticized Raci about his approach to poetry, he was setting up powerful trends for not only what kind of poetry to write but also how to comport oneself in public.[283]

In fact, by the 1890s, hair, along with clothing and accessories was no longer a style exaggeration to be ridiculed but rather an indispensable part of displaying one's identity and to "be read" in the public sphere, in this case as a west-leaning poet. The association made in the novel between his identity as a poet and his hairstyle was indeed to influence the next generation of poets that would grow their hair long just like Ahmet Cemil.[284] Making their bodies in a certain way had the aim to not only give the right messages about their identity in the public sphere but also to make themselves feel like they have already become the successful author they wanted to be, by looking the part. The "making oneself feel as if it already happened" dimension of authorship also informed the ways in which young men of letters set up their living and working spaces in particular ways, as much as they could afford to.[285]

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[282] Demiryürek: 2010, 1022. As mentioned earlier, the positioning of the fez on the head itself gives subtle messages about the wearer's identity and stylistic preferences.
[283] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 21.
[284] Çıkla: 2004, 196.
[285] In *Fashioning Faces*, Elizabeth Fay gives a similar example of literary movements being closely associated with a certain "look": the Barbus, or Bearded Ones, who appeared about

**Decorating authorly environs: bookish objects, furniture and study spaces**

The book itself as an object constitutes an interesting common ground between adorning the authorial body and decorating authorly environs, as it was effectively used for both. As mentioned in Chapter 1, for this generation, books had become relatively common objects that were to be personally owned and privately enjoyed, rather than rarities whose ownership would be exclusive to a privileged minority and whose content would mostly be passed from one to another orally. The individual consumption of books strengthened the relationship between the reader/owner and the book/object, rendering it more fundamental to the former's identity.[286] This type of relationship had not been yet established for the previous generation: In one instance, the ever-prolific novelist Ahmet Midhat recalls an interaction with a Jewish bookseller, from whom he reluctantly purchases a rather large volume despite how uninteresting and ugly it looked – "you would rather cut the pages of to use them as cheese-wrapper, " he comments, only to be pleasantly surprised by its interesting content.[287] He would never imagine carrying it around as an accessory but was just interested in the content it was going to provide for him. Even though he purchased it, he still judged the book by its cover – literally.

Halit Ziya's perception of books operates within a similar framework of focus on appearances, as he was interested in them as aesthetic objects as much as vehicles of learning. During his youth in Izmir, when the fascicles he collected reached to be a sizeable pile, he hastened to have them bound and carefully arranged on his bookshelf.

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1800 in Paris, with "their habitual pensiveness, long hair, and nonconformist aesthetic theories (Fay: 2010, 176).

[286] Fortna: 2011, 158.

[287] Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Ahmet Metin ve Şirzat Yahut Roman İçinde Roman* (1892), 67.

He recalls, “I would always rebel against things that would fail to cater to aesthetic pleasures, I still do.”[288] As a member of a generation who learned to value books as aesthetic objects with a clear message about the intellectual abilities of their owners, when Halit Ziya makes his protagonist carry his books under his arm on the Babıali, it is a clear statement on his personal inclinations and his public identity as a man of letters, as opposed to, for instance, a tradesman or a worker.

Books also feature extensively in the decoration of the working environment, as an object of desire and as a necessity to form the space. With the individualization of reading emerged “the study” as the location where personal intellectual enrichment took place. The material properties of the room thus became central to the quality of the intellectual activity that took place there. Unsurprisingly, when Ahmet Cemil dreams of becoming a successful poet, his dreams are accompanied with a desire for an appropriate working space – but alas, he realizes that his tiny room in the modest Süleymaniye house fails to compare to Hüseyin Nazmi's rich library in the luxurious Erenköy mansion: “the shelves Hüseyin Nazmi filled with the wastefulness of a neophyte's enthusiasm,” he criticizes him with apparent envy, “Oh! If only he could own a room like this, a library filled with books.”[289] To be sure, his envy has more to do with his friend's financial ability that allows him to own and display books at his will, rather than his access to books. In other words, it is not so much in the content they provide as their significance as objects of exhibit that his friend's books stirs Ahmet Cemil's jealousy.

Private rooms where authors worked are thus important spaces of display for authorly objects and furniture, even when others do not see them often; the presence of

[288] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 93.
[289] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 72.

spectators is not so important as the establishment of a space that would nurture the self-image the room-dweller has of himself, hence creating a sense of leisurely engagement with literary arts. They became spaces where authors could paradoxically shape their public identity in private, showing the interconnectedness of the two. Ahmet Cemil's small study stands in contrast with Hüseyin Nazmi's spacious library and is presented as a claustrophobic space, with its single window that fails to ward off the hot air of the summer time and to provide the comfort needed for an aesthetic engagement. His inability to afford this engagement he helplessly longed for thus parallels the space in which this inability occurs. Even though later in the story he attempts to convince himself of the emotional warmth his modest family house provides, Ahmet Cemil is unable to divorce his perceived lack of literary success from what his childhood home fails to provide. This inability underscores the general significance of the study room in the mind of authors, not just as a space of inspiration but also as a commodity to display. As a matter of fact, during part of the 1890s, *Servet-i Fünun* magazine featured photographs of the study rooms of famous writers and intellectuals on a regular basis, where the owner of the room was displayed lost in his work with books beautifully lined up on the shelves behind him.

This connection between the beauty of interior working spaces and the quality of work is also manifest in Halit Ziya's assessment of *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* headquarters when he first visited Istanbul in the 1880s. Even though he recalls the instance with disappointment, what he found reflected his already-formed negative opinion about Muallim Naci; the lack of attractiveness in the environs matches Naci's failure to impress as a poet in Halit Ziya's eyes: “Through narrow stairs, dirty walls, up to a curtainless,

barren and dirty room. A few people were busy applauding the "master" (*muallim*) upon the creation of the first few couplets of a new ghazal, around a wretched little table. They could barely find chairs for me and my friend to sit."[290] In other words, according to Halit Ziya, Naci could not really have worked in a nicer looking office precisely because his poetry did not live up to the standards that the new generation had in mind. In other words, the misery in the office was, to him, reflective of a mindset rather than the consequence of a financial problem. Halit Ziya's staged surprise only works to further underline Naci's symbolic disqualification from the world of literary production: "This was then the conditions under which those ghazals, the important events of poetry's universe, were born? Did they then all come out of the deserted-looking, ruined publishing house […]," he wonders, and adds, "I was expecting the kind of headquarters I was familiar with from the photographs in contemporary French journals, those newspaper offices where one would lose his way, because they are so shiny, adorned and magnificent, with their marble facades. Trying to digest my own disappointment, I vowed to never come back here. The entire world of publishing had just turned into wreckage in my eyes."[291]

This dramatic scene showcases the perceived connection between the care for the working space and for the product of the work done for Halit Ziya. Luckily his shattered perception of the world of publishing was restored anew, when he became a part of the regular gatherings at Recaizade Ekrem's home in Istinye. His working spaces stand in stark contrast with those of Muallim Naci, as does his work. The emphasis is on his laudable modesty, and his ability to create an inspiring working space in the absence of

[290] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 258.
[291] Ibid., 259.

large sums of money: “Back then, the pompous pier and the magnificent buildings that adorns the area around it were all non-existent; the little mansion that was there, by the little pier […] but, I believe this little house in Istinye, with its low ceilings and its handkerchief-sized rooms, was a token of its proprietor's grandeur.” While this contradicts his admiration of the splendor of the French publishing house, the contradiction is explained away through a criticism of the literary field in Istanbul in the following few sentences. “If Recaizade were to sacrifice even a small part of this grandeur, if he were to give consent to even a tiny aberration in his straight path, he would also have had a splendid mansion, like those adorning the Bosphorus coast.”[292] The target of this criticism is not entirely clear, yet Recaizade Ekrem certainly serves as a quintessence of how to appear as a litterateur, under a set of conditions deemed challenging, if not at times debilitating, by Halit Ziya and his fellow writers at the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine. He emerges as a figure of inspiration in the public and semi-public spheres (such as private gatherings, or published photographs of personal spaces), not through the abundance of his finances but through his grasp on the intellectual styles of his time, be it literary, sartorial or spatial.

**Conclusion: More than just a shell**

As exemplified throughout this chapter, images and appearances became the central carriers of carefully crafted messages about the authorial self during this particular time in the imperial capital. To be sure, appearances had always been telling of one's identity in the public sphere, yet this association had thus far been a mere reflection of one's

[292] Ibid., 513.

religious and ethnic background, displayed according to a set of rules as determined by the court.

The sartorial regulations during the reign of Mahmud II saw a loosening of previous laws in terms of religious differentiation and, at the same time, presented a new type of outfit for men in the public sphere, one that allowed more room than before for the manifestation of personal preferences, through the utilization of accessories, and various type of fabrics. For the urban men of letters, this freedom truly found an area of expression during the reign of Abdülhamit II some decades later, thanks to the convergence of a number of crucial factors, such as the proliferation of photography as a new medium (and the consequent attention placed on portrait photography), the developments in the printing techniques during the 1890s, allowing publishers to incorporate more visuals in their journals, the obsession of the court with self-presentation towards the outside world (and the consequent Ottoman participation in world expositions), the individualization of reading and writing practices that occurred as an unintended consequence of education regulations and the increased number of translations allowing writers to increase their familiarity with the new trends in fashion and hygiene that appeared around the same time in Europe, particularly France.

In light of these developments, it is not surprising that *Mai ve Siyah* was one of the two first novels to ever be published in Turkish with accompanying illustrations, the other being Recaizade Ekrem's *Araba Sevdası*, whose serialization largely overlapped with the former during the late 1890s in the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine.[293] Like the protagonist of *Araba Sevdası*, Bihruz Bey, the description of Ahmet Cemil's physical

[293] Fortna argues that "[a]s in the late eighteenth-century France, late Ottoman and early Republican-era popular texts delivered an unprecedented proliferation of images. Some textual and some pictorial, they together changed the reading experience." (Fortna: 2011, 153)

characteristics were very important to the readers, though for different reasons. While Bihruz Bey was a figure of travesty, showcasing the ridiculous consequences of a westernization merely focused on appearances, Ahmet Cemil stood as the prototype of the new and exciting in the world of literature. In the span of one decade between the composition of the two novels (*Araba Sevdası* was written during the mid-1880s even though its serialization did not start until the mid-1890s), the realization of the centrality of the physical appearance to the intellectual identity caused Halit Ziya to create a protagonist whose penchant for a certain type of fashion was not to be ridiculed but deemed necessary to the literary profession. Ahmet Cemil's character suggests that, while appearances are indeed central to one's identity as an author, they need to be put forth in particular ways to generate the right kind of messages about one's intellectual identity. In his world, the external "shell" of an author is almost as important as the intellectual "substance," but not at the expense of it, unlike Ekrem's Bihruz Bey and Ahmet Midhat's Felatun Bey, who showcase the classiest – if overdone versions of the time's sartorial trends, while they do not know a thing about literature. In fact, the distinction between the "shell" and the "substance," or between one's external appearance and intellectual/literary production is implied to be a faulty one for Ahmet Cemil, who believes that one constantly feeds the other, and either one of them cannot really exist without the other.

Ahmet Cemil's self-curated image was surely a vulnerable one; this is, according to René Girard a condition of modernity. He argues that while "[t]he vanity of the *ancien régime* was gay, unconcerned, and frivolous, the vanity of the nineteenth century is sad

and suspicious; it has a terrible fear of ridicule."[294] Even though Ahmet Cemil was unable to digest Raci's criticism and exiled himself to Yemen in total despair, he proved extremely influential for his non-fictional contemporaries, as well as the generations of writers to come. Sadık Tural reports that "during the 1890s, following the publication of *Mai ve Siyah*, a new trend started: the fashion of growing the hair to cover the ears, wearing the fez slightly tilted to the left and growing longer sideburns."[295] Ziya Gökalp observes a few decades later, in 1924, that *Mai ve Siyah* constituted a model for the young generation and "deeply impacted their souls."[296]

What made Ahmet Cemil such an influential figure was Halit Ziya's success in creating a character for young writers to easily identify with, who symbolized what they already knew they wanted to be, a personage with modern/western sensibilities that were balanced rather than over-exaggerated, a sympathetic – albeit tragic, rather than parodied figure that kept his dignity as he suffered from the less-than-ideal circumstances created by the Hamidian regime that his readers were also affected by. The images of Ahmet Cemil as illustrated in the novel (both with words and images) allowed fellow litterateurs and other aspiring poets to establish an emotional connection with the protagonist through his general demeanor, his clothing, accessories and hairstyle, as it spoke to their desires and to what they aspired to be. Two accessories in particular, utilized for their aesthetic rather than functional values best exemplify the emotional nature of this connection: the monocle and the walking stick. Originally designed to help correct eyesight and help with walking respectively, these accessories began to be used, for the first time during the Hamidian era, by people who needed neither their eyesight corrected

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[294] Girard: 1965, 121.
[295] Sadık Tural, *Edebiyat Bilimine Katkılar* (Ankara: Ecdad, 1993), 174.
[296] Quoted in Kaplan, 1976, 108.

nor help with walking. As Reşat Ekrem Koçu records in his *Türk Giyim Kuşam ve Süslenme Sözlüğü*, "all state officials, old and young, began to use walking sticks; […] such a use of the walking stick featured even in songs [...]"[297]

The centrality of clothing, accessories and furniture in the construction of the authorial identity went hand in hand with the increased presence of images, particularly photographs, which had become a major way through which young writers admired their mentors and predecessors, and also recognized them before having to meet in person. In one such instance during Halit Ziya's early career features a chance encounter in Izmir harbor with Recaizade Ekrem where the young novelist recognizes him immediately because he has "seen" him already. Ekrem then invites him to Istanbul – a strong factor in Halit Ziya's final decision to move his family to the imperial capital in 1893. This chance encounter, made possible by the new significance granted to appearances and images, constituted one of the first steps in the building of the *Servet-i Fünun* group during the 1890s. These young writers would then meet in various venues of the imperial capital to build and bolster their affiliations with like-minded fellow writers, and to showcase their carefully curated personal styles. These spaces, also fundamental in the formation of authorial identities during this period, are the subject of the next chapter.

[297] Koçu quotes the lyrics of the song written by Şevki Bey, one of the most famous composers of the time: "Bir belakeş aşıkı sadık değil de ya neyim / Çeşmi mestim bak bana ben şık değil de ya neyim / Meh cemalin vaslına layık değil de ya neyim / Çeşmi mestim bak bana ben şık değil de ya neyim // Nev zuhur gözlükler nadide baston bende var / Giydiğim elbise-i zibayı cana Mir yapar / Sen beğenmezsen benim şıklıkda emsalim mi var / Çeşmi mestim bak bana ben şık değil ya neyim" (Koçu: 1969, 27)

## Chapter 4:

## Performing authorship:
## Urban spaces of meeting, observation and display

At twenty-seven years old, Halit Ziya's move to the imperial capital from İzmir is tainted with a fear of inappropriateness. Mixed with an irrepressible longing to live in the big city, this fear had as much to do with the possibility of not fitting into the already established network of writers or not making the "right connections" as it does with a potential failure in leading the change in the cultural arena and properly navigating the necessities of being a young litterateur in İstanbul. He recalls:

> I particularly felt afraid about my interactions with the participants of the world of literature and publishing, and with the holders of high positions in state institutions or the social world in general. I had trouble in keeping this fear inside and not let it be seen by others. I trembled every minute with the prospect to be laughed at, to appear clumsy and ill-bred, or as if I lacked the skills to say the right things or lead an appropriate life as a provincial child in İstanbul, after having been granted too much trust and respect in İzmir, to the point of being spoiled.[298]

The fear of "not making it" in İstanbul as an "İzmirite" suggests the particularity of the capital, not just in terms of the scope of literary and cultural activity that took place but also in the nature of intellectual performativity. The city was an active participant in the process of cultural transformation, providing various public spaces for inter-authorial socialization and exchange, self-display and observation, and constituting a symbol for the changes taking place in the field of literature. The symbolic value of the city is

[298] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 507.

apparent in the connections Ahmet Haşim makes between the urban space and language in "Lisan İmarı" (Language Construction). He observes, "[i]t is as if we are witnessing the reconstruction of old ruined streets with broken pavements, their opening up into boulevards. On these new streets, old words in nightcaps and bathrobes will not be able to walk without looking laughable. We await the pleasure of watching new ideas stroll back and forth on these modern avenues."[299] Similarly, the ways in which authors, young and old, aspiring and accomplished, move around, watch their surroundings and parade within the urban landscape was a constitutive part of their literary engagement during the last decade of the nineteenth century in that it provided both the content for their writing and an important agent in the performance of their meticulously curated authorial persona.

This chapter will look into the various ways in which the city of Istanbul featured in the life and work of the *Servet-i Fünun* writers and how both the literary and real life depictions of it marked, in spatial terms, their deviation from what came immediately before. I will first draw attention a symbolic shift, in the 1890s, in the literary urban center across the Bosphorus from Çamlıca to Tepebaşı, then track a simultaneous pull towards the Beyoğlu district in the daily experience of the authors producing these texts, complicating the role of Babıali Avenue as the center of literary activity in Ottoman Turkish. I argue that the new interreligious porosity in the system of education that marked the major difference between the Turkish-speaking Muslim litterateurs of this particular generation and their immediate predecessors was matched with an increased spatial permeability into the Beyoğlu-Galata area, across the Golden Horn from Babıali. Much like the standardization of the public education during the 1860s, the simultaneous

[299] Ahmet Haşim, "Lisan İmarı" *İkdam* 3 (Dec 1928), Quoted in Ertürk: 2011, 3.

establishment of first modern municipalities and projects of urban modernization proved formative for the writers of *Servet-i Fünun*, affecting the terms of their daily interactions, their aesthetic sensibilities, and, as Ahmet Haşim keenly observes in "Lisan İmarı," the nature of their language. As the harbinger of a new kind of urban aesthetics, it was thus no surprise to witness Beyoğlu become a center for the new literary aesthetics.

Creating new codes of being in public, the urban landscape of the imperial capital was thus by no means fixed or passive, but rather operative in the construction of the writer and his text, which in turn would recreate it through its literary representations. In the prose fiction of the time, the city is inseparable from its representation albeit not reducible to it: parallelisms between the symbolic position of various neighborhoods in the value system of litterateurs provide signs that render their fictional characters, their emotions, social background, general attitude and value judgments more readily intelligible.[300] For writers of *Servet-i Fünun*, the city constitutes a point of attraction, a source of anxiety and a space generating alienation and disgust all at the same time. The co-existence of mixed feelings makes it all the more unsurprising to see these litterateurs whose identities and art are shaped by the urban transformations of the late-nineteenth century to make substantive plans to leave it altogether as the Hamidian regime tightens its grip on the publishing industry during the last few years of the century.

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The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a concerted effort to transform the Ottoman capital into a Western-style metropolis. This was part of a general attempt to

[300] In the words of Rob Shields, "The City" is a slippery notion. It slides back and forth between an abstract idea and concrete material" (Shields: 1996, 235).

reform the traditional institutions of the empire to ensure its survival; it also paralleled similar projects of urban reorganization in the major capitals of Europe, such as the rebuilding of Paris by Eugene Haussmann and of Rome by Alessandro Viviani during the 1870s and 80s.[301] Initiated by the flux of non-Muslim foreigners into the city, a result of commercial treaties signed with European countries in the wake of Tanzimat reforms, the aim of making the city presentable to Western visitors became an integral part of Abdülhamit II's (r. 1876-1909) more extensive "saving the Ottoman reputation abroad" project in the last quarter of the century.[302] Even though his ambitious project to execute the urban master plan prepared by Joseph Antoine Bouvard, the inspector general of the architectural department of the City of Paris, failed due to a lack of funds, a series of independent projects as well as temporary solutions were implemented during the late 1870s and 80s, such as the erection of clock towers in several locations of the capital, the "beautification" of the city's European entrance via the forced removal of tin shacks built by poor migrants, and the establishment of Tepebaşı Bahçesi (*Jardin du Petit Champs*) on the Muslim cemetery known as *Küçük Kabristan*, or, *Le Petit Champs des Morts*.[303]

By the time Abdülhamit II settled into his three-decade-long rule in 1876, the main dynamics of urban transformation, albeit largely haphazard and lacking a comprehensive strategy, had already been established. The administrative center was already moved from Topkapı to Dolmabahçe in 1856 (and was to be moved further north to Yıldız by Abdülhamit II himself as a measure of self-protection) indubitably reflecting

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[301] I am grateful to Mehmet Kentel for sharing his ongoing work on the nineteenth century urban transformation in Istanbul.

[302] Following the commercial treaties, the empire effectively became and open market, witnessing a fifteenfold increase in trade balance in favor of the Europeans. Between 1840 and 1900, about 100,000 foreigners entered the imperial capital, mainly to benefit from the new advantages provided to them by these treaties. (Çelik: 1986, 38).

[303] Vahdettin Engin, *Sultan Abdülhamit ve Istanbul'u* (İstanbul: Simurg, 2001), 176.

the European tendencies in architecture; *Altıncı Daire-i Belediye* (Sixth District Administration), the first municipality had been established in the Beyoğlu-Galata area a year later in 1857; the concept of public parks had been introduced by the 1860s, with *Taksim Bahçesi* or *Jardin de Taksim* in 1869 and *Millet Bahçesi* in Çamlıca in 1870; and the first underground railway system (*Metropolitan Railway of Constantinople*) was constructed between Galata and Pera in 1875.[304]

In any case, by the 1890s Beyoğlu was established as an area of urban leisure, not just for non-Muslims but also for the Muslim middle class, which, a decade or two earlier, would associate leisure not with the lively tumult of *Cadde-i Kebir*, also known as *La Grande Rue de Péra* (today's İstiklal Street, henceforth referred to as the *Grande Rue*), but with promenades in Kağıthane or Göksu rivers. The movement of leisure from the countryside to the city center for the Ottoman middle classes changed the major attributes of what was meant by leisure, bringing consumerism to the foreground, as clothing stores dominated the *Grande Rue*, selling luxury goods from Europe, not just to foreign inhabitants but also to Muslim Ottoman subjects. Theaters, night clubs, hotels, cafes and restaurants lined the avenue, allowing strollers to shop, eat and entertain outside their homes as part of their recreation time.[305] This was in stark contrast to three decades earlier when the same area was described by Zoiros Paşa, a Greek doctor and an inhabitant of Beyoğlu, as a place "with narrow, crooked and dirty streets, old wooden

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[304] Çelik: 1986, 69; Fatih Altuğ, *Araba Sevdası (Eleştirel Basım),* 46. The number six in the first municipality in Istanbul is an allusion to the Sixième Arrondissement of Paris. The sultan of the time, Abdulaziz I (r. 1861-1876), is the first and only to visit Western Europe.

[305] Ibid., 133. These stores included Hayden's fabric store, Madame de Milleville's Grande Maison de Couture, Madame Vapillon's accessories store, Paquin d'Istanbul, La Maison des Modes Françaises, Maison Baker, Bon Marché, Bazar Allemand. Among the cafes and restaurants were Brasserie de Londres, Cafe-Restaurant de Paris, Cafe-Chantant Parisiana, Concordia and Trocadero.

buildings […] and devoid of Muslim presence."[306] Zoiros's observation is in line with a contemporary reaction on the part of Ahmet Cevdet Paşa toward the Marquis de Moustier, French ambassador in Istanbul: the latter had commented that even though he lived in the city for a long time, he could not really gain a good sense of the Muslim way of life: "You lived in Beyoğlu," Ahmet Cevdet tells his colleague, "you would not only be unable to observe the conditions of Islam there, it would even be impossible to really understand the life in the city. For Beyoğlu is an interstice between the lands of Islam and Europe. From there you view İstanbul with binoculars, but those binoculars are distorted."[307] To Ahmet Cevdet, Beyoğlu was not representative of Muslim commonplaces as the area was mostly (though not exclusively) inhabited by wealthy foreigners who came to the city to benefit from the economic advantages granted to them in the early 1840s, or, occasionally, families of high-ranking Egyptian officers who fell out of favor in the Mehmet Ali Paşa dynasty and brought their fortune to İstanbul.[308]

Such observations were no longer possible during the 1890s when Muslim middle classes had made the *Grande Rue* one of the major locations they frequented – this does not mean that there were not any Muslim imperial subjects in the area in the earlier decades, it just means that Muslims who frequented and/or lived in the area did not engage in recreational activities and were placed too low in the social hierarchy to be

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[306] Reşat Ekrem Koçu: 1958, 2706.

[307] This anecdote is part of the special report written by Ahmet Cevdet Paşa to Abdülhamit II, right after he ascended the throne (Ahmet Cevdet Paşa: 1980, 109). The ambassador in question here is (1817-1869) Léonel de Moustier, who served in Istanbul between 1861 and 1866.

[308] In another work of his, *Tezakir* (Memoranda), Ahmet Cevdet Paşa talks about "Egyptian ladies and gentlemen who brought large sums of money, spent it lavishly and provided a bad example for the pleasure-loving spendthrifts. They broke new ground in the realm of foolish squandering. Egyptian ladies in particular, were fond of western-style clothing and articles (*alafranga melbusat ve tecemmülat*); ladies of İstanbul – members of the palace in particular, began to imitate them" (Ahmet Cevdet Paşa: 1991, 20).

visible to someone like Ahmet Cevdet. The turning of the cemetery into a high-scale public park was as much an issue of class as one of ethnicity and religion. In fact, in a pre-1880 observation of the area, Italian writer Edmondo de Amicis wrote that the cemetery constituted an area where lower classes spent time and socialized: "A Turk seated in the shade smokes tranquilly; *boys run about and chase each other among the tombs*; here and there cows are grazing, and a multitude of turtle-doves bill and coo among the branches of the cypress trees; groups of veiled women pass from time to time."[309]

In a similar vein, about two decades earlier, an English writer, John Harwood, had talked about *Küçük Kabristan*, which was to become *Jardin du Petit-Champs* (henceforth *Tepebaşı Bahçesi*) in 1880s, as a place where lower class subjects frequented, this time with noticeable contempt:

> The dismal promenade of the cemetery was always the same during the brief twilight of those almost tropical evenings; the same contrast of careless life and uncared for death, the same lounging Greeks imbibing coffee and wine of Mitylene, the same dusty dumbs, the same droning and jangling music, the same veiled Turkish and Armenian women shuffling along in yellow boots and slippers, and ogling the men they met most outrageously with their bold black eyes, the same kites and vulture hovering and wheeling over head.[310]

Thus urban projects undertaken during the last quarter of the century in *Altıncı Daire-i Belediye* intended to bring these populations out of the area near the *Grande Rue* and to ease the transportation of middle-class Muslims into the area during the 1880s.[311] As a

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[309] De Amicis: 1870, 92.
[310] Harwood: 1852, 92.
[311] It is thus no surprise that Baron Foelckershamb, a representative of the company that undertook the Metropolitan Railway of Constantinople project defined it as "a work of

result, members of the publishing world, poets, novelists and journalists writing in Turkish were increasingly more present in this area, frequenting cafes, restaurants and shops; whereas consumerism was bad for Ahmet Mithat and hilariously condemnable, if unavoidable for Recaizade Ekrem, it was part and parcel of being a litterateur for Halit Ziya. The changing representations of Beyoğlu and other parts of Istanbul reflect the transformations in the urban fabric and highlight the inseparable connection between the persona of the writer and the city as his space of self-realization.

**From one hill to another: the symbolic shift from Çamlıca to Tepebaşı**

This move towards Beyoğlu happens first and foremost in the realm of literary symbolism. In fact, when the introductory scenes of three novels written in Turkish in 1876 (Namık Kemal's *İntibah* – Awakening), 1886 (Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem's *Araba Sevdası* – A Carriage Affair) and 1896 (Halit Ziya's *Mai ve Siyah* – Blue and Black), one decade apart from one another, are analyzed, an interesting pattern emerges:[312] all three novels open up with a description of nature in a public park in İstanbul, the first two in Çamlıca's *Millet Bahçesi*, and the third in Beyoğlu's *Tepebaşı Bahçesi*. The opening locations were as novel as the genre itself, since, as Zeynep Çelik observes, "[t]he concept of public parks was introduced to the Ottoman capital during the 1860s."[313] Still, the differences among these three works in how they engage with and define these public

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improvement and public utility, which would prove of advantage to persons of all nationalities settled in Constantinople." Levant Herald, January 1875.

[312] While the exact composition date of Recaizade Ekrem's *Araba Sevdası* is unknown, one can approximate it to the late 1880s, given both textual and paratextual information (see Fatih Altuğ's critical edition in Turkish for more information).

[313] Çelik: 1986, 69.

spaces point to the dramatic transformations, within the last few decades of the nineteenth century, in literary aesthetics, conceptions of individuality and perceptions of reality.

In *İntibah*, Namık Kemal starts his description of Çamlıca with a couplet and welcomes the spring in a garden akin to the ones where nightlong poetic performances occurred in the classical tradition.[314] In this garden, roses seem to be playfully hiding among the leaves from the gaze of beautiful faces, occasionally coming out of their hiding place to give each other tender kisses and retreating again, giggling yearningly at each other. Kemal laments his excessive exposure to the Eastern imagery (*hayalat-ı şarkiyye ile kesret-i i'tilaf*) because it makes him think of the nightingale when the rose is mentioned; he knows all too well that the bird is *not* in love with the rose but with its own *freedom*.[315] Nonetheless, he soon returns to the same literary language to liken tulips to wine cups, hastily scattered on the ground following a drinking party (*meclis-i 'işret*) the night before. In Kemal's garden, caught between a traditional literary aesthetics and an effort to ascribe new meaning to old imagery, the commercial center of the city and other areas of high urban development are only visible at a distance, across the Bosphorus, while natural phenomena determine the direction of the narrative and the quality of the language.[316]

As one of the first public parks of the imperial capital, *Millet Bahçesi* was opened

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[314] For more on this, see Andrews, *Poetry's Voice, Society's Song: Ottoman Lyric Poetry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

[315] Namık Kemal: 2007, 2. The passage in Turkish reads: "Ben gülden bahs ettikçe bülbülü unutamam. Vakı'a güle aşık olmadığını bilirim. Fakat bi-çare kuşun tavr-ı sevdavisine bakılırsa o ufacık gönlünde ne büyük bir muhabbet eseri hiss olunur. O muhabbet de var ise kendi hürriyetinedir ki tutulup da kafese habs edilince nağmekarlık etmesi şöyle dursun ekseri yaşaması bile kabil olamıyor."

[316] "Pa-yi-tahtımızın Beyoğlu gibi, Galata gibi, Babıali civarları gibi, Sultan Bayazid gibi hangi ma'mur ciheti görülür ki Çamlıca'nın nazar-ı temaşasından kendini saklayabilsin. İstanbul'da te'sisat-ı 'atika ve ebniyyeyi meşhur eden hiç biri var mıdır ki Çamlıca tasvirini almak mümkün olmasın" (4).

in 1870, about half a century after the area became popular among the members of the burgeoning bureaucracy as a summer destination. By the second half of the century, the hill was providing a meeting place for the first generation of dissenters that came out of the group of bureaucrats and state officials, some of whom, like Namık Kemal, were also active in the field of literature.[317] In an attempt to preserve the Ottoman state in the face of the political transformations of the mid-nineteenth century, these men sought to conflate western political philosophy and teachings of Islam to create the modernist movement that would save the empire.[318] Yahya Kemal describes this first generation of activist-litterateurs on the Çamlıca hill as "children of İstanbul's genteel *efendis*, born of the Circassian slave women, grown in the hands of governesses and servants, who began to dream about the state in the cradle, and who possessed a bit of a princely soul."[319] Welcoming the revival of nature with the spring on the Çamlıca hill, Namık Kemal resonates hope for the future of the existent sociopolitical structures with strategic amendment. The nightingale is still a relevant image, even if it is in love with, not the rose but its freedom.

By the time Recaizade Ekrem, one of the elite children of *Tanzimat*, writes *Araba Sevdası* about one decade later, the same garden appears quite different than in Namık Kemal's depiction of it, a barren and unkempt space with dead flowers. The narrator reports that, the garden changed dramatically from the early 1870s to mid-1880s, between the time when the story took place and the time of narration: "This was the first garden,

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[317] Reşat Ekrem Koçu: 1958, 3710. Among these were Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa, Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, Reşat Bey and Nuri Bey (these last two were also active in the Paris Commune).

[318] Şerif Mardin: 1962, 60. This stance had other important proponents in the Middle East, such as Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh.

[319] Yahya Kemal, "Üç Tepe," in *Eğil Dağlar: İstiklal Harbi Yazıları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1966,) 295.

landscaped and opened to public in İstanbul. It is now closed on most days as it has fallen out of popularity a while ago. […] Çamlıca Garden, described roughly with those words used to be not a melancholic and silence-filled space of loneliness as it is now but a tumultuous place of entertainment and lively discussion (*hengameli bir surgah-ı şevk ü şegab*)."[320] The abandoned ruins of a once popular park point to a sense of desolation and a loss of cultural orientation that took over, as the landscaped garden in Kemal's novel turns into a barren field surrounded by an old graveyard, his language coalescing old imagery with new concepts like freedom and homeland gives way, along with the initial determination and self-discipline of his protagonist Ali Bey, to Bihruz Bey's non-sensical mishmash of French and a convoluted Ottoman Turkish in Ekrem's *Araba Sevdası*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Bihruz spends all his family money into what the previous generation would consider to be useless trivia, a coat custom made by *Terzi Mir* or the latest luxury carriage; he is a farcical figure all through the novel, with no real knowledge of neither French nor Ottoman literary traditions but a great deal of self-deceiving pretense in relation to both. Bihruz is the hilarious announcer of the undeniable centrality of putting forth the right appearance in a world inundated with new set of choices for consumerism and self-display; he also signals the symbolic bankruptcy of the suburban Çamlıca garden, and the consequent move across the Bosphorus to Tepebaşı, where a remarkable amount of inter-authorial socialization took place during the 1890s.

While Kemal's hard-working – albeit confused, bureaucrat turned into a social parasite posing as intellectual in Ekrem's story, some of the latter's characteristics are taken up as fundamental ingredients to the creation of Ahmet Cemil, not as a parody but rather a strong suggestion on how a modern Ottoman litterateur should behave. A

[320] Recaizade Ekrem: 2014, 48.

frequenter of the new *Tepebaşı Bahçesi*, he is also *infatuated* with carriages, not so much to blindly follow the latest fads from the west, but as a carefully selected part of his public persona as an accomplished poet in the imperial capital. With the spatial shift into Tepebaşı, the imagery also changes; while Halit Ziya's language is at least as ornate as Kemal's and Ekrem's, it neither follows the conventions of the classical literary language like the former, nor is a caricatural mixture of Turkish and French like the prose that the latter attributes to his protagonist to showcase the practical absurdities of such an attempt. Rather, it embraces the influence of French language and literature, utilizing its metaphorical conventions and emotional portfolio to approach the Ottoman Turkish lexicon.[321]

The protagonist of *Mai ve Siyah*, Ahmet Cemil, has an innovative (and western-oriented) approach towards poetic conventions like Bihruz; however, unlike him, his decisions on poetic style are far better informed about both major works of Ottoman classical poetry and contemporary French poetry, though with a clear penchant for the latter. Similarly, his stumping grounds, Tepebaşı is not only a different garden, it is also described very differently, clearly evoking the much talked about but never seen or heard (at least by the readers of the novel) poetic masterpiece of the novel's protagonist.[322] In other words, the garden is both a location where poetic inspiration happens *and* a poetic element through the description of which he channels his emotions.

When the narrator of the novel describes the garden through the eyes of a solitary

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[321] I have argued elsewhere that the attribution of decadantism to the writers of *Servet-i Fünun* (including Halit Ziya) had to do with a "fall back" towards both what Ahmet Mithat perceives as the moral degeneration of French naturalism and a very Persoarabic-heavy lexicon without concern for the literary conventions of classical literature.

[322] Tepebaşı Garden is generally associated with the writers of *Servet-i Fünun* in the non-fictional world, as they frequent it very often. Among the best-known regulars are Halit Ziya, Mehmet Rauf, Ahmet Hikmet and Saffeti Ziya (Çıkla: 2004, 243).

Ahmet Cemil, it conveys a very different image than both Kemal's and Ekrem's rendering of Çamlıca. This is a place where stars are compared to a rain of diamonds, and where Ahmet Cemil "thinks that the sky, with its golden flakes scattered on dull blue, is swinging, swinging in front of his half-closed intoxicated eyes, as if it was about to pour all over the sleepy hills across the water, or as if the amorphous surface melting slowly onto the sea would rise slowly, making the ground and the sky embrace in the love-filled aura of the night, with a kiss that would melt and disperse all existence."[323] The streaks of light "pouring down from the skies, dancing around in the starry night and gazing up and down like eyes that have fallen in love with higher things in life" point to not only an unrecognizably novel set of literary conventions but also similarly novel ways of perceiving one's surroundings.[324] This stylistic shift is marked by a very particular instance in the novel where Ahmet Cemil and his friend Hüseyin Nazmi enter a bookshop in Beyoğlu to buy a book of French poetry.[325] Not knowing what they really want, they randomly pick a poetry collection entitled *L'Âme Nue* (Engl. The Naked Soul) by Edmond Haraucourt.[326] They head straight to *Taksim Bahçesi*, another public garden in Beyoğlu, opened eleven years before the *Tepebaşı Bahçesi* in 1869, yet had rarely appeared in the fiction of the time before the publication of *Mai ve Siyah* – to the extent that one can argue its fame is brought about by the popularity of the new park in Tepebaşı.

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[323] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 35, all translations from the novel are mine. The "diamond rain" is a reference to Émile Waldteufel's waltz "Pluie de Diamants," playing in the background as Ahmet Cemil is watching the sky. This is also the scene where the major metaphorical scheme of the novel, that of blue dreams and black disillusions, is set for the first time.

[324] Ibid., 36.

[325] Ibid., 56.

[326] Edmond Haraucourt (1856-1941), writes poetry, novels and plays; some of this major works are *La Légende des sexes, poèmes hystériques et profanes* (1882), *L'Âme nue* (1885), *L'Antechrist* (1893), *Daâh, le premier homme, roman* (1914).

This choice of location is intertextually significant, as *Taksim Bahçesi* (located on today's Gezi Park) overlooks Çamlıca, the center space in Kemal's and Ekrem's narration, unlike Tepebaşı, which overlooks the Historical Peninsula where Babıali Avenue is located. This is a deliberate choice on the part of the characters to be across from the Üsküdar district, a choice clearly voiced by Hüseyin Nazmi: "Look at this sun! Let's read this on this hill over there in Taksim Bahçesi, under this sun, facing the sea, across from the coast of Üsküdar, gently melting into the water."[327] As the mirror image of what occurred in Kemal's *İntibah*, Ahmet Cemil's gaze is directed towards the now-distant Çamlıca hills over which "the air was trembling, as if a breath, having raised from the moist earth below, was hanging and swinging slowly over them." The two friends sit in Taksim, "pleasantly sluggish, with the smell of earth in the garden, the refreshing quality of the poetry pouring out of the book, the sunny scenery misting under the trembling air across [them]."[328] The pleasant lightness in Taksim is contrasted with the weighty air over Çamlıca, alluding at Ekrem's description of the latter as a location of death and abandonment.

The topographical histories of these two gardens during the second half of the century also parallel this dichotomy. While the ruins of the relatively abandoned Çamlıca Garden was surrounded by neighboring Sarıkaya cemetery at the time of *Mai ve Siyah*'s narration, both Taksim and Tepebaşı gardens stand as well-landscaped spaces built over two different cemeteries, *Le Grand Champs des Morts* (Büyük Kabristan) and *Le Petit Champs des Morts* (Küçük Kabristan) respectively, completing the reverse relationship

[327] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 57.
[328] Ibid., 61.

between the two sides of the southern Bosphorus.[329] By 1890, Çamlıca hill, along with the lively political discussions that took place on it, had become a place of death and decay while the Taksim and Tepebaşı gardens, located near the *Grande Rue,* the lively center of consumerism, constituted the center of literary discussions, that is now more focused on the issues of aesthetics, and expression of individual emotions with no clear reference to the political background of the time.[330]

The contrast between the two hills across the Bosphorus is further emphasized through Ahmet Cemil's and Hüseyin Nazmi's physical destruction of the poems they had written thus far, inspired by Ottoman classical poetry: "From that day on, they burnt all drafts. They did not leave so much as one letter intact. All those descriptions of sunrise, poems written as if by girls inflicted with tuberculosis, elegies addressed to wilted flowers, to mothers crying by their child's grave, they burnt them all, along with the parallel poems (*nazire*) they wrote for Fuzuli, Baki and Nedim."[331] The realization for the need to read different poems accompanies the spatial shift across the Bosphorus: "First, they desired to start with a plausible list. They found a series on literary history and decided to read in sequence […]: They read all the way through to Goethe, Schiller, Milton, Myron, Hugo, Musset and Lamartine; they became intoxicated with the pleasures

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[329] Ekrem: 2014, 19. Interestingly, the first poem Ahmet Cemil and Hüseyin Nazmi happen to read in the Haraucourt compilation is entitled *Makber* (Engl. Tomb / Fr. Le Tombeau), a poem on death they have a hard time understanding because of the unfamiliar imagery on death.

[330] The distinction between the political and the individual, strengthened by Abdülhamit's increasingly intolerant censorship regime that made overt political statements impossible, has dominated the scholarship. Yet, as Orhan Koçak points out, these two registers are not completely detached from each other. Rather, this is a period where the political is expressed through the individual. Koçak reminds us that "nothing is in fact that 'individual/internal' – the contrast between the 'character' with a well-developed internal world and the 'type' which represents social dynamics is established too easily. […] Here is the problem that the critics and theorists who look at the East-West problem or larger cultural problems cannot avoid: They assume that these problems only belong to the register of 'ideas', and [wrongly] accept that emotions have no impact on the transformation of ideas" (Koçak: 1996, 95).

[331] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 63.

of this world and decided to stay there for a long time. They immersed themselves in this new ocean of poetry."[332] The universe Namık Kemal had emerged out of, was thus left behind, on both literary and spatial level.

During this time, Beyoğlu District increased its symbolic capital, not only in relation to its public spaces of inter-authorial socialization but also as a popular area to inhabit. In Ahmet Mithat's *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (pub. 1875), Felatun's father Mustafa Meraki Efendi had been described an anomaly as an upper-middle class Muslim citizen residing in Beyoğlu. The epithet Meraki comes from his "curiosity for European goods"; it is thus no surprise that he would want to be in close proximity to the *Grande Rue*, yet this was not established as common practice prior to the last decade of the century. The narrator of the novel does not try to conceal his condemning surprise: "Even though he was well off and owned a beautiful mansion and garden in Üsküdar, where he is from, he sold all of it, without much regard to its actual worth, and moved to […] a neighborhood in Tophane, close to Beyoğlu, just to be able to lead a purely European-style (*alafranga*) life." The narrator then uses the duality inherent in his father's life choices to explicate Felatun's equally poor decisions that eventually prepares his downfall: "In order to really get to know Felatun Bey," he claims, "one surely needs to understand his origins [*menşeini görmek elbet lazımdır*]. It would be easier to understand the general behavior of the person who emerges out of such background."[333] When Halit Ziya writes *Mai ve Siyah* two decades later, the associations he makes between areas of residence and acceptability of social background are quite dissimilar to Ahmet Mithat's.

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[332] Ibid., 63.
[333] Ahmet Midhat Efendi: 2008, 3.

While Ziya himself lives near the fictional Mustafa Meraki Efendi in Cihangir,[334] his protagonist resides across the Golden Horn in Süleymaniye, in a modest house his father purchased with a great deal of personal sacrifice prior to his untimely death.[335] The location of the house, along with the quality of the public spaces and infrastructure of the neighborhood, constitutes one of the major factors that sets up Ahmet Cemil's ultimate failure, which stems as much from his lack of social and economic capital as it does from the inability of his fellow litterateurs to understand the aesthetic depth of his work. In other words, for Ziya, it is no longer the abandonment of one's place of origin to chase a European lifestyle that brings about failure but rather the lack of family funds that would enable one to be closer to it.

The small house Ahmet Cemil's father had procured to "save his children from remaining in the middle of the street," in other words, as a measure of protection for his family, thus ironically serves as a detriment to his literary career by placing him further away from the epicenter of socioliterary activity and in a lower-class neighborhood. In Ekrem's *Araba Sevdası*, declaring the bankruptcy of Çamlıca and the legacy of Namık Kemal's generation, the last piece of real estate left in the hands of Bihruz Bey was interestingly a mansion in the very same neighborhood, Süleymaniye, foreshadowing his ultimate financial (and otherwise) demise.[336] Similarly, towards the end of *Mai ve Siyah*, when Ahmet Cemil marries his sister off with a disappointing wedding ceremony, the discrepancy between his dream wedding for his sister and the reality of it is attributed to

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[334] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 552. Halit Ziya recalls spending a considerable amount of time on the *Grande Rue*, during his commute from the Historical Peninsula: "I would go up to using the *Tünel*, then would slowly walk up towards Taksim, taking my time in front of the window displays, daydreaming, then would return home with a heart crushed between my boundless desires and meager financial means."

[335] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 43.

[336] Ekrem: 2014, 266.

Süleymaniye, their neighborhood and what it could (and could not) offer: “Oh! Was this how he would have to marry his sister off? He had such high dreams for her, well decorated houses, pretty gowns, bejeweled accessories!... Were all those dreams, which he was certain would come true, all lies? As he thought of İkbal becoming a bride, he would once imagine her in a white dress – like the ones he saw and envied in a colorful fashion magazine, her silk veil covering her head, tilted sideways under the jewels ornamenting it.”[337] The reality that his neighborhood could provide for the wedding ceremony was quite dissimilar to his dreams, hinting to his own disillusionment at the end of the novel. Instead of a stylish bride in a gracefully decorated environment was a tasteless mixture of colors, smells and noises that the narrator takes great lengths to describe.

> That day Ahmet Cemil escaped, to avoid seeing the women who came to see the ceremony, crowding the narrow streets of Süleymaniye, making them the scene of a small-scale Judgment Day – a strange ruckus of color and clothing – with their cloaks, and veils, and small children they brought along, the neighbor's daughter, who threw herself onto the streets early in the morning to see the wedding, nibbling on a piece of hazelnut-filled sweet snack, standing next to the Albanian sweets seller with her canary-yellow cardigan on her red-printed dress, her colorful headgear made of flowers and lace embroidery, her loosely tied long stockings falling onto her pink rose-patterned shoes, her white and red belt hanging over her skirt, her embroidered silk handkerchief pinned to her waist, to be away from this army of children chasing each other and screaming constantly, whooping, shouting, crying, running behind the chestnut sellers, helva-sellers, roasted-chickpea sellers, with their undergarments hanging low on their hips, socks tucked in their trousers, yelling 'Mom!'

[337] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 189.

to make himself heard by his mother in the wedding house [...] [338]

The description of the wedding day goes on for a bit longer to communicate the sense of claustrophobic chaos that disgusts Ahmet Cemil into escape. What connotes bad taste is thus no longer Bihruz's misinformed appropriation of European sartorial trends, it rather is the thoughtless combination of colors and fabrics, a lack of proper hygiene and manners, for which Süleymaniye as an entire neighborhood comes to be a sign. It is not to be found in Beyoğlu but across the Golden Horn, in a crowded lower-class neighborhood. While it would perhaps be a stretch to argue that Ahmet Mithat's Mustafa Meraki Efendi is a more socially acceptable figure for Halit Ziya, he is certainly further from where the real horror stands.

Ahmet Cemil is a detached and lonely character in his physical and symbolic escape from his family home in Süleymaniye and inability to find an accepting social circle in a rather hostile professional environment, paralleling some of Halit Ziya's initial anxieties during the move to İstanbul and his uncertainty concerning his ability to successfully navigate this social sphere as a young provincial litterateur, mixed with the excitement to be a part of it. As the new authorial performativity requiring a careful selection and display of consumer goods to disseminate the intended message pertaining to the wearers' literary inclinations in the public sphere shifted the symbolic urban center towards the Beyoğlu district where commercial goods coming from Europe can be found, this shift was creating new socialization patterns and a new set of social etiquette the participants needed to abide by.

[338] Ibid., 189.

**Spaces of production, spaces of consumption: writers "made in Beyoğlu"**

By the 1890s, Babıali Avenue and its immediate surroundings on the Historic Peninsula had already been established as the center of literary activity, in part thanks to the entrepreneurial efforts of Ahmet Mithat Efendi, who owned one of the first publishing houses there. Having opened his first office in his house in Tahtakale, and later moving to Camlı Han in Asmaaltı (near the Spice Bazar), he managed to have enough funds to procure an apartment on Babıali to use as his new headquarters during the mid-1880s.[339] "There were no other printing house on the Babıali Avenue back then," he recalls, "publishing houses and newspapers were tucked away inside some remote arcades [*bir takım ücra hanlar derununda münzevi idiler*]."[340] His impressive entrepreneurial efforts turned Babıali from the center of state bureaucracy to a place of private enterprise for young litterateurs; he had become such an iconic figure that younger entrepreneurs would consider a major milestone in their career to become his acquaintance. Ahmet İhsan, the owner of *Servet-i Fünun*, to be established in 1890, recalls that he has waited for him to pass many times on the avenue, his heart palpitating with excitement: "I would go all the way to his office on the Ebussuud Avenue, but I could never find the courage to enter through the narrow and dark gate of the building."[341]

Prior to the 1880s, Babıali Avenue was the center of "civil officialdom." As Carter Findley observes in his 1989 book with the same title, cultural elites were also scribal officials who operated on the well-established structure of "official slavery" where "those who enjoyed power, and thus also wealth and high status, should do so – not as members of social entities that controlled their own status and identity,

[339] Reşat Ekrem Koçu: 1958, 391.
[340] Ahmet Mithat Efendi: 2013, 42.
[341] Tokgöz: 1993, 37.

independent of the state – but solely as agents of the sultan and solely at this pleasure."[342] Even in case of political dissent, this system remained largely intact, until Ahmet Mithat's introduction of a new work ethic and the possibility to "make oneself" outside the realm of the state, within the field of journalism and the publishing industry. It is thus no surprise that while the major fictional protagonists during the 1870s and 80s, such as Namık Kemal's Ali Bey, Ahmet Mithat's Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi, as well as Recaizade Ekrem's Bihruz Bey were scribal officers, Halit Ziya's Ahmet Cemil never works in a state office; rather he has dreams of becoming a successful poet, and more importantly, a publishing house owner. The scribal officer was replaced with the litterateur-entrepreneur as the prominent figure of the avenue.

Ahmet İhsan's publishing house *Alem Matbaası* (called *Ahmet İhsan ve Şürekası* at the time of its establishment) was founded in 1890 on Ebussuud Avenue, moved to the Babıali Avenue a few years later, to stay in the Cağaloğlu area until well into the republican period.[343] Yet, writer-entrepreneurs spent most of their time across the Golden Horn in Beyoğlu, which proved to be far more constitutive to their "making" than a worn-out and gloomy Babıali. In fact, memoirs of *Servet-i Fünun* writers are filled with negative descriptions of the publishing scene in the Cağaloğlu area. As mentioned in the previous chapter, an old Halit Ziya still clearly recalls his disappointment at his first visit of the avenue. A native of İzmir, he had imagined it to be full of grandiose libraries and majestic printing houses, a gathering place that shook men of letters to their core with excitement. Yet, upon his arrival in İstanbul, he was utterly disappointed to see that

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[342] Findley: 1989, 42. Findley points out that "'officialdom' and 'intelligentsia' were so nearly coterminous that İnal's compendium of late Ottoman 'poets' lives is one of the premier biographical sources on civil officials" (13).

[343] Reşat Ekrem Koçu: 1958, 374.

libraries were fewer in number than he thought, and too small; as for publishing houses, they were dirty, gloomy places where writers were crammed in tiny rooms with bad ventilation, minimal furniture and no curtains. He was particularly disillusioned upon his first visit to *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* headquarters, Ahmet Mithat's literary magazine: the stairs were narrow, walls unclean, equipment old and unkempt, and as Halit Ziya put it, the whole thing was very much unlike "the luxurious spaces with marble façades, and abundant ornamentation that I saw in French magazines."[344]

Not only were the working spaces unwelcoming, but also the general working conditions were less than ideal. Halit Ziya's views on what it meant to work in a publishing house at the time are reflected in Ahmet Cemil's descriptions of the daily life in fictional *Mirat-ı Şuun* magazine (located in the same area) where he started working during his last year as a high school (*idadi*) student:

> To fill up columns of miscellanea from morning to night on end, sitting at a corner of the desk covered with a stained tablecloth, while Ali Şekip was writing a summary of news, Hüseyin Baha Efendi lambasting Ahmed Şevki on an issue of accounting, and the head-typesetter, with his ink-stained palm resting on the door, telling him that the miscellanea section needed two more columns, to work as if he was a text-producing machine, to start writing anew because he does not have time to read what is already written, to write while not being able to find the time to stop in order to rest those wretched eyes that start watering because of the smoke of cigarettes he kept lighting to numb his incessantly working mind, then to doze off, yearning for the glimmer of the sun that was throwing teasing gazes, from the corner of the awrily-hung green curtain, towards these poor souls who were busy killing their own minds there.[345]

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[344] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 258.
[345] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 96-7.

Even Ahmet İhsan's own *Servet-i Fünun*, the center of literary innovation during the latter half of the 1890s is not immune from the gloom that predominates Babıali. In fact, the refreshing content produced within the confines of the *Servet-i Fünun* office is often contrasted with the physical qualities of the space. Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın recalls: "[*Alem Matbaası*] was located in a narrow and old building on Ebussuud Street. Yet, that space, which I had stepped into for the first time then, seemed sacred to me, despite the foul smells and noisy background."[346]

By the time Babıali emerged as a place of literary entrepreneurship and lively publishing activity, it was already a worn-out and unwelcoming locale in the eyes of the younger generation of litterateurs, directing them towards newer and more exciting venues for socialization and self-display. They unsurprisingly gravitated towards the *Grande Rue* for, unlike the previous generation that generally saw the area as a source of immoral acts and lifestyles, Halit Ziya and his colleagues perceived it as an area fundamental to the making of their authorship; it provided not only most of the constituents of their authorly appearance as consumer goods, but also the new spaces where they can meet, shop, read, and observe their surroundings.[347] As Beyoğlu became more popular for the members of the literary field, some of the printing houses publishing works in Ottoman Turkish started to move their headquarters into the area. Interestingly, one of the first to make that move was Ahmet Mithat himself who opened an additional

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[346] Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, *Edebiyat Anıları* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1975,) 31.

[347] For example, Ahmet Mithat describes Beyoğlu as the center of every vice. In a story entitled "Para," the protagonist Sulhi appears as a character that 'escaped' the immorality in Beyoğlu. The narrator comments, "what else is there in Beyoğlu other than filth, sickness, and fraud? […] there, you would rarely find hat-wearing [indicating higher class non-Muslims] fellows. Why would a proud and earnes Ottoman gentleman condescend to the world of entertainment that those fellows do not?" (Ahmet Mithat, "Para," 26).

office in Beyoğlu's Hacopulo Çarşısı (known as Danışman Geçidi today), and established a printing house that procured Greek letters and started publishing simultaneously in Turkish, French and Greek.[348] Ebuzziya Tevfik Bey (1849-1913), one of the most innovative names of the printing industry at the time, also moved his printing house, *Matbaa-yı Ebuzziya*, across the Golden Horn to Galata (near Arap Camii) two years after its establishment in 1880 and has published compilations of world literature, a literary periodical, series of biographies, almanacs, and received many awards in Europe for innovation in printing.[349]

In addition to hosting some of the most forward-thinking printing houses and the newest techniques in text and image printing, Beyoğlu was, as mentioned above, the center of commercialism, providing new generation of litterateurs virtually anything they would need to adorn themselves with to craft their public persona: these numerous shops and department stores include, Verdoux's eyeglasses shop, hairdresser Petro, tailors Vidoviç and Botter, Weinberg selling cameras and other photography supplies, department stores of various sizes like Bon Marché, Bazar Allemand and Pygmalion, Komaninger's store for piano and other musical instruments, Angelidis's Havana Pazarı selling the finest tobacco from the Régie des Tabacs, famous tailors Mir and Cottereaux, shoesellers Burgeni and Herald, and Dumas's store where he sells carriages in the Paris or Vienna style.[350] Some of these stores feature in the fiction of the time; Bihruz is a regular of Terzi Mir and Kunduracı Herald, which both appear in *Mai ve Siyah* along with Bon Marché where Ahmet Cemil spends a considerable amount of time (see Chapter 3).

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[348] Ahmet Mithat Efendi: 2013, 53. Ebuzziya Tevfik moved Şinasi's *Tasvir-i Efkar Matbaası* to the same location in late 1872, a year after Şinasi's death.
[349] Reşat Ekrem Koçu: 1958, 4879.
[350] Ibid., 2714.

There is however a considerable difference between the consumption patterns of the upper-class scribal officers like Bihruz or Felatun and a middle-class poet in the self-making like Ahmet Cemil. The narrator of *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* aptly summarizes the former as follows: "if you were to ask about Felatun Bey's clothes, we would have to reveal our lack of skill in describing it [*tariften izhar-ı acz ederiz*]. Suffice it to say that, he has about a few hundred of those cardboard pictures one would see in a clothing store or a tailor's shop to display the current sartorial trends; he would stand in front of the mirror and *work hard until he makes himself resemble one of those pictures*."[351] In contrast, Ahmet Cemil is striving to be unique, and to find his individuality through a meticulous selection of consumer goods. This distinction is in line with Balzac's conceptualization of the dandy, represented by both Felatun and Bihruz, as the heresy of the elegant life: "In playing the dandy," he argues, "a man becomes a piece of furniture for the boudoir, an extremely ingenuous mannequin that can sit upon a horse or a couch, that bites or sucks on the end of a walking stick by habit – but a thinking being... never! The man who sees only fashion in fashion is a fool."[352] Ahmet Cemil is far from a dandy in that sense, precisely because of his keen perception on the interconnectivity between art, commodities and identity, as well as between artistic production and entrepreneurial spirit. What the *Grande Rue* can provide is thus far more fundamental to his existence than it has ever been for his fictional predecessors.

With the artist-consumer-entrepreneur, members of the intelligentsia truly sets foot in the marketplace for the first time, to make and sell themselves, reflecting their art in their consumption patterns. The commodity fetish that ensues marks the lives of Halit

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[351] Ahmet Mithat: 2008, 8, emphasis mine.
[352] Balzac: 2010, 58.

Ziya and his contemporaries; make them to spend most of their free time on the *Grande Rue*, to look at goods even when they are unable to afford them and occasionally purchasing items they have no need for. Halit Ziya recalls one such instance in his memoirs; the recollection of the seemingly insignificant event decades later is telling of the centrality of 'shopping as leisure' to their lives: he purchases a lampshade from Pygmalion he had been eyeing for a long time, yet could find neither use for him in his house, nor a lamp it could sit on, and he eventually had to order one from the catalog of the Parisian Printemps store. "Until that arrived, the lampshade stood on top of a pitcher shaking its white and red beads, smiling at my childish naïveté and *gave me hope about life*."[353]

The emergence of the department store as a major venue to spend time off work was also a consequence of the various kinds of new visual stimuli present in the space. The novelty of the commercial visuality arguably had an impact on the intergenerational discrepancies in the ways of perceiving the outside world in general, where in Halit Ziya's descriptions light appears in a variety of ways to describe different kinds of emotional states. It also created a practice of observing the other participants of the urban experience.[354] The figure of the flaneur, the lone observer that marked the nineteenth century urban experience in Europe, was thus not without its Ottoman counterpart, rendering the validity of Hugo's famous observation "Errer est humain; flâner est

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[353] Uşaklıgil 2008 (1), 562, emphasis mine.

[354] In "Memory, Desire, Lyric: The Flaneur," Catherine Nesci lists the developments that created the flaneur as a new urban figure: "[n]ew technologies of visual and commercial display multiplied the sights of commodities and advertisements. Popular attractions such as panoramas offered spectacles of optical illusions made of hyperrealist paintings, depicting famous historical battles and panoramic views of cities on a gigantic, 180-degree circular canvas; in the 1820s, Louis Daguerre opened his dioramas, which stimulated life like movements and changing impressions of daylight by the rotation of the spectators' platform […]" (Nesci: 2014, 71).

parisien" questionable.[355] What Halit Ziya presents as Ahmet Cemil's urban experience, often closely paralleling his own is different from that of the previous generation in that sense also. While Ahmet Cemil is a man detached from the crowds around him, Ahmet Mithat's narrator in *Müşahedat*, for example, is one that involves himself to the extreme with whatever is around him, meddling, mingling, making acquaintances, and more importantly, constantly judging.

Strolling in Beyoğlu, Mithat's narrator compares it to Paris and finds it to be much more interesting; he sees stories everywhere [*hangi tarafa bakılsa bir roman görülür*] but in his opinion "the most common of those stories is of a kind that would break one's heart instead of giving joy."[356] Elsewhere, he makes a similar argument about Paris itself, criticizing not so much the city, but the French writers' (Zola's, in particular) manner of always putting the spotlight on misery and immorality: "does kindness and beauty no longer exist in Europe, in Paris, in the world? These [French writers] claim that writing kindness and beauty is pure imagination while writing evil and ugliness is pure reality [*mahz-ı hakikat*] and a true reflection of nature." In Ahmet Mithat's universe, it is indeed nonsensical, if not impossible, to observe without passing judgment. While his contemporary Namık Kemal does not necessarily share his views on Beyoğlu's moral decay, he does display a general disinterest in the act of strolling, promenading and watching crowds. In *İntibah*, a Namık Kemal-like narrator states "places of promenade/spectacle are not my fancy [*seyir yerleri zevkim değildir*]. I do not see any pleasure in things like collecting vice and frustration going after a car from day to night

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[355] Hugo, *Les Misérables*, quoted in Ferguson: 1994, 22. The association between the figure of the flaneur and the city of Paris is also present in Walter Benjamin's analysis of Baudelaire (see Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*).

[356] Ahmet Midhat: 2006, 178.

in a pair of tight-fitting shoes and a necktie reminiscent of hangman's rope, all for the sake of a desolate sign, free from all comeliness."[357] Strolling around in the city, getting lost among the crowds was simply not a common practice and certainly not something that would be perceived to categorically belong with the notion of promenade or *seyir*.

An exact contemporary of Halit Ziya, the famous *şehir mektupçusu* of the time, Ahmet Rasim (1864-1932) seems to continue Ahmet Mithat's tradition of the 'involved stroller', yet his observations are not those of a detached onlooker; he knows and is known by everyone, when he enters a public space, his mission of 'urban reporter' is predetermined.[358] Halit Ziya's protagonist, on the other hand, is a detached man; despite his ultimate desire to be readily recognizable in the urban space, he is not yet so; he rather appears to be a loner, from the very first scene of the novel in Tepebaşı Garden: "his friends were surely there, among the crowd of the garden, which he saw partly from there he stood. What is the need to join them? Does he have any real connection to these promenaders that flow past his eyes like a partial image, to these people that sit in groups under the trees, a connection enough to join the crowd? Is he not far from everyone, a stranger to everyone in this world?"[359]

While Namık Kemal's narrator displays a similar dislike of the Çamlıca Garden, the alternative practice of spectacle he offers is aligned with the visual traditions of the premodern era where analogies of classical poetry predominate. Ahmet Cemil, on the other hand, is as detached from the literary tradition as he is from his immediate surroundings. He is the impartial observer, the flaneur par excellence, unlike his

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[357] Namık Kemal, *İntibah*, 5.
[358] See, Reşat Ekrem Koçu: 1958, 132; Ahmet Rasim, *Şehir Mektupları* (İstanbul: İnkılap Yayınevi, 2012.
[359] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 37.

predecessors, getting lost in the crowd yet not belonging to it. In one of his favorite locations on the *Grande Rue*, Luxembourg, "he would sit in front, watch the people that go up and down, select some of those passers-by to follow further as the limited view from where he sits permits, he would extract meaning from their overcoats, old clothes, packages they carry, or the child standing next to a women and he would write detailed stories for each one of them in a minute's time."[360] This new way of engaging the urban experience that emerged in the Ottoman context with the proliferation of commodities becomes then central to the creative process and perception of selfhood of the litterateur in the case of Ahmet Cemil, who would then become an iconic figure for generations to follow. What Benjamin argues for Baudelaire in relation to Paris, can be argued for Ahmet Cemil in relation to Istanbul: "[h]is poetry is no hymn to the homeland; rather, the gaze of the allegorist, as it falls on the city, is the gaze of the alienated man. It is the gaze of the flaneur, whose way of life still conceals behind a mitigating nimbus the coming desolation of the big-city dweller."[361]

Unlike Benjamin's flaneur, however, the solitary stroller in Istanbul does not lose its initial level of detachment through a newly developed interest in commodities. Benjamin sees the department store as "the last territory of the flaneur," precisely because the abolished distance between the individual and the commodity. There, "[t]he flaneur's dispassionate gaze dissipates under pressure from the shoppers' passionate engagement in the world of things to be purchased and possessed," and thus the detachment, constitutive to the flaneur's identity, is disrupted.[362] In the case of the Ottoman flaneur, the moral

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[360] Ibid., 156.
[361] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 10.
[362] Ferguson, "The Flaneur on and off the Streets of Paris," in *The Flaneur* (New York: Routledge), 1994, 35.

detachment in the observation occurs in simultaneity with the emergence of the commodity fetish, and increased centrality of window-shopping among the intelligentsia. He is thus already attached at the time of his first appearance but his is a different kind of attachment: he is attached because he desires, to own these commodities, not only for the sake of tactile and visual pleasures they generate but also for their ability to construct a certain public persona, much needed for success in the literary field. In other words, the flaneur and the shopper appear simultaneously and in a causal harmony in the Ottoman context, for both of which Beyoğlu provides an ideal location. This initial attachment becomes manifest in Halit Ziya's initial reaction when he receives his first salary in İstanbul:

> Those who tend to deny the influence of money on human destiny, with a scornful attitude particular to those who have never been in dire need for anything, might smile in reaction to what I am about to say, but when I left the general manager's office, I was a changed man. Neither the wet and dark winter days and Cihangir's gloomy nights, nor the noises of the neighborhood children's wooden shoes remained in my head; it was as if I had just stepped out of a public bath having become clean of all this. And that evening, on my way back home, I took a very long time in front of the window-shops of Beyoğlu, particularly of the Pygmalyon, which was then located across the street from Galatasaray."[363]

It is important to emphasize here that his appreciation of new financial possibilities does not stem from a higher likelihood of comfortably caring for his family and himself but rather from a larger variety of luxury goods he will be able to afford and his increased distance from what he perceives to be a world of chaos and misery. Halit Ziya's desirous spectatorship is reflected in the protagonist of *Mai ve Siyah*, whose yearning for

[363] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 560.

commodities is often entangled with his desire to find a woman to fall in love with. In his long urban strolls, Ahmet Cemil's eyes are searching for that potential beloved: "There were thousands of faces that left a mark in his heart; ones that he saw boarding on the steamboat or those he came across in Şişli on the way back from Kağıthane, in Tepebaşı, Taksim, on the bridge, there were thousands of faces he loved for a minute each, those were for him, fairies, poems with wings flying around the imagined figure of that young woman, his happy dream."[364] It is thus no coincidence that he realizes he has been in love with Hüseyin Nazmi's sister, Lamia, when he comes across her in a department store. Lamia is often reduced to the commodities she owns, like the red umbrella she is carrying, and is talked about as another commodity to be owned: "[Ahmet Cemil] saw in himself an interminable and undeniable right to ownership toward Lamia. Lamia was his, yes, only his, and she could not be anyone else's."[365]

This connection between the shopper and the flaneur, present at the time of the emergence of the Ottoman flaneur, is one that appears in the European context as well, undermining the aura of detachment and independence that defines the flaneur, as "[t]he intense engagement of the shopper in the urban scene, the integration into the market and the consequent inability to maintain the requisite distance, preclude the neutrality and objectivity that the flaneur cultivates so assiduously."[366] The centrality of a new visuality brought about by the new shopping experience (such as in the display of commodities, advertisements, etc), transforms the experience of the flaneur along with the proliferation of photography as a new medium, threatening the flaneur's disguise in the open. He can

[364] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 202.
[365] Ibid., 221.
[366] Ferguson: 1994, 27.

no longer remain incognito as portrait photography rendered faces readily recognizable, turning the city from a space of spectacle to a space of performance. For Halit Ziya and his contemporaries in the Ottoman context, these two have already been going hand in hand.

**Authors as commodities: The city as a place of self-display**

A central scene in *Mai ve Siyah*, is, as mentioned earlier, one where Ahmet Cemil strolls up and down the Babıali Avenue, largely incognito, not because he desires to be so, but because he has not made a name yet in the literary field. He dreams: "the young boy who is know only recognized by a few former school friends and a handful library frequenters, will one day notice that two newly graduated literature aficionados point to him in a bookseller... Ah! His chest will then swell with an air of pride."[367] The desire to be seen and recognized in the public sphere is indicative of a new literary marketplace where authors are akin to commodities as the visual recognition of their faces and other physical and stylistic properties is central to their authorial success, making the cityscape not only a space where they move around but also a stage where they perform and display their public selves. This new structure of the literary market where the patronage relations were not as strong, albeit still existent, is strengthened by the new visual regime brought about by the above-mentioned developments such as the department store, window displays, portrait photography and the proliferation of promenading places and city parks. In fact, Boyar and Fleet observe that "[d]isplay was the essential element in one of the quintessential Ottoman pastimes, the *piyasa*, the promenade. In places such as

[367] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 40.

Direklerarası, Fenerbahçe, Kağıthane, and Çamlıca, people rode up and down in their phaetons, strutted and strolled along the pavements in the latest fashions, exchanged pleasantries, flirted discreetly using various coded signals [...]"[368] Ahmet Mithat's narrator in *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* makes a similar observation, referring to Felatun Bey: "Is it not a necessity of this type of personality to go on promenades not to see the nature, the countryside, the meadows, the flowers but instead the people, or rather make oneself visible to others? One could find at least twenty thousand people gathered in a promenade place for this very purpose."[369]

By the time the Tepebaşı Garden becomes functional and subsequently a central gathering place for intellectuals, the self-display gains a more significant function, one that not only showcases one's financial and otherwise ability to follow the latest sartorial trends but that is also suggestive of one's recognizability (thus perceived aptitude) as a litterateur. While the intended spectatorship is more limited in size (i.e. other members of the literary field; writers, poets, publishing house owners, booksellers, etc.), the stakes are higher. Year after a young Halit Ziya recognizes an esteemed Recaizade Ekrem in İzmir, and takes up his advice to move to İstanbul, a young Mehmet Rauf recognizes an older Halit Ziya in İstanbul, a few years following their correspondence, and lingers in a bookshop he frequents in the hopes of meeting him in person.[370] This generation was no longer interested, like their bureaucrat forerunners, in lounging in the cafes of Pera, or parading on the *Grande Rue*; they despised this type of interaction with the urban setting (purposeless vanity) both in the fiction of the 1890s, and in their post-imperial

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[368] Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 307.
[369] Ahmet Midhat Efendi: 2008, 132.
[370] Mehmet Rauf: 1997, 22.

memoirs.[371]

As the nature of the engagement with the cityscape changed, so did the venues frequented by the intellectually inclined young men. It was neither the fancy cafes such as Riche, Tortoni and Valori that Ekrem's protagonist Bihruz Bey preferred, nor the coffeehouses where the general public spent time and exchanged various types of information ranging from political gossip to popular stories.[372] The latter one has thus been instrumental in the emergence of both the novel genre in the Ottoman context as the center of the *meddah* tradition of performing stories and the printing press as the major location, which the latest news was spreading out of.[373] Ebuzziya Tevfik, one of the more progressive figures in the business of literary publishing, voices this general despise toward the public coffeehouses as a seat of ignorance in the form of a cacophony of pseudo-knowledge, comparing it to the much better condition of coffeehouses in London.[374] In a similar vein, Mehmet Akif wrote a poem praising coffeehouses in Berlin, comparing them with counterparts in the imperial capital; though both write from the context of the First World War, they sound some of the major *Servet-i Fünun* sensibilities

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[371] For example, Ahmet İhsan recalls with despise how unbearably crowded the *Grande Rue* used to be, with no space to move in all the way from Tünel Square to Şişli. Similarly, in *Mai ve Siyah*, the narrator describes the nightlife in Beyoğlu in a negative light on multiple instances: "The discorded violins started to play, perhaps for the thousandth time with a worn-out pace and a cacophony that would cause one's ears to rebel." This description of the music scene in one of the most famous night clubs on the *Grande Rue* matches the general chaos of the entertainment world, which is something that these writers sought to distance themselves from (Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 163).

[372] In his dissertation "The Struggle over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman Istanbul, 1780-1845," Cengiz Kırlı makes a distinction between the public coffeehouse that has remained popular from the 16th century till the end of the empire (and arguably beyond) and the 19th century *kıraathane*, which catered to "wealthier and well-educated segments of the population" (Kırlı: 2001, 9).

[373] Ibid., 172 and 181. One of the reasons behind the foundation of the first state-operated newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* was in fact to regulate the already existent networks of news distribution in these coffeehouses.

[374] Uygur Kocabaşoğlu, "İlk Kıraathanenin açılışı," *Tarih ve Toplum* vol. 1 (1984), 67.

on the subject: “This is a coffeehouse... Is that so? Truly surprising! / Space within space... A temple full of light / A thousand suns in its gracious skies! / What a sweet river of light flowing in front of us / It is the soul of dawn overflowing in beams.”[375] The luminosity of the western coffeehouse has been contrasted with the gloomy and overcrowded environments at home, and the new *kıraathane* appeared an alternative venue of socialization to address this gap. *Kıraathanes* constituted new spaces where education and intellectual exchange were deemed more important than entertainment and gossip; their clientele was smaller in comparison, placing them somewhere in between the Parisian salon and the British coffeehouse of the eighteenth century, often referred to a “penny university” in terms of accessibility.[376]

One of the popular *kıraathanes* of the 1890s is Kazım’s in Şehzadebaşı, where Halit Ziya and his disciple Mehmet Rauf had their first meeting in person after having corresponded for a while. They have chosen a secluded corner of the café to keep their conversation as private as possible, but their table was soon filled with other prominent members of the intelligentsia, such as Rıza Tevfik, Ahmet Rasim and Ahmet İhsan, who were eager to engage in conversation with the then already famous Halit Ziya. Mehmet Rauf recalls in admiration that their discussion on the immortality of the soul, involving philosophers and scientists like Büchner, Darwin and Flammarion has been instructive for the young litterateur, even though it interrupted their much-cherished one-to-one conversation. Halit Ziya then invites him to his office in the Regie des Tabacs where he

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[375] The original reads: “Bu kahve... Öyle mi? Lakin hakikaten hayret! / Feza içinde feza... bir harim-i nuranur, / Ki asuman-ı keriminde bin güneş manzur! / Ne selsebil-i ziya karşımıza cuşa gelen, / Ziya değil, seherin ruhudur taşıp dökülen” (Mehmet Akif: 1958, 105).

[376] O'Bryne: 2014, 59. In *Learning to Read in the Ottoman Empire*, Fortna observes that one of these was *Kıraathane-i Osmani*, “located on the central thoroughfare in Istanbul and run by the Armenian Serafim, [which] played a particularly important role in introducing generations of Turkish writers to modern literature” (Fortna: 2011, 108).

worked as an administrator. It was in fact a common occurrence to continue inter-authorial conversations that start in these cafes in semi-private and private spaces after groups of various sizes had been already established.[377] Nonetheless, these *kıraathanes* continued to be the central venues where major literary debates occurred along with newspaper columns.[378]

**Conclusion: a place to live, a place to leave**

The city was a central component in the establishment of a new literary field where patronage relations no longer determined the fate of authors as much as they did previously and participants mostly had to create their own trajectory in an unstable market. It provided new venues where authors could form their public personas through careful selection of a set of commodities, freely display these new personas to find recognition and increase their readership, socialize within the more limited literary market and continue the discussions that fill the non-fiction columns of the literary magazines they wrote in. Its representations also proved central to the prose fiction of the time, pointing to what is socially and culturally bankrupt and where the new generation is headed, both spatially and symbolically. Yet, the imperial capital also appeared as a space to leave behind in its constrictive political climate and often old-fashioned literary environment despite the significant attempts at renovation.

Despite its fundamental position in the formation and re-formation of their authorial identities, Istanbul had already been a source of disappointment for *Servet-i*

[377] Mehmet Rauf: 1997, 26.
[378] In the words of Mehmet Rauf, "objections were not confined to newspaper columns, they poured on to *kıraathanes* and other places of gathering" (Ibid., 49).

*Fünun* writers during the 1890s. Halit Ziya's first impressions of the city upon his permanent move are telling of this disillusionment: "what a painful shattering of dreams I had found myself fallen into: I had found everything rotten, shrunk, flattened, darkened." The city that had been crowded with beautiful carriages, women in their colorful veils and a joyful crowd during Abdulaziz's time were now filled with "stuffy stores with low ceilings, narrow streets that would fill one's lungs with gloom";[379] the Yıldız Palace itself was a pitiful place, lacking in imperial grandeur: "Oh my God! Is this the palace?" Halit Ziya thinks in his first visit, "This small room with a low ceiling, narrow stairs, its air reeking of food and other smells!.."[380] In the climate of corruption they found themselves in, this generation of writers who, for the first time, were able to carve out a space of existence outside the realm of the state and to transform the cityscape according to their priorities ironically desired to leave the imperial capital altogether.[381]

Like his protagonist Ahmet Cemil, who walked the Babıali Avenue in shame and disillusionment at the end of the novel, withdrew to his room in agony, and ultimately left İstanbul towards the remote Eastern lands of the empire, Halit Ziya and his friends saw themselves moving away from the city as soon as they possibly could.[382] As the Beyoğlu-

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[379] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 254.

[380] Ibid., 561.

[381] In *Rise of Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change*, Fatma Müge Göçek describes this generation as follows: "Western-style education and commerce enabled this new class to define for itself a social position within Ottoman society, independent of and outside the sultan's control. The knowledge and skills they acquired through education gave them both expertise and an inalienable resource with which they successfully challenged the sultan's control over the distribution of social and economic resources of the empire. The crystallization of the social space this group created for itself in the mid-nineteenth century was illustrated by the physical transformation of the capital, whereby more public spaces emerged to accommodate the emerging bourgeoisie. Public parks and tea houses in Tepebaşı, hotels, restaurants, and reading saloons in Beyoğlu [...]" Even though she dates this development to the mid-century, the majority of these developments started or gained pace during the last decade of 1800s (Göçek: 1996, 82).

[382] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (2), 376. Like Benjamin's private individual, Ahmet Cemil withdraws to his

Galata area transformed to accommodate the middle-class Muslim members of the intelligentsia and thus moved away from Amicis's mid-century observations where "[t]he Europeans talk and laugh more loudly here than elsewhere, cracking jokes in the middle of the street, while the Turks, as if they were foreigners, carry their heads less high than the streets of Stambul,"[383] a group of *Servet-i Fünun* writers began to make plans to relocate first to New Zealand, then to Sarıçam, Manisa where Hüseyin Kazım Kadri (1870-1934), a young politician sympathizing with the group, had a farm, to live a communal life closer to the nature.

Tevfik Fikret was the leading figure behind this project named *Yeşil Yurt* [Green (Mother)land] that involved a permanent move outside İstanbul into the countryside, where the depressing sociopolitical climate and Abdülhamit's increasingly harsh censorship regime could be avoided.[384] One of the people on board with this plan, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, wrote a compilation of stories entitled *Hayat-ı Muhayyel* [An Imagined Life] in 1899; Tevfik Fikret himself composed two poems, *Yeşil Yurt* and *Ömr-i Muhayyel* in the same year, and designed the large mansion to accommodate all of the

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room at a point where his dreams and the reality are in undeniable dissonance. "Here there were neither strangers to be ashamed from, nor friends to be bored with. Here only was his dream and nothing else. [...] Here he can be truly himself; here he can display all his wounds in front of silent yet loving friends [referring to objects in the room] without having to restrain himself of feeling ashamed" (Ibid., 379). Still the gap between dreams and reality had become so large that the illusion was too difficult even in the private sphere.

[383] Quoted in Çelik: 1986, 158.

[384] Halit Ziya recalls that the driving force for this dream was Tevfik Fikret's gradual withdrawal from the social life around him in Istanbul. "Upon graduation, he noticed, for the first time, the waves of evil beyond the four walls of the school, the life in this country that floated over these waves of evil and found it to be in such drastic contrast with his dreams that he began to feel as if he was being strangled in a shirt of torture that squeezed each part of his body. He narrowed his social circle, reduced the number of people close to him, escaped from his position as a government official and took refuge in *Ticaret Mektebi* [Commerce School] as a teacher of writing, moved away from the city to a *Hisar* mansion, which he decorated with little trinkets according to his taste. The only places where he could find himself were his home and the *Servet-i Fünun* headquarters" (Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 681).

participants, complete with a common living/dining area, adjoining bedrooms, and even details of the furniture."[385] The plan to escape instead of being involved with the radical political movements such as *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* [the Committee of Union and Progress] that eventually toppled down Abdülhamit's regime and started the Second Constitutional Period, was typical of *Servet-i Fünun* members. Hüseyin Kazım's description of the period was telling of the group's general perception: "as the political horizons of the motherland darkened, we were filled with increasing rage, a violent storm was taking over our brains [...] We were burning but did not know what to do. Finally, Tevfik Fikret came up with a solution: to leave the country altogether!"[386] Their political actions were mostly limited to things like half-heartedly subscribing for *İttihat-ı Terakki* in the case of Halit Ziya, or getting up and leaving Tepebaşı Bahçesi when they started to play *Hamidiye Marşı* in the case of Mehmet Rauf.[387]

The group was, however, not a self-consistent whole regarding the permanency of the potential move away from the imperial capital. Even though they never made it to New Zealand, nor to Manisa permanently, Hüseyin Cahit and Hüseyin Kazım Kadri did in fact undertake active roles following the declaration of the Second Constitutional Period in 1908; the two started *Tanin* together, a newspaper that supported the Committee, whereas others like Halit Ziya and Tevfik Fikret did not get as involved in

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[385] Hüseyin Kazım Kadri, *Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyete Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2000), 136. For more information on this unrealized project, see, for example, Rahim Tarım, "Servet-i Fünun Topluluğunun Yeşil Yurt Özlemi," *Kitaplık* v. 93, (April 2006), 77-86; Metin Kayahan Özgül, "Bir Ütopya Taslağı: Hayat-ı Muhayyel," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları*, (April 1988), 133-160; Hatem Türk, "Bir Servet-i Fünun Masalı: Yeni Zelanda Fikri ve Anadolu'ya Avdet," *Turkish Studies*, v. 9/3 (Winter 2014), 1499-1510.

[386] Kadri: 2000, 67. This decision, which Hüseyin Kazım Kadri so naturally embraces, is met with considerable surprise by a member of a later generation Yahya Kemal who comments, "I had always thought that Hüseyin Cahit's famous story, or Fikret's elegy upon the failure of the plan were all imagined. I did not know they were genuinely invested in that dream" (Beyatlı: 1966, 298).

[387] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 43; Mehmet Rauf: 1997, 66.

politics. Even though Fikret was one of the founders of *Tanin* and composed poems for the Committee (such as *Millet Şarkısı* [Song of a Nation]), he had moved away from the city center to Rumelihisarı in a mansion that he called Aşiyan, and withdrawn from all but his teaching position at Robert College by 1910, two years after the Young Turk Revolution. Halit Ziya, on the other hand, also moved away to Ayastefanos in 1905 and did not publish any major work until after the foundation of the republic. Later in his memoirs, he states that the constitutional period had a negative impact on the quality of literature being published by creating an uninspected overflow: "what happened to literature in the midst of this enthusiasm and abundance of writing? To answer shortly, one can say there was no literature, only politics. The literary stars that managed to shine through even the oppressive clouds of [Abdülhamit's] despotic rule had all died out."[388] After the closing of the *Servet-i Fünun* magazine and the estrangement of its members from the literary field, either in resentment or enthusiasm for journalistic work centered around the political events of the time, the imperial capital began to transform anew to accommodate the changed political climate where attention shifted from the commercial areas toward the governmental headquarters. During the ensuing national struggle of the early 1920s, the epicenter was to move further away to outside the borders of the imperial capital.

In fact, in his article on the tendencies of pre-republican modern literature, "Üç Tepe," Yahya Kemal draws attention to this movement and mentions a third hill in addition to Çamlıca and Tepebaşı: Metris Tepe, located in today's Bilecik, came to symbolize the Turkish national struggle and the eventual formation of the nation state.[389]

[388] Uşaklıgil: 2008 (1), 897.
[389] Yahya Kemal, "Üç Tepe," 295.

The dynamics that had emerged during the 1890s would partially give way to the concerns of survival and national building during the early decades of the nineteenth century, yet the legacy of the *Servet-i Fünun* writers would be a major driving force during the republican period, even into the early twenty-first century.

## Conclusion:

## The Birth of the Modern Author in Turkey

In the fiftieth anniversary of his career as a writer, Halit Ziya looks back at his professional life with the following words:

> What have I done in this life and in my writing life, which took a good part of it? One usually senses what one wants to do in the field of art despite all the darkness, yet one never really knows what one has done. I, too, could not quite judge what I have done; I even thought, for most of what I wrote, "Ah, I wish I had a button under my hands, and could just destroy all these by pressing it, to only leave behind a few." Yet, I do have a sense of security that gives me peace and comfort. […] Whatever I have done, I have done it with the intention of doing it well; if I have not been successful, the blame cannot be put on my intentions.[390]

Halit Ziya's regrets at the end of his professional life provide an illustration to a literary career that unfolded under the pressures of the transformations occurring in the literary market. Like his protagonist Ahmet Cemil, Halit Ziya's life is marked with a feeling of inadequacy mixed with a sort of buried self-confidence of "having done the right thing." And like his protagonist, Halit Ziya became one of the most influential figures of the turn-of-the-century literary world, precisely because he could represent so well the insecurities and existential dilemmas of his age.

In the post-humously published "Gerilere Doğru," he reminisces on the beginnings of his career through a surreal encounter with his younger self. The contrast

[390] Quoted in Akalın: 1962, 93.

between the enthusiasm of the young Halit Ziya and the fatigued cynicism of the old marks a span of sixty years spent navigating the dynamics between the existential urges of self-expression and the constrictions of the literary market: "Novels, stories, while writing them I want to lavishly pour parts of my soul into it. Today I am like boiling water that cannot be held in a container," explains the young Halit Ziya, to which the comment an older Halit Ziya makes elsewhere in the story constitutes a response beyond the years passed, as he remarks how he is truly disgusted of writing and has completely lost his previous excitement about the literary profession.[391]

During the years that elapsed following the publication of *Mai ve Siyah* (and the discussions that ensued henceforth), and the end of Halit Ziya's life have not been productive for his literary career, as well as for those of his co-workers. Following the serialization of *Aşk-ı Memnu* (Engl. Forbidden Love) in 1900, *Servet-i Fünun* came under closer scrutiny from the palace upon Tevfik Fikret's alleged involvement in political controversy; the magazine was closed for an undetermined time soon after in 1901, upon Hüseyin Cahit's publication of a translated article entitled "Edebiyat ve Hukuk" (Literature and Justice), found threatening by the Abdülhamit II's tightening censorship regime.[392] Halit Ziya served as the head of *Mabeyin-i Hümayun* in Mehmet V's palace, following the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and Abdülhamit II's dethronement, and a department chair at Darülfünun where he taught classes on western literatures.[393] He did not publish anything significant until after the foundation of the new republic in 1923 (except *Nesl-i Ahir*, serialized in 1909), when he published *Kırık Hayatlar*, which was to be his final novel and to influence generations to come with its tragic plotline. While

[391] Halit Ziya: 2005 (2), 29.
[392] İsmail Parlatır, *Tevfik Fikret* (Ankara: Akçağ, 2004), 19.
[393] For more, see Halit Ziya, *Saray ve Ötesi* (İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları, 2003).

some *Servet-i Fünun* members, like Hüseyin Cahit, became actively involved in politics during the post-Hamidian period, others, like Tevfik Fikret, eventually withdrew from most of their administrative posts *and* artistic endeavors, taking refuge in the then remote districts of the imperial capital. Recaizade Ekrem passed away in early 1914, and his protégé Fikret shortly thereafter in 1915. Most other members like Halit Ziya, Hüseyin Cahit, Cenap Şahabettin, Mehmet Rauf, and Ahmet İhsan lived well into the 1930s and 40s.

Having come together as a result of a fight between two different houses over publication rights, the lifespan of *Servet-i Fünun* as a literary magazine, albeit short, exemplifies some of the distinguishing features of this period marked by a radical transformation of what it meant to produce literature. The unauthorized publication of Recaizade's *Şemsa* in Baba Tahir's *Malumat* magazine in 1895 caused the author to contact one of his former students, Ahmet İhsan, who had just founded his own publishing house and begun to publish *Servet-i Fünun*. Recaizade then recruited another former student, Tevfik Fikret, to become editor-in-chief to the newly minted literary magazine.[394] This event, illustrative of the new autonomy the publishing field acquired during the 1890s, also marks the beginning of a series of heated yet productive literary debates that would open up new (and western-origined) horizons for both poetry and prose fiction. Along with the material realities of literary production, so did change the very definition of authorship as the authorial persona began to come to the foreground in the relative scarcity of strong patrons.

With a focus on authorship, this project aimed to engage the slippery relationship between text and context, and thus the role of literature and the litterateur in times of

[394] Tokgöz: 1993, 95.

social change. As such, albeit with the smaller focus on the life and work of Halit Ziya and other *Servet-i Fünun* writers, the consequences of the observations made here are far-reaching, both for the text that have been henceforth produced and for the Turkish society at large. Thinking about both the function and the internal workings of literature, Bourdieu's provocative observations in *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* have been useful. Bringing the methodological tools of his home discipline of sociology into the study of the literary (and artistic) field, Bourdieu challenges the ineffability of art and of the study of its relationship with the society (and the world) it is a product of. He then goes on to argue that "[t]o seek the logic of the literary field or the artistic field – paradoxical worlds capable of inspiring or of imposing the most disinterested 'interests' – the principle of the work of art's existence in what makes it historic, but also transhistoric, is to treat this work as an intentional sign haunted and regulated by something else, of which it is also a symptom."[395] Thus are thrown the characters in a particular novel into a historically specific universe, symptomatic of the particular and new sensibilities of its own time that cannot be as easily discerned in other areas even though they prove influential in re-shaping the contemporary context as well as the future. Bourdieu describes this universe as "a true *milieu* in the Newtonian sense, where social forces, attractions or repulsions, are exercised, and find their phenomenal manifestation in the form of psychological motivations such as love or ambition."[396]

In creating this relationship between text and context, Bourdieu avoids easy equations between what is going on in the real world and in the fictional world while maintaining the relationship between the two. This is a stance that underlines the

[395] Bourdieu: 1996, xx.
[396] Ibid., 10.

structure without denying individual agency. As a matter of fact, Ahmet Cemil's tragic story has been the very struggle to navigate the balance between the (old and new) structural forces and his personal desires, which are, to a certain extent, the result of those. When one looks at the relationship between the novelist and his protagonist under the light of this methodological approach, an interesting observation ensues: unlike many a fictional work where the writer might create an entirely different universe than his/her own (as, for example, in the case of science fiction), the fictional universe in the Ottoman novel was mostly similar to the real world litterateurs found themselves in. This is not to say the exact same things were happening in fiction but it does mean, in the case of *Mai ve Siyah*, that a shared environment and set of sensibilities connected the real-life litterateurs to their fictional counterparts. Speaking from a Turkish context, Nurdan Gürbilek makes a similar observation that the connection between literature and society is not so much about in the ability of literary texts to provide us with cultural and social documents but more in that they display some of the existential anxieties/concerns that have been excluded from the realm of politics, religion and ethics.[397]

This is particularly significant in the case of *Mai ve Siyah* as a coming of age story, in other words, a story of individual becoming part of larger social structures and learning how to navigate them. Paralleling what Bourdieu observes in Flaubert's *Education Sentimentale* in the case of the protagonist Frédéric, Ahmet Cemil's entry into the social space of the literary field in Istanbul meant that he needed to "accept into one or another of social games which are socially recognized, and engaging in the inaugural investment, both economic and psychological, which is implied in the participation in the

[397] Gürbilek: 2004, 16.

serious games of which the social world is composed."[398] Ahmet Cemil's engagement with his upcoming poetic performance is an example of these "social games," so are the unwritten requirements on how a litterateur should carry himself in the public sphere, the clothes he wears, accessories he sports and places he frequents, as exemplified in the above-mentioned critique Raci wrote on Ahmet Cemil, attacking his appearance and demeanor just as much as (if not more than) his poetry. The protagonist's disillusionment with the environment around him stemmed from the complex intertwining of promises with structural (social, economic, etc) limitations in such a way to obligate the members of the field to make their maneuvers in consideration of the larger structure (such as the loosening of the political center, the consequent increase in inter-authorial competition and hostility) and with an awareness of their personal desires.

Ahmet Cemil's "failure" was one of the most significant and impactful literary events of the late nineteenth century Ottoman imperial capital precisely because it pointed to the new structure of the literary field and its impact on authors, thus marking the emergence of the modern Ottoman author in light of the social and political changes such as the reformations in the realms of education and publishing, as well as the emergence of journalism as a professional field. *Mai ve Siyah* struck a chord at the time of its publication, because it managed to say more about its context than any other non-fictional piece ever could and in more subtle yet effective ways. This is where methodological approaches by scholars like Bourdieu and Moretti prove useful to "decode the text." Bourdieu explains,

> [t]he putting-into-form operated by the writer functions like a generalized euphemism, and the reality de-realized and neutralized by literature that he

[398] Bourdieu: 1996, 12.

> offers allows him to satisfy a desire for knowledge ready to be satisfied by the sublimation offered him by literary alchemy. In order to unveil completely the structure that a literary text could only unveil by veiling, the analysis should reduce the story of an adventure to the protocol of an experimental montage. It is appreciated that this has something profoundly disenchanting about it.[399]

In fact, the actions and reactions of *Mai ve Siyah*'s protagonist Ahmet Cemil throughout the novel provide invaluable clues to grasp how the relationships of endorsement, appreciation and criticism have changed in the field of literary production. It is in its ability to channel the emotions created by these changes that the novel was the expression of a problem crucial to the existence of Halit Ziya as well as many of his contemporaries. It is thus no wonder that Ahmet Cemil's story was "clawing [his] mind" to be born, and upon its birth, propelled one of his friends to want to give him a kiss of compassion.

In this dissertation, I argued that *Mai ve Siyah* is a product of its political, economic and social context, one that, in turn, heavily influenced the context it came out of, creating a prototype for the modern Ottoman litterateur. During the rule of Abdülhamit II, the reformations in the emerging realms of standardized education and of publishing reached a point of culmination in that the first generation of intellectuals who were born into the efforts of political modernization came of age and began to be active in journalism, and literary publishing, urging the palace to tighten its control on these newly emerged professional fields. Despite the increase in literary publications (due partly to the proliferation of printing technologies, partly to the ambiguity inherent in the regulations and the increasing demand), Abdülhamit II came to be perceived to be a censor and oppressor rather than a patron and connoisseur of arts by a considerable

[399] Ibid., 32.

portion of the literary men. The promise of success was thus accompanied with the necessity to successfully handle the existence of the palace's updated system of rewards and punishments along with the increased competition among fellow writers in a field that no longer caters, as it used to, to the whims of literary patrons. Economic difficulties on the ground constituted another challenge for writers during this time when a lot was rendered hypothetically possible, creating an environment of instability where aspiring poets and writers *could* oscillate between dreams of finding success through the expression of their deepest personal sensations and realities of poverty, critique, professional disappointment and persecution. The new sense of foreboding that haunts the narrative in *Mai ve Siyah* was becoming a prominent part of being an author during the 1890s in the literary field where existence was allowed without reliance on a powerful patron figure, and where groups of solidarity (formed via shared aesthetic/political opinions) were formed in its stead.

Born in the 1860s, Halit Ziya was among the generation of litterateurs who had spent most of their lives under Abdülhamit's rule and felt this structural change. Unlike their predecessors who had stronger ties with the sultan and the state, and who were thus mostly operating within the confines of a relatively mono-centric predictability of an early modern system in their efforts to tackle social transformations, Halit Ziya sought to show that, for his peers, the reality was admittedly more complex than the earlier generations had believed. The fate of *Mai ve Siyah*'s protagonist was thus determined, not so much by his two-dimensional and unchanging intrinsic qualities but rather by his reactions to the multi-centric and perpetually transforming networks of power and affiliation, formed through negotiation and bargaining in the oft painful yet promising

absence of a semi-divine authority figure. Ahmet Cemil, though he was not aware of it at the beginning, would have to engage a series of different variables in his personal and professional life in order to carve out a space of his own in the field of journalism and literary publishing.

Despite his initial enthusiasm, his eventual level of frustration and lack of stamina in the face of external challenges would prove the more-experienced yet pessimistic narrator right, reestablishing the antagonistic co-existence of the agency to realize one's personal desires of self-expression and success on the one hand, and the social/economic structures of the capitalist literary marketplace on the other. Even though Ahmet Cemil is portrayed to have failed at the end, his "failure" was a "success" in that it helped point to the emergence of the modern Ottoman literary field; he was thus an extremely influential figure precisely because he was the first fictional embodiment of the modern Ottoman author, with his reaction to the remains of the traditional in the literary field, his personal style and the places he frequented. He was the first tangible product, in the world of fiction, of this very marketplace which, in the words of Orhan Koçak, is a world marked by "a chasm between the infinitude of abstract potentials and the inadequacy of concrete possibilities, between a formal kind of equality and comparability, and an essential kind of inequality and difference, in short, a charm between intention and consequence."[400]

This chasm, perhaps the real protagonist of *Mai ve Siyah*, constitutes a common theme for *Servet-i Fünun* writers in general, with titles such as *Hayat-ı Muhayyel* (The Imagined Life)*, Hayal İçinde* (Inside a Dream)*, Hayat-ı Hakikiye Sahneleri* (Scenes from the Life of Realities)*, Kırık Hayatlar* (Broken Lives)*, Rübab-ı Şikeste* (The Broken Lute) and so on. In his prose poem *Siyah Inciler* (Black Pearls) published in 1898, Mehmet

[400] Koçak: 1996, 110.

Rauf writes, "Ah, I want such a space that would have absolutely nothing in it; none of those things that form life and nature, such a place where my eternal existence would be annihilated and disappear, where not a thing would remain, nothing about this life, this humanity, this world and this existence; nothing."[401] Rauf's words echo Ahmet Cemil's ultimate disillusionment with the world around him, also symbolized by the color black. The disillusioned or broken litterateurs were real persons in *Servet-i Fünun* as much as fictional characters; in his memoirs, Hüseyin Cahit describes his friend and co-worker Hüseyin Siret in the following words: "Siret was one of those who often lived in a dream. It was as if he came to this world to have beautiful dreams and to have them shattered afterwards."[402] Despite his observation on someone else, Hüseyin Cahit himself was far from exempt from this condition. In *Hakikatler Karşısında* (Engl. In the Face of Realities), he writes,

> A feeling akin to a rebellion arises in my heart, like a desire of eternality against the unchanging rules of the universe – no, it is rather something unknown, indescribable and impossible to understand; it does so whenever I think of how many ailing souls like ours witnessed these same scenes full of pain and misery and uselessly followed an honest dream while the ropes connecting them to life were cut by merciless scissors of the agents of time and they were thrown into the same deep pit, dark and without tomorrow, in the face of this limitless universe that always stays indifferent and emotionless to our pain and our temporary pleasures we mistake for happiness.[403]

This aura of hopeless pessimism predominated the work of *Servet-i Fünun* writers during its short lifespan from 1893 to 1901 both in prose and in poetry; and their work (and

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[401] Mehmet Rauf, *Siyah Inciler* (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 2002), 53.
[402] Yalçın: 1975, 140.
[403] Quoted by Mehmet Rauf, *Servet-i Fünun*, n. 431, June 15, 1899.

authorial personas), in turn, left a mark on the world of literature in the imperial capital. In fact, as the sensations evoked by a fast-paced modernization were pushed further from the political realm toward the aesthetic as a result of Abdülhamit's increased censorship, the impact of the journal's literary production was remarkable, impelling most literary scholars to call the last decades of the nineteenth century, the *Servet-i Fünun* (or Edebiyat-ı Cedide) period. One of these scholars, Mehmet Kaplan, points out that Halit Ziya in particular, as 'the novelist' of the group, held a pioneering role in the formation of their style and approach to the process of modernization: "Already during his Izmir days, Halit Ziya began to craft what was to become *Servet-i Fünun*," Kaplan writers, "he did so particularly by introducing the genre of prose poetry […] and realism, which constituted one of the distinguishing features of [*Servet-i Fünun*] literature. […] He is also the one to use the theme of 'dreams versus reality' most frequently and in the most eloquent manner."[404]

Theirs was not only a period of time when the modern author, caught between his new desires and the challenges created by the new social structures, was born, but also one that witnessed a retroactive classification, categorization and reconceptualization of texts and authors, in other words, canonization of literature, both pertaining to local and international literatures, with the writing of literary histories, anthologies in translation and the printing of divans previously available only as manuscript copies. Put more simply, if authors did not exist, they were inventing them as autonomous figures of literary fame. A study of the nature of the shifts from the *tezkire* tradition to the post-printing canonization/anthologizing of Ottoman classical poetry would constitute a crucial part of a larger project on modern authorship, in line with what Bennett argues in

[404] Mehmet Kaplan, *Tevfik Fikret: Devir, Şahsiyet, Eser* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2005), 39.

the context of western literatures: "the authorship of Homer," he remarks, "is precisely not the kind of authorship with which we are familiar, and yet an understanding of the construction of 'Homer' in literary history might help us to understand something about our construction of more recent author-figures."[405]

Similarly, this research can be further expanded to look in greater detail at the impact of Ahmet Cemil on the early republican litterateurs. This impact began to be felt immediately; the poetry movement entitled *Fecr-i Ati* (the Dawn of Tomorrow), one that was founded in the very physical space of the *Servet-i Fünun* headquarters in Babıali. Reşat Fevzi observes in a much later issue of the magazine (reestablished during the early republican period with its new name *Uyanış*) in 1930 that the fictional world of Halit Ziya's *Mai ve Siyah* became a reality for the poets of Fecr-i Ati, who dressed and behaved like Ahmet Cemil, walking up and down the Babıali Avenue with a few books in French tucked under their arms, frequenting various libraries sporting their new long hairstyles. "It was as if," Fevzi comments, "there appeared a physical form for poethood."[406]

In another article published a few years later in 1933, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar recounts a fictional chance encounter with the fictional poet, who had just come back from Yemen where he left for at the end of the novel. Tanpınar tells the reader that this man, whom he later realized to be Ahmet Cemil, instantly caught his attention thanks to his long hair, his dreamy eyes and his over-conscientious yet eccentric clothing style.

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[405] Bennett: 2005, 35.

[406] Reşat Fevzi, (1930-c) "Fecr-i Âtî Nasıl Bir Teşekküldü", Uyanış-Servet-i Fünûn, c.68-4, S. 1778, 11 Eylül (in Cafer Şen, Fecri Ati Encümeni Edebiyatı, *Turkish Studies, International Periodical For the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Volume 4 /1-II Winter 2009).

With various references to the novel, to the other authors of *Servet-i Fünun* and to Halit Ziya's other work, an semi-formal conversation unfolds between the two litterateurs who are from different generations and different levels of reality, where Ahmet Cemil explains to his younger fellow that his departure for Arabia should not have seemed all that surprising "in a period when my older uncles seriously consider immigrating to New Zealand. I was exhausted, I found my surroundings dismal."[407] Having thus established the connection between Cemil's leaving and Fikret's plans to leave, the two embark on a literary discussion where the fictional poet asks questions and gives his opinions on contemporary poets, like Yahya Kemal, Ahmet Haşim and Ahmet Kutsi. As such, this article shows Ahmet Cemil to still be a part of the literary scene during the 1930s, around a time where the living *Servet-i Fünun* members began to write their memoirs and where Halit Ziya was transliterating his own work into modern Turkish. Decades later, another prominent to recognize the impact of Halit Ziya's oeuvre on his own was Oğuz Atay who, in an interview broadcast on the national television in 1975, remarked that he finds his own authorial sensibilities to be very akin to those of Halit Ziya, an author who narrated the stories of "broken lives," of those who dream big only to have their dreams crushed by their own timidity and inertia. Yet, Atay adds, "these characters always seem to be aware and conscious of the drama of their own lives. No one can quite call them victims of fate. That is what I find close to my own in these characters."[408] His observation proves essential both to see the networks of influence between the *Servet-i Fünun* writers and their republican successors and to grasp Ottoman-Turkish literary modernity.

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[407] Tanpınar: 1933, 6.
[408] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EmZaTeWkUE.

Other potential avenues for further research that emerged during the writing of this project have to do with the novel nomenclature used in reference to the litterateur near the turn of the twentieth century with the establishment of journalism as an avenue of private enterprise, the consequent amalgamation of creative, administrative and entrepreneurial identities in the publishing world, and finally, the genre shift towards the narrative as a result of the sharp increases in literacy and variegation of literary tastes. A thorough analysis of terminology from *edib* to *yazıcı*, to *hikayenüvis* and so on, would enable a unique grasp of the transformation in the fields of literature, journalism and publishing during this time and its impact on cultural producers. Similarly, this research on modern authorship can be expanded through a focus on the copyright regulations of the time, which provide hints at the historically specific conceptions of text ownership, to be added to an expanding literature on the history of publishing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey.[409]

My dissertation constitutes a point of origin for studies on the transformations of the literary market and authorship in the wake of modernization efforts in the Ottoman Empire. With a focus on the regulations of education and the emerging publishing sector in the imperial capital unwittingly enabling individual expression, the development of image printing technologies and the consequent proliferation of authorial portraits signaling the increasing emphasis on the appearance of the figure of the author, this project seeks to be the beginning of further research on the ways in which the larger

[409] In *Les Livres et L'Imprimerie a Istanbul* (Engl. Books and Publishing in Istanbul), Johann Strauss has called for more statistical studies on publishing houses and published books during the early phases of printing and publishing in the Ottoman Empire, and singles out the invaluable efforts of Seyfettin Özege, with hope that they would provide inspiration for other scholars (Strauss: 1994, 6). Fortunately, since the publication of this edited volume in 1994, more studies came forth on the subject, one example being Ayaydın Cebe's dissertation, written in 2009.

economic dynamics during the latter half of the nineteenth century interacted with the literary market and the world of cultural production. These developments were surely not limited to the Ottoman Empire, as it is during the same decades of the nineteenth century that the literary field was declaring in autonomy in European countries.

Bourdieu observes in the context of the late nineteenth century literary field in France that "[t]he relationship between cultural producers and the dominant class no longer retains what might have characterized it in previous centuries, whether that means direct dependence on a financial backer, or even allegiance to a patron or an official protector of the arts." As the autonomy of the field increases, Bourdieu remarks a structural subordination in their stead, one which is instituted through, "on the one hand, the market, whose sanctions and constraints are exercised on literary enterprises […] by means of sales figures [or] through new positions offered in journalism [and] publishing […], and on the other hand, durable links, based on affinities of lifestyle and value systems, […] which unite at least a portion of the writers to certain sections of high society, and help to determine the direction of generosities of state patronage."[410] After reading this dissertation, I hope it is clear that this observation resonates with the late nineteenth century literary field in the Ottoman imperial capital. An emphasis on such parallelism between various national literatures in terms of the emergence of a literary market as a relatively autonomous entity enriches our understanding of modernization as a process occurring simultaneously in different geographies rather than something that emerged in the west and traveled outwards from this center to the peripheries of the modern world system, while recognizing the particularities of each local story on equal terms.

[410] Bourdieu: 1996, 49.

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