

BETWEEN THEATRICAL POLITICS AND POLITICAL THEATER:
LATE OTTOMAN THEATRICAL SPHERES

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Thesis Abstract

Melis Süloş, “Between Theatrical Politics and Political Theater: Late Ottoman Theatrical Spheres”

This thesis intends to perceive theater as one of the best stages representing the political tensions, and the intellectual movements of its epoch. In rethinking theater and politics in the late Ottoman Empire, I focused on two fields: Theatricality of the political sphere and the political theater. In the light of the memoirs, newspapers, travel accounts and the play scripts, this thesis scrutinizes the discovery and the manipulation of the popular theater as a political institution. By focusing on the politicization of the theater, which developed within the palatial circles, and the politicization of the repertoire after the Revolution of 1908 in the popular realm, this study examines the instrumentalization of the theater for different political agendas.

The first part of the thesis examines the recent historiographical currents that brought history, anthropology and literature closer. The subsequent chapter is a brief discussion of the Ottoman theater historiography. The third part situates theater within the Ottoman ‘Westernization’ experience. The following chapter scrutinizes the politicization of the theater by the Young Ottomans through the *Vatan* and Gedikpaşa Incidents. The fifth part discusses the transformation of the theater performances into ‘public catharses’ with the proclamation of the Second Constitution. And the last chapter scrutinizes the politicization of the repertoire with the newly emerged genre of *milli facia*, putting the old regime on trial.

Tez Özeti

Melis Süloş, “Tiyatro Siyaseti ve Siyasi Tiyatro Arasında: Geç Dönem Osmanlı Tiyatro Sahaları”

Bu tez, tiyatroya, döneminin entellektüel hareketlerini ve politik gerilimlerini sahneleyen bir alan olarak bakmayı amaçlamaktadır. Görselliğe dayanan geç dönem Osmanlı siyasetine ve tiyatrosuna bakılarak, Osmanlı Devleti politik gündemi ve Osmanlı tiyatrosu arasındaki ilişki üzerinde düşünülmesi hedeflenmektedir. Bu tez, anılar, seyahatnameler, gazeteler, dergiler ve de oyun metinleri ışığında tiyatronun politik bir kurum olarak algılanabileceğini ve kullanılabileceğini göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, saray çevrelerinde politikleşen tiyatroya ve halk arasında politikleşen repertuara bakarak tiyatronun farklı politik amaçlar doğrultusunda araçlaştırılmasını konu edinmektedir.

İlk bölüm tarih yazıcılığında antropoloji, tarih ve edebiyat disiplinlerini yaklaştıran yeni akımlara değinmektedir. Bu bölümü takip eden bölümde, Osmanlı tiyatro tarihçiliği tartışılmaktadır. Üçüncü bölüm, ‘tiyatro’ kavramını, Osmanlı batılılaşma deneyimi içerisinde değerlendirmektedir. Dördüncü bölüm, tiyatronun *Vatan* ve Gedikpaşa Olayları aracılığıyla Genç Osmanlılar tarafından politikleştirilmesini incelemektedir. Beşinci bölüm, İkinci Meşrutiyet’in ilanıyla birlikte tiyatronun toplumsal bir dışavurum ve arınma aracı olarak ortaya çıkması sürecini konu edinmektedir. Son bölüm ise, İkinci Meşrutiyet’in ilanından sonra oluşan, eski rejimi yargılayan *milli facia* türüne bakarak repertuarın politikleşmesini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In our mundane exposure to watch the news broadcast on TV, we often observe how everyday-life is presented in theatrical forms such as public speeches, ceremonies or demonstrations, leading us to explore how theatrical politics and political theater may be intertwined. In the footsteps of scholars like Victor Turner, Erwin Goffman and Richard Bauman, this thesis tries to interpret the entangled relationship of these two different kinds of performances: The performance in everyday life and the staged performances in the historical context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the Ottoman world. Taking the works of Refik Ahmet Sevengil and Metin And as a starting point of the historiography of ‘Ottoman theater,’ this thesis aims to show how the development of the Ottoman theater can illustrate a different aspect of the Ottoman modernization experience. *New Historicism*, coined by Stephan Greenblatt, has offered here a valuable framework in examining theater as one of the best stages representing the political tensions and the intellectual movements of the era. Therefore, rethinking theater and politics in the late Ottoman Empire, this thesis focuses on two fields: the theatricality of the political sphere and the political theater.

Within all aspects of modernization and their performances in the late Ottoman world, what makes theater more attractive as a ‘subject of history’ is its political function. While some aspects of the social and cultural life were only transformed, theatre, adopted as a Western institution, was marginalized and emerged as a newly discovered political space.

As historian Palmira Brummett puts it: “More than any other art form, theater was a symbol of social change for Ottoman satirists. In the Ottoman cartoon space,

the image of theatre, along with that of café, was used to embody the apparent sophistication of culture and entertainment that modern European societies enjoyed.”¹ Theater, therefore, represented the complex relationship between different segments of the society such as the non-Muslim Ottoman bourgeoisie, Ottoman intellectuals, the Young Turks and the Sultan’s entourage more than it staged the famous dramas of the age.

This thesis intends, therefore, to review theater as a political space in the late Ottoman politics throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. I choose to focus on ‘the long nineteenth century’ since I strongly believe that the development of a popular theater and the politicization of the repertoire were the outcomes of a gradual transformation in the Ottoman society. The ‘long nineteenth century’ has been divided into distinct categories such as ‘*Tanzimat* (1839-1876)’ (the period of reform), ‘*İstibdad* (1876-1908)’ (the reign of tyranny), and ‘*Meşrutiyet* (1908-1923)’ (the constitutionalist period) eras both by the Ottoman historians and the Turkish theater historians. This classification tends to oversimplify the complexities of social and cultural transformations, and underestimates the continuity between the popular forms of entertainment.

In the Ottoman society, Western-style theater acquired a social and political significance from its introduction through the ambassadorial soirees. However, I argue that theater became a ‘political institution’ reflecting a constructed image of Ottoman ‘Westernization’ via its incorporation in the Ottoman diplomacy. I trace the ‘discovery of theater as a political institution’ to Sultan Abdülaziz’s trip to Europe (1867) and to the return-visits of the European sovereigns in 1869. The incorporation of Western theater and opera performances in these imperial reception ceremonies

¹ Palmira Brummett, *The Image and The Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press 1908-1911* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 205.

held in the Naum Theater, attached new meanings to theatre which became a new facet for the Ottoman modernization by the late 1860s.

Theater, which was introduced within the discourse of modernization and Westernization, attracted the interest of the growing Ottoman intelligentsia by the 1870s, and became one of the most effective means to get in touch with the society for the Ottoman intellectuals. Therefore, theater became one of the most important aspects of the mass politics through the 1870s and 1880s, particularly through the Gedikpaşa Theater directed by Agop Vartovyan also known as Güllü Agop (1840-1902). Gedikpaşa Theater developed into one of the prominent cultural centers where the Ottoman intellectuals met and used it to disseminate their ideas to the masses by the end of the nineteenth century. The Gedikpaşa Theater and its intellectual team, holding the monopoly of the Turkish theater in İstanbul, had a complex relationship with the Imperial Palace which monitored it. The Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II (1842-1918) encouraged and controlled the production and the consumption of theater plays in the Gedikpaşa Theater. On the other hand, he employed the playwrights (most of whom were political figures) in the Imperial Palace. This complex patronage certainly aimed to control theatre's power to create and to manipulate the public opinion in an age where spread of nationalism and ethnic upheavals were uncontrollable. However, the strict control of the Palace over the popular theater created its opposition with two 'incidents' that attributed a symbolic importance to theater as a public space. The first was the '*Vatan Incident*' (1873) upon which the 'intellectual team' of the Gedikpaşa Theater was exiled; and the second was the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater (1884) upon the performance of the play *Çerkes Özdenleri* (Circassians) in order to 'prevent a possible Circassian uprising'. These events were indeed the outcomes of gradual social transformations

and the rising nationalism in the Balkans which accelerated after the Crimean War (1853-1856) and reached an unmanageable point after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. I believe that the emergence of an Ottoman theater which encouraged mass politics cannot be separated from these gradual social and political transformations, and therefore, should be historicized.

While the ideological currents of the age added a political tension to the theatrical performances, I believe that theater gained a particular significance in mass politics only after the active participation of the audience (initiated with the *Vatan* Incident of 1873). Theater's role in forming and manipulating the public opinion developed together with the political events that brought the declaration of the Second Constitution known as the Ottoman Revolution of 1908. In the days following the revolution, the banned plays of the 'old regime' were staged as mass spectacles under the patronage of the Committee of Union and Progress. These performances having their roots in the late nineteenth century were used to form the public opinion and to legitimize 'the reign' of the Committee of Union and Progress. The theater frenzy that followed the declaration of the Second Constitution created a new market for a new genre: '*milli facia*' (national tragedy) after the dethronement of the Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1909.

The politicization of the repertoire appeared only after 1908, and staged politically loaded plays mostly after the dethronement of the Sultan Abdülhamid II. The transition from the politicization of the theater to the politicization of the repertoire was strongly connected with the radicalization of the Committee of Union and Progress. On the other hand, these plays used the stage to judge the ancien regime and to recreate the Young Turk Revolution in the collective memory. The anti-Hamidian repertoire, just like the cartoon space, created harsh critics that also

influenced the historiography of the era. The scripts judging Abdülhamid II and his reign contributed to the dominant historiographical narrative which described the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II as ‘tyranny’ and the declaration of the Second Constitution as ‘the establishment of freedom and democracy’.²

In order to study the transition from the politicization of the theater to the politicization of the repertoire, I worked on a number of primary and secondary sources. The richness of the primary sources allowed me to interpret them via the help of the historiographical schools that incorporate theater in the history writing. Moreover, the secondary literature both on the history of Western theatre, and the Ottoman theatre did not only point out the way in which theatre history was studied, but also how some aspects were understudied and not historicized.

Besides the secondary sources, the research consists of a number of primary sources such as memoirs of the actors and directors, newspapers, travel accounts, theatre journals, and the scripts of the plays. Memoirs were probably the best sources when I had no idea about the performance of either the actors or the audience. For instance, memoirs of the famous actor and director of the period, Ahmet Fehim (1856-1930) helped me more than I could ever imagine to grasp the atmosphere of the period, the lives of the actors and the role of the theatre in the formation of the public opinion. In a similar way, the memoirs of a leading actor of the age, İbnürrefik Ahmet Sekizinci (1874-1935); the memoirs of ‘the father of Turkish theatre and cinema,’ Muhsin Ertuğrul (1892-1979); the memoirs of Namık Kemal’s son: Ali Ekrem Bolayır (1867-1937); and the memoirs of Leyla Saz Hanım (1845-1936), a

² The genre of national tragedy is revived after major social and political rites of passages like the First World War, the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and the first *coup d’état* of Turkey in 1960, to reshape the public opinion.

dynasty member playing in the imperial women's fanfare helped me conceptualize the cultural and the political milieu of the epoch.

In a similar way, the newspapers and journals of the day were very important for me to realize the popular reception of the social and political aspects of the theatre events. Moreover, newspapers were also very valuable for my research since they reflected the Ottoman discourse of Westernization and modernization within which theatre played a crucial role.

Another valuable source was Adolph Thalasso's article on the Ottoman Theatre, published in 1904, in *La Revue Théâtrale*.³ This little pamphlet did not only inform me about the 'Ottoman Theater,' but also demonstrated an Ottoman intellectual's perception and his attempts of self-orientalizing through a discourse of modernization constructed on the consumption of theater.

Lastly, the scripts of the post-revolutionary theater, which were mostly staged after 1909, or written to be read rather than performed, introduced me to the 'fictional' world of hate and punishment. A number of scripts, which can be found in the National Library of Ankara, and in the National Library of İzmir, harshly judged the old regime and the dethroned Ottoman Sultan on the stage.

The thesis begins with a chapter elaborating the theoretical framework, and surveying the recent historiographical trends and their dialogues that made the study of theater an interesting field of study for the discipline of history. This section discusses the rapprochement of history, anthropology and theater studies which enable scholars to examine the complexities of representative forms. Subsequently, by touching upon the emergence and the development of a historiographical school;

³ Adolphe Thalasso, "Le Théâtre Turc," *La Revue Théâtrale*, no. 16 (1904), pp. 361-384. (See Appendix A.)

New Historicism, I argue that the field of literary studies, and theater in particular, is not a marginal field but a substantial part of politics.

While the first part shows the attempts of ‘blurring genres’⁴, and incorporating theater studies in various branches of social sciences in Western literature, the second chapter touches upon the Turkish theater historiography. This section discusses the first and the second generations of the Turkish theater historians and their works. Whilst the first generation of theater historians introduced vast amount of sources and tried to historicize theater, their attempts to categorize and to periodize the Ottoman -Turkish theater oversimplified the complex and the gradual development of the theater. On the other hand, the following generation of theater historians inherited these categories and did not offer alternative approaches.

Having reviewed the literature, the fourth chapter uses the term ‘performance’ with a broader meaning, and looks for different kinds of ‘performances of Westernization’ in the late Ottoman world. The chapter seeks to rethink theater’s role in the ‘Ottoman modernization paradigm’ by observing the internalization of the Western performances in the Ottoman Palace and by touching upon the transformation of imperial rituals. The transformation of the imperial reception ceremonies and the incorporation of theater performances in these ceremonies after Sultan Abdülaziz’s trip to Europe (1867) suggest that theater gained a political importance in the Ottoman diplomacy. While the Naum Theater became an imperial body through these reception ceremonies, theater became a political institution in the nineteenth century Ottoman world.

The fifth chapter scrutinizes the development of a complex relationship between the Imperial Palace and the Ottoman popular theater in the late nineteenth

⁴ Referring to Clifford Geertz, “Blurred Genres: The Reconfiguration of Social Thought,” in *The Performance Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Bial (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 64-68.

century. The political tension between the popular theater and its imperial control allowed theater to be a 'social milieu' for the development of the intellectual and political ideologies of the Young Turks. This chapter touches upon two theater scandals, 'Vatan Incident' (1873), 'Gedikpaşa Incident' (1884) as well as the censorship policies in order to understand the Palace's agenda on the containment of the popular theater. The chapter argues that the imperial policies on controlling the Ottoman theater with censorship did not politically sterilize theater, but on the contrary, the oppression raised a political tension by the 1880s, and 1890s.

The sixth chapter tries to examine the ways in which the banned scripts of the 'old regime' created theater frenzy after the proclamation of the Second Constitution. This section, situated between the 'old' and the 'new' regimes, aims to observe this period of transition through theater activities. It, therefore, tries to scrutinize the emergence of mass politics and the formation (and the manipulation) of the public opinion through public performances under the patronage of the Committee of Union and Progress. This chapter first tries to historicize the 'Ottoman Revolutionary theatre' within the politics of its time, and then discusses the problem of periodization which tends to oversimplify the complex and the gradual development of the theater. While the majority of the theater historians dated the beginning of the 'revolutionary theater' to 1908, I argue that both the actors' memoirs, and the repertoire of the 'revolutionary theater' itself show a strong continuity with the previous era. Therefore, I claim that the Committee of Union and Progress and the Revolution of 1908 did not 'discover' or 'invent' a revolutionary theater as a means of political mobilization, but rather used an already established 'political institution': theater and its power to legitimize political agendas. I further argue that the 'revolutionary theater' does not end at some point, but is transformed. Theater of

post-1908 era established the tradition of ‘political theater,’ which does not only represent the historical and political situations, but also becomes a part of it in Turkey. This kind of a theater was revived after major political events or Turkey’s ‘rites of passages’, but did not lose its power to form the public opinion and influence the historiography of the age. This chapter further takes a comparative approach and scrutinizes the exemplaries of the ‘revolutionary theater’ which created similar theatre frenzies after the French, Iranian, and the Russian Revolutions. Observing the ‘theatre epidemic’ of the post-revolutionary days, I argue that the Ottoman Revolution created similar pageants with that of the French and the Russian ones. Examining the patronage patterns and the organization of these ‘mass spectacles’, I discuss that theater under the patronage of the Committee of Union and Progress was seen as a means of social and cultural development which served to legitimize the new regime and to form the public opinion.

The last chapter touches upon the creation of a new market for the political theater and the politicization of the repertoire. Focusing on the period after the attempt of a Counter- Revolution, known as ‘The Incident of 31 March’ (1909), I argue that the repertoire of the popular theatre dramatically changed and the new genre of ‘*milli facia*’ (national tragedy) used the stage to judge the Hamidian period. The scripts written after 1908 and staged particularly after 1909 accused the old regime and judged it harshly on the stage. The plays did not only propagate the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress, but also aimed to recreate the ‘*İstibdad*’ (tyranny) era and the Revolution of 1908 in the collective memory. Therefore, I argue that these plays could have helped to construe the stereotypes which defined the Hamidian era as ‘tyranny’ and the leading members of the Committee of Union

and Progress (CUP)⁵ as the 'heroes of freedom' that still echo in the Turkish historiography.

⁵ Will be abbreviated as CUP.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY, THEATRE AND POLITICS: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

I began with the desire to speak with the dead.

This desire is a familiar, if unvoiced, motive in literary studies, a motive organized, professionalized, buried beneath thick layers of bureaucratic decorum: literature professors are salaried, middle-class shamans. (...) It is paradoxical, of course, to seek the living will of the dead in fictions, in places where there was no live bodily being to begin with. But those who love literature tend to find more intensity in simulations-in the formal, self-conscious miming of life-than in any of the other textual traces left by the dead, for simulations are undertaken in full awareness of the absence of the life they contrive to represent, and hence they may skillfully anticipate and compensate for the vanishing of the actual life that has empowered them. Conventional in my tastes, I found the most satisfying intensity of all in Shakespeare.⁶ (Stephen Greenblatt)

Can the historian speak with the dead? To what extent can we historicize literature?

In the following lines, I will try to present an overview of the recent historiographical trends and their dialogues that made the study of the literary culture an interesting field of history. My discussion will begin by mentioning the postmodern challenges against the discipline of history in the light of its rapprochement with anthropology and literature. This rapprochement will then be discussed on the basis of the main premises of *new historicism* which turned scripts into archival materials for historians. Laying out a brief literature review on how theatre and history intersect, I will lastly try to comment on the literature on the Middle Eastern theatre history and historiography.

⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *The Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), p. 1.

Removing the Borders:

The Rapprochement of History, Anthropology, and Literature

1980s witnessed radical historiographical transformations and the revival of narrative which were strongly influenced by the postmodernist challenges of 1970s.⁷

Postmodernism, in the realm of history, attacked the very foundations of historical and scientific knowledge by questioning the objectivity of social sciences and the stability of language. Most postmodernist criticism can be traced back to the influences of the French social scientist Michael Foucault (1926-1984) and the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), then through them back to Nietzsche (1844-1900), who argued that knowledge is an invention, and to Heidegger (1889-1976), who attacked historicism.⁸

Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida worked on the effects of language, emphasizing that language hides truths and become “reality” itself.⁹ As Georg Iggers informs us, like Foucault and Derrida, most postmodernist critics questioned the distinction between fact and fiction, history and poetry. They reviewed history as having no reference to a reality outside of its texts. Postmodernists’ challenges broke the conviction that the historian must follow rational methods to gain truthful insights into the past. Subsequently, by 1980s new historiographical trends shifted

⁷ For further information, see: Lawrence Stone, *The Past and the Present Revisited* (New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. 74-96.

⁸ Joyce Appelby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob, “Postmodernism and the Crises of Modernity,” in *Telling the Truth About History*, edited by Lynn Hunt, Margaret Jacob and Joyce Appelby (New York: Norton, 1995), pp. 200-205.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 215.

their center of gravity from structures and processes to cultures and the existential life experiences of common people.¹⁰

Postmodern theories of history and language went beyond the Foucauldian 'discourse' in later decades with what is called 'the linguistic turn' in historiography.¹¹ The leading names of the field, Roland Barthes (1915-1980) and Hayden White (b.1928) asserted that historiography does not differ from fiction but is a form of it. Hayden White argued that 'form and content cannot be separated in historical writing'. Moreover, he claims that historians have at their disposal a limited number of rhetorical possibilities that predetermine the format and the content of their accounts. Accordingly, 'historical narratives are verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences'.¹² Then, can we claim that the theatrical scripts are as important as the archival sources in the formation of the historical knowledge? This curiosity of mine will be answered by Stephen Greenblatt, known as the founder of a new school of historiography: "*New historicism*" in the 1980s. Before discussing the *new historicism*, first I would like to touch upon the rapprochement of history, anthropology and theater which deeply influenced the founders of this historiographical school, and particularly its father: Stephen Greenblatt.

The linguistic turn, which describes historical narratives as verbal fictions, and historical texts as literary artifacts seemed to be a threat for some historians.

¹⁰ Georg Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), p. 100.

¹¹ Appelby, "Postmodernism and the Crises of Modernity," p. 206.

¹² Iggers, *Historiography*, pp. 118-119.

Consequently, it shifted the attention to cultural history and called for anthropological approaches.

In the late 1970s, the boundaries between the disciplines of history, literature and anthropology got blurred in order to study “culture”. The most significant model came with Clifford Geertz’s *Interpretation of Cultures* (1973).¹³ His ‘thick description’ was perhaps the most appealing model for an interdisciplinary study. In contrast to the linguistic turn which created an object of inquiry based on the idea that culture could be studied like a complex language-like system of signs, symbolic/interpretive anthropology shifted the focus from language models and their validity for cultural analysis to the *meaning* of what is said in language. The new emphasis was on the ways of analyzing meanings and their relationship to actor’s models. As Moore and Sanders remind us in their article, the father of interpretive anthropology, Clifford Geertz perceived culture ‘as a system of meanings and symbols within which actors interpret their experience and order their actions.’ In his view, cultural meanings construct a model of reality and provide guidelines for action. In this sense, culture was public and could be analyzed by the observer without any need to ‘get inside actors’ heads’. Therefore, as Geertz argues, ‘culture can and should be read, translated and interpreted.’¹⁴ With this formulation, Geertz gave a relatively fixed locus and a degree of objectivity to the elusive concept of culture.¹⁵ As Sherry Ortner argues, ‘the focus on symbols was liberating both for the historians, and for the anthropologists, telling them where to find what they wanted

¹³ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

¹⁴ H. Moore and T. Sanders, *Anthropology in Theory: Issues of Epistemology* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), p. 10.

¹⁵ Sherry Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties,” in *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, edited by N. B. Dirks, G. Eley and S. Ortner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 374.

to study as vehicles of meanings'.¹⁶ Geertz, believing in Weber, uses a metaphoric definition, 'man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs and the analyses of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.'¹⁷ According to Geertz, 'culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions or processes can be causally attributed, it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly –that is thickly- described'.¹⁸ Geertz's model has been severely criticized and found to be anti-disciplinary, sophisticated, and seductive by the following generations. However, his contribution to historiography can be considered 'groundbreaking', since it widened the horizons of anthropological theorizing and brought history and anthropology together in order to study 'the culture'.

The growing importance of cultural history did not only trigger the revival of *histoire des mentalities* by the fourth generation of the Annales School, but also helped remove the boundaries between the disciplines of history, anthropology, literature and performance studies. A prominent name in this rapprochement is the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner's ground-breaking model of *liminality* has been very influential in the historiographical shift towards the study of drama.¹⁹ According to him, 'complex modern societies are unlikely to find much consensus on any social question, and the theatre can perhaps best serve them through open-ended

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁹ Victor Turner, *An Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988); Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982); Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," in *The Performance Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Bial, (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 79-88; Clifford Geertz, "Blurred Genres: The Reconfiguration of Social Thought," pp. 64-68.

liminoid playfulness, providing a multitude of possible models and interpretive meanings for the typical events of the epoch.²⁰ It is also very important to underline that this rapprochement is a mutual one. The more anthropology looked for dramaturgical interpretations, the more theatre studies got interested in social sciences for alternative perceptions.

Being in a dialogue with the anthropological model, Richard Schechner, a pioneering name in the modern theatre studies, explains in his co-authored book with Victor Turner *Between Theatre and Anthropology* that he turned to anthropology, not because it is a problem solving science but because he sensed a convergence of paradigms.²¹ Moreover, he claims that ‘just as the theater is anthropologizing itself, so anthropology is being theatricalized’. Accordingly, this convergence was a historical occasion for all kinds of exchanges, which he calls “restored behavior”.²² Schechner further argues in his article “Performance and the Social Sciences” (1973) that there are several points of contacts between the performance theory and the social sciences.²³

²⁰ Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre A Critical Survey from the Greeks to the Present* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 485.

²¹ Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 33.

²² “The convergence of anthropology and theater is part of a larger intellectual movement where the understanding of human behavior is changing from quantifiable differences between cause and effect, past and present, form and content, et cetera (and linear modes of analyses that explicate such a world view) to an emphasis on the deconstruction/reconstruction of actualities: the process of framing, editing and rehearsing, the making and manipulating of strips of behavior-what I call “restored behavior.”
ibid.

²³ “1) Performance in everyday life, including gatherings of every kind.
2) The structure of sports, ritual, play, and public political behavior.
3) Analysis of various modes of communication (other than the written word: semiotics).
4) Connections between human and animal behavior patterns with an emphasis on play and ritualized behavior.
5) Aspects of psychotherapy that emphasize person-to-person interaction, acting out, and body awareness.
6) Ethnography and prehistory-both exotic and familiar cultures.
7) Construction of unified theories of performances, which are in fact, theories of behavior.”

All these achievements ended up in 'blurring genres' as Geertz calls it.²⁴

These rapprochements together with the influence of the linguistic turn helped the emergence of a new historiographical school standing between history and literature:

New historicism.

Putting the Text in Its Historical Context: *New Historicism*

It would have been impossible to conceptualize a study of these minor writers, vaudeville actors, violent theatre riots, and long –forgotten revolutionary theatre criticism, in short, of the revolutionary theater itself and its relation to the French revolutionary politics, without the invention of the new historicism in literary studies. (...) The *new historicism* meant not aestheticizing history, or devaluing masterpieces, but rather refusing either to establish or to recognize a fixed boundary between the literary and the historical.²⁵ (Susan Maslan)

New historicists, gathered around the journal *Representations*, brought several perspectives together such as Marxism, cultural materialism, postmodernism, and interpretive anthropology; and offered alternative fields of study for the discipline of history. The *new historicism* is not only influenced by Foucault and Geertz, but also by the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, who claims that literature is one of the institutions which participate in making state power and ideology familiar and acceptable to the state's subjects.²⁶ As Veeseer observes, the *new historicism* combated empty formalism by pulling historical considerations to the center stage of literary analysis, and by following Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner and other cultural anthropologists, the new historicists have evolved a method of describing culture in

Richard Schechner, "Performance and the Social Sciences," *The Drama Review*, no. 17 (1973), p. 3.

²⁴ Geertz, "Blurred Genres: The Reconfiguration of Social Thought," pp. 64-68.

²⁵ Susan Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy and the French Revolution* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 12.

²⁶ Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 6.

action.²⁷ For the *new historicism*, the object of study is not the text and its context, nor literature and its history, but rather literature in history. In the eyes of new historicists, texts of all kinds are political vehicles in so far as texts mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations. Therefore, one can interpret the *new historicism* as a mode of critical interpretation which privileges power relations as the most important context for texts of all kinds. As John Brannigan claims the *new historicism*, as a critical practice, treats literary texts as a space where power relations are made visible. The way in which literary texts or forms can be co-opted to serve as tools in the construction of power is the central focus for new historicist work; and this focus is first visible in a clear and methodological manner in Greenblatt's works in 1980s. Greenblatt treats literary texts as symbolic formations which differ in no respect from other symbolic formations including historical events and trends. Accordingly, history is not a background context, but the very subject and form in which literature is enmeshed. As Brannigan further argues that for the new historicists, literary texts are vehicles of power which act as useful objects of study in that they contain the same potential for power and subversion that generally exist in society.²⁸ In this way, literary texts become important foci for contemporary attempts to resist power as well. In other words, *new historicism* underlines that the discipline of literary studies is not removed from the sphere of politics at all.

Literary critique and historian Aram Veeseer takes the metaphor of 'portmanteau' to define the *new historicism*, which in his terms 'brackets together literature, ethnography, anthropology, art history, and other disciplines.' As Veeseer

²⁷Aram H. Veeseer, Introduction to *New Historicism*, edited by Aram Veeseer (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. xii-xiii.

²⁸ John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 3-6; pp. 57-59.

further explains, ‘the *new historicism* scrutinizes the barbaric acts that sometimes underwrite high cultural purpose and asks that we do not blank away our complicity.’²⁹ The theoretical books on the *new historicism* argue that there are some key assumptions that bind together the avowed practitioners and even some of their critics. According to Veenser, the first assumption is that every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices, and that every act of unmasking, critique and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes. A further assumption is that literary and non literary “texts” circulate inseparably, and that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature. One further assumption is that a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in the economy they describe.³⁰ On the other hand, Greenblatt summarizes the basic premise of the *new historicism* by stating that ‘the works of art, however intensely marked by the creative intelligence and private obsessions of individuals, are the products of collective negotiation and exchange.’³¹ In his *The Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*, Greenblatt argues for taking the collective production of literary pleasure more seriously, ‘since the moment of inscription, is itself a social moment.’ In his groundbreaking book, Greenblatt describes that many of Shakespeare’s works, particularly in theatre, visibly represent power plays and political corruption within a monarchic system, and spectacularly represent the poisoning of a king, the madness of a king, the murder of monarchs in their beds. One of Greenblatt’s departure points to observe the cultural milieu of the epoch is his assumption of ‘social energy’ that

²⁹ Veenser, Introduction to *New Historicism*, p. xii.

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ Greenblatt, *The Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. vii.

circulates through theatre. According to him, 'through its representational means, each play carries charges of social energy onto the stage, and the stage in its turn revises that energy and returns it to the audience'. He then argues that 'each individual may be said to make a small contribution to the general store of social energy possessed by the theater and hence to the sustained claim that the theatre can make on its real and potential audience'.³² Stephen Greenblatt argues that social energy is inherent in a cultural practice for a number of reasons. According to Greenblatt, there can be no appeals to genius as the sole origin of the energies of great art; there can be no motiveless creation; there can be no transcendent or timeless or unchanging representation; there can be no expression without an origin and an object, a form and a for; there can be no autonomous artifacts, and therefore there can be no spontaneous generation of social energy.³³ The model offered by Stephan Greenblatt became an appealing model for many social scientists from different disciplines. It did not only revive the existing literature on the theatre history, but also accelerated the publications of a latent literature on theater history and historiography. Drama and history were the two disciplines that profited the most from the influence of the *new historicism*. However, the disciplines of anthropology and sociology benefited from the model as well.

Indeed, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed a similar approach with that of the *new historicism*. Whereas the *new historicism* focused on textual analyses, Bourdieu took the theatre as a cultural institution to observe class structures.³⁴ He analyzes the opposing principles of the nineteenth century literary

³² *ibid.*, p. 14.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁴ "Nothing more clearly shows than does the theatre, which can only work on the basis of total connivance between the author and the audience (this is why the correspondence between the categories of theatres and divisions of the dominant class is so close and visible), that the manning

field through the opposition between bourgeois arts (and notably the theatre), social art and art for art's sake. Social art occupies a thoroughly ambiguous position in relation to the other two in that it appeals to external functions (like bourgeois art) while at the same time rejecting (like art for art's sake) the dominant principle of hierarchy in the field of power.³⁵ Bourdieu takes the consumption of drama as a cultural capital and observes class structures through the politics of the theatre. Bourdieu particularly looks at the bourgeois discourses on theatre to see the consolidation of the bourgeoisie and their self-representation. Both Bourdieu's interest in 'theatre', and the new perspectives introduced by the *new historicism* challenged the traditional narratives on the theatre history. Furthermore, they encouraged a review the relationship of the historian with the field of the theatre studies.³⁶ While *new historicism* is widely used for the study of Renaissance and early modern European theatre, it is not yet widely practiced in the study of modern and contemporary theatre.³⁷

On the other hand, a similar transformation can be seen in the theatre studies, and especially in the theater history which turned towards the *new historicism*.³⁸

and value of words (and especially jokes) depends on the market in which they are uttered, that the same sentences can take an opposite meaning when addressed to groups with opposite presuppositions.”

Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, edited by Randal Johnson, (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 93.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 16.

³⁶ See: *Living Theater a History*, edited by Edwin Wilson and Alvin Goldfarb, (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), pp. 12-22; Susan Leigh Foster, Introduction to *Choreographing History*, edited by Susan Leigh Foster, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 3-25; Hayden White, “Bodies and Their Plots,” In *Choreographing History*, edited by Susan Leigh Foster, (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 229-234.

³⁷ See: Ivo Kamps, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Tristan Marshall, *Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages under James VI and I* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).

³⁸ “Theater history, a small and recently emergent field, has experienced disciplinary changes. (...) New approaches argue that all cultural material is ideologically charged.- the texts themselves, the

Theatre historians seem to appreciate the growing interest of historians in the field of the theatre history. A pioneering name in the theatre history, Marvin Carlson mentions that the field of the theatre history is not equipped well enough to explain social and cultural contexts and salutes the growing sensibility of historians towards the theatre history.³⁹

The *new historicism* is used as a model to remove the barriers between the disciplines by a number of scholars working on the theatre and the theatre history.⁴⁰

It is also used for the narration of different local experiences, and alternative approaches.⁴¹

contexts built upon these texts, and the mental world of the researcher who selects and relates these texts and contexts to each other and to his or her own concerns.”

Marvin Carlson, “The Theory of History,” in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 272-275.

³⁹ “Traditional theater history developed in the shadow of European high culture of the late nineteenth century and almost universally accepted the values of that culture. Theater history was by no means considered a study of the phenomenon of theater in all periods and cultures, but a study of the production conditions of the already acknowledged major periods and accepted canon of the European literary drama. The Greek and the Shakespearean theater were thus considered favored topics for historical investigation (as they still are), while the rich tradition of popular and/or spectacle theater, even in Europe, were ignored as undistinguished, decadent, or generally unworthy of critical attention. The growing interest in popular culture in recent years and, even more recently, an attention to the traditionally excluded theater of women, nonwhites, and various culturally marginalized groups have alerted the discipline to the ideological biases hidden in the traditional topics considered proper for scholarly investigation. (...) The researcher influenced by *New Historicism* or by various versions of the history of mentalities in France may welcome precisely those texts that seem most clearly to reveal ideological presuppositions, since the attempted reconstruction of the mental processes of another era is the goal sought. The historian involved in cultural studies or ethnohistory, seemingly closer to the traditional goal of interpreting theater in its cultural “context,” now sees that context as a complex and not necessarily consistent interplay of ideological forces affecting both the production and the interpretation of any artifact or document being studied.”
ibid., p. 276.

⁴⁰ “*New historicism*, in its capacity to lead us to detect previously unsuspected dynamics within society, allows the historian to account for the complexity of the theatrical transactions and to determine to a great extent than has so far been possible, the impact of theater upon society and vice versa.”

Simon Williams, “The Challenge to Professional Training and Development,” in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), p. 243.

⁴¹ “*New Historicism* suggests strategies for such a critique and mandates alternative foundations for the construction of new histories of American theater and drama. More theoretically and ideologically self-reflexive than traditional historians of artistic practice, the New Historicists recognize that they cannot employ value-free procedures for investigating historical subjects. Opposed to what Terry Eagleton has termed “the ideology of the aesthetic”, New Historicists seek to understand the ways in

Whilst the *new historicism* and the rapprochement of the theatre and history encouraged historians to historicize works of arts in their age, the very nature of performance and drama casts doubts about the reliability of the scripts. Tristan Marshall touches upon the shortcomings of the *new historicism* and underlines that “we might genuinely believe a playwright to be sincerely trying to convey one image, while all the time the manner in which it is performed might voice exactly the opposite opinion.”⁴² Furthermore, he argues that historians can sometimes be too zealous in trying to fit plays into convenient boxes in response to literary criticism’s attempts either to fit square pegs into round historical holes or ignore potential aspects of topicality altogether. Marshall further claims that even though the relationship between the disciplines of history and literature is complementary⁴³, both the historian and the literary critic can fail if they attempt to do a reductionist decoding of any script, or if they are prepared to read the text in a particular light. Believing that scripts and their performance are two separate fields of study, I agree

which producing and enjoying works of art can both subjugate and liberate individuals and social groups. This leads them to examine closely the power relations implicit in historically generated concepts of difference regarding race, gender, ethnicity, and class and to question the ideological assumptions underlying such innocent-sounding terms as "entertainment", "style", "dramatic art", and "culture". Suspicious of univocal and teleological histories, new historicists deconstruct the conventions which structure such narratives and urge the consideration of new contexts within which to understand the cultural experiences of the past.”

Bruce A. McConachie, “New Historicism and American Theater History: Toward an Interdisciplinary Paradigm For Scholarship,” in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), p. 267.

⁴² “Any production on stage, for example, authority, such as royal policy and its ramifications, could be interpreted by an audience as a potential alternative view to the motivations and principles of the hierarchy under which they live. At the same time, it is important to admit the problems inherent in taking a piece of stagecraft, conveyed in print, at face value. We might genuinely believe a playwright to be sincerely trying to convey one image, while all the time the manner in which it is performed might voice exactly the opposite opinion.”

Marshall, *Theatre and Empire*, p. 4.

⁴³ “The relationship between the disciplines of history and literature is complementary: History puts literature in perspective while public theatre is an intrinsic part of the recording of the past which illustrates the thinking of a group of individuals writing not just for the entertainment of the literate, but for those who might not otherwise be able to leave a record for themselves.”

ibid., p.5.

with Marshall in his warnings about the dangers of misinterpretation of the plays by historians. Furthermore, I think that the field of the theatre studies is more sensible regarding the performativity of texts, and produced opulent works in recent decades. Journals such as *The Drama Review*, *Theatre Survey*, *Theatre Journal* and *Theatre Research International*, and study groups like International Federation for Theatre Research, American Society for Theatre Research, and Association for Theatre in Higher Education, have been very influential in the growth of the field.

Rethinking the Theatrical Approach to History

To start the overview of recent literature where history and the theatre intersect, one should refer to three important volumes bringing political theatre, theatrical discourse, politics and history together. The first of these is *The Performance of Power* edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (1991). Departing from the assumption that “power is spectacle”⁴⁴, twenty scholars working in the field published this volume ‘to demonstrate that the distinctions between history and theory are no longer tenable and that the dialogue between theorists and historians is not only useful but also unavoidable, given the necessity of historicizing theory and theorizing history.’⁴⁵ The second book is *Imperialism and Theatre* edited by J. Ellen Gainor (1995), which examines the theatre as a site of resistance to imperialism.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ “Theatricality as metaphor, or analogy, accommodates the materialist perception that there is a “playing out” of power relations, a “making” of authority, and a “scenario” of events. In other words, power is spectacle.”

Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, Introduction to *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), p. x.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. xi.

⁴⁶ “This volume will present examinations of a range of imperial and colonial events and periods, focusing on the unique nexus of theatrical performance as a site for the representation of, but also the resistance to imperialism.”

The authors depart from their claim that the ‘theatre has always been a locus of political force’, and address to the questions; why the theatre was selected within a culture or by an artist for the depiction of imperial and colonial concerns, and how the theatre was utilized as the disseminator of a dominant ideology and/or the place for colonized revolt.⁴⁷ The third volume is *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater* edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (1998). The articles in the volume ‘weave a narrative about the theatre’s relevance to the social sphere, as a forum for public debate, a gauge of national inspirations, an enactment of social critique, and a space for imagining alternatives.’⁴⁸ These volumes particularly helped me to understand the ways in which anthropology, comparative literature, history and politics intermingle in the field of the theater studies, and the ways in which the discipline of history can benefit from the ‘theatre’. Besides these three volumes, I benefited from the books I could find on Western theatre, its history and historiography. In the following pages, I would like to touch upon this literature and the way in which they are used in the field of history and its sister disciplines.

As far as I could observe, this rapprochement becomes significant in revisiting the Renaissance studies; in offering alternative approaches to early modern and modern European history; in studying imperialism and colonialism; in rethinking nationalism and revolutions; and in observing resistance against political struggles. It also offers alternative approaches to the studies of gender, race, memory, and semiotics.

Ellen Gainor, Introduction to *Imperialism and Theatre, Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London: New York: Routledge, 1995), p. xiii.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. xiv.

⁴⁸ Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer, Introduction to *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater*, edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 9-10.

To start with, I can argue that the field which benefited the most both from the *new historicism* and from the rapprochement of literary studies and history was the Renaissance studies.⁴⁹

In a similar line with the Renaissance studies, the theatre is used to reinterpret the tensions between the absolutist monarchs and their subjects in early modern Europe, especially in England.⁵⁰ Ivo Kamp's work is particularly important in this field, since it tries 'to unfold the intricate negotiations between the genres of historiography and historical drama in the early years of the seventeenth century, and to relate those negotiations, whenever possible, to the representation of monarchs (and rulers) in the plays.'⁵¹ Likewise, the tension between the theater and the empire is widely studied through Elizabethan-Jacobean drama in order to understand the popular culture of the era and the regulations on the theater.⁵² Through the realm of drama and theatrical representations, these books scrutinize political and social struggles as well as the cultural tissue of the relevant periods. Taking stage as a

⁴⁹ See: Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Stephen Greenblatt, *The Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988); Stephen Greenblatt, *The Greenblatt Reader*, edited by Michael Payne (Malden: Blackwell Publications, 2005); Stephen Greenblatt, "Toward a Universal Language of Motion: Reflections on a Seventeenth-Century Muscle Man," in *Choreographing History*, edited by Susan Leigh Foster (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 25-32; Frederic Kiefer, *Writing on the Renaissance Stage* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996); Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ See: Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theatre in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, London, Cornell University Press, 1997); Marc Baer, *Theatre and Disorder in Late Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Joseph Roach, "The Artificial Eye: Augustan Theater and the Empire of the Visible," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 131-145.

⁵¹ Kamp, *Historiography and Ideology in Stuart Drama*, p. 1.

⁵² G. Blakmore Evans, *Elizabethan – Jacobean Drama* (London: A&C Black, 1987); T.B. Tomlinson, *A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

microcosm, these authors tried to observe the expectations of the audience, and the ideological currents of the age.⁵³

Again, a number of books focused on the government's attempts to monopolize and to control the theatre. These works mainly focus on the eighteenth and nineteenth century England, France and Germany by touching upon the questions: How and why did these governments try to regulate the theatre production? To what extent could they succeed? And, how did the audience respond to the restrictions?⁵⁴ These works emphasize the satirical nature of the theatre--which bothered the politicians--and the imperial control on the theatre. In a parallel way, but for a different time frame, a group of modern scholars study the contemporary regulations towards political theatre, and governments' restrictions on political representations.⁵⁵

With its critical and satirical nature, theatre acted as a battleground in politics, especially in times of crises and revolutions. The theatre, as a means of political

⁵³ For an example, see: Theodore Ziolkowski, *Scandal On Stage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁵⁴ Nina Auerbach, "Victorian Players and Stages," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 183-198; *Living Theater a History*, pp. 290-294; Janice Carlisle, "Spectacle as Government: Dickens and the Working Class Audience," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 163-182; Theodore Ziolkowski, *Scandal On Stage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Gay Gibson Cima, "Conferring Power in Theater" in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 255-264; Thomas Dickinson, *The Theatre in a Changing Europe*, (New York: Henry Holt, 1937); Margaret B. Wilkerson, "Demographics and the Academy," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 238-242; Barry B. Witham, "The Playhouse and the Committee," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt, (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 272-280.

⁵⁵ Tom Burvill, "Playing the Fault Lines: Two Political Theater interventions in the Australian Bicentenary Year 1988," in *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater*, edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 229-246; Zygmunt Hubner, *Theater and Politics*, translated and edited by Jadwiga Kosicka (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992); Janelle Reinelt, "Theorizing Utopia: Edward Bond's War Plays," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 221-241.

mobilization, is used for the dissemination of nationalism in the nineteenth century Europe. A recent scholarship focused on the construction of the nationalist ideology through the theatre, and concluded that the theater was indeed very influential in the consolidation of nationalism.⁵⁶

Similarly, during the last two decades, the revolutionary theaters became a subject of historical inquiry and encouraged, especially historians of the French Revolution, to study the effects of the revolution through its representation.⁵⁷ While these studies followed different paths in analyzing political performances, they all came up with interesting historical information on the mass politics and on the formation of public opinion. For instance, Graham Rodmell examines seven plays performed during and after the French Revolution in his book: *French Drama of the Revolutionary Years*, and observes the tension between the boulevard theatres which choose to keep their 'traditional' repertoire and the street theatres which played an important role in the dissemination of the revolutionary ideas.⁵⁸ Taking a different approach, Sheryl Kroen looks at the legacy of the French Revolution through the performances of Moliere's seventeenth century comedy: *Tartuffe* in her book: *Politics*

⁵⁶ Tristan Marshall, *Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages under James VI and I* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000); Loren Kruger, "Attending (to) the National Spectacle: Instituting National (Popular) Theater in England and France," *In Macropolitics of Nineteenth-Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*, edited by Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo, (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 243-267.

⁵⁷ For the literature on French Revolutionary theatre, see: Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 2002); Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater, The Crises of Legitimacy in Restoration France 1815-1830*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000); Susan Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy and the French Revolution* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005); Graham E Rodmell, *French Drama of the Revolutionary Years*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1990); Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 97.

⁵⁸ Graham E Rodmell, *French Drama of the Revolutionary Years*, (London, New York: Routledge, 1990).

and Theater, The Crises of Legitimacy in Restoration France 1815-1830.⁵⁹ On the other hand, Susan Maslan, in her book *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy and the French Revolution*, examines the birth of mass politics through a close observation of the dramatic events in the age of Revolution and argues that a new genre “domestic surveillance”, linking the politics in the household with the politics in the public sphere was invented through the Revolutionary theatre.⁶⁰ Lastly, I would like to mention historian Paul Friedland and his book: *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution*. Friedland looks at the French Revolutionary theatre and concludes that it was actually very similar to the ways in which manners in the national assembly were conducted. Through a comparison between the stage and the general assembly, he observes the creation of public opinion in the revolutionary years.⁶¹

On the other hand, when we survey the Russian theatre literature, where again theatre played a crucial role in the dissemination of the revolutionary ideologies, we cannot find many sources.⁶² However, the sources that I could reach show that we can speak of a ‘*theatre epidemic*’ in the days following the Russian Revolution of 1917.⁶³ In the Russian case, the revolutionary drama and the mass spectacles

⁵⁹ Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater, The Crises of Legitimacy in Restoration France 1815-1830*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

⁶⁰ Susan Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts: Theater, Democracy and the French Revolution* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁶¹ Paul Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁶² It is indeed worse in the case of the Iranian Revolution. Again, although we know that theatre was strongly influential in mobilizing the masses after the revolution, I could find a fine literature on the subject.

⁶³ For the literature on the Russian Revolutionary theatre, see: Robert Russell, *Russian Drama of the Revolutionary Period* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Robert Leach, *Revolutionary Theatre* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994); Murray Frame, *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theaters, Stage and State in Imperial Russia, 1900-1920* (Jefferson, North Carolina, London: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2000); Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 95-98.

consolidated themselves as a means of social intervention.⁶⁴ Theatre historians working on the subject looked at the post revolutionary Russian theatre from different perspectives. For instance, while Robert Leach looked at the mass movements through a dramaturgical perspective, historian Murray Frame took a Marxist approach and tried to understand the transformation of the social classes via the transformation of the imperial theaters.⁶⁵

While the revolutions of the nineteenth and the twentieth century perceived the theatre as a social event, the political currents of the twentieth century politicized the repertoire. In modern political drama, the most prominent figure of the early twentieth century was probably Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) who established the tradition of “political theatre” with his model of ‘epic drama’. Being different from all the references I mentioned, and all the literature intersecting history and theatre, works focusing on Brecht and epic theatre produced a huge literature in the twentieth century.⁶⁶ According to Brecht, ‘the aim of the epic drama was to achieve the reverse: a political transformation through performance of the theatre as a social and cultural institution.’⁶⁷ Brecht and his model has been a milestone in the modern theatre historiography.

⁶⁴ Leach, *Revolutionary Theatre*, pp. 49-51.

⁶⁵ See, Robert Leach, *Revolutionary Theatre* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994); Murray Frame, *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theaters, Stage and State in Imperial Russia, 1900-1920* (Jefferson, North Carolina, London: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2000).

⁶⁶ Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre*, pp.382-383; Elaine Brousseau, “Personalizing the Political in the Noam Chomsky Lectures,” in *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater*, edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 246-264; Sarah Bryant-Bertail, “The Good Soldier Schwejk as Dialectical Theater,” in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 19-41; Lionel Pilkington, “Irish Theater Historiography and Political Resistance,” in *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater*, edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 13-30; David Savran, “Revolution...History...Theater: The Politics of the Wooster Group’s Second Trilogy,” in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 41-45.

⁶⁷ Pilkington, “Irish Theater Historiography and Political Resistance,” p. 16.

1960s and 1970s witnessed mass political movements all around the world. However, the ones who influenced the political theatre and its historiography the most were the post-war (especially Vietnam War and Cold War) theatres.⁶⁸ The following decade witnessed the production of the guerilla performances and avant-garde theatres, which spread all around the world.⁶⁹ A group of them developed in the United States and were pioneered by Richard Schechner.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, with the rise of new 'sister disciplines' and especially with the development of subaltern and gender studies, a new interest in theatre as a 'site of resistance' gained importance. The rise of the post colonial theory brought other perspectives on the cultural and political dimensions of performance, as performance came to be recognized not only in the operations of hegemonic political powers, but perhaps more importantly in resistance to those powers.⁷⁰ The most influential name in the post colonial drama was Homi Bhabha with his book *The Location of Culture* (1994)⁷¹. In the 1990s and 2000s, a number of scholars worked on the functioning of the colonial theatre as a popular form of opposition

⁶⁸ See: Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 194-197; Nora M. Alter, "Vietnamese Theatre of Resistance: Thich Nhat Hanh's Metaphysical Sortie on the Margins," in *Imperialism and Theatre: Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 1-19; Spencer Golup, "Charlie Chaplin, Soviet Icon," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 199-220; John Bell, "Beyond the Cold War: Bread and Puppet and the New World Order," in *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater*, edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 31-53.

⁶⁹ See: Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, p. 180; Richard Schechner, "Guerilla Theatre: May 1970," *The Drama Review*, no. 14/3 (1970), pp. 163-168; Michale Quinn, "Statellite Drama: Imperialism, Slovakia and the Case of Peter Karvas," in *Imperialism and Theatre: Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 214-230; Lisa Jo. Epstein, "Flexing Images, Changing Vision: The Visions: The Twin Poles of Contemporary French Political Theater," in *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater*, edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 54-73.

⁷⁰ Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, p. 198.

⁷¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

towards imperialism.⁷² The postcolonial perspective in the theatre triggered race studies as well. The struggles between the politics of cultural assimilation and black consciousness are publicly staged both in the colonial lands and in the metropolitan centers and became subjects of historical inquiry.⁷³

In a parallel line with the subaltern studies, gender studies and memory studies, disciplines consolidating themselves in the second half of the twentieth century were interested in theatrical representation. Gender studies were not only

⁷² See: Alan Filewood, "Erect Sons and Dutiful Daughters: Imperialism, Empires and Canadian Theatre," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 56-71; Sue Ellen Case, "The Eurocolonial Reception of Sanskrit Poetics," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 111-131; Sudipto Chatterjee, "Mise en (Colonial) Scene: The Theatre of the Bengal Renaissance," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 19-38; Robert Kavanagh, *Theatre and Cultural Struggle in South Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1985); Mary Karen Dahl, "Postcolonial British Theatre: Black Voices at the Center," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 38-56; Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 198-205; Donald Frishmann, "Contemporary Mayan Theatre and Ethnic Conflict: The Recovery and (RE) Interpretation of History," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 71-85; Gainor, Introduction to *Imperialism and Theatre*, pp. xiii-xv; Michael Hays, "Representing Empire: Class, Culture, and the Popular Theatre in the Nineteenth Century," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 132-148; Loren Kruger, "'That Fluctuating Movement of National Consciousness': Protest, Publicity, and Postcolonial Theatre in South Africa," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 148-164; Robert Eric Livingston, "Decolonizing the Theatre: Césaire, Serreau and the Drama of Negritude," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 182-199; Julie Stone Peters, "Intercultural Performance, Theatre Anthropology, and the Imperialist Critique: Identities, Inheritances, and Neo-Orthodoxies," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 199-214; Elaine Savory "Strategies for Survival: Anti-Imperialist Theatrical Forms in the Anglophone Caribbean," in *Imperialism and Theatre. Essays on World Theatre, Drama and Performance*, edited by J. Ellen Gainor (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 243-257.

⁷³ See: Dahl, "Postcolonial British Theatre: Black Voices at the Center," pp. 38-56; Livingston, "Decolonizing the Theatre: Césaire, Serreau and the Drama of Negritude," pp. 182-199, Kim F. Hall, "Sexual Politics and Cultural Identity in The Masque of Blackness," in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 3-19.

interested in gendered representations⁷⁴, but also intersected with a different genre of drama, feminist theatre.

Recent scholarship on memory studies have been interested in the theater studies as well.⁷⁵ Since ‘memory is socially and culturally constructed through different kinds of representations’, and since ‘it acts as a storage of visual images’, some scholars sought for alternative approaches in the theatre history.⁷⁶

Before concluding this section, I would like to mention that history of art and architecture and semiotics also benefit from the theatre and theatre history in developing their works.⁷⁷

My little survey in the field convinced me that I can never know exactly where the disciplines of history and the theater intersected since they don’t really have borders. Therefore, even though I tried to touch upon the works intersecting the theatre and history, I recognized that they are actually much more numerous than I can ever imagine. Consequently, I want to conclude this part with saluting the *new historicism* which reminded scholars that the fields of literature and history are extremely entangled.

⁷⁴ See: Marcia Blumberg, “Re-staging Resistance, Re-Viewing Women: 1990s Productions of Fugard’s Hello and Goodbye and Boesman and Lena,” in *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater*, edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 122-145; Josephine Lee, “Pity and Terror as Public Acts: Reading Feminist Politics in the Plays of Maria Irene Fornes,” in *Staging Resistance, Essays on Political Theater*, edited by Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 166-185; Reinelt, “Theorizing Utopia: Edward Bond’s War Plays,” pp. 221-241.

⁷⁵ See: Jeffrey Mason, “The Politics of Metamora,” in *The Performance of Power, Theatrical Discourse and Politics*, edited by Sue-Ellen Case and Janelle Reinelt (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991), pp. 92-111; Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as a Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003); Adrienne Kaeppler, “Memory and Knowledge in the Production of Dance,” in *Images of Memory, on Remembering and Representation*, edited by Susanne K uchler and Walter Melion (Washington, London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 109-120.

⁷⁶ Walter Melion and Susanne K uchler, Introduction to *Images of Memory, on Remembering and Representation*, edited by Susanne K uchler and Walter Melion (Washington, London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), pp. 4-7.

⁷⁷ See: Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Situating the Ottoman Theater Within the Middle Eastern Context

In the previous sections, I tried to give an overview of the Western literature on the theatre history and alternative approaches of history which take the theatre, scripts, and performances as sources of historical research. Consequently, I realized that the theatre history is not only a part of the European early modern and modern history, but also a developing field of history since 1980s. On the other hand, my survey also showed that the literature of the Middle Eastern theatre history is extremely limited. Even though we can find some sources on the traditional performances such as puppetry⁷⁸, we cannot find enough sources on staged performances. One reason of this limitation lies in the very nature of the theatre, which was born and grew as a 'Western style' cultural form. It always kept its reputation as an 'elitist' form of art. Moreover, since the European social structures and the Middle Eastern ones are not similar, theoretical frameworks like that of Bourdieu cannot be applied to the Middle Eastern context. I believe that using the theoretical frameworks of the Western theatre historiography in the Middle Eastern context would produce Eurocentric analyses and underestimate the peculiarities of the theatre in these geographies. Another reason is the restrictions of Islam on the body. Even though the recent scholarship challenges this view, the Middle East is generally considered to be 'without drama'. When we examine the general literature on the Middle Eastern theatre⁷⁹, we can see that it is actually very much under the influence of the Ottoman theatre. Europeanization of the Arab theater, for instance, was influenced by the

⁷⁸ See: Nicholas Martinovitch, *The Turkish Theater* (New York: Theatre Arts Inc., 1933).

⁷⁹ Jacob M. Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema* (University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia, 1958); Samuel Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1993); Arlette Roth, *Le Théâtre Algérien de la Langue Dialectale 1926-1954*, (Paris: François Maspero, 1967).

Ottoman modernization and was led by Marun Al- Naqqash (1817-1855) who introduced the modern theater to Egypt. Al-Naqqash had knowledge of the French and Italian theatres, and he introduced Moliere's plays to his audience. Soon Al-Naqqash held the monopoly of the theatre in Egypt.⁸⁰ Al-Naqqash was also very influential in the introduction of the modern theatre into the North African peninsula.⁸¹ Samuel Moreh informs us that the Western style theatre became so popular in Egypt that "men paid all their earnings to attend it, leaving their families hungry."⁸² While Jacob Landau published the first seminal works in the field in the 1950s, the recent scholarship on the Middle Eastern theater led by Philip Sadgrove and Masud Hamdan introduced social perspectives and historical analyses in the political development of the theater. Sadgrove surveys the development of the Western theater in Egypt under the French and the British occupations first by scrutinizing the attempts of founding a modern Arab theater in the 1870s and then by examining the projects of the national theatre.⁸³ Hamdan, on the other hand, perceives theater as an aesthetic medium of mass communication that combines art and politics in the Arabic society by scrutinizing a later time period.⁸⁴ The theatre developed incredibly in these lands via the inevitable interaction with the European powers. For instance, the North African and especially Algerian theatre emerged after the First World War both with the emergence of a national consciousness and

⁸⁰ Landau, *Studies in the Arab Theater and Cinema*, p. 57.

⁸¹ See: Arlette Roth, *Le Théâtre Algérien de la Langue Dialectale 1926-1954*, (Paris: François Maspero, 1967).

⁸² Moreh, *Live Theatre and Dramatic Literature in the Medieval Arab World*, p. 161.

⁸³ Philip Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century (1799-1882)* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1996).

⁸⁴ Mas'ud Hamdan, *Poetics, Politics and Protest in Arab Theatre* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2006).

with Western interactions.⁸⁵ While these territories which were parts of the Ottoman Empire or which were highly influenced by the Ottoman theatre developed their own political repertoire after the First World War, Iran--or to put it more correctly, Persia--seems to be one of the few models in the political uses of the theatre for the Ottomans in the early twentieth century. It is very interesting that the Iranian Constitutionalist Revolution of 1905 paved the way for the Iranian theater troupes and Tehran public playhouses.⁸⁶ As Willem Floor's *The History of Theater in Iran* informs us the constitutionalist regime perceived the theater as a vehicle to diffuse the reformist ideas among the public, and therefore, encouraged its consumption.⁸⁷

The literature on the Middle Eastern theatre, its development and its historiography is a developing field. This literature takes its cue by the Ottoman theatre historiography, which produced a number of works even though some have problematic aspects, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

⁸⁵ Roth, *Le Théâtre Algérien de la Langue Dialectale 1926-1954*, p. 22.

⁸⁶ Brummett, *The Image and The Imperialism*, p. 206.

⁸⁷ Willem Floor, *The History of Theater in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2005), p. 222.

CHAPTER III

OTTOMAN THEATRE HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Literary and Historical Approaches

Unlike Western literature, Ottoman and Turkish theatre history did not attract the attention of historians of the late Ottoman history, even though it has been one of the main domains of Ottoman social life reflecting the political tension. Although the history of modern Turkish theatre, which takes the declaration of the Turkish Republic (1923) as a starting point, has been widely studied by the discipline of modern theatre studies, Ottoman theatre history remained as an understudied field.⁸⁸ One reason of this neglect can be the problem of language. Studying Ottoman theatre history does not only require the knowledge of Ottoman script, but also those of Armenian and French, since the very nature of the Ottoman theatre is multilingual. As popular theatre activities were held by the Armenian community in İstanbul, Armenian sources are very important to interpret the development of the Ottoman theater. On the other hand, since a number of the plays were translated from French, or staged in French both in the palace theatres and in the theaters of Pera, knowledge of French is also necessary in examining the repertoire.

The Ottoman theatre is studied mainly from two perspectives. The first one is the approach of literature, which evaluates theatre with its 'literary value'; and the second one is the approach which tries to take social and political aspects into account. While the first approach remained in the purview of literary analyses, the second one led Metin And (1927-2008) and Refik Ahmet Sevengil (1903- 1970)

⁸⁸ See the works of Sevda Şener, Mehmet Fuat, Zehra İpşiroğlu, Özdemir Nutku, Metin And, and Ergun Sav.

created seminal works on the history of the Ottoman Theater. Throughout this section, I will focus on the second approach which developed in the works of two generations.

Constructing a Historiography of the Late Ottoman Theater in the Works of
Metin And and Refik Ahmet Sevengil

The scholars of the first generation consist of Refik Ahmet Sevengil, Metin And, Özdemir Nutku (b.1931) and Niyazi Akı (1912-1992). While none of these leading names is a historian, Refik Ahmet Sevengil and Metin And can be considered as the two fathers of the Ottoman theatre history and historiography.

The first one of these scholars, Niyazi Akı takes the approach of literature and works on the nineteenth century dramatic literature. Niyazi Akı published two books on the subject. In the first one; *19. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*⁸⁹ (1963) (History of the Nineteenth Century Turkish Theatre), he tried to categorize the plays according to their genres, and grouped them under categories like ‘comedy’, ‘tragedy’, ‘historical dramas’, ‘romantic dramas’, ‘melodramas’, and ‘folk dramas’ without touching upon cultural, social or political aspects of the plays. In his second work, *19. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosunda Devrin Hayat ve İnsanı. Sosyopsikolojik Deneme*⁹⁰ (1974) (Lives and People of the Epoch in the Nineteenth Century Turkish Theatre: A Socio-Psychological Approach), he chose a more problematic categorization, and regrouped the plays according to the themes he selected, such as ‘love’, ‘ideologies’,

⁸⁹ Niyazi Akı, *19. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (Erzurum: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1963).

⁹⁰ Niyazi Akı, *19. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosunda Devrin Hayat ve İnsanı. Sosyopsikolojik Deneme*, (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1974).

'life', 'characters', and 'belief' etc. This approach did not only oversimplify the themes of the plays, but also depoliticized them.

The second influential name in the Ottoman theatre historiography and a pioneering scholar in the theatre studies is Özdemir Nutku. Most of his works such as *Dünya Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (The World Theatre History); *Dram Sanatı* (Art of Drama); *Gösterim Sanatı Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Dictionary of Performing Arts), *Oyunculuk Tarihi* (History of Acting); *Tiyatro ve Yazar* (The Theatre and The Playwright)⁹¹ can be considered as 'reference books'. Although Nutku conceptualized most of his works within the traditional domains of the discipline of the theatre, he was interested in the Ottoman theatre history and devoted a chapter in his work *Dünya Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (The World Theatre History) to the Ottoman theatre and classified the plays staged in the second half of the nineteenth century according to their playwrights.⁹² Niyazi Akı and Özdemir Nutku's works on the nineteenth and early twentieth century theatre literature offers a brief insight to the world of the theater in the late Ottoman era, but do not include social and political analyses on the late Ottoman theatre.

The first attempts of historicizing theatre, and 'putting all the information together' came from the two fathers of the Turkish theatre history: Refik Ahmet Sevengil and Metin And. Even though their works have some problematic aspects, both Sevengil and And introduced vast amount of sources, and tried to historicize the Ottoman and the Turkish theatres.

⁹¹ Özdemir Nutku, *Dünya Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, (İstanbul: Remzi, 1993); Özdemir Nutku, *Dram Sanatı: Tiyatroya Giriş*, (İstanbul : Kalcı Yayınevi, 1998); Özdemir Nutku, *Gösterim Sanatı Terimleri Sözlüğü*, (Ankara : Türk Dil Kurumu, 1983); Özdemir Nutku, *Modern Tiyatro Akımları: 19. Yüzyıl Tiyatrosu*, (Ankara : Dost Yayınları, 1963); Özdemir Nutku, *Oyunculuk Tarihi*, (Ankara : Dost Kitabevi, 2002); Özdemir Nutku, *Tiyatro ve Yazar*, (Ankara: Gim Yayınları , 1960).

⁹² See: Özdemir Nutku, *Dünya Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (İstanbul: Remzi, 1993).

Refik Ahmet Sevengil's *Türk Tiyatro Tarihi* (Turkish Theatre History), published in 1934, can be considered the first attempt to write a history of the Ottoman theater. Refik Ahmet Sevengil started his career as a journalist, then was nominated as a deputy in 1930 and played an influential role in the Turkish National Assembly later in his life. On the other hand, as a theater-lover, he departed with a modest claim and produced the first and the most important books on the Turkish theatre history.⁹³ In his introduction, he mentions that since there is not even a single work on the Western-style theater, he as a theater-lover wanted to share his knowledge and his little research by publishing the book as a 'first attempt'. His personal connections with the previous generation who produced most of the first play scripts of the Turkish theatre, the accessibility of the sources, and his memoirs made his narrative very fluent. In his first work, he did not intend to do any social, cultural or political analyses, but narrated a history of his own as if he was telling his memoirs. In the following years, Refik Ahmet Sevengil decided to do an inclusive monograph, comprising five volumes on the Turkish theatre history. The first of these volumes was published in 1959 under the title of *Eski Türklerde Dram Sanatı* (The Art of Drama in Ancient Turks).⁹⁴ Being influenced by the historiographical currents of the 1930s and 1940s, this study looked for the roots of drama in the Turkish societies. His second volume *Opera Sanatı İle İlk Temaslarımız* (First Contacts with the Art of Opera) was published the same year, 1959.⁹⁵ Sevengil narrated a 'history' on the introduction of the opera in the Ottoman court. Again, his narrative was similar to that of a memoir. He did not give many references other than some newspaper articles, or did not intend to make any comments or analyses on the

⁹³ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1934), pp. 9-10.

⁹⁴ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Eski Türklerde Dram Sanatı* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1959).

⁹⁵ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı ile İlk Temaslarımız* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1959).

subject. The third volume; *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu* (*Tanzimat*⁹⁶ Theatre) was published in 1961.⁹⁷ The book attempted to document the theatre activities of the Ottoman intellectuals, and mainly consisted of these chapters: ‘Şinasi and Theatre’, ‘Güllü Agop and the Gedikpaşa Theatre’, ‘Ahmet Vefik Paşa and Theatre’, ‘Ziya Paşa and Theatre’, ‘Namık Kemal and Theatre’. Starting from his third volume, Sevengil’s narrative gained a more historical and more documentary manner. Even though he historicized theatre in a certain intellectual milieu, he chose to form his narrative on the ‘important’ names, and left many others out.⁹⁸ Although Sevengil used a highly selective method, the way he formed his narratives and the sources he used constructed a solid material on the complex relationship of the Ottoman intellectuals (most of whom were politicians) with the popular theatre. His fourth volume: *Saray Tiyatrosu* (Palace Theatre) examining the imperial theatre under four successive sultans during the nineteenth century was published in 1962. Sevengil, in a way, strengthened the division between the imperial theatre which was under the patronage of the Ottoman sultan and the popular theatre which was under the patronage of the Ottoman intellectuals. His third volume *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, and his fourth volume *Saray Tiyatrosu* were both on the nineteenth century, but narrated two separate theatre histories, and therefore drew a line between the theatre activities held under the patronage of the sultan and the theatre activities held under the patronage of the Ottoman intellectuals. According to Sevengil, the theatre activities in İstanbul

⁹⁶ ‘*Tanzimat*’ means ‘reorganization’ and refers to the era between 1839-1876. The era began with the declaration of the Imperial Rescript of the Rose Chamber in 1839, and ended with the First Constitutional era in 1876. Starting from 1839, a number of reforms on administration are undertaken. This era did witness to the vast movements of bureaucratization, secularization and modernization.

⁹⁷ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1961).

⁹⁸ Some of these names will be included in the works of Metin And.

were 'enclosed within the walls of the Palace'.⁹⁹ I believe that this twosome image is misleading since it does not reflect the complex relationship between the imperial and the popular theatre.

In his last volume: *Meşrutiyet¹⁰⁰Tiyatrosu* (Theatre of the Constitutional Monarchy), published in 1968, he observed the popular theatre activities via scrutinizing the popular theatre troupes.¹⁰¹ The book consisted of the analyses of the theater troupes such as 'The Troupe of Minakyan', 'The Troupe of Ahmet Fehim', 'The Troupe of Burhaneddin', 'The Troupe of Benemeciyan', 'The Troupe of Mürebbi- Hissiyat', 'Troupes of Muhsin Ertugrul', 'The Troupe of the Navy', 'State Conservatory' etc. In brief, he composed his narrative upon the study of the theatre companies and actors. Differing from other works on the theatre of the constitutional era, the book included Sevengil's personal conversations with the playwrights of the era like Kazım Nami Duru.¹⁰² His personal connection to the era did not only make his narrative stronger but also helped to conceptualize Sevengil's perception and political ideas for the reader. On the other hand, Sevengil's narrative had one serious shortcoming. He wrote his books within a strong historical discourse inherited from the 1930s. Sevengil's narrative was problematically in the same line with the narrative of the post-revolutionary theatre scripts glorifying the regime of the Unionists and condemning the 'tyranny' of the Sultan Abdülhamid II. He neither criticized these plays, nor evaluated them.

⁹⁹ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1962), p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ 'Meşrutiyet' means 'constitutional monarchy', and refers to the period between 1908; known as the 'Revolution of 1908', and 1923; the declaration of the Turkish Republic.

¹⁰¹ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1968).

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 10.

The second father of the Turkish theatre history; Metin And criticized Refik Ahmet Sevensil for being very selective.¹⁰³ Metin And argues that Sevensil just touched upon some main theatre troupes, and left many relatively small theater groups behind. One can consider Refik Ahmet Sevensil as the initiator of the Turkish Theater Historiography, and Metin And as the father of the Turkish Theatre history as a discipline. Metin And is the only scholar who conducted research in a number of languages, and he is the only one who introduced Turkish theatre history to many different academic circles and languages. As I will discuss later, Metin And's narrative is the dominant narrative in the field.

Although Metin And cites Sevensil in his bibliography, he specifically underlines that he did not receive help from anyone and that almost all the sources he used were his own.¹⁰⁴ Metin And states that he prepared his four volumes on the Turkish theatre history as reference books. He mentioned that his methodology is 'to put everything into these volumes without any attempt to choose or to evaluate', and legitimized the most problematic aspect of his work: 'putting everything together without analyzing!'¹⁰⁵ Although Metin And's scholarship has some shortcomings, the vast information he introduced formed the body of the discipline and succeeded in becoming 'the reference books' he aimed them to be. On the other hand, Metin And's volumes also introduced two important challenges in the field: The problem of periodization and the problem of categorization.¹⁰⁶ Metin And divided the Turkish

¹⁰³ Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971), p. 9.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁶ "Türk Tiyatrosu tarihini artık kesin olarak dört dönemde inceliyoruz. Bunlardan ilki gerek köylerde, gerek kentlerde yüzyıllar boyunca Türk halkının yabancı etkilerden uzak, kendi yaratıcı gücüyle geliştirdiği özgün Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu. Bundan sonraki üç dönemin ortak kaynağı Batı tiyatrosu ve kültürüdür. Bunların ilki Tanzimat ve İstibdat'ta Türk Tiyatrosu (1839-1908). Üçüncü

theater history into four distinct periods. Unlike Refik Ahmet Sevengil's organization of his five volumes, Metin And's volumes are defined with concrete dates. The first volume *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu*¹⁰⁷ (The Traditional Turkish Theatre), published in 1969, narrated 'the creative Turkish performances that were formed without foreign influences, but via the Turkish creative minds.'¹⁰⁸ The second volume *Tanzimat ve İstibdat'ta Türk Tiyatrosu (1839-1908)* (The Turkish Theater of *Tanzimat* and *İstibdat*¹⁰⁹), published in 1972, provides concrete historical dates such as the declaration of the Imperial Rescript of the Rose Chamber (1839) as the beginning, and the declaration of the Second Constitution in 1908 as the ending point of an era.¹¹⁰ Similarly, the third volume; *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu (1908-1923)* (The Turkish Theater in the Constitutionalist Era 1908-1923), published in 1971, takes the declaration of the Second Constitution (1908) as the beginning, and the declaration of the modern Turkish Republic as the closure of another era. This volume, drawing some parallels between the French and Ottoman Revolutionary theatres, shows some tendencies to historicize the revolutionary theatre of the Ottoman Empire within a comparative perspective.¹¹¹ The last volume; *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu* (The Theatre of the Turkish Republic), published in 1973,

dönem ise bu kitabın konusu olan Meşrutiyet'te Türk Tiyatrosu (1908-1923)'dur. Dördüncü ve sonuncusu ise Cumhuriyet'in 50. Yıldönümünde yayınlanmasını umduğum Cumhuriyet'te Türk Tiyatrosu (1923-1973)'dur." ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Metin And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1969).

¹⁰⁸ And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ *İstibdat* means 'tyranny' and refers to the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II.

¹¹⁰ Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, (Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, Ankara, 1972).

¹¹¹ And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 9.

took 1908 as the starting point of a new distinct era.¹¹² Consequently, I can claim that his narrative emphasized the historical ruptures rather than continuities between these four periods. The second problem in Metin And's narrative is the problem of categorization. Metin And used the very same classifications in his last three books for three different time periods. While the problem of periodization created a disconnected, static image of history, the problem of classification/categorization made his volumes even more problematic. He classified the theater of *Tanzimat* (the Reformation period), *Meşrutiyet* (The Constitutionalist period) and *Cumhuriyet* (the Republican era) with the same schemes without regarding the particularities of each period. Metin And scrutinized 'the history of theatre' mainly under three chapters: 'Stage and Acting', 'Overview of the Dramatic Literature', and 'the Plays' in all three periods. These classifications ended up with the inevitable oversimplification of the complex plays and entangled politics. Moreover, since it is very hard to classify one play under one single category, or one playwright who produced scripts of different genres, under one single genre, this problem created repetitions in the narrative. After discussing the problems of periodization and classification in Metin And's works, I should also ask the question: Was it possible not to periodize or not to categorize? When I looked for an answer in the Western literature on theatre studies, I recognized that although they challenged the periodization paradigms in the late 1980s, and argued for the practice of 'history of mentalities' in the theatre studies, none of the theorists could find 'the best way to periodize'.¹¹³ For instance, the literary critic Thomas Postlewait challenged the tendency of periodization by stating

¹¹² Metin And, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosu, 1923-1983*, (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1983).

¹¹³ See: Thomas Postlewait, "The Criteria for Periodization in Theatre History." *Theatre Journal*, no. 40 (1998), pp. 299-318.

that: “Whatever our method we must recognize that the current evasive practice of making “time charts”, with theatre events in one section and political events in another, tells us almost nothing!” But again, he concluded by arguing that he could not find a way to blend the political events with the theatrical ones.¹¹⁴ If one recalls that Metin And prepared his works in the 1960s, before the rise of the cultural and narrative turns in the Western historiography, one can admit that these were groundbreaking works, making a whole latent theatre literature available for researchers.

Sevengil and And, the two fathers of the Turkish theatre history constructed the backbone of the field, and offered extensive sources and references for the study of the Ottoman theatre. However, both Metin And and Refik Ahmet Sevengil did not consider the role of the audience and the impact of the performances which can indeed reverse the message of the script depending on how it was performed in their works. On the other hand, even though they worked through the texts, they did not intend to do textual analyses. One other problem is their concentration on the dominant theatre troupes. Although Metin And criticized Sevengil of being too elitist, he did not include the amateur groups and small groups of performers in his analyses, either. Besides these problematic aspects, I think that the main three problems challenging the narratives are, as I mentioned before, the problem of periodization, the problem of categorization, and the problem of historical bias. Even though the latter problem is more obvious in Sevengil’s narratives, both authors carries a historical bias towards the old regime, and a tendency to glorify the reign of the Committee of Union and Progress, and subsequently the victory of the new

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 310.

Turkish Republic. The Republican historical discourses also prevented the historicization of the plays within the dynamics of their own eras.

While the books of Metin And and Refik Ahmet Sevengil can be considered 'bibles' for the researcher, another reference source *Tiyatro Bibliografyası (1856-1928)* (Bibliography of The Theatre 1856-1928), published in 1967, is as important as the previously mentioned books for scholars. *Tiyatro Bibliografyası (1856-1928)* is prepared by two librarians who 'loved the theatre': Türkan Poyraz and Nurnisa Tuğrul.¹¹⁵ I think that this work is extremely important since it is the only bibliographical source accomplishing a detailed analysis in the main libraries and archives of İstanbul and Ankara. On the other hand, since the authors did not conduct the research in the small or provincial libraries such as the National Library of İzmir, which is indeed very rich in the field of the theater, the bibliography can be considered 'incomplete'.

In the Footsteps of the First Generation: Revisiting the Late Ottoman Theater

The second generation theatre historians and literary critics chose to stand closer to the approach of literature, which tries to evaluate the theatre with its 'literary value' rather than historicizing it. 'The second generation' mainly consists of three names; Efdal Sevinçli, Alemdar Yalçın and Enver Töre; professors currently teaching in the departments of literature and performing arts in different universities of Turkey. The second generation did not intend to historicize the theatre scripts or to include historical and social analyses. Being highly influenced by the first generation, the

¹¹⁵ Türkan Poyraz, and Nurnisa Tuğrul. *Tiyatro Bibliyografyası (1859-1928)*. (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Matbaası, 1967), p. viii.

works of the second generation revisited Metin And's and Refik Ahmet Sevengil's research.

I would like to start by discussing the works of Efdal Sevinçli, which formed around two axes; the theatre activities held in İzmir, and the life of Muhsin Ertugrul (1892-1979), a pioneering name in the development of the modern Turkish theatre and cinema. In his work on the theatre activities held in İzmir¹¹⁶, Sevinçli did not use a chronological narrative, but rather chose to transliterate some articles on the theatre activities held in İzmir between the years 1839-1923. While he initiated 'a local history of the theatre', the book did not historicize the Ottoman theater. On the other hand, in his works on the biography of Muhsin Ertugrul, he analyzed the mental and the professional worlds of Muhsin Ertuğrul and historicized his life within the politics of the late Ottoman and early Republican history.¹¹⁷

The second pioneering name in the second generation; Alemdar Yalçın claims to accomplish 'a work not only on the literature of the Constitutionalist era, but also on the social and cultural history of the era.'¹¹⁸ He worked on the plays staged after the Revolution of 1908, and organized them into five thematic categories such as 'the scripts themed on the old regime', 'political ideologies', 'education', 'city life', and 'family'. His categorization is reminiscent of the categorization of Metin And and Niyazi Aki. His classification underestimated the links between these scripts, and made the historicization of the plays harder. Yalçın gives the abstracts of some scripts but doesn't get involved in textual analyses. On the other hand, he

¹¹⁶ Efdal Sevinçli, *İzmir'de Tiyatro* (İzmir: Ege Yayıncılık, 1994).

¹¹⁷ Efdal Sevinçli, *Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyet'e Sinemadan Tiyatroya Muhsin Ertuğrul* (İstanbul: Broy Yayınları, 1987); Efdal Sevinçli, *Görüşleriyle, Uygulamalarıyla Muhsin Ertuğrul* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1990).

¹¹⁸ Alemdar Yalçın, *II Meşrutiyette Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ Basın Yayın, 2002), p. 7.

prepares a very detailed list of the plays that were staged or announced to be staged by scrutinizing the works of the first generation theatre historians.

The last name of the third generation is Enver Töre, who remained under the influence of Metin And and Alemdar Yalçın, who was also his thesis advisor. In his work *İkinci Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu, Yazarlar-Piyeler*¹¹⁹ (The Theater of the Constitutionalist Era, Playwrights and Scripts), published in 2006, Töre classifies the plays according to their playwrights. Enver Töre's book is a collection of bibliographies where he gives brief bibliographical information on the author and his works. His second book is on the theatre and women.¹²⁰ He took 'women' as a distinctly separate category, and focused on 'the women' in the world theatre history without regarding their nationalities, professions, and ethnic backgrounds. In his third book, Töre transliterates a selective collection of articles published by an Ottoman literary critic, Müfit Ratip.¹²¹ In a similar way, he transliterated and published some works of two Ottoman playwrights, Şemsettin Sami and Cenap Şahabettin with an introduction in the latter years.¹²²

All in all, I can argue that the second generation followed the footsteps of the first one and revisited the works of Metin And, Niyazi Akı, and Refik Ahmet Sevengil.

While the second generation did not produce groundbreaking works on the theatre history, some articles and unpublished dissertations attempt to approach the

¹¹⁹ Enver Töre, *İkinci Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu Yazarlar – Piyeler* (İstanbul: DUYAP, 2006).

¹²⁰ Enver Töre, *Hayattan Sahneye Kadınlar* (İstanbul: DUYAP, 2006).

¹²¹ Enver Töre, *Fecr-i Atinin Kurucularından Müfit Ratip Makaleleri* (İstanbul: MVT Yayıncılık, 2005).

¹²² Enver Töre, *Cenap Şahabeddin'in Tiyatroları* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2005); Enver Töre, *Şemseddin Sami'inin Tiyatroları* (İstanbul: ASOS, 2008).

subject from a more historical perspective. İlham Khuri Makdisi's dissertation "The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914" is a groundbreaking study scrutinizing the articulation of radicalism in and between Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹²³ Makdisi's thesis also links radicalism to the rise of the press and the theater, and offers new approaches to interpret 'theater' within the politics of its time. Although the dissertation is not on the role of the theater in the late Ottoman politics or on the theatre history per se, the second chapter "Theater and Radical Politics in Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria 1860-1914", examines the intellectual networks through the theater, and historicizes theater within the social and political dynamics of its age as an important agent for the radicalization. Therefore, I believe that her work offers a solid theoretical and historical example in the field. I should also note two other theses working on the theatre history: The first one is the dissertation of Özlem Nemutlu on the theatre activities in İzmir between 1908-1923.¹²⁴ Completing her doctorate in the literature department of Ege University, Nemutlu did not focus on the historical aspects of the plays, but rather chose to take both the methodology and the classifications of Alemdar Yalçın and Metin And. The second thesis I want to emphasize is that of Bilge Seçkin. Entitled 'Staging the Revolution', her master's thesis touches upon three plays; *Vatan*, *Besa* and *Sabah-ı Hürriyet* to interpret the role of the theater in the Ottoman society.¹²⁵

¹²³ İlham Khuri Makdisi, "The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2003).

¹²⁴ Özlem Nemutlu, "II. Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyetin İlanına Kadar İzmir'de Tiyatro Faaliyetleri," (PhD diss., Ege University, 2005).

¹²⁵ Bilge Seçkin, "Staging the Revolution," (Master's Thesis, Bogaziçi University, 2007).

There are also some articles attempting to accomplish a social and historical analysis through examining the politics of the theater. First of them is Mete Çetik's short article on the theater activities held after 1908.¹²⁶ Even though the article resembles an ordinary chapter of Metin And's *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, the very attempt itself is remarkable. The second article which historicizes the theatre within politics of censorship is that of Fatmagül Demirel.¹²⁷ Another work of this kind is Fatih Altuğ's article discussing the power struggles of the Ottoman elites through reading the scripts of Namık Kemal.¹²⁸

All in all, I think that the field of theatre studies is an understudied field by the scholars of the late Ottoman Empire. Having reviewed both the Western theatre historiography and the Ottoman theatre historiography, I will try to historicize the Ottoman theater within the dynamics of its age in the following parts. By arguing that the Ottoman theatre staged the political tensions from its very introduction to the Ottoman politics in the second half of the nineteenth century, I will try to scrutinize what Greenblatt calls 'social energy' that was created via theatre before and after the declaration of the Second Constitution in 1908. In trying to do so, I will also look at the theatre scripts written in the following days of the Revolution, and scrutinize not only the representation of the *ancien regime* through theatre but also the formation of public opinion through public theatres.

¹²⁶ Mete Çetik, "Siyasi Tiyatroda İttihad Terakki ve 1908 Devrimi." *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 145 (1996), pp. 4-11.

¹²⁷ Fatmagül Demirel, "II Abdülhamid Dönemi Tiyatro Sansürü ... ve Perdeler Sansürle Acıldı," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 63 (1999), pp. 36-43.

¹²⁸ Fatih Altuğ, "'Eksik Olma Kemal': Namık Kemal'in Temsillerinde Örtük İktidar," *Kritik*, no.1 (2008), pp. 35-88.

CHAPTER IV

PERFORMANCE AS POLITICS OF MODERNIZATION IN THE LATE OTTOMAN WORLD

Performing modernization becomes one of the most important aspects of the Late Ottoman politics. Both the Ottoman sultans and the Ottoman intellectuals made efforts to reconstruct a new iconography for the modernization. The new imperial representation was centered on the performance of ‘Westernization’ which was one of the main political agendas of the Ottoman intelligentsia from the second half of the eighteenth century. Ottoman Westernization had to be visible in the public space in order to be internalized by the masses. Within these currents, theatrical aspects of the Ottoman modernization were over-emphasized. I believe that different domains of performances offer us one complete image of a gradual transformation and should be considered together. Consequently, I take the term performance with its broader meaning, and argue that different ‘performances of Westernization’ are indeed very much entangled.

I presume that the alteration of rituals, performances and body politics starting from the eighteenth century, like the containment of Ottoman traditional dances of *köçek*, *rakkas* and *tavşan*¹²⁹, the increasing visibility of Ottoman women as a performer, the attempts of establishing a “modern theater audience”, and the emergence of hybrid forms of theatricality like the *Tuluat Theater* (a satirical genre in-between Western drama and Ottoman traditional shadow theater), can indeed stage the spirit of the social and cultural transformations.¹³⁰ On the other hand, when

¹²⁹ They are traditional Ottoman dance forms performed by male dancers dressed as women. For further information, see: Dorit Klebe, “Effeminate Professional Musicians in Sources of Ottoman-Turkish Court Poetry and the Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Music in Art*, no. 30 (2005), pp. 97-116.

¹³⁰ It may be also described as the indoor and staged version of *Orta Oyunu*.

considered together with the modifications of the Ottoman courtly performances, such as the incorporation of Western music and drama into the imperial ceremonies, the formation of women's fanfare in the imperial harem, and the emerging popular genres of hybrid performances can offer an alternative field to study the, so-called, "modernization" experience of the Ottoman society. Believing in the benefits of this kind of a perspective, I will try to touch upon an understudied field, history of Ottoman performance (theatre in particular), and aim to observe the transformation of the Ottoman diplomatic relations, the emergence of the public opinion and mass politics through the manipulation of theater.

In the late Ottoman world, many aspects of modernization gain theatricality in order to be represented both to the domestic and the foreign audiences. One of the first initiators of 'modern European lives' in the Ottoman capital were the travel accounts of the Ottoman ambassadors, a genre called *sefaretname*. These narratives did not only give detailed descriptions of everyday performances, public spaces and cultural lives of the places visited, but also displayed the perception of Europe by the Ottoman ambassadors. A special focus of these *sefaretnames* was the staged performances. Being influenced by these accounts, the Ottoman authorities emphasized the theatrical aspects of the modernization like the use of public gardens, the representation of 'Ottomans' in world fairs, and the transformation of the courtly rituals. Within all these aspects of modernization and their performances, what makes theater more attractive as a 'subject of history' for me is its political function. While most aspects of the social and cultural life were only transformed, theatre - adopted as a Western institution- marginalized and emerged as a newly discovered political space. This chapter will try to touch upon the new kinds of theatricalities in order to historicize the development of theater within the Ottoman political agenda.

In the following lines, I will try to examine the entrance of Western music and drama into the Ottoman politics, first by touching upon different realms of performances such as world fairs and imperial celebrations, and second by observing the internalization of the Western performances in the Ottoman Palace, and lastly by scrutinizing the transformation of the Naum Theater into a political institution.

Ottoman Aspirations for Western Forms:
New Kinds of Theatricalities

The transformation of the public spaces, the vanishing forms of traditional performances, the construction of a new Ottoman image in the world fairs, and the theatricalization of some imperial rituals are indeed very much entangled and developed gradually within the Ottoman concept of Westernization. The discovery of performance as a political and diplomatic means can be traced back to the travel accounts of Ottoman ambassadors visiting Europe. The Ottoman observation of Europe and European ways of life, in these *sefaretnames* introduced new perceptions of performance, theater in particular.

These narratives, which in their own turn were as performative as the events they narrated, gave detailed information on the European everyday performances such as the use of the promenade spaces, the café theaters and leisure activities. These *sefaretnames* show clearly that the Ottoman court had indeed followed the developments in the European opera and drama since the late seventeenth century. Ahmet Refik Sevengil, gives us a detailed list of Ottoman ambassadors who in their *sefaretnames* mentioned their European theater experiences.¹³¹ Among this corpus of

¹³¹ For the translation of the related texts, see: Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı*, pp. 85-87.

travel narratives, a very rich travel account is that of Yirmizsekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi (d. 1732), who went to France in 1719, and published his travel account in 1737 in the first Ottoman printing house: İbrahim Müteferrika Matbaası.¹³² Yirmizsekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi was particularly intrigued by the European operas.¹³³ Describing in detail the architecture of the Opéra of Paris, and the Opera of Palais Royale, like in the *surname* genre, he also informed his readers about the sitting order of the king and his entourage, the surrounding decorative elements, the indoor stage, the instruments and the plays. Similarly, Mustafa Hattı Efendi (ca. 1860-1760) reported on the opera and the theater performances he watched in his travel account on the Habsburgs in 1748. Likewise, Ahmet Resmi (d. 1783), in his account gave detailed descriptions of the opera and drama performances he participated in the Habsburg Empire. In a parallel line, the Ottoman ambassadors in the Russian and Prussian states, like Abdülkerim Paşa, Ahmet Azmi Efendi, Mustafa Rasih Paşa reported on the plays and the librettos.¹³⁴ These accounts did not only inform Ottoman authorities on staged performances but also included details on everyday performances. The European public and promenade spaces, the café culture, and the visibility of women in the public spaces were reported in great detail. Indeed, the spatial transformation of the Ottoman capital İstanbul, in the late eighteenth century, shows a similar pattern with that reported by the Ottoman ambassadors. As the art historian Shrine Hamadeh mentions the emergence of new spaces and forms of sociability, the participation of the ordinary people in the making of the city, its spaces, its architecture, and its leisure arenas such as taverns

¹³² *ibid.*, p. 8.

¹³³ For further information, see: Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹³⁴ For further information, see: Ahmet Refik Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı*, pp. 8-15; Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 30-37.

and coffeehouses show not only the transformation of the public sphere but also the transformation of everyday performances and practices.¹³⁵ Taking these observations into consideration, one can examine the efforts of Westernization in the urban sphere by the end of the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, as art historian Zeynep Çelik underlines, a new definition of public space based on ‘pleasure’ emerged and developed. Taksim Garden became the “promenade favorite” of the Pera community where music played and visiting French and Italian groups performed plays and operettas.¹³⁶

Traditional Ottoman performances were subject to change as well. As the patronage of Western dance and drama dominated the Palace’s repertoire, the traditional Ottoman dances performed by *rakkas*, *köçek*, and *tavşan* were forbidden in 1857.¹³⁷ The prohibition of traditional forms of Ottoman dance was followed by the increasing visibility of Ottoman women as performers.¹³⁸ While this banishment signifies a transition in the dance patterns, it also signifies a transformation in gender definitions and body politics in the Ottoman society.

A similar representation can be observed in world fairs, where the Ottoman State was represented to the international community. Within this representation, performance, theatre, music and dance in “exclusively ethnic character” became indispensable attractions at every fair. For instance, in the World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893, the Ottoman Empire participated with a team of sixty-five

¹³⁵ For further information, see: Shrine Hamadeh, *The City’s Pleasures: İstanbul in the Eighteenth Century* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2008).

¹³⁶ Zeynep Çelik, *The Remaking of İstanbul. Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1986), p. 69.

¹³⁷ Dorit Klebe, “Effeminate Professional Musicians in Sources of Ottoman-Turkish Court Poetry and the Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Music in Art*, no. 30 (2005), p. 108.

¹³⁸ For further information, see the works of Hasmik Khalapyan and Fahriye Dinçer on the first Ottoman female performers.

performers and staged eight plays.¹³⁹ Again, Zeynep Çelik gives an account of a theater performance at the world fair held in Paris in 1900 by the Ottoman Armenian actors.¹⁴⁰ There, the group produced “operettas” based on the Turkish daily life and customs, while Italianizing the performances by using Italian music. In these world fairs, theater became one of the new facets of the Ottoman modernization. Hence, I can argue that even in the fairs, the Ottoman theater gained a political meaning. Ironically, as the Ottoman interest in the West increased, the Western demand for the Ottoman culture was still only focused on its Eastern aspects. While the Ottoman state saw these fairs as a ‘modern’ performance, for the West, the Ottoman pavilion was yet another aspect of the East. While the Ottoman state aspired for a modern Western display in the world fairs mainly for the foreign audience, it followed a similar trend for the domestic audience in the imperial ceremonies, and particularly in the Friday processions.

Within the politics of modernization, imperial celebrations, which can be considered the best means of ‘self-representation,’ were transformed. Some of the imperial celebrations like Friday processions and the imperial reception ceremonies were not only ‘Westernized’ through the incorporation of some European elements, but were also ‘politicized’ through the incorporation of Western music and drama as diplomatic features. Interestingly, the court ritual which adopted more Western elements than others seems to be the most religious one. Friday procession, which was not considered to be an official ‘imperial celebration’ until the nineteenth century became a public ceremony by the second half of the nineteenth century, and

¹³⁹ Cafer Sarıkaya, “1893 Şikago Sergisi’nde Osmanlı Tiyatrosu”, *Topluşsal Tarih*, no. 146 (2006), pp. 66-71; Cafer Sarıkaya, “Celebrating Difference: “Turkish Theatre” in the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893,” (Master’s Thesis, Bogaziçi University, 2010).

¹⁴⁰ Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), p. 24.

incorporated European military music. As historian Hakan Karateke mentions, until the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (1785-1839), the Friday processions were not regularized. However, starting with the reign of the Sultan Mahmud II, the Friday processions became public manifestations of ‘Westernization’ in the imperial ideologies.¹⁴¹ Moreover, as Karateke argues, Friday processions turned out to be public performances including non-Muslims and European visitors. Special lodges were placed for the foreign audiences around the Friday mosques. Before the Sultan arrived, women of the imperial harem got there and waited for him. Imperial orchestra announced the arrival of the Sultan by playing a song or a march. It is also noteworthy that the imperial band played operas from Mozart and Rossini in the Friday prayers.¹⁴² In a similar line, as will be mentioned in the following part, the imperial reception ceremonies held for the European sovereigns incorporated Western performances in the Ottoman diplomatic language.

All these aspects of social and cultural transformations are formulated within a language expressed through different forms of performances. Consequently, it would not be wrong to argue that performance, with a broader definition, gained a fundamental importance in the late Ottoman politics and was used to display the new iconography of the Ottoman Empire both to the foreign and domestic audiences.

¹⁴¹ Hakan Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa! Osmanlı Devletinin Son Yüz Yılında Merasimler* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2004), p. 105.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, pp. 105-106.

The Ottoman Incorporation of Western Performances:

The Palace Context

The consumption of European music and drama was introduced and grew within a political agenda in the Ottoman Palace. Among all aspects of reformation and Westernization, the patronage of European music, opera and drama stood at the very core of the Ottoman modernization paradigm. Perceiving theater as the symbol of the European high culture, the Ottoman elites attributed a fundamental importance to the patronage of European musicians and performers in the Palace. Incorporation of Western art became one of the main components of the modern Ottoman identity.

I think the first attempts of inheriting Westerns art forms as a component of the new self description can be seen after the maturation of the political agenda of Westernization, which declared itself with the abolition of the janissary corps. *Mehterhane* was replaced with a Western style band, and the brother of the famous Italian musician Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848), Giuseppe Donizetti (1788-1856) was employed as the court musician from 1828 until his death in 1856.¹⁴³ As historian Selim Deringil emphasizes, the selection of the maestro was highly symbolic. Giuseppe Donizetti, had previously served as a maestro in the court of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), and he was the brother of Gaetano Donizetti, who served as the maestro of the imperial court in Vienna. Donizetti composed the *Mahmudiye March*, which established a pattern. Donizetti then composed the *Mecidiye March* and chose a number of talented boys and trained them as the new imperial band.¹⁴⁴ Some travel accounts touches upon the transformation of the

¹⁴³ For a detailed biographical account, see: Emre Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa: Osmanlı Sarayının İtalyan Maestrosu* (İstanbul: YKY, 2006).

¹⁴⁴ Selim Deringil, "Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 35(1993), pp. 3-23.

courtly music and show that from the times of Sultan Mahmud II (1785-1839), Western music was practiced and developed within the military circles of the Ottoman court. For instance, Charles MacFarlane (1799-1858), a British traveler narrated that the Turkish band progressed under the Italian maestro: Donizetti.¹⁴⁵ Likewise, Sir Adolphus Slade (1804-1877), the British admiral visiting Constantinople between the years 1829-1831 reported that he was amazed when he heard Rossini's songs played by the new imperial band.¹⁴⁶ With the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid (1823-1861), the consumption of European music and drama spread out from the military domain and extended under the patronage of elites and *paşas* in the Ottoman Empire. This era did not only witness the consumption of European music and drama, but also showed the first attempts of internalizing Western forms of music and drama in the court. Moreover, the Sultan 'Ottomanized' the performers by presenting them with imperial orders and medallions.

The consumption of European opera and drama in the Palace offered a context where Western performances were internalized and hybrid forms of

¹⁴⁵ "We shot along the beautiful port, and soon landed below Pera, at the Melt-iskellesi scale. Between the arsenal and Galata. Not far from the waterside we passed an open square, where some tacticoes were drilling, and a large barrack, where the band of the regiment was practicing a march from Rossini, under the direction of an old purblind Italian.[...] An old Italian charged with the instruction of one of the bands, told me however, that the Turks themselves had not much aptitude for learning it, and that most of the musicians were Armenian rayas. The sultan afterwards placed a few of the younger ichoglans or pages, under the maestro's instructions, and these were making some progress when I left Stamboul, as they were docile and could be kept to work like mere schoolboys as they were. The love for music will do much; for with the Turks, the great difficulty is to awaken an interest in their minds for any art or science."

Charles MacFarlane, *Constantinople in 1828* (London, 1829), p. 517, quoted in: Emre Aracı, "Donizetti at the Ottoman Court: A Levantine Life," *The Musical Times*, no. 143 (2002), p. 52.

¹⁴⁶ "Presently, the songs of a party of Greek boatmen, which had enlivened our dessert, gave way to the strains of a military band, and, unexpected treat to me on the banks of the Bosphorus, we heard Rossini's music, executed in a manner very creditable to Professor Signor Donizetti. We rose and went down to the palace quay, on which the band was playing. I was surprised at the youth of the performers and the familiarity with which they addressed Calosso, calling him Rustam; and still more surprised on finding that they were the royal pages, thus instructed for the Sultan's amusement. Their aptitude in learning, which Donizetti informed me would have been remarkable even in Italy, showed that the Turks are naturally musical."

Sir Adolphus Slade, *Records of Travels in Turkey, Greece & Co., and of a Cruise in the Black Sea with the Capitan Pasha in the Years 1829, 1830 and 1831* (Philadelphia; Baltimore: Carey & Hart, 1833), pp. 77-78.

performances combining eastern and Western elements appeared. I can argue that the Palace had mainly two different patterns of patronage: the patronage of theater groups performing Western dramas and operas, and the patronage of famous maestros and musicians. The patronage of first European groups shows similarities with the previous centuries. Connoting the performance patterns described in the *surnames*¹⁴⁷, the invited performers were dominantly magicians, jugglers and acrobats.¹⁴⁸ Two famous groups of acrobats were very influential in the foundation of the Ottoman theater: the group of the Italian illusionist Bosco (which was later transformed and appeared as the famous Naum Theater), and the circus of M. Soulié (which later turned into the Gedikpaşa Theater). Sultan Mahmud II invited the Cirque of M. Soulié to İstanbul and put them on salary. He gave them a gift box covered with jewelry when he watched and liked their spectacle. In the following decade, when Sultan Abdülmecid, his son watched the same group and liked their performance, he the cirque 'imperial' and gifted them with an imperial order.¹⁴⁹ Actually, the way the two Sultans granted gifts to the French group of performers also reflects the changing imperial policies. In contrast to his father, Sultan Abdülmecid, as he did for many other important artists, honored them with an imperial order and in a way 'Ottomanized' the group. As Adolphe Thalasso points out, this circus was then bought by the Ottoman elites and turned into a Western style theater (the Gedikpaşa Theater).¹⁵⁰ Entitling Cirque de Soulié as 'imperial', and

¹⁴⁷ The books narrating and picturing the Ottoman imperial festivities.

¹⁴⁸ For further information, see: And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 53-56.

¹⁴⁹ And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁰ "Entre temps, M. Soulié, un écuyer français débarquait a Constantinople avec quelques acrobats et faisait construire, a Guedik-Pacha, un hippodrome pour sa troupe. Au depart de cette troupe, des notables musulmans acheterent le cirque et le convertirent en theatre. Ne pouvant ce pendant pas engager comme actrices des femmes, ils se trouverent dans l'obligation de recourir a un home de paille et de faire figurer comme directeur-proprietaire de leur theatre un Armenien, Vartov, dit Agop-Gulli Efendi."

turning it into a prominent theater show the newly emerging currents of internalizing the Western performances.

The consumption of the Western performances was diverse, and the rewarding patterns depended on the sultan's favor. The imperial palace, especially starting with the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid, hosted several Italian and French theater groups performing the classics and the contemporary plays. These groups performed both in the Palace and outside of the Palace usually in the Italian Theater, in the French Theater, and in the Naum Theater all located at the Pera district. The performances were dominantly in Italian and French. As far as I could observe, none of these troupes received an imperial order. On the other hand, famous maestros and musicians were usually awarded with imperial orders and titles upon their services. Composing marches for the sultan was prestigious both for the sultan for whom the march was composed for, and for the one who composed the march and presented it to the sultan. As Selim Deringil reminds us, the 'invented' or 'imported' tradition of having a national anthem was an important change, which continued after Sultan Abdülmecid.¹⁵¹ These composers would also be awarded with 'the nineteenth century commemorative feature': Medallion. For instance, the Ottoman maestro Donizetti was awarded with one of the most prestigious medallions; '*Tuğra Nişanı*' in 1831 before he became a colonel in 1853 and brigadier general in 1856.¹⁵² But besides these medallions, he was titled as '*Paşa*'; a high ranking 'Ottoman' official. His titles are noteworthy since they show the Ottoman policy towards incorporating European artists into the sultan's entourage. What Donizetti initiated continued in

Thalasso, "Le Théâtre Turc," p. 372.

¹⁵¹ See: Selim Deringil, "Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no. 35 (January, 1993), pp. 3-23.

¹⁵² Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa*, pp. 84-86.

later ages. In the reigns of Sultan Abdülaziz and Sultan Abdülhamid II, the patronage of the European maestros and the production of imperial anthems-as an important constituent of the new representation of the ‘Ottomans’-became one of the major elements of the ‘Ottoman courtly culture’.

Sultan Abdülmecit’s court welcomed a number of famous European musicians. These European performers were rewarded in an ‘Ottoman way’: with imperial orders, titles and medallions. When we observe the patronage patterns of these musicians, we see the developing interest of internalizing these performances. For instance, when the renowned musician of the age, Geatano Donizetti, the brother of Giuseppe Donizetti composed a military march, *Grand Marcia Militare Imperiale* for Sultan Abdülmecid in 1841, the Ottoman Sultan rewarded him with a ‘*Nişan-i İftihar*’.¹⁵³ In a similar way, when Franz Liszt (1811-1886), another prominent musician of the age, visited the Ottoman court in 1847, he received a ‘*Dördüncü Numaradan Kit’a Nişan*’.¹⁵⁴ Likewise, when Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881) visited the Ottoman court and composed a particular march for Sultan Abdülmecid, he was rewarded with 20,000 *kuruş* and a *Murassa* Medallion covered with diamonds.¹⁵⁵ Again, another leading musician of the epoch, Rossini also composed marches for the Sultan Abdülmecid. Emre Aracı mentions that Rossini actually composed two anthems and received one ‘*Nişan-i İftihar*’ and one “*Dördüncü Dereceden Mecidiye Nişanı*’.¹⁵⁶ Besides the ones rewarded with imperial orders, there were also a number of musicians visiting the imperial court, performing at Naum Theater or at the Palace

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

¹⁵⁴ Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu*, pp. 27-28.

¹⁵⁵ J. Théodor Radoux, Viextemps, *Sa Vie, Ses Oeuvres* (Liege: 1891), pp. 71-77, quoted in: Bülent Aksoy, *Avrupalı Gezinlerin Gözüyle Osmanlılarda Musıki* (İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 1994), pp. 103-104.

¹⁵⁶ Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa*, pp. 102-108.

theater, like Leopold de Meyer (1816-1883), Eugene Vivier (1811-1872), Murio Celli (d.1900), and August d'Adelburg (1830-1873).¹⁵⁷

The extensive consumption of Western music and drama in the Palace led not only to the internalization of these Western forms of performances, but also facilitated the 'Westernization' of Ottoman performances such as *Orta Oyunu*. Western-style performances, which initially grew in the Ottoman Palace and in the European embassies, were so much incorporated into the new Ottoman self-description that they produced the hybrid performance forms of the nineteenth century. Three forms are particularly worth mentioning: The emergence of the *Tuluat Theater*, the organization of women's fanfare, and the construction of the Dolmabahçe and Naum Theater buildings.

One of the first hybrid forms was the genre of *Tuluat Theater*, which carried the Ottoman *Orta Oyunu* to indoor stages. The scripts adopting Moliere's plays to traditional Ottoman shadow theater show the emergence of hybrid genres of performances that incorporated both Ottoman and Western elements.¹⁵⁸

A second 'hybrid form' displaying the internalization of Western forms of music and performance is the organization of a Western-style women's fanfare and ballet group in the Palace under the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid. Leyla Saz Hanım (1850-1936), the daughter of Hekim İsmail Paşa (1812-1871), informs us about the women's fanfare, which was composed of more than ninety girls of the imperial harem. Her memoirs demonstrate the transformation of everyday performances and the growing importance of Western style performances in the imperial harem.

At the old Çırağan Palace and at Dolmabahçe, the part of the rez de chussée on the side of the men's apartment was set aside for music

¹⁵⁷ Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa*, pp. 102-108.

¹⁵⁸ For the adaptation of Moliere's *Tartuffe*, see: Thalasso, "Le Théâtre Turc," pp. 372-378.

classes. The professors were all men. The musicians who were Kalfas came in their everyday dress, simply throwing over their heads two meters of *yaşmak* or veil of gauze which they pulled behind their heads and pinned to their hair, while throwing the two ends on to their shoulders or behind, down their back. The dancers came without any veil whatsoever, it was permitted, it seems, for these slaves to show themselves to men without being veiled. The Eunuchs who escorted the professors and the girls of service who accompanied the musicians and the dancers always attended these lessons. The orchestra for Western music and the brass band practiced together two times a week and the orchestra of Turkish music only one time: Friday; which is the day of rest for Moslems, was always a day off. For dancing lessons, there was a special room, but on the days of general rehearsal, the corps de ballet and the orchestra were joined in the great hall of honor where the festivities took place.¹⁵⁹

Moreover, her narrative shows some kind of a competition between the women's orchestra and the imperial band. Leyla Saz Hanım also informs us about the Western style education on music and dance in the Palace. In her narrative, she underlined that 'both the musicians and dancers of the Palace were in normal services and performed diverse functions', and in a way, illustrated the Ottoman concern on keeping the traditional division of labor within the Palace.

All of the female musicians and their orchestras in the imperial harem were wonderfully accomplished. These female musicians of the Sérail played just as the imperial Orchestra which, in itself, was quite remarkable. (...) At the Palace of the Sultan, there never were brass bands in the sense of military music, but only orchestras with instruments both for Western music and for Turkish music. The sultans also had corps de ballet for European dances and one for dances in the Turkish Style but most of the latter are forgotten today, such as the one called Dance of the Rabbit. The sultans also organized music classes, more or less along the lines of those in the imperial harem. It should be remarked that all the musicians and the dancers of the Serail, both in the imperial Harem, as well as in the courts of the sultans were in normal services and performed diverse functions just like all the others. They were chosen among most talented girls of the Serail and then were sent to music class on specific days and at specific hours, over and beyond their ordinary duties. When they were well trained, they took their place in orchestras of the imperial Harem or of the

¹⁵⁹ Leyla Saz, *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans*, translated by Landon Thomas (İstanbul: Hil Yayınları, 1999), pp. 53-54

sultanes where they played when required, while all the remaining time fulfilling their nominal duties.¹⁶⁰

Leyla Saz adds that the performers mostly performed the operas; *La Gillome Tell* and *La Traviata*.¹⁶¹ Her narrative on the women's fanfare demonstrates both the consumption of European and Ottoman music in the Palace, and offers an example on the formations of hybrid forms of performances. Moreover, her words on the 'dance of the *rabbit*' demonstrates that Leyla Saz Hanım seems to be confused about how to emotionally approach the traditional court dancers like *tavşans* and the *köçeks*. While on the one hand, she is drawn to the memory of 'old times', her narrative also displays an orientalist tone of a new courtier committed to Western aesthetics.

Another strong signifier of 'internalizing the Western forms' is the construction of the theater buildings. After the imperial rescript of the Rose Chamber in 1839, the sultans encouraged the construction of public theaters. Starting from the reign of Sultan Abdülmecit, sultans ordered the construction of theater buildings in the Palaces. Sevengil mentions that these theaters were planned to be similar to the European Palace theaters, namely to that of Versailles'.¹⁶² Theater of Dolmabahçe Palace grew out of this project. Later, Yıldız Theater was constructed in the Yıldız Palace under the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, and witnessed a number of banned plays which were not allowed to be performed in public theaters but only in the Palace theater. The first Palace theater: Dolmabahçe Theater was very much associated with the French counterparts both by the French journals of the day and

¹⁶⁰ Saz, *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans*, pp. 55-59.

¹⁶¹ Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁶² "The desire to keep the palace of İstanbul on an equal footing with the European palaces may have been among the reasons why this theater was established; this way, there would not only be a theater in the palace of the Ottoman sultan similar to those present in the palaces of the European kings, but theater and opera as fine arts would gain a novel impetus in our country." *ibid.*, p. 19.

by the Turkish newspapers.¹⁶³ The theater building was constructed by the French architects and designers, and reflected not the traditional Ottoman style, but that of the ‘orientalized’ favor of Louis XIV.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, it can be considered the architectural form of the internalization of the Western performances. In the ‘Western-style’ Palace theaters, sultan’s lodge was the most glorious part of the building.

Similarly, the theater of Naum was reconstructed in Pera after the fire of Beyoğlu under the patronage of Sultan Abdülmecid, and reflected the glory and the prestige of the Ottoman sultan with its ornamented sultan’s lodge. Theater of Naum can be considered an extension of the Theatre of Dolmabahçe both politically and financially. As Sevengil narrates, when Naum asked for financial support of the sultan for the reconstruction, the grand vizier Mustafa Reşit Paşa advised Sultan Abdülmecid to give the required financial support (60,000 *kuruş*) ‘in order to please Europeans and the foreign ambassadors.’¹⁶⁵ This statement of Mustafa Reşit Paşa summarizes how political the patronage of theater was. This agreement also shows that theater and the politics of theater were used in international politics.

Later in 1852, Naum asked for the monopoly of staging theater and opera performances for ten years. Upon the sultan’s acceptance, Naum gained the

¹⁶³ Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı*, p. 63.

¹⁶⁴ Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa*, p. 123.

¹⁶⁵ “Grand vizier Mustafa Reşit Paşa (in response to the letter of Sultan Abdülmecid) declared that it would be convenient to help Naum. In the vizierate note addressed to the palace it is indicated that theaters and operas as such exist in most European countries, that it would be good to have similar ones also in İstanbul and that the wooden building which was early on allotted to Naum for his performances -thinking Europeans would like it- is burnt down during the Beyoğlu fire and thus now has to be rebuilt with bricks. As an addition it is stated that the foreign embassies will provide help to the owner of the note. If the sultan also provides help, it will be a good and courteous act with regard to these ambassadors; despite the fact that Naum is an Ottoman subject, if no aid is granted by the sultan, whereas it has been provided by the foreigners, the act will be inappropriate for the glorious name of the empire. Both to please the foreign embassies and to delight the owner of the note, it would be appropriate to grant approximately sixty thousand *kuruş*, however it is commanded and seen proper to act according to the wishes of the sultan no matter what.” Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu*, p. 18.

monopoly of staging Italian and French dramas, operas and ballets. In 1862, Naum asked for the same privilege once more. This time, the Palace granted a five-year privilege with the condition of ‘acting according to the imperial rules and orders’.¹⁶⁶ The monopoly of theater, first granted to Naum, then to Güllü Agop, made the control of this ‘newly discovered political institution’ easier.

Theater, from its very introduction to the Ottoman Empire, was recognized as a new space combining politics and literature. Although theatres, and particularly Naum, represented the transformation of the Ottoman politics of culture during the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid, theatre became ‘a political institution’ in the reign of the Sultan Abdülaziz. Even though the Western-style theater was incorporated into the Ottoman courtly culture by the mid-nineteenth century, it was particularly after Sultan Abdülaziz’s trip to Europe (1867) that it became a part of the political life.

Abdülaziz Era and the Naum Theater

Within all these theatricalities that gained particular importance in the late Ottoman politics, the ones used in the diplomacy aimed to reconstruct the Ottoman identity *vis a vis* Europe. Similar to the ‘Ottoman image’ represented in world fairs, the imperial rituals performed in front of the Ottoman audience offer an interesting ‘performance’ for the researcher.

Sultan Abdülaziz, as the first Ottoman Sultan visiting Europe, and his visit as the first diplomatic trip (1867), represent a turning point in the Ottoman international politics. The account of his trip offers a rich material to study the transformation of the Ottoman identity. However, what made his trip more interesting were the return-

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 16-19.

visits of the European sovereigns in 1869, a matter which may be expressed as ‘the discovery of theater as a political space’. Upon his return, Sultan Abdülaziz transformed the centuries-old Ottoman reception ceremonies and incorporated opera performances in these ceremonies. Therefore, one can observe that Sultan Abdülaziz’ trip to Europe (1867) was linked to the transformation of the imperial reception ceremonies (1869), which made the Naum Theatre emerge as a political institution.

Until the eighteenth century, the reception ceremonies held for the European ambassadors kept more or less the same format. The ambassador was first invited to a lunch with the grand vizier, and was then offered rose extract and a tobacco pipe. Once he offered his gifts, he was dressed in a khilhat and was escorted to the sultan’s audience Hall.¹⁶⁷ During the eighteenth century, the importance of the ambassadors increased; and the nineteenth century-the so called ‘age of the ambassadors’- witnessed a number of modifications in the reception ceremonies. This signified the importance attributed to the sultan’s visibility in international relations. Especially after his visit to Europe, Sultan Abdülaziz developed a diplomatic language portraying Ottoman Westernization. Intrigued by the European social and cultural life, he transformed the traditional image of the Ottoman sultan, accepting the compatibility of Europe. Articles appearing in the journals of the day evaluated the trip as a turning point in the Ottoman politics and ideologies.¹⁶⁸ Ali Kemali Aksüt, who published an account on this trip in 1944, examines a number of newspapers and mentions that both the Ottoman and the European newspapers attributed a

¹⁶⁷ Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşal*, pp. 123-124.

¹⁶⁸ Ali Kemali Aksüt, *Sultan Abdülaziz’in Mısır ve Avrupa Seyahati* (İstanbul: Ahmet Sait Oğlu Kitabevi, 1944), pp. 86-95.

fundamental importance to the trip since ‘the sultan, at the end, recognized the superiority of Europe’, and that ‘he will carry back what he observed there.’¹⁶⁹

Sultan Abdülaziz’s arrival to Toulon was celebrated with great joy; and a number of festivities organized by Napoleon III.¹⁷⁰ One of the most important aspects of his trip appeared to be his active participation in the European cultural life, particularly the European performances recounted in his travel account. Sultan Abdülaziz participated both in the performances organized as part of the official reception program and the informal public performances. On 5 July 1867, Sultan Abdülaziz and his entourage watched an opera performance in Paris in the opera situated on the Boulevard des Capucines.¹⁷¹ Sultan Abdülaziz participated in different performances both in the Palace theater and in the Opera of Paris during his stay in France. When he went on to London on the 15 July, the bands of Queen Victoria welcomed him with the *Aziziye March* composed by Guatelli.¹⁷² The same night, he participated in a great performance of two thousand singers in the Crystal Palace organized to ‘welcome’ him.¹⁷³ The next evening, Sultan Abdülaziz participated in another performance and was reported to be ‘amazed’ by the performance of the Italian group.¹⁷⁴ It was also noteworthy that ‘the Sultan Abdülaziz was seated in the emperor’s lodge alone’ and watched Auber’s *Asaniello*.¹⁷⁵ As narrated by Ali Kemali Aksüt, before the sultan’s departure from

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 87-89.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 118-127.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*, pp. 134-135.

¹⁷² Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa*, p.93.

¹⁷³ *The Levant Herald [The Daily Bulletin]*, 19 July 1867.

¹⁷⁴ Aracı, *Donizetti Paşa*, p. 161.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 161.

England, an ‘official’ concert and a ball were held in the Guildhall by the British sovereign.¹⁷⁶ Lastly, he participated in the banquet given in his honor in the Office of India.¹⁷⁷ Aksüt further informs us that Sultan Abdülaziz financially helped some of these opera groups during his stay. In the following days, he went to Belgium and then to Vienna, where again the performance of a ballet; *La Biche au Bois* was incorporated into the program of the reception. From there, he returned back to İstanbul, where the Ottoman navy welcomed him and his entourage with music and banquets.¹⁷⁸ His trip, needless to mention, demonstrated the new cultural and political orientation of the Ottoman Empire. Aftermath his return, he reorganized the imperial band, appointing Guatelli as the head of the band.¹⁷⁹ Sultan Abdülaziz incorporated opera and drama performances in the imperial reception ceremonies upon his return. When the European sovereigns visited in 1867 paid return-visits to the Ottoman capital in 1869, they were welcomed with a reception program similar to theirs. The reception ceremonies held for the European sovereigns were remarkable since they attempted to construct a new diplomatic language by using Western performances via frequent visits to the Naum Theater.

Ahmet Refik Sevengil informs us about three different occasions like that: the visit of Prince of Wales, the visit of French Empress Eugénie, and the visits of the Austrian King François Joseph.¹⁸⁰

When the Prince of Wales and his wife arrived in İstanbul on 31 March 1869, the performers of Naum Theater were about the leave. However, the government

¹⁷⁶ Referring to the theatrical performance organized for the formal reception ceremony.

¹⁷⁷ Aksüt, *Sultan Abdülaziz'in Mısır ve Avrupa Seyahati*, pp. 170-173.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

¹⁷⁹ Mahmut Gazimihal, *Türk Askeri Muzikaları Tarihi* (İstanbul: Maarif Basım Evi, 1955), p. 69.

¹⁸⁰ Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı*, p. 41.

asked them to stay since Sultan Abdülaziz wanted to include one or two opera performances in the program of the reception. Just like on Sultan Abdülaziz's trip, some of these opera and theater performances were part of the official program and some were not. The first performance hosting the Prince and his wife held on 2 April 1869 was an informal meeting. The Sultan Abdülaziz, foreseeing the popular demand on 'participating in the same performance with the sultan', tried to prevent the last minute black market and paid two thousands liras to Naum in advance. This non-official opera, organized in honor of Prince of Wales, was a 'performance' both for the domestic audience and for the foreign audience. The displayed image of the Turkish sovereign watching an Italian opera with his people was unusual for the European sovereign. Likewise, the image of a sultan watching a public opera with the European prince was an atypical image for the general public. Hence, this organization may be interpreted as the visual manifestation of change and Westernization both for the foreign and for the domestic audiences. The Prince went to the Naum Theater and watched a second 'informal' opera on 5 April. Two days later, an 'official' opera performance took place with a ceremony as part of the imperial reception ceremony in the Naum Theater. Just like on Sultan Abdülaziz's visit of England in 1867, the emperor's lodge in the Naum Theater was reserved for the Prince of Wales and his wife. The daily *Terakki* gives us an account on the performance.¹⁸¹ The article informs us about the protocol and seating order in the sultan's lodge 'where the Prince and the Princess of Wales, Sultan Abdülaziz and his vizier Mustafa Fazıl Paşa watched the performance together'. Furthermore, the article also mentions that the sultan and his visitors were welcomed with great

¹⁸¹ *Terakki*, 8 April 1869.

‘public love and demonstrations’ in the Beyoğlu district as they entered into the theater building.

Again Sevengil informs us that a similar reception ceremony was organized for the visit of the French Empress Eugénie. The French empress visited the imperial capital İstanbul on September 1869. Again, the Sultan Abdülaziz asked Naum to call the performers earlier than the usual since some opera performances were to be integrated into her reception program. Eugénie was welcomed by the imperial band directed by Guatelli. Since the program of reception included an opera performance in the Theater of Naum, the sultan’s lodge was arranged for the empress. However, due to a last minute change, she could not watch the opera.¹⁸²

A third program of the reception, repeating the same pattern of the one Sultan Abdülaziz observed on his trip was the one prepared for the visit of the Austrian king François Joseph.¹⁸³

These three reception ceremonies, held for the European sovereigns reflected the reception ceremonies held for Sultan Abdülaziz in Europe in 1867. Through the incorporation of the Western opera and drama into the imperial ceremonies, Sultan Abdülaziz attributed a political significance to the theater. The Naum Theater became an imperial body hosting opera performances where political figures met and spent their time together, and represented the changing ideologies of the Ottoman Empire. The theater became a political institution and entered into the political life through these ceremonies. The subsequent Ottoman sultan, Sultan Abdülhamid II used theater as a ritualistic space for the welcoming receptions, as well. The Naum and Yıldız Theaters were used for Sultan Abdülhamid II’s reception ceremonies.

¹⁸² Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı*, p. 42.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

Refik Ahmet Sevengil informs us about these reception ceremonies, and argues that a special performance took place for each European sovereign's and ambassador's visit to İstanbul.¹⁸⁴

In conclusion, one can state that the Naum Theater acquired a particular political importance after Sultan Abdülaziz II's return from his trip to Europe (1867). Upon his return, the incorporation of opera and drama performances in the Ottoman imperial reception ceremonies loaded the Ottoman stage with some kind of a political tension; hence he discovered the theater's potential to become a political institution. Even though the performances were not political at all, the very act of staging performances for diplomatic reasons introduced, -and to a certain extent legitimized-, theater's power as a political space both to the Ottoman intelligentsia and to the Ottoman masses that would use it for political purposes in the subsequent decades.

¹⁸⁴ "Traditionally an opera performance would take place as part of the reception festivities planned with regard to the official visits of foreign sovereigns. During the reign of Abdülmecid, foreign ministers and high officials who visited İstanbul were invited to Naum's Theater in Beyoğlu to watch an opera performance. Also during the reign of Abdülhamit II, Italian opera groups were performing in Beyoğlu; however, Abdülhamit II was taking security measures at great extents to ward off his paranoia, disabling him from participating in out-of-palace entertainment. It is very probable that he decided to construct a theater inside the palace grounds while hosting Wilhelm to make sure that they do not have to leave for Beyoğlu theaters. The fact that the date of Wilhelm's visit to İstanbul and the date of the construction of the Yıldız Theater coincides gives plausibility to this thought. By constructing this theater, the sultan was at the same time proving to the German emperor that the Turkish palace had a little theater inside as is the case with European palaces and that the sultan was fond of these kinds of fine arts. As a matter of fact, the visiting members of foreign dynasties have always been invited to the Theater of the Yıldız Palace." Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu*, p.120.

CHAPTER V

THE RISE AND THE POLITICIZATION OF THE POPULAR THEATRE: THE *VATAN* AND THE GEDİKPAŞA INCIDENTS

As theater was introduced to the Ottoman society via the imperial rituals and the ambassadorial soirées, it was perceived as a sign of progress and reform. By the second half of the nineteenth century, when theater began to be spread out of the imperial domains, mostly under the patronage of the Italian, French and the Armenian community of the Pera, it was kept under strict imperial control. Throughout the nineteenth century, theater did not only create its ethnically mixed community, but also made transnational networks of artists under the sultan's patronage. The popularization of the theater, especially among the Ottoman intelligentsia and the Ottoman bourgeoisie shows a highly complex relationship between popular theatre and its imperial control. Even though popular theatre created a new public space, it could not develop outside the theater monopolies which were under strict control of the Palace until the declaration of the Second Constitution known as the Ottoman Revolution of 1908. The reformists had 'experienced' theater's political power as 'a maker of the society', or as 'an educator of the masses', and also as 'a generator of the public space' from the examples of the French and Russian Revolutions.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the Naum Theater, having the monopoly of staging theatre and opera performances, acted both as an imperial body and as a popular theater for the public of İstanbul who were indeed not very familiar with the genre of the Western theater. Performances in the Naum Theater became the new 'luxury' entertainment of the Ottoman bourgeoisie where they could watch famous European operas with the Ottoman governors, *paşas*, dynasty members and

even the sultan himself. The newspapers inform us about the frequent visits of the Ottoman Sultan Abdülaziz to the Naum Theater in the late 1860s.¹⁸⁵ The sultan's participation in the popular performances helped, on the one hand, the popularization of the theater, while on the other, gave it a political character.

The popularization of the theater as a public space was not 'an easy process' for the public. By the late nineteenth century, the theater became the new space for discussions among the audience. Metin And's studies on the newspapers of the era, helps us to understand the nature of these disputes.¹⁸⁶ As it appears, the government tried to establish order, and teach 'how to be an audience' through the press. An article in the newspaper *Ruzname-i Ceride-i Havadis* shows that the İstanbulite audience was extremely 'active' during the performances and disputed with the officers during the performances.¹⁸⁷ The newspapers of the period explained that eating during the performance, shouting, laughing, smoking, standing up during the performance, throwing something onto the stage, wearing big hats that would bother others' viewpoint, etc. were all causes of such debates. The 1870s and 1880s witnessed the process of 'educating masses on how to behave in the theater'. The

¹⁸⁵ Sevengil, *Opera Sanatı*, p. 37.

¹⁸⁶ And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 84-86.

¹⁸⁷“Last Tuesday night, a conflict has occurred between the officers and the audience at the theater house which is situated in Beyoğlu. According to what we have heard, the director of the theater sided with the audience and inconvenient acts took place, hence this Wednesday night the theater house was temporarily shut down by the above mentioned officers.”

Ruzname-i Ceride-i Havadis, 1277, no.56;

“Because some of the people at the above mentioned theater (Naum Theater) started to engage in immoral acts such as blowing whistles of dislike and shouting which caused other members of the audience great disturbance, from this moment on, if such inappropriate behaviors and acts are ever to be repeated, it has been announced by the administrative officers that the responsables will be expelled immediately and maybe punished. A specific officer has been assigned to this case.”
Ceride-i Havadis, 1275, no. 930;

“To protect the audience from any misfortune that might disturb their comfort and entertainment, it is forbidden for the audience to carry sharp objects and sticks. It is declared that in case such objects are found, the situation should be reported to the government officials.”
Ceride-i Havadis, 1268, no. 554, quoted in: And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 85.

government frequently issued special rules on ‘how to be an audience’. Accordingly, smoking, shouting, carrying guns, sticks and umbrellas, eating and walking in the theater building were prohibited.¹⁸⁸ Theater also aimed to widen the audience’s knowledge on French and Italian dramas.

On the other hand, theater provided a space for the Ottoman intellectuals to form their ideologies, allowing them to diffuse their ideas and gather popular support. This fed the government’s concern to control, to regulate access and to monitor the repertoire of the theater. Murray Frame’s work shows that a similar trend was also observed in the Russian Empire, which also monitored and regulated the popular theatre.¹⁸⁹ In 1852, the Ottoman government granted a ten-year monopoly of staging theater and opera performances to Naum. The agreement was renewed in 1862, but this time, the palace granted a five-year privilege with the condition of ‘acting according to the imperial rules and orders’. When the Naum Theater was ruined after a big fire in 1869, destroying a part of the Beyoğlu area, the palace granted a ten-year monopoly of staging theater (particularly in Turkish) to Güllü Agop and his Gedikpaşa Theater.¹⁹⁰ The aim was twofold: Firstly, the government would encourage the development and the popularization of the Turkish theater, and secondly, the government would regulate it.

However, the development of the Turkish theater and the discovery of its political power by the Ottoman intellectuals went beyond what the Ottoman Sultan could imagine. In a couple of years, the Gedikpaşa Theater became one of the main intellectual centers of the imperial capital. Since the publications of the Ottoman

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁸⁹ Frame, *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theaters*, p. 12.

¹⁹⁰ Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 64.

intellectuals (among whom the Young Ottomans played a crucial role) were under strict control, the theater became an alternative space for these intellectuals to spread their ideologies.¹⁹¹

This chapter will try to scrutinize the complex relationship between the popular theater and the imperial control in order to observe the transformation of the theater from an imperial institution hosting European sovereigns into a public space staging the political tension between the Ottoman sultan, Ottoman intellectuals and the general public.

In the following lines, I will first try to touch upon the development of the ideological currents opposing the government, and their reflection on the stage by observing the ‘*Vatan* Incident’ (1873), which I believe symbolizes the politicization of the popular theatre. Subsequently, I will try to mention Sultan Abdülhamid II’s policy of censorship towards the theater and touch upon the complex relationship between the popular theatre and the imperial control by scrutinizing the ‘Gedikpaşa Incident’ (1884).

The Radicalization of the Ottoman Intellectuals and the “*Vatan* Incident”

One of the most important theater scandals staging the political tension between the masses and the authority was the ‘*Vatan* Incident’ that took place in 1873. This ‘incident’ loaded a symbolic meaning to this particular play, and singled out Namık Kemal as a prominent ideologue within the Young Ottomans. The ‘*Vatan* incident’ did not only help to the creation of the public opinion through the theater, but also portrayed Namık Kemal as the national hero in the post-revolutionary theater.

¹⁹¹ Some of these names are Namık Kemal, Ebüzziya Tevfik, Ahmet Mithat, Şemseddin Sami, Ahmed Fehim. Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, p. 24.

Following the imperial rescript of the Rose Chamber in 1839, a series of bureaucratic reforms took place, giving leading positions to Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals educated in Europe. This era of reformation perceived 'Westernization' as a political agenda, which eventually empowered those Ottoman intellectuals trained abroad. Soon, the Ottoman reformation created its own opposition and opposing political groups like the Young Ottomans within the imperial circles. The ideological development of the Young Turks is best examined in Şerif Mardin's seminal book *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*. As Mardin argues, the Young Ottomans were 'at one and the same time the first men to make the ideas of the Enlightenment part of the intellectual equipment of the Turkish reading public and the first thinkers to try to work out a synthesis between these ideas and Islam.'¹⁹² Accordingly, what united these young intellectuals was a common knowledge of European civilization and a growing concern about the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹³ In his analysis of Ottoman history, Erik J. Zürcher also examines the roots of the ideological movement. He mentions that according to Young Turks, the solution to reunite the Empire lay in the introduction of a representative, constitutional and parliamentarian government in the empire, thus instilling a true feeling of citizenship and loyalty to the state among all Ottoman subjects, Muslims and non-Muslims.¹⁹⁴ These intellectuals improved and disseminated their ideologies through journals which were published in Europe and reached the empire either via the post offices operated by the Europeans in the Ottoman Empire, or through the agency of tradesmen. As historian Erik Zürcher argues, 'they can be regarded as the

¹⁹² Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p. 4.

¹⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁹⁴ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: New York; I.B. Taurus & Co Ltd. Publishers, 1998), p. 71.

first modern ideological movement among the Ottoman elite of the empire, and they were the first who, through their writings, consciously tried to create and influence *public opinion*, the term for which (*efkar-ı umumiye*) was also of their making.¹⁹⁵ Without getting into the intricacies of this complex era, let us try to situate Namık Kemal as a leading figure and as a passionate Young Ottoman who had a tremendous impact. For Namık Kemal, *hürriyet* (liberty) and *vatan* (the nation) were key ideals. Zürcher describes the ideas of Kemal as ‘a defense of liberal values with Islamic arguments.’¹⁹⁶ In his publications, Kemal emphasized emotions rather than reason and called for mass politics. Şerif Mardin defines Namık Kemal as an ideologist manipulating symbols, and underlines that ‘as much as the word “*hürriyet*” is an invention of Kemal, it is to him too that is credited the first extensive use of the word “*vatan*” in the sense of “fatherland” in Turkish literature.’¹⁹⁷ Besides his political identity, Namık Kemal was a playwright, a poet and a novelist. By looking at his works, I can argue that he wrote in a number of genres in order to reach a larger public and disseminate the Young Turk ideologies. His works aimed the formation of the public opinion that favored to merge the European ideals and the Islamic tradition. Since one of the most influential ways to reach a larger audience was theater, he wrote a number of play scripts that, in a way, formed public opinion.

Even though we do not know whether the Ottoman intellectuals were influenced, or they were in touch with the *Nahda* intellectuals of Egypt or not, Ilham Khuri Makdisi’s thesis shows striking ideological similarities between the Young Turks and *Nahda* intellectuals, who perceived theater as a central institution for the

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁹⁶ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 71.

¹⁹⁷ Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, p. 326.

advancement of civilization.¹⁹⁸ Just like Namık Kemal, Egyptian intellectual Salim Naqqash associated theater with progress and civilization.¹⁹⁹ ‘Progress would be achieved both individually and socially thanks to the theater; individually, through the spectator’s heightened moral consciousness, and socially, through the gathering of individuals in front of a stage and their common shared experience of performance.’²⁰⁰ Makdisi argues that this interaction between individuals who shared space and spectacle was itself a form of collaboration which made the individual transcend the self, “push away that which divided” him from his fellow spectators, and form a social body.²⁰¹ Salim Naqqash and Namık Kemal show interesting similarities not only in their perception of the theater, ‘which helps the development of the society’, but also in their usage of vocabulary. To expound his ideas to Ottoman public, Kemal created a new vocabulary in which old words were given new meanings corresponding to the terminology of the nineteenth century liberalism. ‘*Vatan*’, the Arabic word denoting one’s birth place became the equivalent of the French ‘*patrie*’, ‘*hürriyet*’ (being a free man) that of ‘*liberté*’, ‘*millet*’ (community) that of ‘*nation*’ in a broad sense.²⁰² In a similar line, Naqqash attributed a new definition to ‘*al watan*’. Naqqash’s *homeland* was not “*the nation*”, but rather a land that welcomed foreigners and integrated them into his homeland.²⁰³ As Makdisi

¹⁹⁸ Makdisi, “The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914,” p. 111.

¹⁹⁹ Also see: Philip Sadgrove, *The Egyptian Theatre in the Nineteenth Century (1799-1882)* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1996).

²⁰⁰ Makdisi, “The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914,” p.108.

²⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 108.

²⁰² Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 72.

²⁰³ Makdisi, “The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914,” p. 110.

mentions, the love for one's homeland implied recognizing what was good for it, including welcoming and supporting those whose work contributed to the creation of a social body, especially through the theatre. Furthermore, Makdisi underlines that Naqqash had managed to argue that he, a Syrian, would contribute, through the theater, to leading Egypt on the path of civilization by increasing the Egyptians' love for their country and the creation of a social body.²⁰⁴ Moreover, he insisted that the theatre's benefits for the Egyptian society would only materialize if the performances were in Arabic.²⁰⁵

Considering these similarities, one can argue that the use of theater as a means to create public opinion was not particular to Namık Kemal, or to the Istanbulites. It was rather the growing radicalism which invented the use of performance to attract both the literate and the illiterate masses in different parts of the Empire. Namık Kemal's new terminology, which was created via theater and press, became the new ideological exemplary for later generations of Muslim liberals and nationalists.

Namık Kemal's *Vatan* had a groundbreaking impact on the transformation of the theater from an elitist form of art into a public spectacle. There, the Gedikpaşa Theater, with its monopoly of staging Turkish theater, played a crucial role by attracting many Turkish intellectuals and politicians of the age. Some of these names were Namık Kemal, Ebüzziya Tevfik (1849-1913), Ahmet Mithat (1844-1912), Şemseddin Sami (1850-1904), and Ahmed Fehim (1856-1930).²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 110.

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁰⁶ Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 24- 36.

Namık Kemal wrote his famous play *Vatan Yahud Silistre* (Fatherland or Silistra) in 1873. The play compared the love of the fatherland with that of a lover.²⁰⁷ When, *Vatan Yahud Silistre* (Fatherland or Silistra) was premiered in the Gedikpaşa Theater on 1 April 1873, the theater was filled with an enthusiastic audience. Some political names like Mısırlı Mustafa Fazıl Paşa (1829-1875) and Bereketzade İsmail Hakkı Bey were among the audience. Even though theater historians Metin And and Refik Ahmet Sevengil mention that this premiere did not aim to create a political tension, there are narratives and memoirs which show that Namık Kemal had an intention to mobilize the masses through his play. Since most of his publications were censored by the government, theater, according to Kemal, would serve to disseminate his ideas to a larger audience.²⁰⁸ Ahmet Refik Sevengil informs us that from the very first scene of the performance, the audience participated by applauding and shouting as “Long live Kemal!”²⁰⁹ Namık Kemal’s son narrates that by the end of the play, ovations reached a peak and a group of the audience wanted to congratulate Namık Kemal in person. However, the playwright had already left the theater before it ended. This enthusiastic group insisted on congratulating him in person, and walked to the building of the newspaper *İbret*, co-directed by Namık

²⁰⁷“Abstract: Zekiye lives in a Rumelian city with her wet nurse. She meets İslam Bey, who has volunteered for the army, and falls in love with him. İslam Bey leaves Zekiye in order to fight on the battlefield, saying “those who love me should follow.” Zekiye puts on men clothes and follows him under the name of Adem. In the second act, in Silistra castle İslam Bey is wounded and Zekiye takes care of him. The commander of the castle, Sıtkı Bey, is away from home because of he lost his reputation in the army before. He enters the army under another name and becomes a commander. Silistra castle is under a siege. İslam Bey, Abdullah Çavuş and Zekiye volunteer for a mission to blow up the enemy’s arsenal and succeed. As a result the castle is saved. İslam Bey explains Zekiye’s genuine identity and Sıtkı Bey by asking some questions learns that Zekiye is his own daughter. The story ends with preparations for the wedding of İslam and Zekiye.” Seçkin, “Staging the Revolution,” p. 149.

²⁰⁸ “See: Ali Ekrem, *Namık Kemal* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1930), p. 49; Sahadettin Nüzhet, *Namık Kemal* (İstanbul: Yeni Şark Kitaphanesi, 1933), pp. 62-63.

²⁰⁹ Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 178; Ekrem, *Namık Kemal*, p. 49.

Kemal.²¹⁰ However, Namık Kemal was not there either.²¹¹ Then, the audience left a note commending the play *Vatan* and supporting Namık Kemal's efforts to revive *patrie*, freedom and nationhood, and left it with the co-director and publisher of the journal *İbret*, Aleksan Sarrafyan.²¹² The next day, both this note, and the comments on the performance were published in the newspaper *İbret*. The newspaper also informed the audience that *Vatan* would be staged a second time the following evening because of popular demand.²¹³ Ahmet Refik Sevensil informs us that, the

²¹⁰ "The previously mentioned play titled "Fatherland or Silistra" was performed in Gedikpaşa Theater. People were so moved by the play that they let out cries of "yaşasın Kemali Millet" (translated literally as "long live the wise nation" but Kemal also connotes the playwright Namık Kemal). The author was called on stage several times and applauded for a very long time. In the streets, hundreds of people with torches at hand were searching for Kemal who had left the theater as if fleeing and returned his home with a car. The palace could not remain indifferent to such a manifestation. The newspaper *İbret* was shut down." Ekrem, *Namık Kemal*, pp. 49-50.

²¹¹ "Just as the newspaper was being printed, around fifty notables came in front of our publishing house and woke me up with shouts of "Long live the maturity of the nation" and informed us that in the Ottoman Theater where *Vatan* of Namık Kemal was performed they asked for the playwright and learned that he was in his publishing house. They had arrived to thank him, but when they could not find the playwright, they wrote a note of thanks immediately and left. Because there was not enough time, I had to refuse their requests for publishing the note, postponing it to tomorrow's newspaper." *İbret Gazetesi*, 2 April 1873, quoted in: Sevensil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 179.

²¹² "This is the copy of the 'thank you' notice we received yesterday night:
Long live the 'maturity' (emphasis on the word Kemal) of the Nation!
Even though the fact that drama ranks as the brightest and the most beneficial form in literature is proved by the high ideas contained in the judgments of famous writers whose piles of books fill libraries and is experienced by the real theater performances we have seen, this night, the nation has invigorated before our eyes how sublime theater is and how spiritual its effects can be.
Long live the nation!
It is a fact that theater is the spirit of literature, the brightest part of it, a unique beauty which infatuates hearts.
Theater, with its spiritual power, makes people cry, laugh: opens the conscience and illuminates.
Long live the nation!
Although we do not have the words and the power to thank the playwright and to appreciate him and his piece which is worth the whole world, with the fervor of national sovereignty and national attachment, we could not lay back from expressing our conscientious emotions. We are sure that we will be excused for our insolence on this subject."
İbret Gazetesi, 3 April 1873, quoted in: Sevensil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 179.

²¹³ "The drama titled *Vatan yahut Silistre*, written by the editor of our newspaper Mr. Kemal, was staged in the Ottoman Theater the other night. As the audience has conceded, the abovementioned play depicted the yearning of the Ottomans for courage and their other pleasant characteristics. The applause and the demands forced everyone to ask for another performance of the play. Besides the wishes of the precious people who after the performance arrived at our publishing house at midnight, the wishes also of the people who could not be present in the theater the other night has led us to get permission for another performance tonight. *Vatan* will be staged again tonight and it will be

same night, upon the publication of these articles, and the political movements emerging around the newspaper *İbret*, the government abolished the publication of the newspaper. The last issue of the newspaper announced that the government closed down the newspaper since 'it tried to divide the community' and since 'it published articles that were 'harmful' for the country.'²¹⁴ The literary committee of the Gedikpaşa Theater, led by Namık Kemal, was now 'suspects', and 'potential-criminals' for the Ottoman government. Namık Kemal and his friends whose articles and books were frequently censored probably knew that their performance would create a political tension from the very beginning. Indeed, Namık Kemal's son Ali Ekrem mentions that his father wrote theater pieces when he realized that he could not disseminate his ideas otherwise.²¹⁵ Consequently, it would not be wrong to argue that the premier of *Vatan* and the following events were consciously incorporated into a political agenda, which would -once more- portray Namık Kemal not only as a 'lover of fatherland', but also as an Ottoman reformist fighting against the 'sultan's tyranny'.

The following night, a group of policemen 'visited' the Gedikpaşa Theater and arrested the literary committee which included Namık Kemal, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Mustafa Nuri (1824-1890), Ebüzziya Tevfik Bey and Hakkı Efendi.²¹⁶ These intellectuals were exiled separately.²¹⁷ Ahmet Mithat and Ebüzziya Tevfik Bey were

performed on behalf of Karakaşyan Yeranuhi Hanım, one of the first actresses of the theater, who helped the staging of the play the other night." *İbret Gazetesi*, 3 April 1873, no. 130, quoted in: Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 179.

²¹⁴ Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 182.

²¹⁵ Ekrem, *Namık Kemal*, pp. 49-50.

²¹⁶ Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 182.

²¹⁷ "(...) Mr. Kemal, Mr. Nuri, Mithat Efendi and Fatihli Hakkı Efendi, - the journalists of the newspaper *İbret* which was shut down the other day-, and Mr. Tevfik, the owner of the newspaper *Sıraç*, were present at the theater of Agop which is situated in Gedikpaşa last Sunday night, and hence

sent to the island Rhodes. Mustafa Nuri and Hakkı Efendi were exiled to Acre, and Namık Kemal was sent to Cyprus (and stayed in the fortress of Famagusta until the dethronement of the sultan).²¹⁸

There are different narratives on the reasons why these intellectuals were arrested. Some of these narratives belong to Mustafa Nuri Bey (an author in the daily *İbret*), Sadettin Nüzhet (an early Republican literary critic), Ali Ekrem (Namık Kemal's son), and Midhat Cemal Kuntay (a Turkish writer, poet and lawyer).²¹⁹ The narratives of Ali Ekrem and Sadettin Nüzhet argue that Namık Kemal and his audience promoted the dethronement of the sultan. Accordingly, after the first performance of *Vatan*, a large group of audience invited Namık Kemal to the stage. Once they recognized that he was not there, they headed to the newspaper *İbret*. And on the way, they shouted as: "Long live Kemal! Long live fatherland! This is our wish! May God grant our wish!" (The word 'wish' was '*murad*' in Turkish; it was also the name of the crown prince (*veliaht*) on whom progressives had pinned their hopes).²²⁰ Sadettin Nüzhet argues that the masses invoked Sultan Murad, who was also a friend of Namık Kemal.²²¹ The Sultan, threatened by the politicization of the theater, closed down the newspaper *İbret* which promoted constitutionalism, and 'politically sterilized' the Gedikpaşa Theater by sending the political figures to exile.

were arrested by the police force and put in public jail. That night, even the owner of the above mentioned newspaper, Aleksan Efendi, was arrested, but he was released the next day. Today, it is being told that the above mentioned journalists will be exiled to Cyprus, Rhodes and Akka. Because the reasons of their arrest are unknown and there is no official declaration with regard to their situation, we did not dare get into the details."

Basiret Gazetesi, 9 April 1873, quoted in Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 185.

²¹⁸ See: And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 102-103; Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, pp. 184-185; Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theater 1839-1923," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)*, no. 1 (1983), p. 53.

²¹⁹ For a the discussion on of the narratives, see: Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, pp. 178-206.

²²⁰ Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theater 1839-1923," p. 53.

²²¹ Nüzhet, *Namık Kemal*, pp. 62-63.

The ‘*Vatan* Incident’ became a turning point not only in the popularization of the Ottoman theater, but also in changing the nature of the theater activities. As we learn from the newspaper *La Turquie*, the government decided to control each and every theater play and censored the ‘dangerous elements’ that could cause social unrest in these scripts.²²² On the other hand, Namık Kemal’s plays gained an incredible popularity. Gedikpaşa Theater continued to stage the plays of the exiled playwright. From his Cypriot fortress, Kemal sent two plays: *Zavallı Çocuk* (Poor Child), and *Akif Bey*. Güllü Agop, the director of the theater, produced and staged these plays although the name of the author was discretely omitted from the program.²²³

Vatan yahut Silistre and the ‘*Vatan* Incident’ are associated with the ideological currents of the Ottoman intelligentsia through the 1870s. Soon the play *Vatan* gained additional meanings such as the love of the fatherland, Ottomanism and the pursuit of liberty. For instance, Adolphe Thalasso, discussed ‘how extraordinary *Vatan* was’ in his article on the Turkish theater published in 1904.²²⁴ He did not only quote the dialogues reflecting the love of the *patrie*, but also described how strongly he felt this love of fatherland throughout these dialogues.²²⁵ Moreover, he informed us about the current politics of the government towards the theater and condemned the Ottoman government since it exiled these intellectuals.²²⁶

²²² *La Turquie*, 12 April 1873.

²²³ Menemencioğlu, “The Ottoman Theater 1839-1923,” p. 54.

²²⁴ Thalasso, “Le Théâtre Turc,” p. 373.

²²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 373.

²²⁶ “Kemal et Ahmed Mithat comprirent que suivre cette voie c’était étouffer au berceau le théâtre turc. Aussi, réagirent- ils avec autant de vigueur que de courage, mais, hélas! Ces vertus, comme nous le verrons dans la suite, furent payées par l’exil et l’interdiction sur les théâtres ottomans de toutes les pièces dont le sujet, de près ou le loin, se rattachait a des idées réformatrices ou portrait une atteinte, - si petite fut-elle, au texte du livre saint. Aujourd’hui encore l’interdiction qui pèse sur *Vatan* n’a pu

The exiled writers returned to İstanbul when a group of leading Ottoman politicians carried out a *coup d'état* deposing Sultan Abdülaziz on 30 May 1876. Prince Murat, who was close to the Young Ottomans and who had been in touch with Mithat Paşa, Namık Kemal and Ziya Paşa, was crowned.²²⁷ Namık Kemal and Ziya Paşa were appointed as Palace secretaries.²²⁸ Three months later, Sultan Murat was dethroned on the basis of some mental illness, leaving his place to Sultan Abdülhamid II, who would become one of the most controversial figures of the Ottoman history.²²⁹ Crowned in 1876, Sultan Abdülhamid II was both a modernist and Islamist who would develop an even more complex relationship with the Ottoman intelligentsia and the opposing political groups. Following a period of Euphoria (both for the Ottoman intelligentsia and for the Ottoman theatre) after the promulgation of the First Constitution of 1876, Sultan Abdülhamid II dissolved the chamber of deputies two years later to begin his reign which would be a 'tyranny' for the Ottoman intelligentsia.²³⁰ The reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II was marked with censorship for the Ottoman theater, which -to a certain extent- had created its own public in the '*Vatan* incident'. Sultan Abdülhamid II's policies of censorship reached its peak with the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater in 1884.

être levée soit a cause d'une tacite concession diplomatique faite a la Russie, soit surtout parce que l'idée de Patrie ne peut pas, ne doit pas exister chez le turc de façon abstraite, mais dans une forme tangible."

Thalasso, "Le Théâtre Turc," p. 376.

²²⁷ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 77.

²²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 77.

²²⁹ For further discussion on Sultan Abdülhamid II's character, see: Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "II. Abdülhamid'in Saltanatı (1876-1909): Kızıl Sultan mı? Ulu Hakan mı?" *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 103 (2002), pp. 10-19.

²³⁰ Menemenciöglü, "The Ottoman Theater 1839-1923," p. 54.

Censorship and the Destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater

The containment of popular theatre during the reign of the Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909) and the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater in 1884 provide some very important clues to understand both the political and the cultural atmosphere of that era. First, ruining of a major theater just because of one play's possible potential to politicize the masses shows that the Ottoman public was indeed very susceptible to political unrest. Second, it clearly shows that by the mid 1880s, theater became a political arena and a means to mobilize the masses. Third, the later patronage of the Gedikpaşa team in the Ottoman Palace under Sultan Abdülhamid II shows the complex relationship between the Palace and the popular theater.

The Hamidian era was in fact a stage for the complex relationship between the popular theatre and the government; a relationship based on fear and censorship. The epitome of Sultan Abdülhamid II's policy of censorship was undoubtedly the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater, which led the Palace towards a patronage of the 'interdict', and shifting its policies towards controlling the public opinion. The irony of this saga was that Sultan Abdülhamid II actually loved the theater. He ordered the construction of a theater in the Yıldız Palace. His vizier Tahsin Paşa informs us in his memoirs that Sultan Abdülhamid II did not only use Yıldız Theater for the reception ceremonies of the European sovereigns and ambassadors, but also as a place where he spent time and discussed daily issues.²³¹ On the other hand, his love for the theater did not change his policy of censorship towards it or the press. All the literary and artistic activities of the period were under strict control of censorship, which could manifest itself in absurd implementations.

²³¹ Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamid Yıldız Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Milliyet Matbaası, 1931), p. 17.

The analysis of the complexities of the Hamidian era would be an overwhelming endeavor at this point. Both the domestic and international dynamics of the era in which he reigned and his life-story portraying him as a curious and a modern young prince in the Ottoman court have been explored in great detail in the works of Selim Deringil, François Gergeon, Yavuz Selim Karakışla and in many memoirs, including those of his daughter Ayşe Osmanoğlu and his vizier Tahsin Paşa. What is relevant for our study is his paradoxical stance *vis a vis* modern cultural forms. As historian Selim Deringil argues, in the Hamidian era, Ottoman statesmen became obsessed with reciprocity which could be procured through *representation*, and sought to project the image in Europe that ‘we are like you’.²³² Given the political atmosphere of the time when his uncle Sultan Abdülaziz was murdered, and the Balkan states were dissolved, Sultan Abdülhamid II developed paranoia in the midst of a ‘decline’ paradigm. As international political tension escalated, and secret anti-Hamidian organizations were founded, Sultan Abdülhamid II came to rely more and more on the espionage system he built up. Historian Yavuz Selim Karakışla gives detailed information on the ‘institution of espionage’, and argues that Sultan Abdülhamid II drew the Ottoman society into a collective paranoia by employing spies in each and every aspect of the social and political life.²³³ One of the greatest fears of Abdülhamid II was the growth of an opponent public opinion, which started to take shape by the late 1870s. He was well aware of the public influence the theater had, which made him control each and every play after the ‘*Vatan Incident*’ of 1873. İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri Sekizinci (1874-1935), the

²³² Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), p. 15.

²³³ Yavuz Selim Karakışla, “II. Abdülhamid’in İstibdat Döneminde Jurnalciliğin Boyutları,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 120 (2003), pp. 24-29.

famous actor, translator and the playwright of the day informs us that Sultan Abdülhamid II feared the theatre's potential to 'awaken' the masses, and that therefore he withdrew Namık Kemal's *Vatan* from circulation and banned any national play.²³⁴ A number of words like 'yıldız' (star), 'burun' (nose), or 'mecnun' (lover) were prohibited because of their implications of the sultan or the palace, having a potential to cause a public unrest.²³⁵ Furthermore Sekizinci narrates how absurd were these controls, and how he suffered from censorship.²³⁶

Sultan Abdülhamid II did not only censor Turkish plays. He also censored European plays that would be staged in İstanbul. Furthermore, he prohibited the performances of foreign actors, and censored some plays that could implicate the Ottoman Empire and its sultan in Europe.²³⁷ For instance, when one of the famous actors of the age, Sarah Bernardt (1844-1923) visited İstanbul in 1888, Sultan Abdülhamid II did not want her to perform since she could perform 'death' so realistically.²³⁸ Similarly, the famous actor Ernesto Rossi (1897-1967) and his group could not perform *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Louis XIV* or *Neron*, since these plays could represent the dethronement of a king.²³⁹ The government also censored

²³⁴ "İbnirrefik Ahmed Nuri Sekizinci'nin Hayatı ve Eserleri," *Türk Tiyatrosu*, no. 151 (1946), p. 7.

²³⁵ "In the plays that were performed back then, it was forbidden to use the words *Efendi* (Sir) and *Kadın* (Woman). Because the word *Efendi* could be misunderstood by the princes while the word *Kadın* by the wife of the sultan. Particularly the words *Yıldız* because it relates to the Yıldız Palace, *Burun* (Nose) because it might refer to the big nose of Sultan Hamid and *Mecnun* (Mad) because it disturbs Sultan Murad which was dethroned, were never mentioned." Mehmed Rebii Hatemi Baraz, *İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri Sekizinci (1866-1935)* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001), pp. 18-19.

²³⁶ "Back then, I was interrogated because of the one-act comedy I translated, titled "*Anatolun İzdivacı*" (The Marriage of Anatol). Because the word *Anatol* resembles the word Anatolia. (...) I struggled very hard to explain that I translated this piece from French and that it had no connection to Anatolia." *ibid.*, p. 19.

²³⁷ Demirel, "II Abdülhamid Dönemi Tiyatro Sanstürü ... ve Perdeler Sanstürle Acıldı," p. 40.

²³⁸ And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 247.

²³⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 247-248.

the international theater groups who travelled to İstanbul ‘just to perform’.²⁴⁰ When they were censored, however, these international groups still got paid since the Ottoman sultan did not want to ‘damage’ his international relations.²⁴¹ Sultan Abdülhamid II’s censorship reached beyond the borders of the Empire as well. He banned some theater performances staged in Europe. For instance, Sultan Abdülhamid II asked the French President Sadi Carnot (1834-1894) and Queen Victoria (1837-1901) to ban the play ‘*Muhammed*’, which could create a negative impression about Islam and its prophet Muhammed.²⁴² But yet, these measures were not enough for him. Upon the ‘inadequacy of the control’, Sultan Abdülhamid II ordered the preparation of a document for the regulation of the theater. In the Ministry of Education, a committee of ninety-two people gathered and prepared some legislation for censorship.²⁴³ However, this legislation did not sufficiently regulate the censorship craze either. The officers continued to ban plays that did not violate the law.

Within the empire, censorship and the ‘fear of the theatre’ reached its peak with the destruction of a major theatre; Gedikpaşa Theater in 1884. Ahmet Midhat’s plays *Çerkes Özdenleri* (The Circassians) and *Çengi* (Dancer) were staged on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Gedikpaşa Theater. Upon a rumor arguing that the play *Circassians* promoted a Circassian rebellion, the theatre was surrounded by four hundred municipal workers who dismantled it in one night.²⁴⁴ In his memoirs, Ahmet

²⁴⁰ *ibid.*

²⁴¹ Demirel, “II Abdülhamid Dönemi Tiyatro Sansürü ... ve Perdeler Sansürle Acıldı,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 63 (1999), pp. 40-41.

²⁴² *ibid.*, p. 41.

²⁴³ For further information, see: And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 249.

²⁴⁴ “The plays *Çerkes Özdenleri* and *Çengi* being ordered by his holiness Ahmet Mithat Efendi are against propriety and morality and as a matter of form, contradictory to Islamic tokens; since the mis-

Fehim narrates the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater, ‘the temple of the Turkish theater’ because of Sultan Abdülhamid II’s groundless fears, and condemns the regime.²⁴⁵ On the other hand, the famous actor of the day; İbn-ür Refik Ahmet Nuri Sekizinci argues that Sultan Abdülhamid II ordered the destruction of the theater since he received some news that ‘the emerging opposition called ‘the Young Turks’ were very much influenced by the Gedikpaşa Theater, and were organized through this institution’.²⁴⁶ Ahmet Fehim informs us that after the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater, the Ministry of Education sent a notice to the theaters informing that each and every play staged without the approval of the government would face a similar punishment.²⁴⁷ Subsequently, the fear precluded theater activities in İstanbul for a while. Moreover, after the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater, a law

en-scene of these plays are not appropriate, that the previously mentioned plays should never be performed again and that the officers that were called yesterday be informed about this requirement ordered by his Holiness Şehremini Devletlü Paşa, the minister of police affairs, his highness.” *Tarik*, 23 November 1884.

²⁴⁵ “In this period there (in the Gedikpaşa Theater) we performed a lot of plays: firstly we performed *Gaye, Seyyid Yahya, Besa*, -which we had performed in the First Gedikpaşa-, and later *Çerkes Özdenleri*, the last play of Mithat Efendi (1884). However, this last play caused a lot of gossip among the spies and the media. There were many criticisms. In the end, all of this affected the Palace differently. It was said:

“A Circassian issue is being created, better said, they want Circassians to be given half-sovereignty. Meanwhile, Murat Bey and others write a history of the Circassians secretly. This is flagrantly a preparation for an attempt at rebellion against the Ottoman state and the Ottoman dynasty. The play must be banned and its creators arrested.” One night Hamdi Bey, Mithat Efend and me – in the house of Mithat Efendi’s mistress- were having fun. There was a knock on the door. They asked for Mithat Efendi. He got up and left. We spent the whole night in great terror and depression. In the morning, I went to the theater. As I was walking down to Gedikpaşa slowly, I saw that the front of the theater was crowded by white belted Municipality sergeants. “The end” was coming... I realized the danger immediately, went back, and found myself near my mother in Üsküdar. From then on, at this old corner of the Anatolian side, we were waiting for news of the events that were about to take place in the little theater house hidden in the domed silhouette of İstanbul. At last, we heard that the theater was abolished upon Sultan Hamid’s groundless fears. The hands that destroyed that place... They know that the place they destroyed is the first temple of Turkish theater.”

Ahmet Fehim, *Sahmede Elli Sene*. (İstanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2002), p. 21.

²⁴⁶ “Back in those days, Jeune Turcs were springing up in Europe. The Gedikpaşa Theater was abolished in one night upon the orders of Sultan Hamid who believed that these Jeune Turcs were mused by the above-mentioned theater. After that (the Ottoman Theater) did performances in Bağlarbaşı, in Kadıköy and in Şahzadebaşı during Ramadan under the sweet custody of a violent censorship.”

“İbnirrefik Ahmed Nuri Sekizinci’nin Hayatı ve Eserleri”, p. 6.

²⁴⁷ Fehim, *Sahmede Elli Sene*, p. 32.

prohibited the performance of any Turkish play, leaving the stage only to translated plays.²⁴⁸

Ahmet Fehim informs us that the officers commissioned to censor the scripts 'were uncultured, simple-minded and bigoted' and that they banned whatever they found 'dangerous' including translated scripts which were not political.²⁴⁹ Fehim also narrates that the censors were dominantly radical islamists, and they tried to ban some plays in the month of Ramadan.²⁵⁰ Ahmet Fehim's memoirs can be considered one of the best sources narrating the government's fears, paranoia and measures to control. In another narrative, he explained how the government tried to ban some words like 'yıldız' (the word 'star' connoting the imperial palace) even if they were direct translations from French.²⁵¹ Again, Fehim's memoirs on Çaprazlıyan's efforts to open a workshop on dance, and the government's insistence on seeing his

²⁴⁸ For further information, see: Fehim, *Sahnedeki Elli Sene*, p. 32; And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 243-247; Demirel, "II Abdülhamid Dönemi Tiyatro Sansürü ... ve Perdeler Sansürle Acıldı," pp. 36-43.

²⁴⁹ "I cannot move on without telling my concerns and what I had to endure during that period. On the one hand turbaned basket heads, on the other hand corrupt gerdermaries and in the end censorship. These three ignorant powers have constantly punched theater and art and knocked them down. For example, I go to the provinces. I get prepared. On my first night, a police officer and one or two turbaned people stand in front of me and said: "Ramadan is a month of worship. Plays are sinful" and they ban the plays. Or they say: "Did you come here to bring draught and infertility to our country!" and they sack you out immediately... In İstanbul on the other hand, the Police Force does not give permission for Ramadan. On top of that, a trouble maker such as Arap Abdullah who levies tributes on Şehzadebaşı comes into the scene. He robs us... What about censor? This is the scariest one! Either the Ministry of Education, or the police or the media! A censor committee consisting of ignorants, just to look nice to the Palace, harms you without understanding or knowing the details of the plays. One day, I never forget, I brought to the committee a play in translation. Anyway it was forbidden to play native dramas after the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater. Only plays in translation could be performed. One of the members of the committee, a representative of the Üsküdar Prefecture, a bearded bigot turned towards me and said: "You should take out all the Arabic words from the sentences of the priest in this play. Qu'ran is given in Arabic and thus Arabic words are illicit to non-Muslim tongues." I was stuck frozen. Fortunately, one or two members did not attend to the advice of this bigot."

Fehim, *Sahnedeki Elli Sene*, pp. 31-32.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

²⁵¹ "One night I was performing a translated comedy. I said "Your eyes shine like a star" to the woman across me. Immediately a couple of policemen dropped in. They called me. Looking straight at my face, they said: "So it is like the Star (Yıldız)!" I showed them the play and said "This is approved. Censorship has not deleted this sentence." Then they vamoosed."

ibid., p. 32.

approval notice also show that the regime and its policy of censorship were so narrow-minded that they could not imagine any other kind of performance other than the performance of the censored plays.²⁵² By the 1900s, the municipality of İstanbul banned all popular theater activities in İstanbul.²⁵³ All these censorship policies discouraged the theater, and created not only unemployment, but also a rivalry among performers. The destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater, the ban on Turkish plays, censorship and the strict measures of the government tried to make the theater 'a politically sterilized domain' through 1884-1908. However, Fehim's memoirs portray that destroying the Gedikpaşa Theater building made the popular theater and the performers even more 'political'.²⁵⁴ This censorship did not diminish but multiplied the popular theater activities. Considering the theater historian Marvin Carlson's statement that 'every play and its performance connotes its previous performances, and acts as a 'memory machine'', one can see that *Vatan* and the *Çerkes Özdenleri* became symbols of opposition and revolution in the following decades.²⁵⁵

²⁵² "From the actors, poor Çaprastıyan, who was left alone, appeals to the Üsküdar Prefecture with a petition to give dance courses in a saloon above the Vakıf Club. He asks for permission to do foot plays. The district governor calls for Çaprastıyan and says: "Do you have the approved version of this play? If you have, I will give permission, if you do not I will not let you do it" Çaprastıyan is surprised: "Sir", he says, "this is a foot play. There is no approval for this."

The district governor insists and says: "Bring it so we shall see." Poor Çaprastıyan starts to dance in front of the governor. Governor starts to shout taking this act as an insult.

He says: "Bring the approved version! There is an order! I cannot give permission to you. Come on, go away!" and refuses the petition.

These events show the ideas and values of the administrators during that period. I am full of rage against these people. When the time comes, I do not even want to remember their corpses with good intentions!"

ibid., p. 32.

²⁵³ ibid.

²⁵⁴ "It was only a building which was torn down by four hundred people with the order of the Palace. To the contrary, theater, was rooted and settled in the spirits and minds more than ever. We, the actors, started to be more influential during this period."

ibid., p. 22.

²⁵⁵ Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, p. 2.

Although the popular theaters were ‘politically sterilized’, and lost the political power they gained with the ‘*Vatan* Incident’, once the Gedikpaşa Theater was destroyed, the ‘imperial control’ took over all the theater activities. The day after the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater, Sultan Abdülhamid II employed ‘the Gedikpaşa team’ in the Palace. The playwright Ahmet Mithad was appointed as the secretary of the quarantine in the Palace.²⁵⁶ The director of the Gedikpaşa Theater, Güllü Agop was appointed as the director of the Yıldız Theater. Moreover, he converted to Islam, took the name ‘Yakup Efendi’, and acquired a military rank in the Palace.²⁵⁷ One of the prominent actors of the Gedikpaşa Theater, Mınakyan Efendi was appointed as the stage manager of the Palace theatre.²⁵⁸ Unlike Agop Vartoviyan (Güllü Agop), Mınakyan Efendi refused to convert to Islam.²⁵⁹

Sultan Abdülhamid II’s policy toward the containment of the popular theatre was a complicated one. He saw theater as a central institution of ‘progress and civilization’, so he ordered the construction of a theater in the Palace, and he frequently used this theater for diplomatic purposes. On the other hand, the ‘*Vatan* Incident’ and the ‘political danger’ of the theater scared him; therefore, he wanted to limit the theater within the borders of the imperial palace. Destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater, the main stage of İstanbul, and his later appropriation of the Gedikpaşa team in the Palace illustrate his paradoxical policies towards theater.

A very interesting aspect of the ‘censored era’ was Ahmet Vefik Paşa’s patronage of the theater in Bursa.²⁶⁰ Ahmet Vefik Paşa was a theatre lover, and

²⁵⁶ Fehim, *Sahnedeki Elli Sene*, p. 22.

²⁵⁷ Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi*, p. 46.

²⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁵⁹ Demirel, “II Abdülhamid Dönemi Tiyatro Sanstürü ... ve Perdeler Sanstürle Acıldı,” p. 38.

²⁶⁰ Ahmet Vefik Paşa was the governor of Bursa between the years 1878-1882.

translated thirty-four plays of Molière into Turkish.²⁶¹ Some of the performers suffering from the irrational censorship in İstanbul took refuge in Bursa in the theater constructed by Ahmet Vefik Paşa. Ahmet Vefik Paşa was both a representative of the government and a reformist Ottoman intellectual. His stance promoting the theatre in Bursa showed, in a way, that there was also a growing opposition to the sultan's policies in his own entourage. Ahmet Vefik Paşa's encouragement of the theater did not last long, however. In 1882, Ahmet Vefik Paşa was removed from office with an imperial degree and was given another position in the Palace.²⁶²

A leading Ottoman intellectual and playwright of the era, Namık Kemal also suffered from a similar policy of exile. When Sultan Abdülhamid II heard a rumor arguing that Namık Kemal was trying to dethrone him, he ordered the grand vizier Midhat Paşa to exile Namık Kemal. However, Midhat Paşa did not obey the order. Subsequently, Sultan Abdülhamid II exiled Midhat Paşa on 5 February 1877, and imprisoned Namık Kemal on 9 February 1877.²⁶³ Especially these last two intellectual figures became 'heroes' in post-revolutionary theater scripts. As will be discussed later, these two figures were portrayed as heroic fighters against Sultan Abdülhamid II's 'tyranny' in the post-revolutionary theater.

Again, a comparable theater patronage was that of the governor of Adana, Ziya Paşa (1825-1880). Ziya Paşa, a lover of theatre, ordered the construction of a theater and a theater troupe in Adana in 1880.²⁶⁴ However, he died after a short while and managed to remain 'untouched' by Sultan Abdülhamid II's exile policies.

²⁶¹ Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 133; Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 10.

²⁶² Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, pp. 127-132.

²⁶³ Thalasso, "Le Théâtre Turc," p. 376 ; Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, pp. 234-239.

²⁶⁴ Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, p. 144.

When we consider Sultan Abdülhamid II's policies towards the patrons and performers of the popular theater, it would not be wrong to argue that he either distanced them from İstanbul, or employed them in the imperial Palace.

All in all, I can argue that the strict censorship policies towards the theater, the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater by the Ottoman government, and the employment of its team in the Palace demonstrate the importance attributed to the control of the theater in order to keep the social order. Furthermore, demolishing the theater (on the premise that 'it can create a Circassian upheaval') displays the strong conviction that the theater was influential in shaping the public opinion. The 'Vatan incident', the censorship policies, and the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater, in other words, the containment of the popular theatre demonstrate that the Ottoman theater was able to cause political tension by the 1880s and 1890s. This observation challenges the traditional narratives of the two masters of the theatre history, Metin And and Refik Ahmet Sevengil who date the 'politicization of the theater' to 1908, that is, to the declaration of the Second Constitution. Although it is true that the political theater was consolidated in the constitutionalist era, it gained a symbolic importance for the politics of opposition with these two theater 'incidents' of the 1870s and 1880s. Moreover, the narratives of the performers show that Sultan Abdülhamid II's policies of oppression created a feeling of 'revengefulness' towards the regime.²⁶⁵ After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, theatre -which was already politicized- blossomed under the patronage of the Committee of Union and Progress and became one of the fundamental institutions to disseminate the ideologies of the revolutionaries.

²⁶⁵ "I am full of rage against these people. When the time comes, I do not even want to remember their corpses with good intentions!"
Fehim, *Sahnedeki Elli Sene*, p. 32.

Namık Kemal, his plays, the '*Vatan* Incident' and the 'Gedikpaşa Incident' then became symbols of oppression and resistance in the popular Ottoman theater.

CHAPTER VI

LEGITIMIZING THE NEW REGIME: OLD REPERTOIRES, NEW FORMS OF SPECTACLES

The history of revolutionary theatre was a complex story of shifting relations to representation, micro-contests over interpretation, struggles over authority, and constructions and deconstructions of political and cultural identities. (...) And theatre, perhaps more than any other cultural institution, illuminates the contingency, rather than the historical necessity or coherence, of the revolution and of its effects and thus the degree to which its participants were shaped by events even as they shaped them.²⁶⁶ (Susan Maslan)

To understand how “Ottoman Revolutionary theatre” was situated within the politics of its time, one should begin by exploring the historical milieu of the declaration of the Second Constitution (23 July 1908) known as ‘the Ottoman Revolution of 1908’ or ‘the Young Turk Revolution’. A brief review of the historiography on the Ottoman Revolutionary theater shows that the strict periodization laid out so far by scholars like Refik Ahmet Sevengil, Metin And, Enver Töre, and Alemdar Yalçın tends to oversimplify its complex and gradual development. Taking a comparative perspective based on exemplaries of other similar and contemporaneous ‘revolutionary theaters’, this chapter will try to show how similar ‘theatre epidemics’ were created and experienced in France, Russia and Iran. This comparative perspective was useful in situating the Ottoman experience into its own historical context which embraced the masses under the patronage of the CUP. The memoirs of the actors, and the accounts of daily newspapers clearly show the growth of popular interest in the ‘pageants’ of *Vatan* and *Besa*.

²⁶⁶ Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts*, pp. 7-8.

The Historical Milieu of the Young Turk Revolution

The history of the Hamidian and Young Turk eras has been the two most influential political experiences of the turn of the nineteenth century in terms of showing the reception of modernity by both state and society. The complexities of these eras had many dimensions including Sultan Abdülhamid II's oppression which could be felt in each and every aspect of the social life, the spread of the nationalist feelings around the Empire, and the changing international power relations. As thoroughly analyzed by historian Feroz Ahmad, the deterioration of Ottoman politics and economy rapidly found expression in the formation of a secret political organization in 1889 known as the Committee of Union and Progress.²⁶⁷ Junior officers and civil servants who joined this anti-Hamidian movement aimed at overthrowing the Hamidian autocracy and restore the constitution shelved in 1878. However, this was only intended as a prelude to a social revolution designed to place the lower middle class, to which most Young Turks belonged, in a position of power and influence within the new regime. Indeed, as Ahmad further argues they differed from the senior officers, who, like the high bureaucrats, wanted only a constitutional monarchy and had no desire to see Turkish society undergo a social revolution.²⁶⁸

During these decades, theater did not only reflect the progressive marginalization of Ottoman intellectuals and enable them to disseminate their ideas and gather support, but also provided a means of expression and a space for the formation of the Unionist ideology.²⁶⁹ When on 23 July 1908, the Committee of

²⁶⁷ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London, New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 30.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

²⁶⁹ Also see: Makdisi, "The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914," pp. 96-176.

Union and Progress succeeded to 'persuade' Sultan Abdülhamid II to promulgate the constitution for the second time, public reaction in İstanbul was one of tremendous joy and relief, leading people from all walks of life to celebrate in the streets. As Feroz Ahmad reminds us, once the censorship was lifted, newspapers and magazines representing all the communities of the empire and a wide assortment of opinions flooded the market to satisfy the curiosity of an eager public.²⁷⁰ In many places, including the capital, people targeted the representatives of the old regime, forcing the dismissal of officials and hunting down known members of the espionage system.²⁷¹ The political exiles also began to return to the capital.

Young Turks rapidly adopted an agenda of social reform after the Revolution of 1908. As Feroz Ahmad puts it, "the Young Turks experimented with virtually every sphere of life, hardly anything was left untouched."²⁷² They not only changed the political system but also attempted to refashion society by borrowing more freely from the West than ever before. The Young Turk movement, however, composed of joined forces to overthrow the Hamidian regime, was itself divided. Ottoman historians usually divide the ideological movement into two principal groups, the Liberals and the Unionists. In Feroz Ahmad's terms, the liberals generally belonged to the upper classes of the Ottoman society: 'they were well educated, Westernized, cosmopolitan and comfortable with a foreign language and culture, usually French.'²⁷³ As supporters of the constitutional monarchy, their ideology was Ottomanism, a dynastic patriotism to which all religious and ethnic communities

²⁷⁰ Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p. 31.

²⁷¹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 93

²⁷² Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, p.32.

²⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 34.

could owe allegiance without sacrificing their own narrower aims and aspirations. On the other hand, the Unionist members of the CUP were also constitutionalists and supported a political regime similar to the one envisaged by the liberals. But in contrast to the liberals, the Unionists came from what might be described in Western term as the ‘lower middle class’, the class which had suffered the consequences of progressive integration into the world market due to the erosion of the indigenous economy. Indeed, the power relations and the ideological struggles of these different groups were more complex than I could explain above. Feroz Ahmad’s words thoroughly summarizes the issue: “In the transitional period which began in July 1908, there was a latent struggle for power between the sultan, supported by conservatives and reactionaries, the high bureaucrats, supported by the liberals, and the Unionists who relied on their organizational strength in the army and society at large.”²⁷⁴

Rethinking the Periodization of the Ottoman Revolutionary Theater

Pioneers of the Turkish theater history, like Metin And and Ahmet Refik Sevengil periodize the history of the Ottoman ‘Western-style theater’ under two distinct categories: ‘Theater of the *Tanzimat* Era’²⁷⁵ (*Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*) and ‘Theater of the Constitutionalist Era’ (*Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*).²⁷⁶ While Sevengil chooses to focus on

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁷⁵ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1961), Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, (Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, Ankara, 1972).

²⁷⁶ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1968), Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971).

theater troupes rather than a chronological line, Metin And's narrative was constructed with classifications and periodizations. According to Metin And, the 'revolutionary theater' started with the declaration of the Second Constitution in 1908, and ended with the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923.²⁷⁷ In a more recent historical review, Alemdar Yalçın also follows Metin And's periodization for the Constitutionalist theater as (1908-1923), but rather focuses on the literary sides of the plays written between 1908-1914.²⁷⁸ Another theater historian Enver Töre also respects Metin And's periodization, but rather focuses on the bibliographies produced by playwrights who wrote plays between 1908-1923.²⁷⁹ Bilge Seçkin's master's thesis, however, periodize the 'revolutionary theater' between the declaration of the Second Constitution (23 July 1908), and the Counter-Revolution (13 April 1909) known as the '31 March Incident'.²⁸⁰

In the light of new research, it is now possible to revisit the established periodization of the so-called 'Ottoman revolutionary theater' of the Constitutionalist era. An analysis of the newspapers, memoirs and play-scripts shows that a strict periodization of the era underestimates the gradual formation of the Ottoman popular and political theater. To date the beginning of 'the revolutionary theater' to 1908 was problematic mainly for two reasons. Firstly, the memoirs of the actors and playwrights clearly document an increasing public interest in popular theatre with political themes prior to 1908. Secondly, as many of the plays staged after 1908 belonged to the *Tanzimat* era, making a strict division between the *Tanzimat* theater

²⁷⁷ And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 10. .

²⁷⁸ Alemdar Yalçın, *II Meşrutiyette Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ Basın Yayın, 2002).

²⁷⁹ Enver Töre, *İkinci Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu Yazarlar – Piyesler* (İstanbul : DUYAP, 2006).

²⁸⁰ See: Bilge Seçkin, "Staging the Revolution," (Master's Thesis, Bogaziçi University, 2007).

and Revolutionary theater would be rather misleading. To date the end of 'revolutionary theater' to 1909, to 1914, or to 1923 also proves to be problematic, since these dates did not 'end' the revolutionary theater but rather changed its nature. Therefore, the following lines will touch upon this methodological problem, and argue that the transformation of theater was a gradual process, underlining the fact that the earlier periodizations oversimplify the complex development of theater in the late Ottoman world.

While 'whether the declaration of the Second Constitution was a 'revolution' or not' is a subject of debate, one can easily state that there was indeed a revolution in the domain of theater very similar to the theatrical responses to the French and the Russian Revolutions.

Indeed, as mentioned in the previous chapters, theater had already become a political institution in the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz. In the subsequent decades, theater developed as a public sphere, parallel to the development of the coffeehouses.²⁸¹ Both the coffeehouse culture, and the shadow theater culture, which was based on political satire, helped the theater to gain its power to influence public opinion. Considering all these cultural and social factors, one cannot claim that the revolution 'created a political theater'. However, what the Revolution of 1908 accomplished was to use the popular theater to mobilize the masses as a means of propaganda. Therefore, we can speak of a 'revolutionary theater', which was used by the CUP to persuade the masses, especially the illiterate, on the righteousness of the new regime. On the other hand, the politicization of the repertoire and the creation of

²⁸¹ For further information on the coffeehouses, see: Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

a new genre of theater representing the 'tyranny of Sultan Abdülhamid II' could only emerge after the dethronement of the Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1909.

In his memoirs, Ahmet Fehim comments on the effects of the destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater. He underlines that the strict censorship policies did not only create unemployment, but also triggered a sense of revenge among the actors who took refuge in other towns to find jobs and establish theaters.

What four hundred people, with the order of the Palace, destroyed and tore down was only one building (Gedikpaşa Theater). Theater, on the contrary, was rooted in souls and in brains. We, the thespian people, became more influential in this period. (...) They had destroyed our theatre, our home, as well. We scattered everywhere and enlightened the most desolate places of the country with the torches of theater.²⁸²

The destruction of the Gedikpaşa Theater brought a change in the organization of theater groups based in İstanbul. As Ahmet Fehim's memoirs show, these troupes began to tour in different cities of the Ottoman Empire. For instance, Ahmet Fehim and a group of actors formed a traveling troupe and went first to Salonika, then passed to Edirne where they helped the establishment of a theater.²⁸³ Later, they also performed in Trabzon, Ordu and Samsun. Financial conflicts often divided their troupes. Ahmet Fehim and some of the remaining actors travelled to Çanakkale, Bozcaada, and Midilli, yet again suffering from financial difficulties, they joined Fasulyeciyan once more in Tekirdağ, and continued to perform in Çorlu and in Kırklareli. Afterwards, Ahmet Fehim decided to take a new turn and went to Ankara in search of new jobs. He first worked in the Kocamanoğlu Theater, then in the Cendrecioğlu Theater. Subsequently, another period of unemployment followed: Ahmet Fehim took a tour in the Black Sea region and performed first in Samsun,

²⁸² Fehim, *Sahnedeki Elli Sene*, p. 22.

²⁸³ They were: Fasulyeciyan, Hiranuş Hanım, Sofi, Kör Mari and Binemeciyan. Fehim, *Sahnedeki Elli Sene*, p. 22.

then in Ünye, and later in Giresun. After this tour, he joined the theater troupe of Minakyan Efendi, and visited the Aegean region. This time, they performed in İzmir, Salonika, İskeçe, and Kavala. The mobility of the theater troupes around different towns and cities of the Empire was certainly an outcome of the fall of the Gedikpaşa Theater. What came out of this transition, however, was the formation of a ‘theater culture’ in provincial capitals and towns, which, in a way, simulated the ‘coffee-house culture’ as a new entertainment platform. The rising popularity of these troupes helped the emergence of a new marketplace for the consumption of the theater around 1900s. Ahmet Fehim, for instance, returned to İstanbul and founded his own group: ‘*Ahmet Fehim Topluluğu* (Ahmet Fehim’s Troupe).’²⁸⁴

Ahmet Fehim’s memoirs clearly demonstrate that after the devastation of the Gedikpaşa Theater, which staged a political tension if not a political script, theater became a new sphere for the formation of public opinion. Moreover, his narrative shows that theater troupes had played almost a ‘missionary’ role in spreading a certain tradition of ‘going to the theater’, which was perceived in the provinces as a Western and modern behavior. Despite the obvious financial interest, these troupes also gave public training to the general audience, and contributed a great deal to the establishment of a new public space which functioned in a very similar way to the one formed via the coffee-houses.

Ahmet Fehim’s memoirs offer us a narrative which illustrates how theater troupes prior to 1908 travelled all around the country, disseminated the ideas of Ottomanism and Westernization through the theater, particularly through staging the play scripts of Namık Kemal, and created an audience that would support them. Therefore, I argue that the Committee of Union and Progress, and the Revolution of

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp.24 -120.

1908 did not 'discover' or 'invent' a revolutionary theater as a means of political mobilization, but rather used an already established institution: Theater and its potential power to legitimize ideologies.

In her dissertation *The Levantine Trajectories*, Ilham Khuri Makdisi illustrates how theater becomes a new kind of popular entertainment by the 1900s in the Ottoman world. Looking at the development of theater in Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria, Makdisi makes the following comments:

The number of plays written or translated by intellectuals and 'regular' bourgeois alike, the quest, by average citizens, for rehearsal space, the sheer volume of pages devoted to discussing theatrical matters in the press or in municipal reports, all these aspects give a sense of the theater's importance and ubiquity in the lives of elites and non-elites at the beginning of the twentieth century in Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria.²⁸⁵

It was also important to remember that the plays staged after the declaration of the Second Constitution were literary products of the *Tanzimat* era, suppressed in the Hamidian period. The plays of Namık Kemal gained a particular symbolic meaning during this era, even though their contents were 'politically sterilized' under the censorship. The joy of the revolution was reflected on the stage with the famous plays written during the reign of the martial law. Besides Namık Kemal, plays written by Şemseddin Sami (1850-1904) and Abdülhak Hamit (1852-1937) were also among the most popular ones.²⁸⁶ Needless to mention, Namık Kemal's plays dominated the repertoire of the 'revolutionary theater'. The play: *Vatan yahud Silistre* (Fatherland or Slistra) which premiered with the 'Vatan Incident' of 1873 was soon staged by different troupes in a number of places, and became the symbol of the revolution. Other plays that Namık Kemal wrote while on exile (*Gülnehal*, *Akif*

²⁸⁵ Makdisi, "The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914," p. 104.

²⁸⁶ And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 115-120.

Bey, Celalettin Hazemşah, and Zavallı Çocuk (The Poor Child) became extremely popular in the days that followed the Revolution.²⁸⁷

Namık Kemal's plays did not only dominate the repertoire of the 'revolutionary theater', but also shaped the structures of the post-revolutionary scripts.²⁸⁸ For instance, the phrase "Will the hell break loose?" that Abdullah Çavuş, a main character in *Vatan* repeats after each sentence set a pattern for other revolutionary plays. Selecting a phrase and repeating it after each sentence was thus copied by a number of scripts written after *Vatan*. Again, the fact that Zekiye, *Vatan*'s heroine, was dressed like a man to accompany his lover in the battle front also set a trend for 'masculinization for the love of the nation.' Yet again, in the *Zavallı Çocuk* (The Poor Child), two lovers die before uniting, and this pattern becomes a literary element for a number of plays.²⁸⁹ Another legacy of *Vatan yahud Silistre* can be seen in the titles of the scripts written after the declaration of the Second Constitution. Most of the theater scripts written after the Revolution of 1908 adopted the word 'yahud' (or) in their titles to allude to *Vatan yahud Silistre* (Fatherland or Silistra).²⁹⁰ The names of the plays written after the Revolution of 1908 used the word 'or' to add an additional title to the plays. The second title usually explains 'the theme' of the play, and aims to further inform the audience about its thematic content before the performance.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 116-118.

²⁸⁸ For further information, see: Didem Ardalı Büyükarman, "Türk Tiyatro Edebiyatında Vatan Kavramı (1860-1940)," (Phd Diss. Marmara University, 2007).

²⁸⁹ For further information, see: And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, pp. 116-119.

²⁹⁰ For further information, see: Cem Şems Tümer, "19. Yüzyıl Metinlerinde Geleneksel Bir Tercih: "Yahut"lu Başlık Kalıplaşması," *Turkish Studies*, no. 3 (2008), pp. 380-398.

²⁹¹ Some examples are: "*İstibdatın Vahşetleri Yahut Bir Fedainin Ölümü*", "*Bir Haftıye Ailesi Yahut Mazhume-i İstibdat*", "*Genç Zabıt Yahut İstibdat Zulümleri*", "*İstibdatın Son Günü Yahut Zavallı Valide*", "*Cemiyet-i Haftıye İşkenceleri Yahut Bir Següzeşt-i Hunin*", "*Haftıye Darbesi Yahut Bir Kızın*

The majority of plays written after 1909 represented ‘the tyranny of the *ancien regime*, and glorified the CUP. Although these plays which condemned the old regime were numerous, it is difficult to say that they reached a large audience. One can state, however, that the plays, novels, histories and newspapers of the age were all very influential in the formation of public opinion about the tyranny of the *ancien regime*.²⁹² On the other hand, Namık Kemal’s plays were not the only ones reflecting ‘the joy of the revolution’. Şemseddin Sami’s *Besa Yahut Ahde Vefa* (Pledge or the Oath of Fidelity), and *Gave ile Seydi Yahya* (Gave and Seydi Yahya,); Mehmet Rıfat’s *Pakdamen*, and *Ya Gazi Ya Şehid* (Veteran or Martyr); Ebuzziya Tevfik’s *Ecel-i Kaza* (The Time of Death); and Ahmet Mithat Efendi’s *Çengi* (Dancer) were all written in the second half of the nineteenth century and staged after the Revolution of 1908.²⁹³

It is also important to remember that the repertoire of the plays staged right in the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution did not display such an anti-Hamidian stance. Ironically, the ‘joy of the revolution’ was celebrated with the plays of the old regime. The main difference, however, was the emphasis put on certain terminology. Words like ‘nationalism,’ ‘Ottomanism’ and ‘constitutionalism’ censored before the

İntikamı”, “*Hırs-ı Saltanat Yahut İntikam-ı Meşru-ı Millet*”, “*Bekir Ağa Bölüğü Faciaları Yahut Serair-i İstibdattan Bir Nebze*”, “*Sevda-yı Medfun Yahut Safahat-ı İstibdat*” etc... Tümer, “19. Yüzyıl Metinlerinde Geleneksel Bir Tercih,” pp. 380-398.

²⁹² This public opinion was so strong that it still echoes today, and shapes the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire. I believe that the public opinion created via the performances and the publications which defines the old regime as a ‘tyranny’ shaped the historical discourse which shows the imperial rule (and particularly the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II) as ‘oppression and tyranny’, and the reign of the CUP as ‘freedom, and democracy’.

²⁹³ For further information, see: And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 118.

revolution were now overemphasized after the revolution, a fact that makes it difficult to date 'revolutionary theater' to 1908.²⁹⁴

The popularity of *Vatan* after the declaration of the Second Constitution created a new market for the political theater, and set a trend for the politicization of the repertoire. In this milieu, the post-revolutionary scripts judging the old regime, and the popular culture which produces them introduced the new theater genre of "*milli facia*" (national tragedy). The politicization of the repertoire did not end at a certain point but got transformed within the political events shaping the atmosphere of the day. In the eve of the First World War, for instance, the repertoire changed in such a way that the plays encouraged people to fight by staging the previous military successes. After the First World War in 1918, the same genre targeted the CUP leaders on stage, framing them as responsible for the loss of War. Again, after the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923, theater was used to construct a historical discourse glorifying the national leader, Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938), and representing the Ottoman history as a history of oppression and corruption. Therefore, it would be misleading to 'end' the 'revolutionary theater' in 1914, 1918, or 1923. The politicization of the repertoire did not end at a certain point but got transformed within the political events shaping the atmosphere of the day.²⁹⁵ All in all, I believe that the incorporation of theater into the politics was a gradual process.

The 'revolutionary theater' had its own organization and political power before the

²⁹⁴ As there was no 'beginning' of the revolutionary theater, there was also no 'ending'. The theater of post-1908 era established the tradition of a 'political theater' which does not only represent the historical and political situations, but also becomes a part of it in Turkey. This kind of theater was revived after the major political events like the First World War, the declaration of the Republic in 1923, and the first *coup d'état* of 1960.

²⁹⁵ The theater activities following the first *coup d'état* of 1960 also resembles the ones following the Revolution of 1908. After the coup of 1960, theater was used as a public space where the workers strike and unionization found its first organizations. Between the first two *coup d'états*, hence between the years 1960- 1971, the theater, as a public space, witnessed the radicalism of both leftist and rightist politics.

declaration of the Second Constitution. The repertoire of the revolutionary theater itself clearly demonstrates that this was not a new genre. On the other hand, what the revolution accomplished was the invention of mass spectacles and philanthropic organizations that would legitimize the rule of the CUP. This new market produced its own genre after 1909.

Putting Ottoman Revolutionary Theater in a Comparative Perspective:

The Cases of French, Russian and Iranian Revolutionary Theaters

In the days following the Revolution of 1908, the stage actually served to legitimize the new regime by the Unionist intellectuals. This effort of the intellectuals (most of whom were francophone) came precisely through an internalization of the French Revolution. They also happened to be the main participants of the revolution process as playwrights, actors and spectators. As historian Makdisi stated, ‘in the first years of the twentieth century, the French Revolution and *Marseillaise* had been appropriated to the local stage.’ Indeed, when we look at the performances of *Vatan*, after the declaration of the Second Constitution, we can see that most of the performances were introduced with *Marseillaise*. Makdisi further argued that thanks to theatre, radicals and aspiring revolutionaries throughout the Ottoman Empire began to engage in role-playing on stage, assigning themselves the roles of Saint-Just, Danton, and Robespierre. Accordingly, ‘the stage did not only serve to disseminate these concepts to a larger audience, but it also allowed the masses to learn from their past in the Revolution, and rehearse their roles as the revolutionary crowd’.²⁹⁶ Therefore, Makdisi stated that ‘theater was pivotal in allowing radicals and masses to imagine, to rehearse, to live and to glorify the revolution’:

²⁹⁶ Makdisi, “The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914,” p. 148.

If these thinkers could only fantasize about their own revolution in the first few years of the twentieth century, by 1908 the dream had become reality. The Young Turk Revolution brought with it a constitution, general euphoria, and a series of plays celebrating it onto the Egyptian and Syrian markets.²⁹⁷

In the post-revolutionary Ottoman theater, just like it had been in the French revolutionary theater, “regular” people were recruited beforehand to act in the role of the revolutionary crowd or people’s army in these plays.²⁹⁸ Considering these similarities, one can argue that the Ottoman Revolution did not only take the mottos of the French Revolution: “*Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité*”, but also its model of the post-revolutionary theater.

When we examine the post-revolutionary theater in France, we can see that theatre was affected tremendously by the social turbulence of the decade of the French Revolution. Graham Rodmell, working on the French Revolution, reminds us that it was a period of frantic dramatic activity as new drama numbered in the thousands and new theatres in the hundreds.²⁹⁹ As historian Paul Friedland puts it, ‘The theatricality in the French society during the Revolution was remarkable. The increase in the number of theatres alone was astonishing: in two years from 1789-1791, the number of theatres in Paris tripled.’³⁰⁰ Similarly, historian and literary critic Susan Maslan reminds us that ‘at least one thousand new plays were written and performed, approximately fifty new theatres opened, and there were roughly twenty five theatrical performances every day in Paris during the Revolutionary

²⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 150.

²⁹⁸ See the mass performances of *Vatan* in the following part, Also see: Makdisi, “The Levantine Trajectories: The Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo, and Alexandria, 1860-1914,” p. 151

²⁹⁹ Rodmell, *French Drama of the Revolutionary Years*, p.1.

³⁰⁰ Friedland, *Political Actors*, p.1.

decade.³⁰¹ Just like it has been in France, the theater boomed after the Ottoman Revolution of 1908, and the Russian Revolution of 1917. But, besides the ‘theater epidemic’ that major revolutions created, a radical transformation in the nature of the theatre was also experienced through the French Revolution. As Friedland mentioned, ‘with the French Revolution, the worlds of theater and politics intermingled’. The rules seemed to have changed almost overnight with the Revolution. Dramatic actors who only a few months before had been social and political outcasts in an old regime that officially regarded their crafts as profane were elected to powerful military positions.³⁰² Friedland further argued that ‘while politicians were being unmasked as actors, dramatic actors were themselves being denounced by both the political left and right as being secret agents of the other. Moreover, his work informs us that during the Reign of Terror, suspicions about actors’ political allegiances led to large-scale imprisonment of actors in Paris as well as in the provinces.

A very important aspect of the revolutionary theater both in the Ottoman and in the French cases was their similarities in the ‘theatricality of their political life’ during the Revolutionary era. In both cases, the parliament itself operated as a ‘stage’ with its political actors giving speeches and its audiences applauding their oratory performance. Another theatrical aspect of the political ground was undoubtedly the ways in which these revolutions were celebrated. In the Ottoman case, when Resneli Niyazi had left the Sultan’s army to go up to the mountains, this had become the symbol of the Young Turk Revolution. Resneli Niyazi also had a domestic deer, following him wherever he went. Both his leaving for the mountains and strolling

³⁰¹ Maslan, *Revolutionary Acts*, p.15.

³⁰² Friedland, *Political Actors*, p. 2

around with his famous deer were extravagant acts embodying theatrical elements. The Revolution of 1908 in Macedonia was also highly 'theatrical'. In the French case, as Friedland argues the most striking example of the theatricalization of politics was the way the debates in the National Assembly were 'staged'. There, the Assembly building was organized in such a way that the audience attended the sessions with the nation's representatives. Even before the National Assembly had officially come into existence, the deputies of the Third Estate had distinguished themselves from the deputies of the first two estates by breaking with tradition and allowing an audience to witness their debates.³⁰³ In both cases, the revolution changed the form in which political representation was practiced. For the Ottoman intellectuals, and for the ruling group (Young Turks and their political organization, the Committee of Union and Progress), the French Revolutionary theatre represented the example of creating a public space where the mass culture and the mass politics could interact.

The experience of pageants and mass performances of the French Revolution were not only adopted by the Ottoman Revolution, but also by the Russian Revolution in the early twentieth century. Just like the Ottoman and the French Revolutions, the Russian Revolution was followed with a 'theatre epidemic'. In his book *Revolutionary Theater* on Russian theatre, Robert Leach explains this concepts as follows: 'In conditions of enormous hardship, of starvation and cold, during the dislocation of society and the dangers of lawlessness, the demand for plays and for dramatic activity was almost insatiable.'³⁰⁴ Like in the Ottoman post-revolutionary theater, the typical drama of the Russian 'theatre epidemic' was geared to

³⁰³ Friedland, *Political Actors*, p. 180.

³⁰⁴ Leach, *Revolutionary Theatre*, p. 36.

propaganda purposes. As Leach stated, these plays lacked intellectual talent and art, and used on stage mostly peasants and workers. Again, most of the plays were staged as mass spectacles, which clarified several elements of the revolutionary theatre:

In terms of content, political tendentiousness was now not only acceptable but became a generating force, especially in its use of popular heroes. The spatial distinction between performance area and auditorium was typically blurred. Furthermore, the mass spectacles convinced many theatre workers that they could contribute to the building of the new society through their profession.³⁰⁵

Taking these factors into consideration, Leach argues that the theatre's potential for social intervention was established.³⁰⁶ One of the most famous examples of the Russian pageants was the performance of Nikolai Evreinoff's *The Storming of the Winter Palace* in 1920. It involved more than eight thousand participants, army units, armored cars and trucks, even a battleship, and was played before an audience of more than a hundred thousand.³⁰⁷ These mass spectacles actually reflected the transformation of the Russian society. Indeed, what distanced theaters from their courtly status and turned them into mass spectacles was this transformation.³⁰⁸ After Lenin's death (1924), the revolutionary period was symbolically at an end. Even though the revolutionary theatre did not disappear, it eventually faded from 1924 onwards.

Besides the Russian and French Revolutions, which were followed by a 'theater epidemic', another model for the Ottoman revolutionary theater was the theater activities held during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution which took place

³⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁰⁷ Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, p. 97.

³⁰⁸ For further information, see: Frame, *The St. Petersburg Imperial Theaters*, p. 17.

between 1905 and 1911.³⁰⁹ This revolution which led to the establishment of a parliament and eventually to the dissolution of the Qajar dynasty carried important political resemblances to the Ottoman case. In other words, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution no doubt was a 'source of influence' for the Ottomans, especially in the political uses of the theatre. In his book *The History of Theater in Iran*, Willem Floor calls attention to the new boost to the modern theater. Floor argues that the power of the theater had grabbed the imagination of many deputies so that the draft law for the newly established municipalities had as one of its aims to create theaters.³¹⁰

In Iran, it was strongly believed that the theater was one of the vehicles to diffuse the reformist and the constitutionalist ideas among the population at large. The reformists wanted to express their desire for political freedom and their other ideals via theater. When compared to the French, Ottoman and Russian Revolutions, however, the post-revolutionary theater in Iran could not grow stronger and lost its original zeal. Another important difference lay in the fact that the Iranian theater could not create its own political repertoire, and mostly adopted foreign plays. Namık Kemal's *Vatan yahud Silistre* had a particular importance among these adaptations. The popular performances of *Vatan* between 1908-1914 in Iran showed the strength of the newly developed Ottoman popular theatre.³¹¹

All these four revolutionary theatres had one common aim: to create public opinion! The theatre became one of the main platforms where public opinion took

³⁰⁹ For a detailed historical review on Iran's Constitutional Revolution, see: Mangol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909* (Washington: Mage Publishers, 1995); Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

³¹⁰ Floor, *The History of Theater in Iran*, p. 222.

³¹¹ It had been translated into Persian by Malekzadeh-ye Tabrizi, and staged by the Hey'at-e Kheyriyeh-ye Vataniyeh on November 17, 1910. For further information, see: Floor, *The History of Theater in Iran*, p. 224.

shape, was expressed and shared. The relationship between the theater and politics was indeed strongly connected to the rise of mass politics. Since revolutions needed mass politics, the “theatre epidemic” was not an unexpected, but rather a natural aspect of the revolutionary periods.

Theater provided a space for the expression of ideas. As one of the first scholars to consider theater as ‘one of the institutions of the public sphere,’ Jürgen Habermas argues that public opinion developed initially with respect to the arts, theater and literature, and only later came to assert itself in the political realm.³¹² Habermas’ observation linking public sphere and theater, and consequently linking theater with the formation of public opinion is/ and has been a very important assumption in studying the formation of the public space.

In the Ottoman case, a public sphere where performances satirized the regime was already very present. Scholars who studied the public sphere in the late Ottoman world often underlined the role of the coffeehouses and the new literary and artistic genres of the satirical press. The use of *Karagöz* shadow theater as a means of political critique and the rise of caricatures in the press were important cultural forms in constructing public opinion in the urban space.³¹³ What the revolutionary theater achieved, however, was the fact that it was able to mobilize the masses.

³¹² For further information, see: Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).

³¹³ See: Helene Desmet-Gregoire, *Doğu'da Kahve ve Kahvehaneler*, edited by Helene Desmet-Gregoire, François Georgeon, translated by Meltem Atik, Esra Özdoğan (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 1999); Cengiz Kırılı, "Surveillance and Constituting the Public in the Ottoman Empire," in *Publics, Politics and Participation: Locating the Public Sphere in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: SSRC, 2009), pp. 282-305; Cengiz Kırılı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu: Osmanlı Modernleşme Sürecinde Havadis Jurnalleri* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009); Palmira Johnson Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000).

The Public Catharsis of the Revolutionary Era: “The Theatre Epidemic”

The days following the declaration of the Second Constitution witnessed greatest spectacles of all kinds. The Revolution was celebrated with popular manifestations, boycotts, parades, and cartoons. As historian Palmira Brummett argues, the Revolution brought an interregnum both in terms of freedom of press and in terms of the functioning of a new Ottoman regime. For Ottoman journalists, 1908 was a year of euphoria and of disillusionment. Using cartoons, satirists created an Ottoman cartoon space where the crisis of the revolution could be played out. There, the merging of the real and the imagined was natural and inevitable.³¹⁴ Actually, the newspapers of the age observed a very similar development in the theater. For instance, according to Hüseyin Fehmi, writing in the newspaper *Hizmet*, the first agitation was in the press and the second one was in the theatre.³¹⁵ The boom of theater after the revolution, referred as the ‘theater epidemic’³¹⁶ or as ‘stage incursion’³¹⁷ (*‘sahneye hücum’*) introduced Ottoman public to the idea of performance and consumption of the theater. Hence, it introduced topics which were previously limited only to certain political and intellectual circles via the popular theater. The plays that were prohibited after the Gedikpaşa and *Vatan* incidents were

³¹⁴ Brummett, *The Image and The Imperialism*, p. 3.

³¹⁵ “Meşrutiyet, hürriyet-i natika-i milleti iade edince ilk galeyen matbuatta, ikinci tuğyan da temaşada kendini gösterdi.” Hüseyin Fehmi, “Sanayi-i Nefise-İnkılab-ı Temaşa,” *Hizmet*, 4 February 1909.

³¹⁶ The phrase used for the theater activities following the French and the Russian Revolutions. It was also adopted by the Turkish theater historians like Metin And.

³¹⁷ The term is used by Muhsin Ertuğrul. Muhsin Ertuğrul, *Benden Sonra Tufan Olmasın* (İstanbul: Remzi, 2007), p. 84.

staged for the crowds and rapidly became symbols of the Revolution.³¹⁸ Especially two of them, Şemseddin Sami's *Besa Yahud Ahde Vefa* (Pledge or Oath of Fidelity) and Namık Kemal's *Vatan yahud Silistre* (Fatherland or Slistra) dominated the repertoire of the 'national theater'. These plays staged as mass spectacles or pageants aimed to reach illiterate people to form public opinion and to legitimize the rule of the CUP. While the theater was used to legitimize the new regime, it did not develop as an independent or 'protest' art form. Rather, it developed under the patronage of the CUP, and served their political agenda. During the period following the Revolution of 1908, the CUP entered the realm of the theatre mainly in three ways: First, as the 'new patrons of art', they used performances as a means of political propaganda. Second, they stood at the backstage as playwrights.³¹⁹ And third, the CUP members were symbolically presented on stage as the 'heroes of freedom'.

It is important, at this point, to dwell upon the scripts and their roles in the formation of a political repertoire in the following chapter. In the following lines, I will first try to observe how 'the theater epidemic' boomed after 23 July, then scrutinize the theatre frenzy with the spectacles of *Besa* and *Vatan* under the patronage of the CUP.

During the celebrations of the Second Constitution, the stage became a new space where people expressed their excitement and celebrated 'freedom'. Most of the spectacles served to legitimize and to glorify the rule of the CUP. Interestingly, the structure of these performances differed from the previous and subsequent

³¹⁸ "Two days after the proclamation of the Second Constitution, I rented the Tepebaşı Amphitheatre. My purpose was to play the copyrighted plays which were prohibited after the Gedikpaşa Incident during the Hamidian era. No one had yet dared to do that." Hafi Kadri Alpman, *Ahmet Fehim Bey'in Anıları* (İstanbul: Tercüman, 1977), p. 192.

³¹⁹ Some of these names were: Abdülhalim Memduh, Dr. Refik Nevzat, Tunalı Hilmi, İhsan Adli, Kazım Nama, Abdullah Cevdet, Beha Tevfik.

decades. Unlike the previous ones performed in the Gedikpaşa and Naum Theaters, these performances were staged in public squares and in public buildings; and were either accompanied by a public demonstration of the CUP, or with speeches of the politicians. These compounded performances were usually organized as fund-raising organizations to heal public wounds.

Ahmet Fehim's memoirs give us the best published narrative describing the atmosphere of the day and the theater frenzy. The famous actor and stage director described the atmosphere of the day as an 'extravagance' and 'anarchy'. According to him, the Revolution created anarchy in the theater. Ahmet Fehim thinks that this movement had only one leader, Namık Kemal, and a single positive aspect, people's participation in the theater.³²⁰

In a parallel line, Muhsin Ertuğrul (1892-1979), known as the founding father of the modern Turkish theater, describes the same phenomenon as an 'ecstasy both creating and created by the boom of theater'. Ertuğrul, in his memoirs, also touches

³²⁰ "In these joyful days, the number of the ones who participated in the theater was incalculable. To continue my work as before, I tried to maintain the performances in Kadıköy and Tepebaşı Theaters. Yet, İstanbul then became a city of madmen who refused to heal. Hirsute people, putting four gas chests and sheets together to form a stage, were playing a ridiculous play ending with the words "Long Live Country!" "Long Live Freedom!" When the Second Constitution was proclaimed, the art of the theatre went out of control and turned into a craze. We, the performers, had to become quiet and scattered around. I went to Salonika. It was even worse. Rambling groups were coming together and shouting: 'Liberty!' at every corner. The educated people of Salonika levied tributes on the stages. After performing five or six plays in Eden, we left our place for the Bulgarian parties who were coming by necessity. Yet we could not work. People then got sick of theater, and disgusted by it. By abusing the play *Vatan Yahut Silistre*, there was no one left who was not defrauded or robbed. The amount of the gold gathered was innumerable. However, all this money was spent neither for country nor for the army, neither for the navy nor for anything useful, but rather remained in these theatre marauders. (...) We had to return to İstanbul. The chaos was still continuing in İstanbul. Anyone could act on the stage and some newly emerging playwrights were writing down some bullshit such as *Sabah-ı Hürriyet* (The morning of Freedom), *Jön Türkler* (Young Turks), *Hamid'in Son Günleri* (The Last Days of Abdülhamid), *Saray Entrikaları* (Intrugues of the Palace) and staged them in a number of diversely named theaters. Some of them staged all the Ottoman sultans. Doubtlessly, this was a revolution. And it was the anarchic reflection of the revolution on the stage. There was only one good aspect of this anarchy and one creator of this aspect. The good side was that Turkish youth fearlessly appeared on the stage, and the creator of this movement was Namık Kemal's *Vatan Yahut Silistre*." Fehim, *Sahnede Elli Sene*, pp. 134-135

upon the Revolution, and its celebrations on the stage.³²¹ In his memoirs, he argues that the Revolution and the performances of the censored plays of Namık Kemal and Şemseddin Sami created a great enthusiasm in a theatrical milieu which was believed to be 'dead'.³²² As a reaction to the oppression and censorship, Muhsin Ertuğrul states that the censored plays became symbols of the Revolution and created mass spectacles.³²³

The articles appearing in the newspapers of the day clearly illustrate how the Revolutionary theater became a new genre of celebration embracing all kinds of bodily expression of joy and dance.³²⁴ Press had a leading role in disseminating the Revolution, and in calling the crowds to participate in this new theater experience. Indeed, the post-revolutionary press resembled the post-revolutionary theater. They both aimed to educate the masses and to form public opinion to condemn the old

³²¹ "In July 1908, when Sultan Abdülhamid II proclaimed the Second Constitution, the transformation from the monarchy to parliamentary constitutional government caused so much joy and enthusiasm that all the educated youth of İstanbul ran in the streets. With the excitement of being liberated, they began to express this joy on stage. For this purpose, they generally preferred to stage Namık Kemal's plays; and offered the masses to watch the performances of *Vatan Yahut Silistre* (*Fatherland*) and *Zavallı Çocuk* (the Poor Child) which were hitherto prohibited. Ertuğrul, *Benden Sonra Tufan Olmasın*, p. 83.

³²² "Once the period of fear, espionage, and oppression, referred to as 'tyranny' came to an end, theatre which seemed 'dead' was revived. This transformation can be best observed in İstanbul's various summer theaters. The prohibited plays of Namık Kemal and of Şemseddin Sami were staged by the passionate young actors, and theatre groups performed in various places between Beyazıt and Kadıköy. The idea of establishing a national Turkish theatre thus came up on the agenda again. But none of the existing amateur societies could realize that." *ibid.*, p. 26.

³²³ "Indeed, with the Revolution, one can see a revival in scriptwriting. After the long years of Sultan Abdülhamid II's oppression, the proclamation of the Second Constitution made a public catharsis in the expression of thoughts. Namık Kemal became a leading name to stimulate the nationalist sentiments and to provide unity. The plays of Namık Kemal which had been prohibited for a long time were now frequently staged on theatres. Again, one of the prohibited plays of the old regime: Şemseddin Sami's *Besa* became very popular." *ibid.*, p. 30.

³²⁴ "We did not yet appreciate the benefits of the theatres. Because some ludicrous people, in the name of theatre made such disgrace that our folks then thought the theatre was nothing but belly-dancing; and this time we, the young people of İzmir, got together and organized a permanent theatre in our city. Our theatrical purpose was very serious; we wanted to stage exemplary plays which would be in service to moral maturation of the youth." *Çapkın*, 8 October 1909.

regime. While the newspapers could only influence the literate population, theater could also influence the illiterate masses.

Just after the Revolution, the newspapers informed the audience that ‘the freedom and the protection brought by the Revolution were reflected on the stage as well.’³²⁵ The newspaper *Sabah* announced that ‘the plays that were hitherto censored and missed would now be performed.’³²⁶ Actually, the newspapers were full of the theater news. Most of the time, they advertised the plays and called for participation. For instance, one of these articles which appeared in *Ahenk* did not only encourage people to attend the show, but also taught a history of the theater ‘which was an educational and progressive institution in the civilized societies.’³²⁷ Addressing the people of Manisa, the article calls for participation in the performances of the visiting troupe *Milli Osmanlı Tiyatrosu* (Ottoman National Theater).

Theater was already placed at the center of the ideological discourse of Westernization by the Ottoman intellectuals. It developed within the enlightenment discourse of ‘progress and civilization’, gained new ‘missions’ after the declaration of the Second Constitution. After the Revolution of 1908, it served other purposes as well. First of them was a mutual one. While the theater helped to legitimize the new regime on the stage, the CUP’s patronage legitimized the ‘theater’ which was hitherto banned, and considered to be ‘dangerous’. Second, it served to create public opinion. As Muhsin Ertuğrul narrated in his memoirs, the theater served to ‘awaken

³²⁵ *Sabah*, 29 July 1908.

³²⁶ “With the declaration of the Second Constitution, from the infinite benefits that the press attained, the theatre also benefited. From then on, the masterpieces such as *Celaller*, *Atıf Beyler*, *Duhter-i Hindu*, *Gave* will be staged instead of the vulgar plays. (...) We always missed them.” *Sabah*, 29 July 1908.

³²⁷ *Ahenk*, 18 November 1909.

the ordinary people' with the intermediary of those who had access to the stage.³²⁸

Third, both the newspapers and the Ottoman intellectuals regarded the theatre as a means for social and cultural development. Accordingly, theater was a tool to educate and to nationalize the masses. For instance, one article published in the newspaper *Hizmet* compared theater's educational role with that of schools' and placed it in the popular discourse of 'progress and civilization.'³²⁹ Similarly, another article written by an Ottoman intellectual, Hüseyin Fehmi perceived theater not only as a fundamental institution in the social development, but also as a cultural tool to 'improve one's behavior and culture.'³³⁰ On the other hand, it was also noteworthy that all these debates and the theater frenzy developed around few plays, which were indeed the cultural products of the previous era.³³¹

³²⁸ "Most people who realized the importance of the social transformations grew a desire for the theatre in the post-1908 era of "rushing to the stage" in order to 'warn the ordinary people'. In various public squares of İstanbul, summer theaters were built, a number of theatre troupes were founded by amateurs, and scripts that would voice the public joy would be staged." Ertuğrul, *Benden Sonra Tufan Olmasın*, pp. 83-84.

³²⁹ "The influence of the theatre upon morality is as much as that of the schools. In civilized societies, the governments constructed public theatre buildings and companies. The greatest scholars, even those of ethics, work in such magnificent buildings and in this way they acquire fame and reputation and therefore do service to humanity." *Hizmet*, 29 January 1909.

³³⁰ "Although the theatre is one of the most laureate and blooming pillar of the fine arts (*sanayi-i bedia*), unfortunately when its name is recalled the miseries of the Hamidian era are remembered. The desperate people who did not yet see and experience a real theater which is a high art form, cannot understand its importance. When the Second Constitution was proclaimed, the first excitement was expressed in the press and the second one in theater. The newspapers, being usually the slave of censorship, today showed the spread of freedom of speech. One could observe the same level of zeal in our current theatres in order to taste the pleasure of manner and kindness. For those who considered the swift revolution occurring on our stages as an opening of maturation for the future of our manners would never be mistaken. (...)" Hüseyin Fehmi, "Sanayi-i Nefise-İnkılab-ı Temaşa," *Hizmet*, 4 February 1909.

³³¹ These plays were Şemseddin Sami's *Besa* (Pledge or Fidelity to the Oath), Namık Kemal's *Vatan* (Fatherland), *Gülnehal*, *Zavallı Çocuk* (Poor Child), and *Akif Bey*. For further detail, see: Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, p. 12.

The reflection of the Revolution on stage was first seen in the performances of *Besa*.³³² In a very short time, theater created its own audience. The performances of *Besa* were followed by the performances of *Vatan*, which created a new market for the production of the scripts and the politicization of the repertoire. These two plays played a significant role in the the development of theaters into mass spectacles under the patronage of the Committee of Union and Progress.

A few days after the declaration of the Second Constitution, the two major theater companies, Ahmet Fehim and Minakyan Efendi Companies announced that they would perform *Besa*.³³³ Even though Ahmet Fehim argues that he was the first one who ‘dared’ to announce it,³³⁴ the newspapers show that both companies staged the play around the same time. The newspapers announced the performance of *Besa* with great enthusiasm.³³⁵ According to the newspaper *Millet*, the performance of

³³² “*The Plot of Besa yahud Ahde Vefa*: A daughter of a shepherd falls in love with her cousin and they get engaged. However, one of the men of Tepedelen Bey, Selfo also loves the daughter. The Bey forces the shepherd to give his daughter to Selfo. The shepherd resists. Selfo kidnaps the daughter on the order of the Bey and during the kidnapping he kills the shepherd. Before he dies, the shepherd makes his wife promise to get revenge. She searches for their enemies and she witnesses an event. One guy was sleeping under a tree and another guy took his guns. The first guy wakes the sleeping guy and wants him to beg for mercy. Yet, he refuses to do so. When he was about to shoot him, Vahide, the wife of the shepherd, shoots the man and saves him. He was Fettah Ağa, who had been away for twenty years and now he was going to see his son and his wife. Vahide tells him her story and Fettah Ağa takes an oath to kill the murderer of her husband. But the murderer was his own son Selfo, but Fettah Ağa kills him due to his oath (besa).”
Seçkin, “Staging the Revolution,” pp. 136-137

³³³ Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, pp. 11-13.

³³⁴ “Two days after the proclamation of the Second Constitution, I rented the Tepebaşı Amphitheatre. My purpose was to perform the copyrighted plays which were prohibited after the Gedikpaşa Incident during the Hamidian era. No one had yet dared to do that. Everyone was still afraid. I got rid of all concerns and fears. I proclaimed that we would perform *Besa*.”

Alpman, *Ahmet Fehim Bey'in Anıları*, p. 192.

³³⁵ “We missed them. We could not read, see them with pleasure. Now the zealous achievement to be expected from the company of Minakyan Efendi, for the passion of liberty, is to successively perform patriotic, freely expressed written scripts. Yesterday, he came to our printing house informing us that he would stage *Balmumcu* this week and *Besa* next week. We could not have yet figured it out: *Besa* was the most eligible piece to stage now.”
Sabah, 29 July 1908.

Besa meant the beginning of a new ‘age of progress’.³³⁶ It also announced that the play was ‘approved’ by the CUP.³³⁷ After a series of rehearsals, Ahmet Fehim restaged *Besa* on 7 August 1908 at the Tepebaşı Theater. He describes that the theater was as full as ‘the day of reckoning’ that night.³³⁸ Ahmet Fehim had prepared new *mise-en scenes*: He demanded Sinanyan to compose a song, invited eighty students of the Armenian Music School as the chorus, and exhibited the dance of the Albanian Lap region. Moreover, he brought a flock of sheep that would pass by the stage.³³⁹ Actually, Ahmet Fehim did not only use his creativity but also incorporated politically symbolic elements into the performance. For instance, he played songs from Guillaume Tell, a well recognized melody used in the Friday Processions and in the imperial reception ceremonies as observed in the previous chapters. The structural organization of this first spectacle deeply influenced others, and set a ‘format’ for the major theater performances held after the Revolution under the patronage of the CUP. In the subsequent performances, the speeches of the Ottoman intellectuals and politicians with themes around the love of fatherland and the role of the theater in modernization became a part of the performances.

³³⁶ Millet, 6 August 1908.

³³⁷ *ibid.*

³³⁸ Alpman, *Ahmet Fehim Bey’in Anıları*, p.192

³³⁹ “I had prepared a new *mise en scene* for *Besa*. I asked Sinanyan to compose great music, asked for the participation of eighty students from the Armenian Musical School, and organized a parade of sheep during the performance. I had choreographed a dance from the region of Lap in Albania. I asked Virjin to play the role of ‘Meruşa’ and asked Raşit Rıza to act as the little shepherd appears for the first time on stage. During the intermission, a famous Italian tenor sang a song of Guillaume Tell. A general made a speech on patriotism. Izzet Melih Bey talked about the theatre. Then, we performed *Besa* for three days and nights and made a great sum of money. On the third night, I realized that İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri Bey got dressed and played the role of “Fettah” without informing me. I did not get surprised at all because the nights were full of applause and excitement and the stage was swarming with various people and brand new actors.” *ibid.*, p. 192.

In the following days, the newspapers praised the first show of *Besa*, and glorified this first ‘national performance’. The newspaper *Sabah* announced the performance of *Besa* as one of the main political and cultural events of the day.³⁴⁰ This article described how ‘unbelievable’ was the performance of *Besa*. *Sabah* was not the only newspaper glorifying the play. Similarly, the newspapers *Servet-i Funun*³⁴¹, *Tanin*³⁴², *Millet*³⁴³, *İttifak*³⁴⁴ helped to ‘nationalize’ the theatre by their support. Interestingly, all these articles portrayed that the audience was not very much interested in the literary aspects of the scripts, but they were rather interested in

³⁴⁰ “Now, thank God, we started the work from the beginning. Government is reconstructed. Its magnificence and grandeur, its strength and might will be later on seen, the deficiencies will be perfected and completed one by one. There in this context yesterday, Şemsettin Sami Bey’s *Besa* play was performed for the first time. (...) Oh God! Was it a dream? Was the play *Besa* performed, or wasn’t it? That’s not possible! No, it was not possible and feasible. (...) *Besa* could not be performed! How could it be performed? Yes, yes it was performed and it was perfectly performed! Yet the *freedom* played a role here. (...) 33 years later, we saw a national theatre for the first time, thank God! Victory, victory... But being affected by its excitement and influence how can I portray and express my sentiments? How could it be possible? What am I supposed to write, to say? Alas, 33 years, minutes of which are supposed to be as precious as a century... What a pity that the martyrs of freedom who became deprived of the honor of seeing such a play. What a pity for those who were forced and condemned to see the plays which changed form in terms of mischief of ethics, dirtying sentiments and principal subject in those nasty places...” *Sabah*, 8 August 1908, quoted in: Bilge Seçkin, “*Staging the Revolution*,” pp. 50-54.

³⁴¹ “With thousands of patriots who suffered from the tyranny of the old regime, theatre was fully crowded. For 33 years, we had been so thirsty for justice, liberty that with singing the liberty song (*lağmat-ı hürriyet*), the air that we breathed was enough to calm the fervor of liberty. We wholeheartedly and with our all might were shouting “Long live Liberty!” *Servet-i Funun*, 8 August 1908, quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 57.

³⁴² “Furthermore, when Fehim Efendi playing the role Zebir reacted to the tyrannical threat of Demir Bey and said “Those times are over, we now have a constitution. We are all equal!” the spectators shouted: “Long live Liberty! Long live Equality! Long live Justice! Long live Fraternity!” The feeling of liberty in everybody’s heart was apparent, and could be seen in their eyes.” *Tanin*, 8 August 1908.

³⁴³ *Millet*, 8 August 1908.

³⁴⁴ “I do not want to tell the main part of the play: Every Ottoman loving his country, and knowing the influenced wisdom of his country certainly knows Sami Bey’s play script. Did Sami Bey become successful at this? Was the theatre eligible for the current laws of art? Talking about this is common, yet it is enough to investigate the patriotic excitement that it brought about in the hope of heart.” *İttifak*, 21 August 1908, quoted in: Seçkin, “*Staging the Revolution*,” pp. 64-65.

the very performance of the play! All these articles mentioned that the audience was shouting 'Long live freedom' during the performance. Again, most of the slogans that were used to support the actors on the stage were not related to the theme or performance of *Besa*, but to the Revolution and its 'adopted' motto: 'Liberty, equality and fraternity!' *Besa* had created an active audience who demanded the repetition of the performance for three subsequent nights.³⁴⁵ The newspapers giving information on the later performances also showed that the performances incorporated a national element: The national anthem.³⁴⁶ As far as I could observe, *Kanuni Esasi Marşı* (the march of constitution), *Hürriyet Marşı* (the march of liberty)³⁴⁷, and *Marseillaise* were the most commonly played marches during the plays.

From their first performances on, both *Besa* and *Vatan* showed the manipulation and the exaggeration of what Stephen Greenblatt calls 'the social energy.' Greenblatt argues that 'each individual may be said to make a small contribution to the general store of social energy possessed by the theater and hence to the sustained claim that the theatre can make on its real and potential audience'.³⁴⁸ Considering that the audience was shouting 'Long live!' and applauding during the whole performance without considering the breaks, one can speak of a social energy that produces a collective imagination and participation.

³⁴⁵ Alpman, *Ahmet Fehim Bey'in Anıları*, p. 192.

³⁴⁶ "The manner of consecration that the people expressed when the March of the Constitution was playing awakened a sense of crying in hearts. In the future, we will certainly see plays which will be in the service of ascension and progression of our country and thus be cherished."
İttifak, 21 August 1908, quoted in: Seçkin, "*Staging the Revolution*," pp. 64-65.

³⁴⁷ *Tanin*, 25 August 1908.

³⁴⁸ Greenblatt, *The Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 14.

While the performances of *Besa* created a public space for the politicization of the audience, the performances of *Vatan* were used to legitimize the new regime. Under the patronage of the CUP, *Vatan* was mostly staged in public squares for the public weal. These philanthropic performances did not only serve to raise money, but they also served to disseminate Ottoman nationalism to a larger audience. The performances of *Vatan*, under the patronage of the CUP, were accompanied by political demonstrations, and Unionists' speeches. Efdal Sevinçli argues that these performances were used to 'decorate' the conferences of the CUP, which sought the popular support of the masses.³⁴⁹ Indeed, the newspapers display a similar pattern to that described by Sevinçli. The popular performances of *Vatan* were accompanied by the long tirades of political figures like Prince Sabahattin.³⁵⁰ As 'patrons of the arts', the CUP leaders used these popular performances to raise money for the public expenditures. Again, the newspapers reveal that this pattern of patronage continued at least until the beginning of the First World War.³⁵¹

The performances of *Vatan*, having a symbolic meaning in the collective memories were particularly significant since they resembled public demonstrations where the dynasty members, the CUP leaders and the public came together. *Vatan* also acted, in Marvin Carlson's terms, as a 'memory machine' for the Ottoman public since it referred to the oppression and censorship.³⁵² These performances and their patronage patterns were noteworthy to conceptualize the role of the theater in the formation of public opinion and mass politics. The newspapers announced that

³⁴⁹ Sevinçli, *Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyet'e*, p. 13.

³⁵⁰ *İkinci Meşrutiyetin İlk Yılı*, (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008), p.113.

³⁵¹ *Ahenk*, 10 April 1913; *Anadolu*, 20 August 1913.

³⁵² Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, p. 2.

the first performance of *Vatan* would be held in the Tepebaşı Summer Theater.³⁵³ For the first performance, an audition was organized to select the leading actor: İslam Bey.³⁵⁴ In his memoirs, Ahmet Fehim underlines that when he initiated the audition, he received an incredible demand from all segments of the society.³⁵⁵ Actually, this narrative was very interesting since it shows the popular interest in the theater. Ahmet Fehim informs us that the applicants were not only young actors, but also 'theatre-lovers'. He informs us that 'soldiers, officers, the elderly, engineers, doctors, pupils, grocers, young people, writers, poets, and people from various classes competed for the role of İslam Bey.'³⁵⁶ People's participation in the actual performance was also remarkable. The account of actor Raşit Rıza is revealing: "I said one word and immediately an officer from audiences pulled out his sword and started to give a speech/tirade. We were performing together with the audience."³⁵⁷ Similarly, the articles on the performance emphasized the enthusiasm of the audience 'who frequently interrupted the play with their applause'.³⁵⁸ These narratives demonstrate that the performances of *Vatan* blurred the lines between the audience

³⁵³ *Tanin*, 10 August 1908.

³⁵⁴ Sevengil, *Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 75.

³⁵⁵ "In newspapers, I declared that I will perform Namık Kemal's *Vatan Yahut Silistre* and I started a competition for the role of İslam Bey. The theatre was turning into a place of mass meeting with numerous applicants. (...) In these days of amazement, I am still astonished that my father yet did not rise from his grave and come up on the stage. Nurettin Şefkati and Raşit Rıza won the competition." Fehim, *Sahnedeki Elli Sene*, p. 133.

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, p. 14.

³⁵⁸ "No one cared about the proper performance of the play. Every word of İslam Bey was interrupted by applause. Everyone forgot about the play and the performers. They applauded for the future of the Ottoman state. As the performance continued, the national feelings became stronger. Furthermore, in the third scene, where the beloved soldiers defended the nation against the attack of the enemy, the heart of a huge nation was fluttering." *Tanin*, 22 August 1908.

and the stage. At this point, we can also speak of the performance of the audience who actively participated in the performance.

The first performance of *Vatan* was organized under the patronage of the CUP. The CUP invited a chorus of seventy people to sing the *Vatan March* composed by Sinanyan Efendi, and one hundred fifty people to act 'a group of soldiers'.³⁵⁹ The money raised from this performance would be used to purchase two cruisers (named after two 'heroes of liberty' Enver and Niyazi) for the navy.³⁶⁰ The very 'national' aim of this organization brought the audience together as 'citizens', and 'Ottomanized' them throughout the performance. The audience included a number of politicians, *Paşas*, and the Grand Vizier.³⁶¹ Indeed, the participation of the ruling elite in these performances was very important in order to represent the rapprochement of the politicians with the masses and to emphasize the importance given to public opinion.

In a week, the performance of *Vatan* moved from the theater buildings to the public squares. *Vatan* became a mass spectacle with the participation of 10,000 people and a number of political figures in the Tophane Square.³⁶² Actually, this was the first performance of *Vatan* in a public square. This 'festival' was organized under the patronage of the CUP to help the victims of the *Çırçır* fire.³⁶³ The performance of

³⁵⁹ Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, p. 14.

³⁶⁰ "One week after the declaration of the Second Constitution, Reşad Rıdvan Bey and I decided, under the auspices of (*Tanin*) newspaper, to perform the play *Vatan* for the benefit of cruisers (Enver and Niyazi).

"İbnirrefik Ahmed Nuri Sekizinci'nin Hayatı ve Eserleri," p. 10.

³⁶¹ *Tanin*, 22 August 1908.

³⁶² "The play was performed with extraordinary applause of approximately ten thousand people." *İkdam*, 29 August 1908.

³⁶³ "A concert given for the victims of the *Çırçır* fire and national donation was held at the Tophane Talimhane Square and the deceased eminent writer Kemal Bey's play *Vatan* was performed by the officers (*zabitan-ı askeriye*). Quite a big scene was constructed in front of the factories and the

Vatan started with the speeches of the politicians and princes, and was followed by the *Hamidian March*.³⁶⁴ Around 1908, both the audience's participation in the *Hamidian March* and the speeches of the princes showed that the 'revolutionary theater' was not yet anti-Hamidian. Theater plays started to satirize and judge the old regime and Sultan Abdülhamid II only after the dethronement of the sultan in 1909. On the contrary, the participation of the dynasty and the ruling class in the performance, namely Prince Abdürrahim Efendi, Ali Rıza Paşa, Necip Paşa, Ali Refik Paşa, and Kaymakam Galip Bey encouraged the theater and strengthened the role of the theater in the making of public opinion.³⁶⁵

The glorious third performance of *Vatan* was organized under the patronage of the Ministry of War to help the victims of the *Çırçır* fire.³⁶⁶ This performance

mosque at the Talimhane Square and the side facing the Talimhane Square was closed with wooden pieces. Every side of the square was lit by luxurious lamps and the railings were lit by lanterns and the square was adorned with flags from. Şehzade Abdürrahim Efendi dressed in his artillery official uniform honored the aforementioned place and was greeted by the Minister of Arsenal Rıza Paşa and other senior officers. He was taken to the mansion facing the Talimhane Square. The play was performed with extraordinary applause of approximately ten thousand people. As the band played the March of Liberty at intermissions, a perfect parade march was conducted by the soldiers at the final scene and infantry (*zuhaf*), infantry with turban (*sarıklı zuhaf*) and infantry of artillery participated in this parade march."

İkdam, 29 August, 1908.

³⁶⁴ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, 29 August 1908.

³⁶⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶⁶ "A philanthropic concert was held in the Ministry of War for the victims of the *Çırçır* fire. For the concert in the Square of Ministry of War, a 24-metre-wide and 12-meter-long, perfect scene was constructed in the front facing the Beyazıt door. For those who were to participate in the concert, a wide area was reserved in the square. As luxurious lamps were placed in some parts of the square, there were also Ottoman flags everywhere. After one o'clock, the *fasıl* started to be played by the officers of the Ministry of War, and the national songs were sung and applauded extraordinarily by the public. The singers' performances lasted until two o'clock. Then, the imperial band and the band of the Arsenal sang national songs. Then the play *Vatan* was performed and was applauded extraordinarily. A perfect parade march was conducted by participating regular troops, *sarıklı* artillerymen, and the band of infantry with fes who were dressed up in their uniforms. Along with these, a speech was made by Namık Kemal Beyzade Ekrem Bey for those participating and also a piece of verse was read addressing Ottoman soldiers. Then a poem called "Red Feses" by Ekrem Bey addressing the informers was read loudly by an amateur and was applauded with the echoes of 'Long live Liberty, Long live Justice, Long live the Army.' Following this, the national comedy named *Mürebbiye* was performed and the plays lasted on until the late hours of the night. The Princes including Salim Efendi, Ahmed Efendi, Abdülkadir Efendi and Cemaleddin Efendi, the son of deceased Prince Şevket Efendi also participated in the concert.(...)"

witnessed one of the most crowded performances of all times. The dailies mention that the printed tickets alone numbered 16,000.³⁶⁷ The government provided public transportation for the masses³⁶⁸, and military uniforms for the actors. Actually, this was a combination of a number of performances. The event started with the performance of two different choral groups,³⁶⁹ followed by the performance of a national comedy, *Mürebbiye* (Teacher) by Hüseyin Rahmi.³⁷⁰ Subsequently, the brother of Niyazi Bey (one of the ‘heroes of freedom’) gave a speech.³⁷¹ Then, *Vatan* started with applause.³⁷² As reported by the newspapers, ‘thousands of people shouted “Long Live Freedom, Justice and Army!”’.³⁷³ The show ended with a ‘poem recitation’ by the son of Namık Kemal: Ali Ekrem.³⁷⁴ Just like in the previous performances, the dynasty members, the CUP leaders, and the masses became one single body throughout the performance. As far as I could observe from the newspapers, the ambassadors of Iran, France and Spain, the members of the Ottoman dynasty (Prince Selim, Prince Selahaddin, Prince Ahmed, Prince Abdülkadir, Prince

İkdam, 12 September 1908.

³⁶⁷ *İkdam*, 11 September 1908.

³⁶⁸ “A perfect concert will be held in the square of the War of Ministry this evening to help the victims of the *Çırçır* Fire. Afterwards, Kemal Bey’s *Vatan* and Hüseyin Rahmi Beyefendi’s *Mürebbiye* will be staged. For those who will participate in the concert, one carriage from the Anatolian and Rumelian Railway Companies and a ferry from the *Şirket-i Hayriye* and the *Haliç Dersaadet Administration* are reserved.”

Tercüman-ı Hakikat, 11 September 1908.

³⁶⁹ Mabeyn-i Hümayun Muzikası, and Tophane Sanayi Muzikası. See: *Sabah*, 11 September 1908.

³⁷⁰ *ibid.*

³⁷¹ *İkdam*, 13 September 1908.

³⁷² *ibid.*

³⁷³ *Tanin*, 13 September 1908; *İkdam*, 12 September 1908.

³⁷⁴ *ibid.*

Burhaneddin, Prince Abdülrahim, Prince Kemaleddin, Damat Cemaleddin, Sabahaddin Paşa, Nureddin Paşa, Arif Hikmet Paşa), and the ruling elite (Hasan Fehmi Paşa (the Minister of Justice), Hakkı Beyefendi (Minister of Interior Affairs), Ali Rıza Paşa (Minister of War), Müşir Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, Fuad Paşa, Mahmud Muhtar Paşa) were among the audience.³⁷⁵

Besides these three significant performances, *Vatan* was frequently staged in public schools, in public squares, in public gardens and in public complexes under the patronage of the CUP.³⁷⁶ While most of the mass spectacles, under the patronage of the CUP, took place in İstanbul, other major cities of the Empire, such as İzmir, Salonica, Samsun, Adana, Bursa,³⁷⁷ Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria³⁷⁸ experienced this theater 'frenzy' with *Vatan* as well.

The mass performances of *Vatan* did not only become 'symbols of revolution' but also created a new market for the political theater, and contributed a great deal to the politicization of the repertoire. After the attempt of Counter-Revolution in 13 April 1909, and the subsequent exile of Sultan Abdülhamid II, the repertoire of the popular theatre dramatically changed. While the format and the literary features of the scripts were highly influenced by Namık Kemal's scripts, the new genre of '*milli facia*' (national tragedy) reflected the consolidation of the Unionists' regime.

³⁷⁵ *Tanin*, 13 September 1908; *İkdam* 12 September 1908.

³⁷⁶ "With the help of the government, we performed *Vatan* in the squares of War and Arsenal Ministries, in Kuleli and Darüşşafaka Schools in İstanbul and furthermore in Selanik with the participation of the students of the War Academy and the band of the Arsenal." "İbnirrefik Ahmed Nuri Sekizinci'nin Hayatı ve Eserleri," p. 10.

³⁷⁷ See: Efdal Sevinçli, *İzmir'de Tiyatro* (İzmir: Ege Yayıncılık, 1994).

³⁷⁸ See: Makdisi, "Levantine Trajectories the Formulation and Dissemination of Radical Ideas in and between Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria, 1860-1914".

CHAPTER VII

PUTTING THE OLD REGIME ON TRIAL: INVENTING THE “*MILLI FACIA*” GENRE

‘The theatre epidemic’ that followed the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 created a new market for the consumption of the political theater. The mass performances of *Vatan* and *Besa* in the public spaces strengthened the role of the theater in mass politics. Even though the staged performances of these plays written before 1908 were not anti-Hamidian, the market it created gave birth to a new genre: ‘*milli facia*’ (national tragedy) narrating a history of the Hamidian Era as a period of oppression and corruption. Ironically, although the ‘politically sterilized’ plays of the old regime created pageants in the days following the revolution, the ‘politically loaded’ post-1908 scripts which put the theater back on the stage did not appeal to the Ottoman masses once the joy of the revolution faded.

Reflecting the Counter-Revolution on Stage:

Politicization of the Repertoire

The proclamation of the Second Constitution was followed with a boom of theater. The theater became a popular art form reflecting celebrations of the Young Turk Revolution with the mass spectacles of *Vatan* and *Besa* under the patronage of the CUP. In parallel to the post-revolutionary Ottoman press and the growing interest in the genre of cartoons, the theater also offered a satirical stance staging contemporary events of the era.

Just after the Revolution of 1908, a number of politicians, artisans, tradesmen and people of various ranks wrote scripts blaming the old regime. The scripts indeed

reflected public opinion and the popular reception of the revolution in the late 1910s. The Ottoman theater historians, namely Metin And, Refik Ahmet Sevengil, Alemdar Yalçın, Enver Töre, and Efdal Sevinçli agree that these scripts lacked literary qualities and were primarily concerned with staging contemporary politics to the Ottoman public. Efdal Sevinçli particularly underlies that none of these plays had literary qualities which could carry them to the following decades. He also emphasizes that these scripts were all written by the ones who had enthusiasm rather than knowledge on the theater.³⁷⁹ The political scripts blaming the Hamidian era were found to be ‘simple’, ‘aimless’, ‘weak’, and ‘fruitless’ by the literary critics of the late 1900s as well. For instance, a renowned literary critic of the era, Celal Sahir argued that these scripts were not only ‘poor’, but also lacked ‘*effect scénifique*’ and ‘*thèse*’ in one of his articles published in *Servet-i Fünun*.³⁸⁰ Indeed, what these literary critics found ‘fruitless’ can be ‘fruitful’ sources for the historian, as they represent the popular historical discourse of the 1910s.

Among all the genres of popular theater in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, like translations, melodramas, social and domestic dramas, historical dramas, romantic dramas, and adaptations, a new kind of political repertoire emerged, usually referred as ‘*milli facia*’ (national tragedy) or

³⁷⁹ Sevinçli, *Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyet’e*, pp. 11-12.

³⁸⁰ “Obviously what is expected from the theatre is first a valuable script, and then the means of performance. Considering the first, I can admit that our contemporary period is poorer than thirty years before. Even though it has been a long while since the Second Constitution, -which brought the freedom of speech , has been declared, none produced a fine work. Although it is not possible to produce works of art isolated from people’s anger and enthusiasm, none of the plays condemning the old regime and the spies, with the speeches with ‘long live the constitution’ deserve to be titled as such. Indeed, they are mostly like public sermons. And generally, they lack essence. They also lack ‘*effect scénifique*’ and ‘*thèse*.’ That is why, the emerging theatre companies tended to provide their repertoires from Kemal Bey’s patriotic and speech-like scripts and Hamit’s fertility of malignity.” Celal Sahir, “Temaşa’ya Dair,” *Servetifünun*, 11 June 1325, quoted in: And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p.119.

'*milli dram*' (national drama). Even though they did not dominate the repertoire, they appealed to radical political groups and represented a historical narrative, which still echoes today in the Turkish historiography. Theater historian Alemdar Yalçın informs us that 139 plays were staged between the years 1908-1910. 93 of them were copyrighted works; and 46 of them were translations and adaptations. Yalçın also mentions that 32 of the 93 copyrighted plays were anti-Hamidian, and themed around the tyranny of the previous era.³⁸¹ These plays, offering an anti-Hamidian discourse have long been neglected and not studied either by Ottoman historians or by theater historians. Indeed, they formed a large repertoire, well-kept at the National Library in Ankara and other public libraries as printed books and pamphlets. Their very presence in these libraries and their publication information cited on the first pages of these scripts demonstrate that the leading publication houses of the epoch, such as Osmanlı Matbaası, Karabet Matbaası, Tanin Matbaası, Servet-i Fünun Matbaası, and the leading periodicals of the age like *Ahenk*, *Türk Yurdu Mecmuası*, *Aşiyân Mecmuası*, *Kalem Mecmuası*, and *İnci Mecmuası* supported their publications.³⁸² Considering the accessibility of the scripts, one can argue that they circulated in the market and that they were popular as a genre consumed by the Ottoman public. On the other hand, one cannot really know whether they were performed or not as the newspapers did not always announce them and as the flyers and the notices on theater activities were not systematically archived, but rather kept in private collections. Therefore, the following questions come to our minds: Were they written to be read or to be performed? Where were they performed? How did the audience react or participate? Although these questions remain unanswered, based on the

³⁸¹ Yalçın, *II Meşrutiyette Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi*, p. 39.

³⁸² See: Appendix B.

research that scholars like Metin And and Alemdar Yalçın conducted in a number of libraries, it is possible to reach a list of some of the plays which were performed.³⁸³ Although the periodicals of the late 1910s do not inform the public on each and every performance staged, and that these lists can never be considered complete, they nevertheless give information on the popularity of this genre of plays.

The illusion of the Young Turk Revolution and the mass performances of *Vatan* encouraged people, especially the Unionists and the followers of the Committee of Union and Progress to write theater scripts to stage and to judge the Hamidian era. While the joy of the revolution and popular discourse portraying the CUP members as the 'heroes of freedom' inflamed the theater activities, the Counter-Revolution of April 1909 shadowed the popularity of theater. Historian Sina Akşin defines the Revolt of April 1909 as 'an unsuccessful attempt of Counter-Revolution against the reign of the CUP by the Sublime Porte.' Akşin states that '31 March Incident' called for the restoration of the Shari'a, the dismissal of the cabinet and the seclusion of the Muslim women. The uprisings grew within an Islamic discourse since it aimed to use religion to appeal to the masses. Anti-Unionist elements came out in opposition to reform and called for a union based on Islam.³⁸⁴ As Feroz Ahmad reminds us, through their daily *Volkan*, the Islamists and the rebels appealed to the clerics in parliament, the lower ranks in the army and the urban lower classes. The troops of the İstanbul garrison and the students from the religious schools rebelled on the 13 April 1909. Upon the unrest, the officers (the followers of the CUP) organized a force known as the 'Action Army' led by General Mahmud Şevket Paşa to restore

³⁸³ For further information, see: Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*. (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971); Alemdar Yalçın, *II Meşrutiyette Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ Basın Yayın, 2002).

³⁸⁴ Sina Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakki* (Ankara; İstanbul: İmge Kitabevi, 2001), p. 185.

order in the capital and punish the rebels.³⁸⁵ While the organization of the Counter-Revolution has been a subject of debate between the historians of the late Ottoman Empire, and were discussed in the works of Sina Akşin, Feroz Ahmad, and Şükrü Hanioğlu in great detail, I will summarize the subject by underlining that the uprising ended up with the restoration of the constitutional regime by the CUP, and consolidated the CUP's power within the government. Sultan Abdülhamid II was dethroned and forced to leave İstanbul to be settled in Salonika. Besides the discussions of the historians on the complex nature of the event, what was relevant for our subject was the reflection of the Counter- Revolution on stage. The religious uprising dimmed the revolutionary joy and empowered the CUP members who later became as 'tyrannical' as the dethroned Sultan Abdülhamid II.

Theater activities were interrupted after 13 April, and the repertoire of the revolutionary theater became more radical in judging the old regime. Immediately after 13 April, the '31 March Incident' was represented on stage. The Counter-Revolution and the 'corrupted' personality of the dethroned Sultan Abdülhamid II became popular themes of the post-1908 scripts and joined the repertoire of the '*milli facia*' genre.

One can argue that the political repertoire evolved around two classes of symbolic figures. The first group consisted of the symbols of the new regime: The muses of liberty (usually chained at the beginning of the play and freed by the end of the play), namely Midhat Paşa, and Namık Kemal. The second group consisted of the characters who symbolized the old regime, namely İzzet Paşa, Fehim Paşa and the dethroned Sultan Abdülhamid II himself. The plays were often based on the opposition between these two groups, ending eventually with the glory of the first

³⁸⁵ Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest For Identity* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), pp. 52-53.

group. They either caricaturized a group of people like ‘the CUP members’, ‘Young Turks’, ‘the spies’ and took them as solid entities, or singularized political figures like Midhat Paşa, Namık Kemal, Abdülhamid II, İzzet Paşa and Fehim Paşa. Both the structures and the contents of these plays judging the old regime on stage were indeed very similar. Even though categorization of these plays can underestimate their entangled narratives and similarities, one can examine them according to their dominant themes, a strategy followed by Metin And and Alemdar Yalçın. The plays evolved around five dominant themes: (1) The plays depicting Namık Kemal and Mithad Paşa as the ‘heroes of freedom’, (2) the plays personalizing the corruption of the Hamidian era with two leaders of the spy network: Fehim and İzzet Paşas, (3) the scripts judging Sultan Abdülhamid II and his character, (4) the plays glorifying the Young Turks and the CUP, and (5) the scripts staging the Counter-Revolution of April 1909. In the following part, examples from these five categories will be mentioned with references to the works of Metin And, Alemdar Yalçın and Enver Töre .

The CUP members, who were initially acting as the patrons of arts were now symbolically presented as the heroic fighters of the nation on stage through these scripts. Moreover, some CUP members themselves wrote plays and played an important role in the formation of the political repertoire. Metin And who examined these playwrights gave a list of some of the CUP members who actively participated in the formation of the political repertoire.³⁸⁶ Among these writers were Abdülhalim Memduh and Refik Nevzat, co-authoring *Abdülhamit ve Genç Bir Harem Ağası* (Abdülhamid and a Young Eunuch); İhsan Adli and Mahmut Şevket, co-authoring

³⁸⁶ And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 114.

Hürriyet Kurbanları (the Victims of Freedom); Kazım Nami Duru, the playwright of *Nasıl Oldu?* (How It Happened?); Tunalı Hilmi, the playwright of the plays of *Memiş Çavuş*; Abdullah Cevdet who translated many works of Shakespeare into Turkish; and Baha Tevfik, a renowned literary critic writing on the theater.³⁸⁷

Theater was now public, and politicians, elites, non-elites could contribute to the making of the repertoire and the formation of a historical narrative that put the old regime on trial. The stage offered a space of interaction between the audience and the political actor through the political repertoire. This political genre did not only put the Hamidian era on trial, but also staged contemporary events like the Counter-Revolution and the dethronement of Sultan Abdülhamid II, acting therefore as a medium of communication through which the public could participate in the circulation of information.

While the early examples of these plays published just after the 23 July displayed thematic and structural similarities with *Vatan*, the latter scripts adopted a more radical vocabulary that puts the Hamidian era on trial and reflected the consolidation of the Committee of Union and Progress. One of the most popular scripts published just after the revolution was Kazım Nami Duru's '*Nasıl Oldu?*' (How It Happened?).³⁸⁸ Unlike others, '*Nasıl Oldu?*' and its performance were criticized and prompted articles in a number of newspapers. Regarding the articles, one can conclude that the play was performed a number of times and was promoted in the periodicals of the epoch.³⁸⁹ When Refik Ahmet Sevengil asked the author to inform him on the play, Duru told him that he actually wrote the first two acts before

³⁸⁷ Since the biographies of these authors are not documented, it is very hard to find the years of birth and death.

³⁸⁸ Kazım Nami Duru, *Nasıl Oldu?* (N.p: n.p, 1326).

³⁸⁹ For Further information, see: Sevinçli, *İzmir'de Tiyatro*, pp. 25-29.

the 23 July and the last act just after the 23 July.³⁹⁰ The play actually narrated hi(s)tory of the Young Turk Revolution. Duru, as a Unionist himself, staged the organization of the Young Turk movement and the structure of the Committee of Union and Progress. The play narrated the love of a Turkish soldier (Behlül) and his Greek lover (Victoria). Victoria, just like in *Vatan*, cross-dressed as a man, took the male name Behzat for her love of nation, and for the love of Behlül. The moment her identity was recognized and the authorities decided to exile her, the Second Constitution was promulgated and the two lovers were freed. Besides this love story, the play gave not only a historical narrative on the organization of the CUP, but also emphasized the love between a Greek woman and a Turkish man. In the later days, the political plays started to judge the old regime and its symbolic figures on stage. The plays did not only aim to propagate the rule of CUP but also revived the memory of the “*istibdad*” period, the dethroned Sultan and the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. By restaging the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II and the subsequent Young Turk Revolution, the CUP used theater to reshape collective memories through a collective remembering process. In the words of James V. Wertsch, such a process ‘typically provides an essential basis for the creation and maintenance of groups, specifically imagined communities.’³⁹¹ The collective remembering and the formation of the collective memory, in return, played important roles in the construction of the historical discourses of the era. In the Ottoman case, the political repertoire influenced the consolidation of the Unionist ideologies in the popular level. Political theater could have also strengthened the historiographical narrative of

³⁹⁰ Sevensgil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu*, p.10.

³⁹¹ James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 67.

the Young Turk Revolution which condemned the old regime and glorified the reign of the Committee of Union and Progress.

Illustrating Temptation for the 'Milli Facia' Genre

Departing from Stephan Greenblatt's argument that the 'works of art, however intensely marked by the creative intelligence and private obsessions of individuals, were the products of collective negotiation and exchange', it would be wise to analyze the texts of some plays dating from the post-1908 era and discuss their historical narratives that put the old regime on trial.³⁹²

The scripts written after 23 July represented the Young Ottomans, the CUP members, and the Young Turks as one single body gathered around the ideologies of Ottomanism and nationalism and personalized them with two figures: Mithad Paşa and Namık Kemal. On the other hand, the scripts also represented the old regime by grouping the two head *paşas* of the spy network, (İzzet and Fehim Paşas) and the dethroned Sultan Abdülhamid II together. In most of the plays, Sultan Abdülhamid II's spies tortured innocent people and separated lovers because of the fallacious reports of the spies. These plays happily ended with the declaration of the Second Constitution and the arrival of the national heroes (the Young Turks) who saved the poor people from the tortures of the spies. In general, the last scenes depicted the joy of the Ottoman people who acquired freedom, equality and fraternity with the Young Turk Revolution. This plot was so cliché that the famous playwright of the era Cevdet Maşuk discussed in his article that any of these five-act plays would start by staging the 'age of tyranny', and continue with the devastation and the bust of an

³⁹² Greenblatt, *The Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. vii.

innocent family because of the lies of Sultan Abdülhamid II's spies. The second act would stage the process of interrogation and the third act would demonstrate the tortures. The fourth act would stage the preparations of the Young Turk Revolution, and the fifth would represent the declaration of the Second Constitution and the victory of the Young Turks.³⁹³ Indeed, Maşuk's observation was very accurate and can be observed in the majority of the post-1908 scripts.

These scripts can be examined in five categories according to their dominant themes. The first group consists of the plays depicting Namık Kemal and Mithad Paşa as the 'heroes of freedom'. These plays were usually haunted plays, led by the ghosts of Mithad Paşa and Namık Kemal, the two opponents of Sultan Abdülhamid II, and by the muse of liberty which was usually chained at the first scene and freed in the last scene. For instance, Ahmet Bahri's *Gasb ve Nedamet ve Yine İhanet* (Seizure and Sorrow and Yet Again Betrayal) can be observed as an example.³⁹⁴ The play aimed to narrate a history of the late Ottoman era throughout thirty five acts, as Bahri mentions:

My piece depicts several historical periods. Some names are falsified for necessity. The script is composed of thirty four scenes, starting from the dethronement of Sultan Abdülaziz, continuing with the reign of Sultan Murad, and staging Sultan Abdülhamid II's reign from his princehood, until the 31 March Incident. I believe that it will be read impatiently.³⁹⁵

The play started with a scene where Sultan Abdülaziz and his sons panicked about being murdered, and ended in the pavilion of Alatini in Salonika where the dethroned Sultan Abdülhamid II resided. In the last scene, Abdülhamid II begged for pardon

³⁹³ Cevdet Maşuk "Piyelerde Üslup," *Musavver Hale*, (January 1325), quoted in: And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, p. 182.

³⁹⁴ Ahmed Bahri, *Gasb ve Nedamet Yine İhanet* (Selanik: Yeni Asır Matbaası, 1326).

³⁹⁵ Ahmed Bahri, *Gasb ve Nedamet Yine İhanet* (Selanik: Yeni Asır Matbaası, 1326), quoted in: Yalçın, *II Meşrutiyette Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi*, p.52.

from the ghosts of Namık Kemal and Midhat Paşa that punished him. The script narrated a whole history of the late Ottoman politics starting from the reign of Sultan Abdülaziz until the present day from the narratives of the political characters like prominent *paşas*, sultans, generals etc. As Alemdar Yalçın informs us, the playwright interrupted the text whenever he wanted the audience to participate in the performance by applauding. Throughout the play, the ideas of the Young Turks on the proclamation of the Second Constitution were voiced by the ghost of Mithad Paşa. In a similar fashion, Mehmet Sezai's "national drama" *Mithad Paşa Yahut Hükm-i İdam* (Mithad Paşa or The Death Sentence) criticized the old regime and the dethroned sultan by staging the execution of Midhat Paşa.³⁹⁶ The play depicted Midhat Paşa's efforts for the reclamation of the constitution. The subsequent act informed the audience on the judge of Mithad Paşa, Sururi, and informed the audience on his personal insecurities, and his cruelties. Sururi was represented as heartless in order to get closer with Sultan Abdülhamid II. The third scene demonstrated the trials of the famous *paşas* in Ta'if, and showed the testimonies of the false witnesses and narrated the unfair decision of execution from the narrative of Sururi. The fourth scene staged the defense of Midhat Paşa, and gave the message: 'The heartless and unjust people will always be judged by God.' The following scene portrayed the joy of the commander Bekir since he would rise in the rank when he strangles the famous *paşas* including Midhat Paşa. The last scene took place in Yıldız Palace and depicted Sultan Abdülhamid II's joy when he handled the head of Midhat Paşa brought by Bekir in a box. However, he could not enjoy his victory since the ghost of Midhat Paşa came and judged him. At the end of the play, Sultan Abdülhamid II lost his mind, when he saw the ghost of Mithad Paşa. The play *Mithad*

³⁹⁶ Mehmet Sezai, *Mithad Paşa Yahut Hükm-i İdam* (İzmir: Keşişyan Matbaası, 1328).

Paşa Yahut Hükm-i İdam, in a way ‘executed’ Sultan Abdülhamid II, and aimed to display his ‘real character’ to the Ottoman public. One last example I want to mention is *Mithad Cemal Kuntay’s Kemal* which depicted the ghosts of Namık Kemal and Midhat Paşa.³⁹⁷ The play started by staging Namık Kemal’s and Mithad Paşa’s efforts to reestablish the constitutional monarchy, and continued with a scene depicting Mahmud Nedim Paşa. Mahmud Nedim Paşa indeed celebrated the hanging of Mithad Paşa and the exile of Namık Kemal. Throughout the play, bribery and corruption of the high officers in Yıldız Palace were staged. The play ended with a highly symbolic scene portraying Namık Kemal’s sorrow when he heard of Midhat Paşa’s murder. Namık Kemal, then fell asleep and judged Sultan Abdülhamid II in his dream.

Actually, using ghosts to invoke the past, to give historical information, to face and to judge history has been a widely used method, especially in the works of Shakespeare which were frequently translated to Ottoman Turkish in the early 1900s. Marvin Carlson who examined the ‘ghostly’ narratives in his book *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as a Memory Machine*, argued that both the ghosts and the dreams were products of a complex relationship between the theater and cultural memory:

All theatrical cultures have recognized, in some form or another, this ghostly quality, this sense of something coming back in the theatre, and so the relationship between theatre and cultural memory were deep and complex. (...) A parallel process can be seen in dreaming, which as many dream theorists have observed, had a distinct similarities in the private experience to the public experience of theatre.³⁹⁸

The theoretical framework offered by Carlson helps to reinterpret the dreams and the ghosts of the three leading political figures: Namık Kemal, Mithad Paşa and Sultan

³⁹⁷ Mithad Cemal Kuntay, *Kemal* (İstanbul: Sırat-ı Müstakim Matbaası, 1328).

³⁹⁸ Carlson, *The Haunted Stage*, pp. 2-3.

Abdülhamid II. The ghosts of Namık Kemal and Mithad Paşa were indeed recreated on stage with more radical discourses defining the political agenda of the Committee of Union and Progress. They represented the anti-Hamidian opposition of the Young Turks, rather than Namık Kemal's idea of 'synthesis', which favored the Islamic character of the Ottoman state. In a way, the visualization of the Hamidian era and the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 used these symbolic figures to propagate the politics of the Committee of Union and Progress.

As opposed to Namık Kemal and Mithad Paşa who represented 'honesty, justice, equality', Fehim Paşa and İzzet (Holo) Paşa, the two leading politicians of the Hamidian era, who were also acting as the heads of the internal espionage system that Sultan Abdülhamid II built in the palace, represented 'corruption, tortuosity, injustice and sexual aberration' in the Ottoman Palace. The plays led by Fehim and İzzet Paşas form the second group in the repertoire of the *milli facia* genre. Scripts depicted the spies working for the espionage system, and demonstrated that they wrote millions of fallacious reports, called '*jurnal*' according to their personal relations. A popular theme of these plays was sexual harassment which broke up innocent Ottoman families. These scripts, as can be expected, happily ended with the declaration of the Second Constitution, which freed young girls from sexual harassment of Sultan Abdülhamid II and his spies. The plays also aimed at triggering the Ottoman social values and deepening a sense of 'revenge' towards the old regime. One of the first examples of these scripts was Hüseyin Suat Yalçın's *Şehbal Yahut İstibdatın Son Perdesi* (Şehbal or the Last Scene of the Tyranny).³⁹⁹ In the first scene, Fehim Paşa saw Şehbal, a newly-wed young woman in the street, found her

³⁹⁹ Hüseyin Suat Yalçın, "Şehbal Yahut İstibdatın Son Perdesi," *Aşiyân Mecmuası*, no. 17 (1324), pp. 10-14.

attractive, and assaulted her household. Fehim Paşa threatened her, and told that he would kill her family unless she marries him. ‘The poor girl’ married him to save her family, but she was tortured and kicked out after a short time. Şehbal started to work as a housemaid, but got sick and died on 23 July before she could celebrate the joy of the revolution! In a similar fashion, Mehmet Burhaneddin’s *Fehim Paşa*⁴⁰⁰ and Ali Haydar’s *Nereye? (Where?)*⁴⁰¹ staged sexual violence of the corrupted Fehim Paşa. The plays, like many other Fehim Paşa plays, staged the lynching of Fehim Paşa after the declaration of the Second Constitution.

Fehime Nüzhet, a prominent Ottoman female writer and an active political figure in the CUP also wrote two scripts condemning the spy network. The first of these, *Bir Zalimin Encamı* (The Fate of a Cruel Man), was on the corruption of the espionage system, bribery, and the sexual harassment of the spies. Nüzhet narrated the family dramas caused by the fallacious reports of the spies, and staged the lynching of the Fehim Paşa.⁴⁰² Besides these representations, the play was particularly important since it exposed Fehim Nüzhet’s ideas. She argued for the women’s’ rights, and voiced her political ideas through the narrative of an elderly man. In her second play, *Adalet Yerini Buldu* (Justice Was Done), Nüzhet staged the corrupted relationship of the spy Fazıl with his family, the failure of his intimate relationships and the calamity of the events.⁴⁰³ The play, focusing on the family relationships ended with a scene where the Second Constitution was proclaimed, and the Young Turks established an ‘equal and just’ system. Again, İbnücemal Ahmet

⁴⁰⁰ Mehmet Burhanettin, *Fehim Paşa* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i İkbal, 1327).

⁴⁰¹ Ali Haydar Emir, *Nereye? (Beş Fasıldan İbaret Tiyatro (Facia))* (İstanbul: Suhulet Küttüphanesi, 1327).

⁴⁰² Fehime Nüzhet, *Bir Zalimin Encamı, “Merhum Hakkı Paşa Kerimesi Nüzhet”* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1324).

⁴⁰³ Fehime Nüzhet, *Adalet Yerini Buldu* (İstanbul: Karabet Matbaası, 1326).

Tevfik's *İstibdat'ın Son Günü yahut Zavallı Valide* (The Final Day of the Tyranny or Poor Mother),⁴⁰⁴ Halil İbrahim's *Rüşvetle Mesned* (Built by Bribe),⁴⁰⁵ and Vahit Lüftü's *Hafiyе Darbesi Yahut Bir Kızın İntikamı* (Coup of Spies or the Revenge of a Girl), staged the sorrow of innocent people, and ended by taking revenge from, or by lynching Fehim Paşa on stage.⁴⁰⁶ While Fehim Paşa was the leading actor of the scripts themed around family tragedies, some other plays like Yusuf Niyazi Ebu Kemal's *Mülevves yahut Bir Casusun Akabeti* (The Dirty or a Spy's Doom) depicted İzzet (Holo) Paşa as the representative of the espionage system.⁴⁰⁷ Yusuf Niyazi illustrated İzzet Paşa and his deputy Süreyya as heartless, corrupted butchers and judged them in his scripts. The play represented how Süreyya's wife suffered from his husband's sexual perversions. The play ended with a scene where a woman-- sexually abused by Süreyya-- killed Süreyya. The scripts on Sultan Abdülhamid II's espionage system and the two leading *paşas*, Fehim and İzzet Paşas aimed to stage the bribery, torture, and sexual abuse practiced by the spies. Centering on family dramas and sexual harassment of young girls, these plays form the most radical examples of the '*milli facia*' genre.

The 'evil' aspects of the Hamidian era were not only represented by the two leading political actors, İzzet and Fehim Paşas, but also by Sultan Abdülhamid II himself, after the Counter-Revolution of April 1909, and the dethronement of the Sultan. A third group of post-1908 scripts were written to judge Abdülhamid II on stage. While the majority of the plays representing İzzet and Fehim Paşas were on

⁴⁰⁴ İbnülcecmal Ahmed Tevfik, *İstibdatın Son Günü Yahut Zavallı Valide (Facia 5 Perde)* (İstanbul: İkbâl Kütüphanesi, 1926).

⁴⁰⁵ Halil İbrahim, *Rüşvetle Mesned (Askerî ve Millî Dram)* (İstanbul: İkbâl Matbaası, 1326).

⁴⁰⁶ Vahit Lütfi, *Hafiyе Darbesi Yahut Bir Kızın İntikamı* (İstanbul: n. p., 1337).

⁴⁰⁷ Yusuf Niyazi-Ebukemal, *Mülevves Yahut Bir Casusun Akabeti* (İstanbul: n. p., 1327).

sexual harassment, the plays depicting Abdülhamid II used different stories and plots to put him on trial. For instance, in Dr. Kamil's (a prominent CUP member) *Canlı Cenaze Yahut Yıldız'da Meşrutiyet Telaşları* (The Cadaver Like Person or the Constitutional Panic in Yıldız), Abdülhamid was portrayed as an insecure, timid, powerless and pathetic person.⁴⁰⁸ The play represents a typical post-1908 script, where the Hamidian era was portrayed as a period of corruption, while the CUP members were depicted as national fighters influenced by the French revolutionary examples. A second example for the third group of plays was Abdülhalim Memduh and Refik Nevzat's *Abdülhamit ve Genç Bir Harem Ağası* (Abdülhamid and a Young Eunuch).⁴⁰⁹ The play portrayed Sultan Abdülhamid II reading each and every fallacious report of the spies, and punishing innocent people. The script also touched upon Sultan Abdülhamid II's unjust policies in the diplomacy. Moreover, the play mentioned that Abdülhamid II granted some insignificant people with imperial orders, whereas he exiled very influential politicians. The play ended with a scene where a young eunuch judged him of being corrupt and forced him to resign from his post. While the eunuch forced him to resign, the audience also saw the Ottoman people who gathered in the garden of the palace, shouting: 'Long live the constitution!' In the last scene, the young eunuch symbolized the revenge of the oppressed classes and the slaves. Through the play, the authors narrated Sultan Abdülhamid II's personality with his own speeches and internal feuds. For instance, the tirade below by Sultan Abdülhamid II aimed to display his 'ruthless' character:

Abdülhamit: I swear in the name of God. With the name of God, I will put everyone in each other's custody. I will sacrifice the souls to

⁴⁰⁸ (Dr.) Kamil, *Canlı Cenaze Yahut Yıldız'da Meşrutiyet Telaşları* (İstanbul: Arşak Garoyan Maatbaası, 1325).

⁴⁰⁹ Abdülhalim Memduh and Refik Nevzat, *Abdülhamit ve Genç Bir Harem Ağası* (İstanbul: Sühulet Kitaphanesi, 1326).

corpses, the corpses to souls. I will darken and ruin the sun, the moon and stars. I will oppress and torture until no body, no heart, no brain, no conscience and no mercy is left in Turkey.

I will devastate the religions of Mohammed, Jesus and Moses.

I will force to convert Muslims to Christianity, Christians to Judaism, and Jews to Islam. I will be the tyrant. Yes, like owls, above the dust of the children of the country, I will govern the Ottoman Sultanate. I will ruin everything. In this world, only I will reign by myself.⁴¹⁰

Abdülhalim Memduh and Refik Nevzat co-authored a second script on the very same subject but focused only on two figures: Sultan Abdülhamid II and Vicdan ('conscience'). The play *Abdülhamid ile Vicdan* (Abdülhamid and Conscience) focused on the dialogues between Sultan Abdülhamid II and his conscience embodied as a female muse.⁴¹¹ The muse Vicdan judged Sultan Abdülhamid II for every single failure, mistake, cruelty, and torture he committed in the last decades, and portrayed him as a paranoid, insecure, heartless, timid and corrupted person. After long tirades of Vicdan that put Sultan Abdülhamid II on trial, Sultan Abdülhamid II committed suicide. Moralızade Vassaf's *Yıldız Faciaları* (Tragedies of Yıldız) included probably some of the harshest and aggressive critiques about Sultan Abdülhamid II and his spies.⁴¹² The play does not only portray Sultan Abdülhamid II as a corrupted Sultan having fun with the young and beautiful girls of the imperial harem, but also as a non-believer. *Yıldız Faciaları* includes some touching scenes of torture and dialogues of the torturers, namely Bekir and İzzet Paşas. For instance, Beşir and İzzet Paşas' discussion on torturing some Young Turks aimed to reveal the suffering of the revolutionaries under the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II to the theater audience:

⁴¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 28-30, quoted in Özlem Nemutlu, "II. Meşrutiyetten Cumhuriyetin İlanına Kadar İzmir'de Tiyatro Faaliyetleri," p. 200.

⁴¹¹ Abdülhalim Memduh and Refik Nevzat, "Abdülhamid ve Vicdan," *Ahenk*, (14-22 May, 1909).

⁴¹² Moralızade Vassaf, *Yıldız Faciaları* (İstanbul: Suhulet Kütüphanesi, 1327).

Beşir Bey: Ah, but they are not afraid of dying. We did what could be done. We also spilled bucketfuls of cold water on them; that water layer by layer froze on their scarred faces, on their rugged bodies covered by blood, and on their torn clothes. They are bleeding profusely from their noses. Each and every part of their bodies is injured and scarred. Yet they still shout at us ‘bastards, villains, and traitors!’ Look how daring they are!

İzzet Paşa: (Standing up angrily) I know how to force them to talk and kill them!⁴¹³

The play ended with a Young Turk (Ali Rahim) cursing Abdülhamit: “God... Let our revenge fall upon Sultan Abdülhamid II; my God give him the worst disaster, your greatest tribulation!”⁴¹⁴

Interestingly, the Unionist playwrights touched upon the minority politics and again condemned Sultan Abdülhamid II. As a CUP follower, Mehmet İhsan staged the Armenian uprisings of 1895 in his play *Ermeni Mazlumları Yahut Fedakar bir Türk Zabiti* (The Oppressed Armenians or a Devoted Turkish Officer).⁴¹⁵ The pro-Armenian play staged the massacre of the Armenian groups, and accused Sultan Abdülhamid II and his government. Moreover, in the play these Armenian families were protected by the Young Turks and the members of the CUP. The first scene took place in Artin Efendi’s house, whose brother was lynched by the Muslims. The scene informed the audience that outside the house, the Muslims attacked the Armenians, lynching and killing them with sticks and stones. In the subsequent scene, the unionist soldier Fazıl Bey saved Artin Efendi’s scared family. Upon that, Fazıl Bey was exiled to the island Rhodes by Sultan Abdülhamid II’s government. The play ended happily with a final scene staging the declaration of the Second Constitution which ‘introduced liberty, fraternity, and equality to the Ottoman

⁴¹³ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁴¹⁵ Mehmet İhsan, *Ermeni Mazlumları Yahut Fedakar bir Türk Zabiti* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1324).

subjects regardless of their ethnicity'. Differing from the previously mentioned plays, *Ermeni Mazlumları Yahut Fedakar bir Türk Zabiti* emphasized that the CUP was indeed protecting the non-Muslims. Recalling that the CUP's politics towards non-Muslim population was stricter, one can argue that the play aimed to legitimize the CUP's power within the non-Muslim society as well.

As can be seen, the 'evils of the old regime' were not alone on stage. The heroes of the post-1908 plays consisted of the CUP members, Young Turks, and their followers. The fourth group of plays was on the organization of the CUP and the declaration of the Second Constitution. Young Turks were the leading actors of these plays staging the clashes between the new and the old regimes. They usually died for their motto 'freedom, equality and fraternity' and fought against the tyranny of Sultan Abdülhamid II. For instance, Selanikli *Hilmi's Menfiler Yahut Felaket-i İstibdat* (The Exiles or the Disaster of Tyranny) staged the grief of the Young Turks under the despotism of Sultan Abdülhamid II.⁴¹⁶ At the end of the play, the exiled Young Turks were freed with the declaration of the Second Constitution. In a parallel line, Hasan Nadir's *Devr-i Sabıkta Vükela* (Ministers in the Old Regime) staged Young Turks' efforts to reestablish the constitutional monarchy.⁴¹⁷ Both of the plays demonstrated the organization of the CUP and their rituals. The idea of staging the secret organization to the public was indeed a common feature of this group of plays. Similarly, Moralızade Vassaf's *Mukaddime-i İnkılap* (Preface to the Revolution) represented the struggle of the Young Turks under the tyranny of Sultan Abdülhamid II.⁴¹⁸ Again, another play displaying the torture and the torment of the Young Turks

⁴¹⁶ Hilmi (Selanikli), *Menfiler Yahut Felaket-i İstibdat* (İstanbul: n.p., 1327).

⁴¹⁷ Hasan Nadir, *Devr-i Sabıkta Vükela* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1326).

⁴¹⁸ Moralızade Vassaf, *Mukaddime-i İnkılap* (İstanbul: İkbâl Kütüphanesi, 1335).

was Ahmet Hilmi Şehbenderzade's *İstibdatın Vahşetleri yahut Bir Fedainin Ölümü* (The Brutalities of the Tyranny or the Death of an Assassin).⁴¹⁹ Likewise, Halil Rüştü's *10 Temmuz 1324* (10 July 1324) represented the boredom and the struggle of a nationalist peasant Recep and his role model Unionist Hüseyin Bey to 'awaken the Ottoman public' under the old regime.⁴²⁰ Expectedly, the play ended with the proclamation of the Second Constitution which solved all the struggles and conflicts in the society. The plays on the social and political activities of the Young Turks also touched upon the organization of the CUP abroad, and namely in Egypt, France and Britain. For instance, the playwright Sait Hikmet, a strong follower of the CUP, represented the operation of the Young Turks and their society in Paris in his play: *Mazi ve Atı* (The Past and the Future).⁴²¹ In the play, a Young Turk (the principal character of the play) Refik Bey was exiled to Fizan, but found a way to escape to Egypt and then to Paris where he met with other CUP members and Young Turks. Actually, one can see a similar gist in Aka Gündüz's *Aşk ve İstibdat* (Love and the Tyranny).⁴²² The play staged the struggle of a revolutionist named Ali, and his collaboration with the secret organization of CUP for the future of his nation. One other very influential play raising discussions in the newspapers was the co-authored work of Tahsin Nahid and Nevvare Ruhsar: *Jön Türk* (Young Turk).⁴²³ The main character of the play, Nihad, a nationalist young man falls in love with Kazım Paşa's (a loyal *paşa* of Sultan Abdülhamid II) daughter. Upon their quarrels, Kazım Paşa

⁴¹⁹ Ahmet Hilmi Şehbenderzade, *İstibdatın Vahşetleri yahut Bir Fedainin Ölümü* (İstanbul: Müşterek'ül Menfa Osmanlı Şirketi Matbaası, 1326).

⁴²⁰ Halil Rüştü, *10 Temmuz 1324* (Bursa: Matbaa-i Amire, 1324).

⁴²¹ Sait Hikmet, *Mazi ve Atı* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Hayriye ve Şürekası, 1325).

⁴²² Aka Gündüz, "Aşk ve İstibdat," *Kadın Mecmuası*, no. 16; 21; 25, (1325).

⁴²³ Tahsin Nahit and Nevvare Ruhsar, *Jön-Türk* (İstanbul: n. p., 1325).

forced Nihad to leave their house. Nihad found a way to join the British freemason community and left the Ottoman lands. After the declaration of the Second Constitution, Kazım Paşa was prisoned and Nihad returned to İstanbul, married Kazım Paşa's daughter and distributed Kazım Paşa's wealth to the poor peasants in Anatolia. The play ended with a scene where the Ottoman public shouted "Long live the constitution, long live the liberty!" *Jön Türk* was particularly significant since it represented the CUP's relations with other secret communities and groups. Most of the plays depicting the CUP members and Young Turks as the main characters staged the events paving the way for the declaration of the Second Constitution in Manastır. These plays usually depicted the murder of the Ferik Şemsi, and the symbolic climb of soldiers to the mountain in Manastır to represent the experience of 'proclaiming the Second Constitution'. The plays centering on the heroism of the Young Turks and the CUP members apparently tried to recreate the operation of the secret Committee of Union and Progress and the political organization of the Young Turks on stage. These plays tried to propagate the mottos of the revolutionaries 'liberty, equality and the fraternity' through the stories of torment, grief and love, and tried to reshape public opinion. While the Young Turks appeared as national heroes in the scripts written just after the Revolution of 1908, by the late 1910s, they appeared as the war-criminals. The *milli facia* genre that condemned Sultan Abdülhamid II was ironically used to judge the Unionists and their decision to fight in the First World War by the late 1910s. The plays written by the end of the 1910s like *Hürriyet Kurbanları* (the Victims of Freedom)⁴²⁴, or *Caniler Saltanatı* (The

⁴²⁴ İhsan Adli, *Haile-i Mahmut Şevket-Hürriyet Kurbanları* (Edirne: Vilayet Matbaası, 1335).

Sultanate of the Villains)⁴²⁵ condemned the CUP leaders for being responsible for the territorial and the demographical losses on stage.

CUP members became more and more “despotic” as they established their power in the society after their successful suppression of the Counter-Revolution of April 1909. Throughout 1900s, the scripts did not only serve to spread the ideologies of the CUP and to legitimize them but they also served to spread contemporary events like the organization and suppression of the Counter-Revolution of April, 1909. The scripts narrating the ‘31 March Incident’ forms the last group of plays that I want to mention. The attempt of Counter- Revolution made significant changes in the repertoire of the *milli facia*. While the old regime was personalized as Fehim Paşa or İzzet Paşa in the scripts published between July 1908- April 1909, the scripts written after the dethronement of Sultan Abdülhamid II depicted the old Sultan as the symbol of corruption, and judged him on stage. For instance, Dr. Kamil’s *Dönmez Yüz yahut Hürriyet Ordusu* (The Unbending Face or the Army of Liberty) staged the ‘31 March Incident’ in great detail, and portrayed Sultan Abdülhamid II as the organizer of this religious rebellion.⁴²⁶ The play ‘informed’ the audience that Sultan Abdülhamid II helped the newspaper *Volkan* and the soldiers of *Avcı Taburu* in the revolt. On the other hand, the muse of liberty, ghosts of Namık Kemal and Mithad Paşa usually appeared and judged Abdülhamid II’s personality and his political character. Throughout the play, the 31 March Incident was staged and Sultan Abdülhamid II was depicted as the one who organized the rebellion. The first scene enacted the revolt. The subsequent scene visualized the discussions of the CUP members in Salonika and the formation of the *Hürriyet Ordusu* (Army of Liberty).

⁴²⁵ Bulgurluzade Rıza, *Caniler Saltanatı (Manzum Bir Facia)* (İstanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1919).

⁴²⁶ (Dr.) Kamil, *Dönmez Yüz yahut Hürriyet Ordusu* (İstanbul: Necm- i İstiklal Matbaası, n.d.)

The following scene shifted to the Yıldız Palace and demonstrated Sultan Abdülhamid II's fears. In the subsequent scenes, the *Hareket Ordusu* (Action Army) suppressed the revolt, and girded the Yıldız Palace. Esat Paşa informed the audience that Abdülhamid was dethroned, and the play ended with a highly symbolic scene depicting the ghosts of the martyrs, Louis XIV, Sultan Abdülhamid II and Derviş Vahdetti (the leading name of the revolt) together, accompanied by the anthem of liberty. The close relationship drawn with the French Revolution and martyrs of liberty judging the political figures aimed to represent the complex nature of this historical process to the Ottoman public in a very simple and biased manner to recreate the past in the collective memories. The dialogues of the unionists aimed to arouse the national feelings of the audience. For instance, a short poem of Dr. Kamil was recited at the very beginning of the play to voice the feelings of the Ottoman public towards Abdülhamid II:

Behold, behold that your doom comes soon.
There is no possibility of your salvation.
Your life is at the hand of the free ones.
Oh your death is soon!
Your agony is great in the world beyond,
Do not speak, I do not heed to listen to you,
If you have a reply, save it for the Reaper.⁴²⁷

The poem, which carries the same biases with the narrative of the whole script, represents the ways in which Sultan Abdülhamid II was judged on stage in front of the audience. Another play 'divinely judging' the dethroned Sultan Abdülhamid II upon the 31 March Incident was Mehmed İhsan's *Hırs-ı Saltanat Yahut İntikam-ı*

⁴²⁷ "Bil bil ki yakındadır zevalin.

Kurtulmağa yoktur ihtimalin.

Ahrarın elindedir hayatın.

Vah yakındır mematın!

Ukbada büyüktür ıstırabın,

Söz söyleme dinlemem hitabın,

Azrail'e varsa ver cevabın."

(Dr.) Kamil, *Dönmez Yüz yahut Hürriyet Ordusu* (İstanbul: Necm- i İstiklal Matbaası, n.d.), quoted in: Alemdar Yalçın. *II Meşrutiyette Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi*, p. 128.

Meşru-ı Millet (The Rage of Sultanate or the Legitimate Revenge of the Nation).⁴²⁸

The play depicted Sultan Abdülhamid II's alliance with Derviş Vahdeti and Hamdi Çavuş to organize the Counter-Revolution of April 1909. The subsequent scene demonstrated the discussion of the soldiers, and informed the audience on the events of 13 April. The play, similar to the others, represented the suppression of the uprising and the dethronement of Sultan Abdülhamid II. The last act showing Abdülhamid II's fears after the attempted assassination, was the most interesting part of the play. In this section, the ghosts of Namık Kemal and Mithad Paşa interrogated Abdülhamid II. Abdülhamid's feelings and fears given as inner monologs were remarkable since they represented the way in which the revolutionary public wanted to see him:⁴²⁹

Abdülhamid: I understand they want to kill me in agony and torture. Well, I wonder what will happen to me... Will I spend every hour of my life isolated from the world? Or do the people want to get their revenge in this way? How can pleasure come in such an unpleasant life deprived of the sultanate? Will I spend the rest of my life in such a reprehension and burden of the nation? No, I will not live, I will die. (He stands up by addressing his vicinity with an ambitious look.) No, no I will not die, I will live. I will take revenge on those who wants to take revenge on me. I will refuse any offer for my wealth; I will dismiss them from my sight. I will reveal rage and violence (calming down) Oh, no! Will I be successful, will I counter the weapon of vengeance pointed at me?! Alas! Oh, how exhausted and how tired my body is... My eyes merely want to be shut. (Meanwhile a dark silhouette and a great rumble emerge. Abdülhamid, not being strong enough to move, is possessed by fear and fever. A mental seizure begins to strike him. A great paleness invades his face. The rumble continues.)

The text continues with 'a scene of trial' upon the emergence of the ghosts of Namık Kemal and Mithad Paşa:

⁴²⁸ Mehmed İhsan, *Hırs-ı Saltanat Yahut İntikam-ı Meşru-ı Millet* (İstanbul: Arşak Garoyan Matbaası, 1327).

⁴²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 91-96.

Abdülhamid: Oh my God, what is happening? I am frightened! (The noise is continuously heard; in the rear of the garden the dead cross with their necks and arms chained. Following this, those in bloody shrouds pass by. Then the corpses pass by. And Abdülhamid begins to tremble violently.)

Abdülhamid: Oh, they are threatening me... I see, the dead and the alive of the nation want to get revenge on me. (Meanwhile two men in shrouds appear. Side by side they approach Abdülhamid. Abdülhamid, his chin narrowed and his face acquiring that of the state of the two dead in front of him, speaks in a trembling voice):

Abdülhamid: Who are you?

First Dead: Two victims sentenced to the oppression of the oppressor.

Abdülhamid: The oppression of the oppressor? Who is the oppressor?

The Second Dead: You!

Abdülhamid: Who are you?

The First one: Mithad and Kemal!

Abdülhamid: What do you want from me?

The Second one: The improvement of the state that you could not accomplish yet.

Abdülhamid: What I did to you...

The First one: What you did to us and to the nation is beyond comprehension... Every second of your life was spent with murders. The nation, for thirty four years, has forgiven you for the nobility and justice of your dynasty... And you gnawed on this property and the nation with your perpetual brigandage which has nothing to do with the caliphate. You ruined and destroyed the state treasury. You wasted the law at the expense of your illegitimate goals and ambitions. The nation forgave your holy caliphate, not yourself, but again you could not improve the state. Finally you made this holy state and its nation miserable. People who are destined to a certain collapse did not have any more strength to forgive you. The nation had again showed generosity and they dethroned you, saving your life along.

The Second one: And this dethronement became the legitimate vengeance of the nation. Yet this modest vengeance is still benefaction at the expense of your thirty four-year-oppression. From now on, spend your life praying for the virtue and development of the state and the nation. Wipe out the wrath and the hostility from your heart. Leave all your wealth and estates where you had seized them. Pray for

(pointing at the rear side with his finger) the forgiveness of those poor people that you enslaved for your ambition of reign and tyranny. (The table removes. The reactionaries are seen in the gallows tree. Cevher is also seen among them. All of them point at Abdülhamid.)

Abdülhamit: (Terrified) They all point at me, they address me as the reason for rebellion. Oh, Cevher, Cevher is there! (His hands closing his face) Oh, I cannot take this... What a doomed person, what an oppressive sultan I was! Forgive me... Oh holy God, forgive me. I take sanctuary in your grandeur. (He falls onto the chair and faints).

The First Dead: This one should not die, but live!

The Second Dead: Yes, every hour of his life is now sufferance for him!

These scenes of interrogations and trials by the ghosts of the symbolic political figures were one of the most important parts of the post-1908 political repertoire, not only because they staged a 'divine punishment', but also since they gave a particular historical narrative on the Hamidian era. Again, a very similar play staging the Counter-Revolution of April 1909 was *Ahmet Cevat's Yıldızın Sonu* (The End of the Yıldız).⁴³⁰ The play depicted Abdülhamid as the financial sponsor of the Counter-Revolution. The play, in parallel to the previously mentioned ones, staged the revolts, the preparation of the army and the success of the army in suppressing the revolts. Differing from other '31 March Incident' plays, *Yıldızın Sonu* was accompanied with a love story demonstrating Abdülhamid's failure in his personal life as well. Abdülhamid's favorite actually loved a Unionist, Subay Cemal. The Sultan who could not handle the failures in each and every single aspect of his life killed that young woman by the end of the play. Besides these three, a number of

⁴³⁰ Ahmet Cevat Emre, *Yıldızın Sonu* (İstanbul: Jirair Keteon Matbaası, 1325).

other plays, as discussed in the works of Metin And and Alemdar Yalçın, aimed to stage the Counter-Revolution of April 1909.⁴³¹

All these five groups of plays, standing between history and imagination formed an anti-Hamidian repertoire. Because of the limitations of the topic, this study could only touch upon a limited number of plays and had to leave many others behind. Although one should never take these scripts at their face value, the textual analyses of these plays and the political representations they include may reveal some understudied aspects of the late Ottoman politics like the international operations of the CUP. Besides their historical narratives, what made these scripts significant for social scientists was the juxtaposed representation of the old and new regimes. How these popular scripts constructed a historical narrative and reshaped the contemporary events of the day for the audience was particularly important to interpret the collective imagination of the late 1900s. I return to my departure point and recall the new historicist approach with Greenblatt's statement:

I propose that we begin by taking seriously the collective production of literary pleasure and interest. We know that this production was collective since language itself, which was at the heart of literary power, was the supreme instance of a collective creation. (...) Theatre was manifestly the product of collective intentions and the moment of inscription, was itself a social moment. Moreover, the theatre addresses its audience as a collectivity.⁴³²

Within this theoretical framework, I can argue that these scripts offer us clues on particular aspects of the collective imagination in the late 1900s. The majority of the plays written after 1909 represented 'the tyranny of the *ancien regime*, and tried to legitimize the 'reign of the CUP'. Even though one cannot know their popularity and

⁴³¹ For further discussion on the plays, see: Alemdar Yalçın, *II Meşrutiyette Tiyatro Edebiyatı Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ Basın Yayın, 2002), Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*. (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971).

⁴³² Greenblatt, *The Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 4.

actual performances, the very production of these texts, parallel to the Ottoman cartoon space of the late 1900s, aimed to reshape public opinion with their historical narratives. The plays, novels, histories and newspapers of the age, all accusing the old regime, were influential in the formation of public opinion. This public opinion was created via the performances, publications and historical narratives which defined the old regime as a 'tyranny'. They all played an important role in the formation of a historiographical discourse depicting the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II as 'oppression and tyranny' and the reign of the Committee of Union and Progress as 'freedom and democracy'.

Standing between fact and fiction, the political repertoire shaped and was shaped by the dominant historical narratives of the Ottoman intelligentsia. The representation of the old regime, Sultan Abdülhamid II, the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the 31 March Incident did not only aim to propagate the reign of the CUP, but also reshaped and retold the recent history on the stage for the audience. Theater of the post-revolutionary era became a forum for discussions, staging contemporary events, judging and praising political figures on the stage. With these qualities, theater did not only act like the press, but also offered access to the recent social and political developments for the Ottoman public. Therefore, the political repertoire played a significant role in shaping public opinion and the collective imagination.

To conclude, I should also underline the subjectivity of the repertoire selected in the above analysis. Given the breadth of the literature on the late Ottoman drama, only a limited number of politically loaded scripts were presented as examples of the national tragedy or national drama genres. All these scripts, whether they were

performed or not, were indeed much more complex than I could study in detail within the limitations of this thesis.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION:

SITUATING THE POLITICAL THEATER IN TURKISH HISTORIOGRAPHY

Standing between fact and fiction, developments in theater during the post-1908 era were also 'staged' in the press of the late Ottoman era. The theater of the post-revolutionary era directly reflected the recent developments in the Ottoman domestic and international politics and was crucial in communicating politics to the masses in its own fashion. The narratives of the Ottoman satirical press and the periodicals clearly show how the post-1908 theater both shaped and was shaped by the dominant historiographical discourses of the Unionist Ottoman intellectuals. Theater was, therefore, very significant in modeling public opinion in an age when it was the most important medium of visual communication.

The play scripts written after 1908 became a space where one could judge the old regime or glorify the new one. Although it is not possible to know whether these plays were popular or not, or even whether they were performed at all, theater served as a public space where the contemporary events were staged, judged or glorified, and where people shared their feelings and thoughts on how to interpret the new political developments. In this historical context, the popular theater operated as a courtroom for the trial of the old regime. Putting the despotic old regime on trial gave way to the glorification of the new regime as an outcome of a gradual social transformation, putting the theater in the center of a 'discourse of Westernization'. Theater thus became an indispensable part of the political life of the nineteenth century with the growing importance of the public spaces and the invention of mass politics.

It is important to see how the political theater continued to reflect contemporary events even after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and operated as one of the most significant agencies to interpret the current political change in modern Turkey as well. As theater became an important aspect of the Ottoman social and political life throughout the late nineteenth century, in the following decades, it kept its role in shaping public opinion in parallel to the press, and became an important aspect of the social life in Turkey.

To give a few examples, one may start with the change that followed the First World War. Theater, used as a means to form public opinion, encouraged people to 'fight' rather than to 'judge' the old regime by the eve of the War. However, after the First World War, the repertoire changed and plays started to blame the CUP for the Ottoman defeat. By 1918, a certain repertoire had been formed as to condemn the members of the CUP, which left its place after the declaration of the Turkish Republic in 1923 to a new theater primarily used to promote the new republican regime. This new theater followed indeed the very same genre of play/repertoire that both glorified the rule of the CUP after 1908, and accused them once the Ottoman Empire was defeated in the First World War.

With the declaration of the Turkish Republic, theater also became a new platform to celebrate Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as the ultimate hero of the past wars, including the First World War and the Independence War. Here theater was used once again to construct a historiographical discourse, which while glorifying the national leader Mustafa Kemal on the one hand, represented an Ottoman history as a history of oppression and corruption on the other. The plays written after the proclamation of the Turkish Republic promoted the ideals of the new regime under the leadership of a charismatic leader, Atatürk. In his analysis of '*inkılap temsilleri*',

Levent Boyacıođlu provides us with this republican theater genre where women's emancipation, commitment to Western arts and sciences, an imagined bright future for the Republic of Turkey had been laid out.⁴³³ People's Houses, the Republican network of local cultural centers took on a fundamental role in disseminating such plays, offering a ground just like the post-1908 plays to form a collective memory judging the old regime and promoting the new one. Mustafa Kemal, himself, placed 'theater' within the discourse of civilization and encouraged the idea of a national theater. Just like Sultan Abdülaziz and Sultan Abdülhamid II, he used theater in diplomacy by hosting the Iranian shah at an opera performance for the reception ceremony.⁴³⁴ Mustafa Kemal's approach to theater was indeed very 'Ottoman', following the Ottoman Westernization paradigm set by the Ottoman Sultans.

The nature of the late Ottoman political theater, best represented in the *milli facia* genre or its Republican version, the so-called *inkılap temsilleri* continued to re-emerge in other forms during the later decades of the Republican era. After the *coup d'état* of 1960, for instance, theater was used as a public space where the workers' strikes and unionization found their first organizations.⁴³⁵ Throughout the years 1960- 1971, theater acted as a space where the debates between the radical left and extreme right were staged for larger audiences. Just like it was in the days following the Revolution of 1908, theater became 'political' with the audience's performances and government's censorship, not with the repertoire.

Especially in the mid-1960s, theaters became public spaces where the plays were violently attacked and interrupted by groups from extreme right or radical left

⁴³³ For further information, see: Levent Boyacıođlu, "Tek Parti Döneminde İnkılap Temsilleri," *Tarih ve Toplum*, no.102 (1992), pp. 30-36; no. 103 (1992), pp. 30-35; no. 104, (1992), pp. 26-33.

⁴³⁴ For the opera performance Atatürk organized for the reception ceremony of the Iranian shah, see: Metin And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e Türk Tiyatro Tarihi*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), p. 157.

⁴³⁵ Metin And, *Türk Tiyatrosu'nun Evreleri*, (Ankara: Turhan Kitapevi,1983), p. 406.

ideologies.⁴³⁶ Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan*, used in the debates between rightists and leftists, caused a violent polarization, and was banned by the government in 1964. This decision inflamed the rising opposition against the government and gave birth to further upheavals. In another case, in the midst of a peaked political milieu, the government tried to stop the performance of the play *Pir Sultan Abdal* in 1969 in Tunceli. When the audience protested the government, the police directly attacked the audience, leaving two people dead, eleven injured and eighty arrested during the demonstrations.⁴³⁷ Manifestations where the rightists, the leftists and the police forces fought frequently used theatre as a politically symbolic space in the late 1960s.⁴³⁸ It is possible to trace this trend of political theater in the 1970s with Haldun Taner's *Devekuşu Kabare*, Genco Erkal's *Dostlar Tiyatrosu* and Asaf Çiyiltepe's *Ankara Sanat Tiyatrosu* to be followed in the 1980s by Ferhan Şensoy's *Ortaoyuncular*. All in all, theatre became a part of the Ottoman/ Turkish social, cultural and political life from the late nineteenth century onwards, a subject-matter Ottoman and Turkish historical research has to study more seriously.

This thesis intended to review theater as a political space in the late Ottoman politics, arguing that from its very start, it acquired a political significance and became a 'political institution' through its incorporation in the imperial celebrations. This new modern artistic genre became, in a very short time, one of the most powerful means to disseminate the ideologies of the Ottoman intelligentsia,

⁴³⁶ And, *Türk Tiyatrosunun Evreleri*, pp. 378-381.

⁴³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 462.

⁴³⁸ One should also mention here another social aspect of theatre of the 1960s, where unionist demonstrations and worker's strikes emerged as important social expressive forms. TOTSİS (Türkiye Opera, Tiyatro ve Yardımcı İşler Sendikası) and Tİ-SEN (Türkiye Tiyatrocular Sendikası), the two important theater unions of the 1960s were among the pioneering groups who organized three major strikes. *ibid.*, p. 406.

negotiating between imperial oppression and an oppositional public opinion. The development of theater into a public space reached its peak with the revolution of 1908 which created pageants through the banned plays of the old regime. The mass performances indeed created a new market for the politicization of the repertoire and putting the old regime on trial on the stage. The post revolutionary theater staged the contemporary, and established a certain tradition of 'political theater', which then continued to be revived with other political events that Turkey experienced.

Although theater lost its political significance in our daily lives and in our collective memories since the 1980s, it has been a part of the Turkish politics since 1900s. Representing the political 'rites of passages'⁴³⁹ in its own satirical fashion popular theater did not only shape public opinion but also the historiographical discourses of its own era. A careful survey of theater can therefore offer a different perspective for the study of Ottoman modernization.

To conclude, I should perhaps acknowledge that this study could only analyze part of a large corpus of texts produced during the post-revolutionary era. The richness of these texts undoubtedly deserves a much more thorough textual analysis. A careful thematic review of these texts may provide us with clues on the rhetoric of popular culture during the Young Turk era. The Unionist terminology built upon the love of fatherland, the love of nation, freedom, justice, Ottomanism and constitutionalism through these scripts can offer alternative approaches to study the popular culture of the Young Turk era. I should add that a discussion of the theater's role in the political context of this era may be situated within a larger framework of other artistic genres. A survey on the development of the cinema, painting and music under the patronage of the CUP would certainly reveal the Unionist political agenda

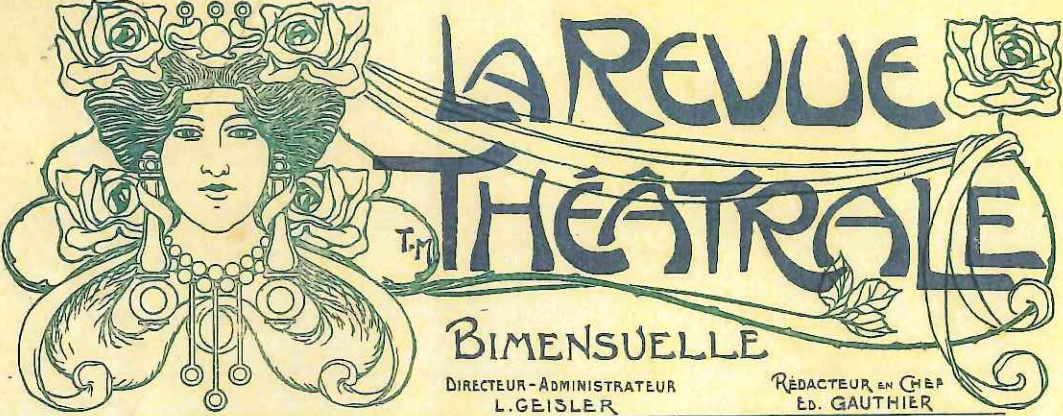
⁴³⁹ Referring to Victor Turner, see: Victor Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," pp.79-88.

which encouraged the formation of an Unionist repertoire in different realms of popular art.

APPENDIX A

Adolphe Thalasso, "Le Théâtre Turc," *La Revue Théâtrale*, no. 16 (1904), pp. 361-384.

3^e ANNÉE. — NOUVELLE SÉRIE. — N^o 16. Août 1904. — 11.



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LE THÉÂTRE TURC

* *A Monsieur A. Barbier de Meynard,*
de l'Institut,
Directeur de l'École des Langues Orientales.

Les derniers événements suscités en Orient viennent de remettre la Nation Turque à l'ordre du jour. Tout ce qui touche à ce peuple ne saurait être indifférent. Le moment paraît donc opportun de le montrer sous ses phases inconnues. J'ai essayé dans une étude purement littéraire, aussi complète que possible, et présentée, en son ensemble, pour la première fois, d'examiner son théâtre dont l'histoire et le répertoire, encore ignorés, intéresseront, je l'espère, ceux qui s'occupent des choses d'art. Je me suis d'autant plus attaché à cette étude qu'aucune scène n'a mieux réfléchi un état social et subi l'influence d'une organisation et d'un régime tout particuliers. Le lecteur voudra bien excuser les lacunes, les erreurs mêmes qui auraient pu se glisser dans un travail où je n'avais pour me diriger que quelques points de repère que les notes recueillies, au jour le jour, pendant de nombreuses années. Je tiens à remercier, ici, le jeune artiste français LUCIEN ZACCHIO, de Paris, pour les aquarelles de Karagueuz peintes spécialement en vue de cette étude — la Maison Phébus, de Constantinople, qui, également pour cette même étude, a pris les différents clichés des musiciens turcs et de la troupe Minakian; M. PIERRE ANHÉMIAN, pour son croquis si original de Karagueuz et Hadjiyyat; enfin M. M. TCHOUDJIAN fils et S. HOUSSEPIAN, beau-frère du compositeur turc, pour les dessins d'Arif et de Zehir.

A. T.

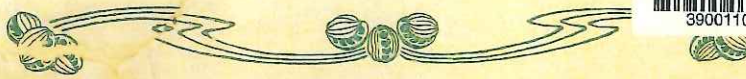
Avant-Propos

De toutes les littératures iraniennes et sémitiques — syro-arabes, d'après Renan — et de leurs dérivées, la littérature ottomane est la seule dont le théâtre, en plein développement, compte, déjà, à son actif, des œuvres originales de puissante conception. Le théâtre arabe et le théâtre persan sont, le premier en formation et de date trop récente, le second trop exclusif, trop religieux, trop « mystère », pour qu'une comparaison avec le théâtre turc soit possible. Les trois époques du théâtre turc sont :


1. L'époque de Karagueuz (de... à 1760);

2. L'époque de Piri Hanunou (de 1760 à 1869);

3. L'époque contemporaine (de 1869 à nos jours).

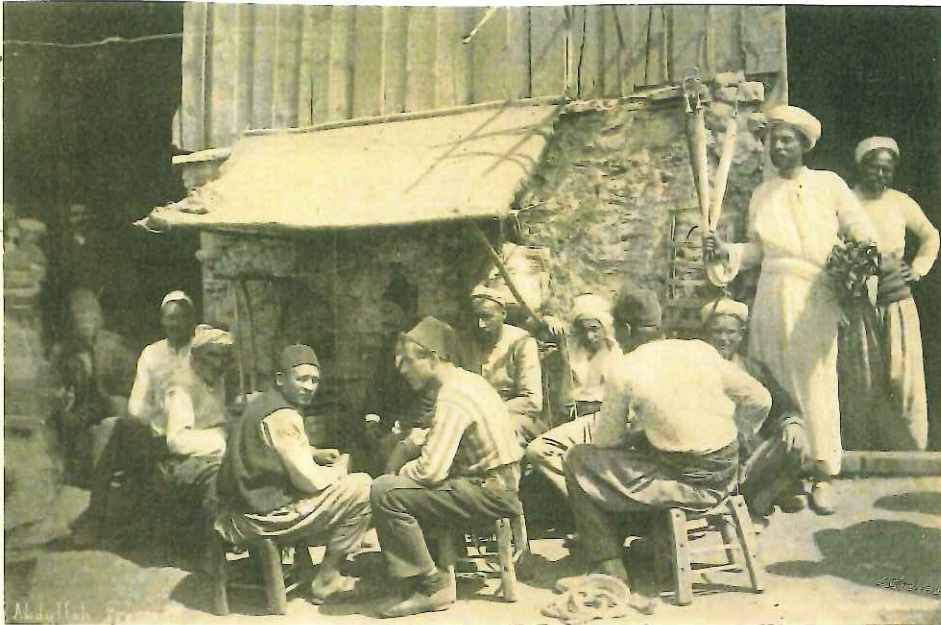


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SPECTATEURS ATTENDANT UNE REPRÉSENTATION DE KARAGUEUZ

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PREMIÈRE PÉRIODE

Karagueuz. - Esthétique (de... à 1790).

BOZAZI ONYERLERI
13-01-1997
KODUPE

Au théâtre populaire de Guignol, en France, correspond en Turquie le théâtre populaire de Karagueuz. *Karagueuz*, littérairement, signifie « yeux noirs ». Deux différences distinguent ces deux scènes : les personnages de Guignol sont en bois et se meuvent dans un cadre avec décors et rideaux, comme de véritables acteurs ; les personnages de Karagueuz sont en baudruche colorée et projettent leur ombre sur un écran en toile tendue, éclairé par derrière, à la façon des ombres chinoises ; mais, tandis que ces derniers sont immobiles et uniformément noirs, chez les personnages de Karagueuz on distingue très nettement sur la toile les couleurs des figures et des costumes, les mouvements et jusqu'au moindre des gestes.

Les personnages teints sont obtenus par la puissante lumière disposée derrière eux. Cette lumière envoie, par transparence, les couleurs sur la toile et son interposition entre les pantins et les opérateurs rend ces derniers invisibles. Cette même interposition explique pourquoi les personnages de Karagueuz se meuvent sur une scène sans décors ; ces décors empêcheraient de les faire manœuvrer. Des trois unités, Karagueuz n'a gardé que l'unité de lieu ; encore y était-il forcé. Ce sont les personnages qui, au cours de la pièce, renseignent le public sur le lieu où ils agissent et l'avisent des changements de décors. Comme au temps de Shakespeare, quoi !

On manœuvre les pantins au moyen d'une longue baguette fixée à leur dos ; le supplice du pal. A cette baguette se relie les fils qui font mouvoir leurs bras, leurs jambes, leur tête et leur buste.

L'origine du théâtre de Karagueuz se perd dans la nuit des temps, ce qui explique, jusqu'à un certain point son immortel succès. Le terrible Mahomet II ne rêvait pas encore la conquête de Constantinople que les tribus nomades turques présentaient un grand plaisir aux prouesses érotiques de ce mauvais sujet. Qui peut affirmer que l'obscène Karagueuz ne soit pas sorti tout entier du cerveau génial d'un Rabelais asiatique à la suite d'une libérale romaine, d'une bacchanale de la Grèce ou d'une fête d'Osiris.

Quelques auteurs croient voir en lui la caricature d'un vizir de Saladin : il serait, dans ce cas, d'origine musulmane. Mais rien ne prouve ce dire, basé moins sur des faits que sur l'imagination. Quoi qu'il en soit, des siècles ont passé depuis, sans amener aucune modification au tempérament fougueux de Karagueuz : l'amour physique le possède aujourd'hui comme au jour de sa naissance : il est resté, cet amour, aussi terre à terre que l'instinct animal qui le fit naître, aussi féroce que la nature qui le pousse brutalement, et sans aucune aspiration d'ordre supérieur, les deux sexes à se rapprocher. Le mépris du mâle pour la femme, dépourvue d'âme, affirme-t-il, ne renfermerait-il pas le mot de l'énigme ?

La troupe du théâtre de Karagueuz se compose d'une foule de personnages dont le nombre plus ou moins grand dépend des moyens de l'entrepreneur pour qui chaque couple de marionnettes exige le concours d'un compère. Quatre personnages sont cependant d'absolute nécessité pour que le spectacle puisse, régulièrement, avoir lieu : *Karagueuz*, *Hadjiyat*, le père noble et le *Zerbeck*.

A tout seigneur tout honneur. *Karagueuz* est un congénère de Polichinelle ; sot, fourbe et hypocrite comme lui, il est le type national pris dans la vie vulgaire. Le Pulcinella de Naples, le Meapatacco romain, l'Arlequin de Bologne, le Punch français, le Guignol lyonnais, le Punch anglais, le Vylenspiegel du Nord, le Ketchel Pehlivan de Perse, le Karagueuz turc ressemblent sous tous rapports, avec cette seule différence que leur passion dominante est celle de la nation de leur origine. Le type. Ces héros, pris dans le peuple, et sans qu'aucune éducation soit venue corriger leurs instincts bas, ont pour exception : tous placent leurs intérêts propres au-dessus de ceux des personnes qu'ils servent. Le Karagueuz n'est pas et la bonne chère, ces messieurs ne visent qu'à un but : l'assouvissement de leurs passions. Polichinelle paraît encore le plus civilisé. Tous les moyens semblent bons à ces protagonistes pour arriver à leurs fins. On les prendrait pour des lecteurs assidus de Machiavel. Ils savent, à

TATP

d'autrui, convoiter la femme du prochain et donner des coups de bâton ; ils mettent leur gloire à mentir et ne se font pas le moins du monde scrupule de singer la dévotion. Mais, au fond, ils ne sont guère méchants : ils sont tous bons enfants et poltrons, ce qui, jusqu'à un certain point, explique leur naïveté et leur hypocrisie. Il n'y a que Punch, le héros des marionnettes anglaises, qui fasse exception à la règle. Froid et cruel, ce monsieur n'éprouve aucun remords à assassiner tout le monde en commençant par sa femme et en finissant par le diable, avec un sang-froid bien digne d'ailleurs du peuple dont il représente le type populaire.

Bien plus que ses confrères, Karagueuz est sensuel et obscène. La luxure est sa passion dominante. Avec son air de tout respecter, il ne respecte rien : tout est souillé par ses désirs lubriques et ses fantaisies de satyre ; il ne croit pas plus à l'honnêteté qu'à la vertu dont il prend le masque pour mieux satisfaire ses appétits. Il est, d'ailleurs, si blasé et tellement pervers, qu'il en arrive à mal faire pour le seul plaisir de mal faire : c'est un raffinement de coquinerie qu'il se paie. Sans esprit ou plutôt plein d'un esprit grossier et de bas étage, il soulève les rires de son auditoire par des saillies d'un naturalisme dépravé et des calembours enfermant toujours une obscénité. Une de ses grandes joies consiste à parodier tel passage, tel mot d'un poète célèbre. Et vous ne sauriez imaginer ce qu'il entre de sottise dans ces parodies littéraires où les vers ailés et les grandes pensées se transforment en plaisanteries ordurières et cyniques.

Il ne faut cependant pas trop lui en vouloir à ce brave Karagueuz ; en fait d'esprit, il offre à son public la monnaie qui a cours dans le pays. Et ces braves gens se pâment d'aise, hurlent d'enthousiasme, toutes les fois qu'il échappe à Karagueuz une de ces gaudrioles qui feraient rougir jusqu'aux oreilles l'écrivain le plus franchement gaulois. Et puis, Karagueuz ne se contente pas seulement de parler ; il accompagne ses paroles des gestes les plus extravagants. Où l'esprit va-t-il se nicher, parfois !

Karagueuz a deux attributs distincts : d'abord une calvitie complète et puis... quel que soit mon désir de taire la chose, je me vois obligé de la mentionner pour la sincérité de mon étude, et puis... ce que, au dire de Benjamin Constant, il pénétra. Quant à sa calvitie, il la cache soigneusement sous un énorme *calpak*, espèce de du chapeau. Inutile de dire que, dans le cours d'une représentation, ce *calpak*, à son grand enlevé et qu'une grêle de coups de bâton pleut sur sa tête, nue comme un mur de chauve comme Polichinelle est bossu. Sa figure est d'un grotesque repoussant et tout, la charge et la caricature.



Marionnette de la troupe de Karagueuz. JEUNE ANGOUREUX.

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pagon, le frère d'armes de Karagueuz, l'Oreste de ce Pylade, est un rusé compère, tout, il a tout vu, tout lu, tout étudié, tout commenté. Il a voyagé partout. encore que son ami, il s'entend à parodier les poètes. Son rôle, sur la scène de Karagueuz, est de nos Revues. Aucune science n'a de secrets pour lui. Mais où excelle cet dans la connaissance du cœur humain. C'est le Stendhal de la boutique, un Stendhal jours en mouvement, il agit toujours sous cape. C'est à lui que Karagueuz s'adresse ses affaires a pris mauvaise tournure. Lui seul sait se sauver à temps lorsqu'il pleut des par Karagueuz qui — on ne sait trop pourquoi — a tout pouvoir sur lui et auquel il Son accoutrement lui donne un faux air de Louis XI en caricature.

appelé, au gré de l'impresario, Ali, Moustapha ou Mehmet, représente la ganache, le dindon traditionnel de la farce. C'est un composé de Pantalon et de Cassandre : c'est le vieillard grotesque, amoureux et dupé. Il paie toujours les pots cassés et, toujours aussi, il est... battu et content.

Le *Zeïbeh*, *Behri-Moustapha* ou *Bachi-Bouzouk*, littéralement *tête filée*, est le Croquemitaine, le capitaine Fracasse, le diable, le *deus ex machina* de la représentation. Il opère les enlèvements, exécute les vols, coupe les têtes. Il jure comme quarante sapeurs et n'ouvre la bouche que pour lancer des blasphèmes et vociférer des menaces de mort. Brusque et plein de franchise, il ne peut supporter la sensualité de Karagueuz et la fourberie de Hadjiyyat. Il paraît toujours à la fin de la pièce pour punir les méchants : mais il est toujours leur dupe, sinon leur victime. Bien triste moralité, d'autant plus triste qu'elle est vraie.

Ces spectacles sont donnés dans toute la Turquie, mais, principalement, à Constantinople, à l'époque du Ramadan. Pendant l'été, on les donne à Haïdar-Pacha, aux Iles-des-Princes et dans le Bosphore. Ils ont ordinairement lieu dans des jardins publics dont on a, au préalable, recouvert les grilles d'enceinte de grands paravents de bois pour empêcher les curieux de jurer gratis de la représentation. Lorsque l'entrepreneur possède quelques ressources, il achète, dans un endroit fréquenté, un lopin de terre autour duquel il fait élever quatre murs. Des bancs en forme d'estrade y sont appliqués et constituent les loges et les galeries. Une immense tente attachée aux quatre murs, et dont le mât s'élève au milieu du théâtre, garantit les spectateurs contre les intempéries de la saison. Aucun plancher ne découvre le sol humide et l'on s'installe où l'on veut, sur des bancs de l'amphithéâtre ou sur les escabeaux — d'une propreté toujours douteuse — disséminés dans la salle.

Des gens de toutes les classes fréquentent ces théâtres. L'élément populaire y domine. Plus de la moitié des spectateurs se compose d'enfants des deux sexes pour qui le spectacle de Karagueuz est le seul, l'unique, le vrai, le grand spectacle.

Cela demande, en pensant à l'austérité musulmane, que les parents envoient leurs garçons et leurs fillettes à ces représentations cyniques et immorales, dont ils ne rapportent que quelques calembours ignobles et qui, à la longue, ne peuvent que dépraver les mœurs.

L'auditoire se compose d'imams, de soldats ambulants qui, moyennant 20 paras, viennent y passer une soirée agréable. Les *filsh*, les autres jouent au tric-trac. Ces derniers ne sont pas autrement le *kief*, ce *dolce far niente* que l'on aime tant.

L'époque contemporaine (de l'époque contemporaine) c'est : pas de dames turques ne les, au contraire, bizarrerie inexplic



SPECTACLE DE KARAGUEUZ. Scène entre Karagueuz et Hadjiyyat, croquis inédit de M. Pierre Anméglian.

101777



Extrait du *Mézar*
de la Courtoise,
 de Champéaux.
 Fayard, éditeur.



Troupe de Karagueuz.
 Le SULTAN.

toutes les formalités de la fumigation.

cable, ces mêmes Turcs, qui ne laissent jamais leurs femmes paraître en public dans une salle de spectacle, font très souvent à Karagueuz les honneurs de leur harem. Cachés derrière des *cafass*, — sorte de grillages en bois, — femmes légitimes et odalisques assistent à ces représentations, applaudissant les prouesses du Don Juan grotesque qui en est le héros, et ces spectacles ne font qu'attiser « le feu qu'un soleil ardent et une vie oisive ont allumé dans leur corps et qu'entretient la jalousie tyrannique et insensée dont elles sont l'objet. »

Le sujet des représentations roule presque toujours sur une intrigue amoureuse, toujours obscène. Ces pièces où, comme l'a si bien dit Gautier, « les scènes lascives d'Aristophane se combinent avec les songes drôlatiques de Rabelais », sont composées d'une suite de tableaux indépendants les uns des autres et se rattachant peu ou prou à l'action principale; ce sont, comme qui dirait « des pièces à tiroirs ».

Les entrepreneurs font mouvoir les marionnettes, prêtant à chacune d'elles le langage qui lui est propre. Et pendant toute la durée du spectacle ce ne sont que cris sauvages et voix qui n'ont rien d'humain. D'ordinaire, la représentation dure deux heures et se poursuit sans entr'actes. Il est vrai de dire que souvent la scène reste vide. Les personnages rentrent dans la coulisse pour laisser jouer la musique. On entend, alors, les voix discordantes et monotones d'une troupe de musiciens ambulants, pour la plupart Juifs et Arméniens. Ils chantent à tue-tête des *manis* (complaintes) en s'accompagnant de tambourins, appelés *dairés*, et d'une espèce de guitare, le *hiouri*. Ces musiciens sont engagés à la soirée. Qui ne les a pas entendus ne peut se faire la moindre idée de l'originalité et de la cacophonie de la musique de Karagueuz.

Aucune pièce de ce théâtre n'a été imprimée. Comment, d'ailleurs, en donner une traduction ! Karagueuz serait forcément arrêté à la frontière et, accusé d'outrage à la pudeur, ne pourrait continuer sa marche vers Paris qu'après avoir passé, — selon la très spirituelle expression de Parisisi, — par

PREMIÈRE PÉRIODE

Karagueuz et le théâtre de Molière

« Éminemment national », le théâtre de Karagueuz — qui, par sa verve et son humour se rapproche plus que n'importe quelle autre scène de l'Europe de notre vieille gaularie, — a toujours eu ses coudées franches et n'a subi aucune influence étrangère, jusqu'aux environs de 1840, date à laquelle un impresario introduisit dans le répertoire des traductions libres, *ad usum Turcorum*, de quelques scènes de Molière.

Voici les faits :

Je ne fus pas peu surpris, en me rendant un jour à la Sublime-Porte — en 1884 — d'entendre dans la rue deux gamins jouant aux billes, réciter en turc la scène III du premier acte de *L'Avare*; celle où Harpagon, avant de renvoyer La Flèche, veut s'assurer si le « vrai gibier de potence » ne lui a rien volé.

Saisi d'étonnement, je prêtai l'oreille à la conversation de mes deux bonshommes. C'était bien Molière qu'ils récitaient presque textuellement. Si, malgré ce que j'en entendais, la chose m'eût laissé encore quelque doute, ce doute fut vite dissipé quand je vis un des gamins présenter ses mains à son camarade qui lui disait : « Montre-moi tes mains ».

Je leur demandai alors où ils avaient appris ce qu'ils venaient de débiter. Ils répondirent qu'ils avaient retenu cela du spectacle de Karagueuz, à Sultan-Ahmed, où ils se rendaient tous les soirs. J'avais peine à en croire mes oreilles. Je n'hésitai pas à aller le soir même à Sultan-Ahmed où j'eus la chance, après une heure d'attente, d'entendre la scène dont je donne plus loin la traduction. J'y retournai une dizaine de fois, j'entendis des phrases entières, des fragments de scènes de diverses comédies de Molière.

Je tombais d'étonnement en étonnement. Finalement, je me décidai à voir l'entrepreneur de ce théâtre de Karagueuz; je voulais avoir le fin mot de l'énigme. Je lui demandai où il avait appris les scènes qu'il débitait avec tant d'aisance.

— Je les tiens de mon père qui, pendant vingt ans, a été directeur du Karagueuz.

— Votre père connaissait-il le français ?

— Vous vous moquez de moi, *Effendim* (mon seigneur). Un homme connaissant le français s'amuserait-il à gagner sa vie au métier de directeur de Karagueuz ?

— Mais qui donc a appris toutes ces scènes à votre père ?

— Mon grand-père, qui a été le plus grand directeur de marionnettes que Constantinople ait jamais possédée; il s'était tellement identifié avec le rôle de Karagueuz qu'on ne le connaissait plus que sous le sobriquet de *Hassan Karagueuz*.

— Parlait-il, lisait-il le français ?

— Non, *Effendim* ! Et ce n'est pas lui, croyez-moi, qui serait venu causer avec un *french* (chrétien), comme je fais, moi. Il les avait en horreur, eux et leur langue.

— Et vous ne les détestez pas, vous ?

— Autres temps, autres mœurs. Je les aime, au contraire.

Il n'y avait décidément pas moyen d'avoir la clef du mystère.

Je le priai, alors, de me réciter deux scènes, qui m'avaient frappé parce qu'elles étaient presque mot pour mot identiques à l'original. L'une est celle dont j'ai déjà parlé, l'autre la scène V de l'acte premier de *Tartuffe*.

Je les écrivis sous sa dictée, ignorant qu'elles me serviraient un jour à l'étranger, et que je vous présente.

L'année suivante, je retournai voir Karagueuz. J'allai, cette fois, à Sultan-Basma, où j'eus la chance que j'y ai entendu presque toute la comédie des *Fourberies de Scapin*, éduquée par le directeur de scènes spirituelles, considérablement augmentée de calembours et de mots obscènes, et pour la circonstance et adaptée à l'esprit de l'auditoire turc.

Le directeur de ce théâtre, à qui je m'adressai, me dit qu'il avait été autrefois *khirak* (apprenti) de *Hassan Karagueuz*.

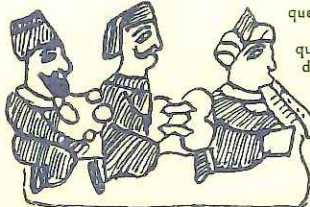
A Prinkipo, des *Hes-des-Princes*, où tous les soirs, pen-

Extrait de
Marionnettes et Gipsy
 de St. Mendès
 Joven, éd.



Théâtre de Karagueuz.
 BARRAGE DE BAH T.

Extrait du *Mézar* secret de la Courtoise.



MUSICIENS DE LA TROUPE DE KARAGUEUZ.



Théâtre de Karagueuz.
Journé de TAMBOURIN.

débarcadère, il y a un spectacle de Karagueuz, j'entendis presque textuellement, avec force inversions, il est vrai, la scène II de l'acte II des *Fourberies de Scapin*, celle où Scapin parle de l'enlèvement de son maître par le Turc de la galère et où Gêronte, hésitant à remettre immédiatement la somme réclamée pour la rançon de son fils, répète sur tous les tons : « Mais que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère ? » Dans *Karagueuz* cependant, la galère est remplacée par la montagne, et un *zeibek* prend la place du Turc.

Une chose qui ne m'a pas peu surpris, c'est que la plupart de ces traductions sont celles de scènes ou la même phrase répétée, comme « *Le pauvre homme* » et « *Qu'allait-il faire dans cette galère ?* » donne au dialogue une tournure du plus haut comique.

J'interrogeai également le directeur de *Karagueuz* des *Iles-des-Princes*, sur la provenance de cette scène : il la tenait de l'impresario de Sultan-Bayazid, avec qui il était autrefois associé.

J'écrivis cette scène sous sa dictée et l'envoyai, dans mes cartons, rejoindre les deux autres. Lorsque, dans le courant de l'été 1886, M. Paul Déroulède vint à Constantinople, je ne manquai pas de lui donner sur *Karagueuz* les renseignements qu'il me demanda. Je l'accompagnai même à Sultan-Bayazid, où nous assistâmes pendant quelques minutes à la représentation de *Karagueuz*. Il fut si frappé de cette traduction en turc, des scènes principales du théâtre de Molière, jouées dans les spectacles populaires, que son étonnement d'une part et ses instances de l'autre me poussèrent à prendre ces notes que je livre aujourd'hui au public.

Outre les deux scènes que je mets sous les yeux du lecteur, combien de phrases, au cours de ces représentations, empruntées au répertoire du grand Comique et que répètent à l'envi les gavroches et les marchands ambulants de Stamboul !

Il ressort de ceci que quelqu'un, bien avant Aaly-Bey et Ahmed-Véfik Pacha, a traduit en tout ou en partie les comédies de Molière et que cette traduction a été remise à Hassan-Karagueuz, qui ne doit certainement sa gloire qu'à la connaissance qu'il avait de ce théâtre. Le public, c'est certain, prenait pour sienne, l'œuvre d'un autre, et, comme les caractères de cette œuvre sont essentiellement vrais, les Turcs ne purent que créer une célébrité à l'histriion qui, à l'aide d'un grossier plagiat, leur présentait des passions et des caractères si profondément humains.

La traduction en turc de Molière, sous la direction d'Ahmed-Véfik Pacha, n'a été faite que lorsque ce dernier était grand-vizir. Or, Ahmed-Véfik Effendi n'a reçu le titre de Pacha qu'en 1863, à son retour de France où il avait été envoyé pour représenter la Turquie à la conférence de Paris, relative aux affaires de Syrie. Quatre ans plus tard (1867), il était nommé grand-vizir. C'est de cette époque, — il n'y a que trente-sept ans, — que date la traduction littéraire des œuvres de Molière.

La traduction d'Aaly-Bey, faite deux années auparavant, nous reporte aux environs de 1865.

Or, il y a cinquante-cinq ans que Hassan-Karadix ans, ce qui nous reporte vers 1840. Pour qu'elles se soient conservées si fidèlement dans la mémoire de ses successeurs, il faut admettre aussi que ces scènes étaient souvent jouées, et ce, avant la publication des basses classes turques va entendre Molière et Karagueuz pour savoir ce que son fils est allé que les gamins de Stamboul vont, devant la peu *enturqué*, il est vrai, — mais qu'ils doivent diligence qu'ils mettent à l'apprendre de C'est donc sûrement de l'époque de Hassan-scènes de Molière, c'est-à-dire de 1840 environ. Pacha, en tous cas, qui, à cette date s'exprimait à langue française. Une preuve convaincante et gueuz où j'ai entendu des fragments de scènes et jours Hassan-Karagueuz comme la source directe

Voici maintenant la traduction fidèle, plus j'ai parlé. Le lecteur pourra comparer le texte que j'ai cru utile de retrancher certains mots obscènes qui n'ajoutent rien au sens, et qui ne sont que des apostrophes nationales qu'un personnage lance à l'autre pour relever son discours. Après ce que j'ai dit sur l'esprit et le langage de Karagueuz, on me saura gré, je pense, de cette réserve.



Théâtre de Karagueuz.
Acteur HABILÉ ET DANSEUR.

L'AVARE. — Acte premier, Scène III. — *Harpagon, La Flèche.*

MEHMET-AGHA, KARAGUEUZ.

MEHMET. — Allons, fais silence et sauve-toi immédiatement, fils d'entremetteur, digne d'être précipité, la corde au cou et une grosse pierre attachée à cette corde, au plus profond des eaux de Serai-Bournou (la Corne d'or).

KARAGUEUZ. — Par Dieu ! de par Dieu ! cet homme est bien méchant ! Qu'il ne me soit pas donné de contempler le visage du Très-Haut, si cet homme réellement n'a pas le diable dans l'âme.

MEHMET. — Que dis-tu là en me tournant le dos ?

KARAGUEUZ. — Je me demande par quelle loi de justice vous me renvoyez. Je me demande à part moi (dans mon dessein) raison de ce renvoi.

MEHMET. — Voyez-moi ce... qui veut savoir pourquoi je le chasse.

KARAGUEUZ. — Oui, pourquoi ?

MEHMET. — Tais-toi, si tu ne veux pas que je te retire les intestins.

KARAGUEUZ. — Eh bien ! salut, alors, et que Dieu vous le rende.

MEHMET. — Attends !

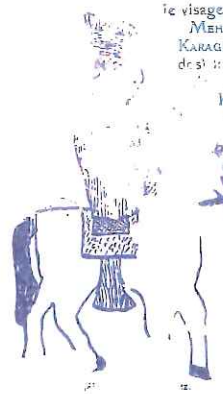
KARAGUEUZ. — Alors, comme d'ordinaire, vous vous repentez de la décision prise ?

MEHMET. — Non.

KARAGUEUZ. — Alors, comme d'ordinaire, vous vous repentez de la décision prise ?

MEHMET. — Non, j'ai dit d'attendre pour m'assurer si, comme à l'ordinaire, tu n'as rien emporté.

KARAGUEUZ. — Pour l'or de Dieu, qu'emporterais-je ? N'avez-vous pas tout sous clef, depuis le pain jusqu'au conseil, depuis le café jusqu'au sucre, depuis l'or jusqu'à l'argent ?



Extrait de *Marioulette*
de Guy de Maupassant, éditeur.



Théâtre de Karagueuz.
A. BAZANUS.

MEHMET. — Ne deviens pas insolent, si tu n'as pas envie que je te torde le cou. Allons ! viens ici, montre-moi tes mains.

KARAGUEUZ. — Mes mains, les voici.

MEHMET. — A présent, fais-moi voir les autres.

KARAGUEUZ. — Les autres, quelles autres ?

MEHMET. — Les autres mains.

KARAGUEUZ. — Les autres ? Les voilà. Êtes-vous satisfait ?

MEHMET. — Oui. Attends maintenant que je voie si tu n'as rien caché dans ton calpalk.

KARAGUEUZ. — M... soit de la tombe de ceux qui ont engendré les avares...

MEHMET. — De qui parles-tu ?

KARAGUEUZ. — N'allez pas prendre cela pour vous. Je n'ai nommé personne.

MEHMET. — Tais-toi, pour ne pas voir ton nez prendre la place de ta bouche et ta bouche la place de ton nez.

KARAGUEUZ (*courant*). — Oui ! c... ce discours s'adresse à toi.

MEHMET. — Ah ! l'entremetteur ! le ruffian ! Eh ! Eh ! attends que je m'assure si tu n'as rien caché dans tes culottes ?

KARAGUEUZ (*dans la coulisse*). — Dans mes culottes ? Il y a bien des choses cachées ; mais qu'il ne me soit pas donné de jouir de la présence de Dieu si tout ce qui s'y trouve ne m'appartient pas.

(Musique à l'orchestre.)

TARTUFE. — Acte premier, Scène V. — *Oreste, Cléante, Dorine.*

MEHMET-AGHA, KARAGUEUZ, LE ZEIBECK.

MEHMET. — Bonjour, mes amis ! on s'ennoblit en vous voyant. Viens ici, Karagueuz, et dis-moi tout ce qui s'est passé chez moi cette semaine, tandis que j'étais à respirer l'air pur du Bosphore.

KARAGUEUZ. — Hier soir la haneum (madame) s'est trouvée très mal. Toute la nuit elle n'a fait qu'avoir des nausées et s'évanouir, s'évanouir et avoir des nausées.

MEHMET. — Et Hadjiyyat, comment va-t-il ?

KARAGUEUZ. — Hadjiyyat ? Oh ! il se porte comme un charme.

MEHMET. — Le pauvre ! le pauvre !

KARAGUEUZ. — Nous n'avons pu comprendre comment, comme cela, d'un coup, la haneum s'est trouvée mal : le médecin a certifié que le ragoût de courges lui a dérangé l'estomac.

MEHMET. — Vous aviez hier soir du ragoût de courges ?

KARAGUEUZ. — Oui.

MEHMET. — Et Hadjiyyat en a-t-il mangé, lui ?

KARAGUEUZ. — Certes. Trois fois il a rempli son assiette.

MEHMET. — Trois fois ! Le pauvre ! le pauvre !

KARAGUEUZ. — La haneum avait une si forte fièvre qu'elle n'a pu fermer l'œil de toute la nuit, elle a beaucoup souffert. Toute la maison (*baremlik*) était sens dessus dessous et toutes vos femmes ont passé la nuit à veiller à ses côtés. Ce n'est qu'à l'aube qu'elle s'est assoupie.

MEHMET. — Et Hadjiyyat ?

KARAGUEUZ. — Hadjiyyat ? Il est allé se coucher avec les poules, hier soir, et à l'heure qu'il est, il ronfle encore.

MEHMET. — Il ronfle encore ? Le pauvre ! le pauvre !

LE ZEIBECK. — Il dort encore ! Eh bien ! je vais le réveiller.

MEHMET. — Gardez-vous en bien. Ne savez-vous pas que le serpent ne pique jamais un homme qui boit de l'eau, qu'il attend qu'on ait bu pour mordre ? Qu'est-ce que cela signifie ? Que Dieu ne veuille pas qu'on dérange un homme qui boit, qui mange, qui dort et qui f... Pourquoi donc aller réveiller Hadjiyyat ? Laisse-le dormir ! Le pauvre ! le pauvre !

KARAGUEUZ. — Eh bien, où allez-vous, Effendim ?

MEHMET. — Je vais voir la haneum.

KARAGUEUZ. — Non, cela n'est pas possible. Le médecin l'a défendu, et d'ailleurs elle dort maintenant.

MEHMET. — Elle dort ? Alors, viens avec moi au Bazar.

(Musique à l'orchestre.)

Il est bon de dire, pour la compréhension de cette scène, que la haneum se porte à merveille : moins honnête qu'elle s'est laissée prendre aux déclarations mielleuses de Hadjiyyat qui ne se fait aucun scrupule de partager les faveurs d'une jeune femme avec son compère Karagueuz. A l'arrivée inattendue de Mehmet-Agha, la haneum est dans les bras du Tartufe turc, et tout ce que Karagueuz raconte sur la santé de la haneum est une ruse de son invention pour éloigner son maître et prévenir les amants de l'arrivée du mari.

Extrait de *Marioulette*
de Guy de Maupassant, éditeur.



Théâtre de Karagueuz.
B. V.

LES FOURBERIES DE SCAPIN. — Acte II, Scène IV. — *Scapin, Géronte.*

HADJIYYAT, MEHMET-AGHA.

HADJIYYAT. — Quel malheur, seigneur Dieu ! Que devenons-nous ! Qu'allons-nous devenir ? mon maître ! mon pauvre maître capturé par les zeibeks qui menacent de vous envoyer sa tête si vous ne payez pas les 200 livres (!) qu'ils demandent pour sa rançon !

MEHMET. — Deux cents livres ? Mais où diable veux-tu que je les trouve ?

HADJIYYAT. — Ainsi donc vous laisserez égorger votre fils comme une poule, vous ne faites rien pour mon maître ? Dieu seul sait, ô Hassan ! ô mon maître chéri ! que j'ai tout tenté pour le sauver et que c'est ton père, ton père seul qui est cause de ta mort.

MEHMET. — Mais où l'ont-ils capturé ?

(!) 200 livres turques équivalent, à 23 francs la livre, à une somme de 4.600 francs.

Extrait de *Musé turc*
de la Collection Fayard, édité.



Théâtre de Karagueuz.
Kavus (Gendarme).

HADJIYAT. — Sur la montagne.
MEHMET. — Qu'allait-il faire sur la montagne ?
HADJIYAT. — Nous allions à la chasse, lorsqu'au détour d'un chemin, trois zeibecks, armés jusqu'aux dents, nous ont arrêtés. Après nous avoir dépouillés d'abord de nos armes, ils ont garrotté Hassan et m'ont rendu à la liberté pour que je vienne vous dire que, si dans cinq heures la somme de 200 livres ne leur est pas remise, ils vous enverront la tête de votre enfant.
MEHMET. — Voyez-moi ces cocus !... Comment faire ?
HADJIYAT. — Mais remettre la somme, coûte que coûte, de gré ou de force !
MEHMET. — Mais qu'allait-il faire sur cette montagne ?
HADJIYAT. — Ne perdez pas des moments précieux.
MEHMET. — Écoute-moi, Hadjiyat. Ne m'es-tu pas un serviteur fidèle ?
HADJIYAT. — En doutez-vous ?
MEHMET. — Eh bien ! tu iras délivrer mon fils en prenant sa place, et tu attendras que je puisse emasser la somme de 200 livres pour ta rançon.
HADJIYAT. — Par Dieu ! vous plaisantez ! Que voulez-vous que les zeibecks fassent d'un otage qui n'a ni sou ni maille ?
MEHMET. — Avec ça que mon fils est plus riche que toi !
HADJIYAT. — Si votre fils n'a pas de fortune personnelle, son père est riche, au moins.
MEHMET. — Mais qu'est-il allé faire sur cette montagne ?
HADJIYAT. — Une demi-heure est passée en vaines paroles. Hâtez-vous, pour l'amour de Dieu !
MEHMET. — Eh bien ! alors, vas au grenier, prends les meubles qui s'y trouvent, appelle un *Bilpazarli* (1), vends-les et avec l'argent...
HADJIYAT. — Vous voulez rire !... Tous ces meubles ne valent pas cinquante piastres. (2)
MEHMET. — Cinquante piastres ?... Des meubles du temps du Sultan Ahmet !
HADJIYAT. — Assez ainsi, ne perdez pas de temps.
MEHMET. — Mais qu'est-il allé faire sur cette montagne ?
HADJIYAT. — Cette montagne, décidément, vous pèse sur l'estomac : il n'y a qu'un moyen pour vous en dégager, chercher le fond de votre bourse.
MEHMET. — Tu me crois donc riche ?
HADJIYAT. — Je ne vous crois rien du tout. Ce que je sais, c'est que vous ferez tout pour sauver votre fils.
MEHMET. — Ne pourrais-tu pas, Hadjiyat, m'avancer cette somme ?
HADJIYAT. — Moi, vous avancer cette somme, mais où la trouverais-je ?
MEHMET. — Allons, ne fais pas l'idiot. Je sais bien que tu as des économies. Allons, mon brave, avance-moi cet argent et Dieu te le rendra.
HADJIYAT. — Dieu ! mais non pas vous !
MEHMET. — Moi aussi. Tu vois, ça te fait 400 livres : 200 de Dieu et 200 de moi.
HADJIYAT. — Que de paroles inutiles, quand vous savez que je n'ai pas le sou.
MEHMET. — Alors, il faudra que j'aie me procurer cette somme.
HADJIYAT. — Oui, allez vite. Ces brigands, comme il est vrai qu'il n'existe qu'un Dieu, sont décidés à couper la tête à Hassan, si je ne leur apporte la somme demandée.
MEHMET. — Je lancerai la justice à leurs trousses.
HADJIYAT. — La belle affaire ! lancer la justice pour que ces misérables égorgent plus vite votre enfant.
MEHMET. — Tu as raison. Mais qu'allait-il faire sur cette montagne ? Écoute. J'ai oublié que j'ai cette somme à la maison. Viens avec moi. Fais vite, cours sauver mon enfant !

Extrait du *Musé turc*
de la Collection Fayard, édité.



Théâtre de Karagueuz.
Vendeur comédienne ornée
à l'entrée des musées
d'Ankara

Extrait de *Marionnettes*
de Gougenot



Musique à l'orchestre.

Je ne voudrais pas m'étendre davantage sur le théâtre de Karagueuz au sujet duquel, cependant, il y aurait encore beaucoup à dire.

Tous ceux que le prototype des marionnettes turques intéresse pourront lire avec profit les pages curieuses consacrées à ce mauvais sujet par les écrivains qui ont assisté à ses prouesses érotiques.

Gérard de Nerval, le premier de tous, a parlé de Karagueuz dans son *Voyage en Orient* ; le premier, aussi, il nous a donné des scénarii du Polichinelle turc. En des chapitres où la compétence va de pair avec l'exactitude, il a retracé un tableau de tous points original du théâtre des pantins osmanlis.

Quelques années plus tard, Théophile Gautier, dans son *Étude sur Constantinople*, reprenait le même thème avec des points de vue différents et le héros des fantoches turcs se profilait en relief extraordinaire derrière l'écran du guignol, sous la plume magique du grand Théo.

Paul Arène, dans *Vingt jours en Tunisie*, s'étend aussi sur Karagueuz : mais ne parlant que des représentations dont il a été le spectateur en Tunisie, où le pantin ottoman prend des licences qu'il ne se permet pas en Turquie, auteur nous offre un Karagueuz très amusant, mais qui diffère un brin de celui qui a droit de cité à Stamboul.

Tout amusantes aussi les pages consacrées au personnage initial du théâtre turc, par Champfleury, dans son *Musée turc*. Pour la première fois, le texte s'agrémentait de gravures d'une cocasserie aussi variée que docu-

ment quelques pages, judicieusement choisies, accompagnées d'illustrations originales, M. Maindron, dans ses *Marionnettes et Pantins*, nous régale du dessus du panier de tout ce qui a été écrit sur Karagueuz. Les extraits, choisis avec beaucoup de goût, font du chapitre qui lui est réservé une monographie aussi complète que possible.

Après l'annonce d'un feuilleton que mon maître et ami Jean Jullien a écrit en 1894, je crois, dans le *Paris*, sur le théâtre de Karagueuz, et une page de Louis Loüé, dans *Aziyade*, où il est question incidemment du spectacle des pantins turcs, j'aurai cité, — il me semble, — tous les écrivains qui se sont intéressés à Karagueuz et dont pas un, à cause, sans doute, de l'ignorance où il se trouvait de la langue turque, n'a relevé les rapports étroits que j'ai constatés entre cette scène et la comédie de Molière.

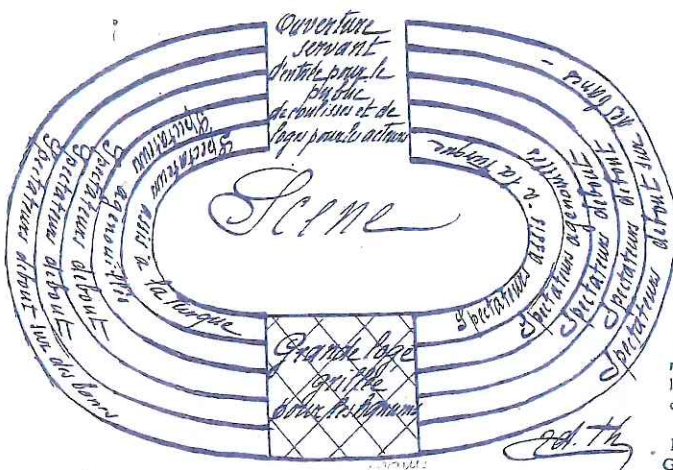
(1) *Bilpazarli* : marchand du Baza.

(2) Une piastre équivaut à 18 centimes.

DEUXIÈME PÉRIODE

Orta Oyounou

(de 1790 à 1869)



THÉÂTRE DE L'« ORTA OYOUNOU ».
(Disposition de la salle et de la scène.)

En vertu de circonstances dont l'explication nous mènerait trop loin — c'est l'histoire même de la Société ottomane et de ses transformations successives, sous la pression des idées occidentales, qu'il nous faudrait retracer — le théâtre de Karagueuz donna le jour, vers la fin du XVIII^e siècle, à l'Orta Oyounou (Jeu du milieu).

Si cette deuxième période procède directement de Karagueuz, Karagueuz ne lui a point cédé le pas. Gardant les prérogatives des protagonistes des spectacles populaires, il s'est scindé du genre auquel il a donné naissance; et tandis que ce dernier, grandissant, se déve-

loppant, préparait la troisième époque et se fondait en elle, Karagueuz, lui, comme un schisme théâtral, continuait ses fredaines sans se préoccuper autrement des enfants qui lui devaient la vie.

Ici, des acteurs se sont substitués aux marionnettes, une vraie scène au milieu de la salle — d'où sa dénomination d'Orta Oyounou — a remplacé le guignol; ce ne sont plus des atellanes sans suite, telles qu'en débitent les entrepreneurs de pantins, mais de vraies pièces avec exposition, intrigue et dénouement.

L'influence de la Commedia dell'Arte se fait sentir dans l'idée, celle de notre sortie dans la forme.

Comme les directeurs de Karagueuz se contentent, pour lui faire lâcher ses épigrammes polissonnes, du premier café venu, de même les acteurs de l'Orta Oyounou, pour représenter leurs farces rabelaisiennes, improvisent leur théâtre dans le premier enclos rencontré sur la route. Il suffit que le voisinage d'une mosquée ou d'un jardin public, d'une fête ou d'un panayir (foire), les allèche par l'espoir d'une recette fructueuse.

Tels nos forains emportant dans leurs vastes maisons roulantes le matériel complet de leur baraquement éphémère, les directeurs de l'Orta Oyounou voiturent, dans d'immenses arabas (tombereaux à quatre roues) leur échafaudage de construction, leur attirail scénique, leurs oripeaux et tous les acteurs de la troupe.

Ils s'en vont ainsi sous le soleil ardent, entraînés par des bœufs lourds et lents, qui font à chaque pas carillonner les grelots soyeux et multicolores attachés à leur cou; un artiste en costume aiguillonné et conduit, tandis qu'un bateleur, debout sur le derrière de la voiture, donne la parade et, par ses boniments, attire le public qui augmente à chaque tour de roue.

Dès que les curieux sont en nombre suffisant, l'araba s'arrête, et, pendant que le bateleur perçoit le prix des places, le théâtre est dressé. On enfonce dans la terre, en forme d'octogone ovoïde, huit grands pieux autour desquels on fait courir un fil de calicot vert, haute de deux mètres et demi, pour empêcher les indiscrets de voir le spectacle. Une ouverture pratiquée entre le premier et le deuxième poteau et deux autres poteaux plus petits, fixés parallèlement, servent de portes pour le public; une loge, en face, formée d'un rectangle en bois entouré de grillages (grillages) cachera les *baneums* (les femmes) aux regards des hommes; quelques nattes jetées à terre, et voilà.

Plusieurs années plus tard, des impresarios heureux construisirent de véritables baraques en bois qu'ils appelèrent pompeusement *triathènes*. Mais, comme les spectacles soient donnés à ciel ouvert ou dans de méchantes baraques, l'auditoire soit admis à s'asseoir à terre ou sur des bancs, le théâtre conservera toujours sa forme de stade ovoïde, le rétroscène restera le même, le pas, et le public prendra place, invariablement dans le grand cercle.

Les spectateurs du premier rang sont assis dans la position traditionnelle de nos Arabes à celle que, chez nous, les tailleurs prennent dans le grand cercle du deuxième rang, toujours en cercle.



ACTEUR DE L'« ORTA OYOUNOU ».



ACTEURS TURCS.
SCÈNES DE L'« ORTA OYOUNOU ».

Cl. Abdullah frères.



FEMMES TURQUES ASSISTANT, DANS UNE LOGE, À LA REPRÉSENTATION DE L'« ORTA OYOUNOU ».

Les types les plus curieux et les plus originaux de la Comédie italienne, dont l'histoire est si intimement liée à la création de la scène française, qui a rendu tant de services inappréciables à notre art dramatique et de laquelle le grand Molière lui-même reste éternellement débiteur, semble être aussi l'inspiratrice du répertoire de l'Orta Oyounou. Les longues relations de la Turquie avec Venise et Gênes ne sont sans doute pas étrangères à cette inspiration. Arlequin, Colombine, Cassandre et Pierrot. Il y a aussi quatre personnages d'absolue nécessité pour les représentations de l'Orta Oyounou : le *Kavouklou* (le gros bonnet), le *Peschekiar* (l'introducteur), le *Sevgulu* (l'aimé) et la *Zéné* (la femme).

Proportions gardées du génie national de chacun des deux peuples, de grandes affinités existent entre le caractère des personnages turcs et celui des personnages italiens.

Avec moins de grâce espiègle et de malice enjouée qui font d'Arlequin le type le plus aimable de la Comédie italienne, *Sevgulu* lui ressemble beaucoup, malgré le sensualisme qui le pousse à préférer la prose à la poésie.

Qu'elle joue indifféremment les rôles d'une jeune fille, d'une femme mariée, d'une veuve ou d'une fille de joie, la *Zéné*, autour de laquelle pivote invariablement l'intrigue de la comédie, possède, au même degré que Colombine, une ruse pleine d'esprit et de gentillesse, mise au service de ses amours et employée à bernier *Kavouklou*, à se jouer du *Peschekiar* et à se faire enlever par *Sevgulu*.

Kavouklou, le vieux bellâtre, vaniteux et insupportable, obstinément ridicule, sot, entêté, trompé et berné par tout le monde, est un composé bizarre de Pantalon, de Cassandre et de Léandre. Il y a en lui de l'Arnolphe et du Bartholo. Il y a, surtout, du Karagueuz. La luxure est sa passion dominante.

Peschekiar, c'est un Scaramouche doublé du *Hadjiyvat* des marionnettes turques. Son imagination lui offre toujours des ressources pour venir à bout des difficultés que lui créent la *Zéné*, *Sevgulu* et *Kavouklou*. Fin, rusé, gai, amoureux, vaniteux, habileur, il brouille tout, arrange tout. La marche de l'action dramatique est toujours entre ses mains et il pétille d'un esprit *musris*, dû, certainement, à son double atavisme théâtral.

Pour qu'une représentation puisse régulièrement avoir lieu, ces quatre personnages sont indispensables ; c'est-à-dire que les troupes de l'Orta Oyounou se composent pour le moins de quatre acteurs. Encore, ces acteurs sont-ils choisis d'après l'importance de la pièce, et ils peuvent varier. Il est des comédies où chacun d'eux change jusqu'à dix fois de costume et de rôle, et où les rôles sont différents. La loi musulmane défend à la femme de paraître en public, et c'est pour cette raison que les arméniennes tiennent le rôle de la *Zéné* ; par conséquent, dans ces comédies, ces arméniennes jouent le rôle de la *Zéné*. Après la fin de la représentation, les arméniennes se retirent, et une page turque vient leur apporter le *Sevgulu* et le *Peschekiar*. Il semble, — tous les jours, — qu'il se trouvait de la langue turque dans la bouche de ces deux personnages.

Arli, marchand du Bazar, piastre équivaut à 18 centimes.

Le milieu de l'enclos ou de la salle reste vide et sert de scène ; on y place quelques meubles, chaises, lit, etc. Il n'existe, par conséquent, pas de décors ; un acteur, au cours du spectacle, annonce les changements de scène, tout comme autrefois au Théâtre du Globe.

Une portière est placée devant l'ouverture par laquelle le public a été introduit, une autre portière devant l'ouverture qui donne sur la scène. L'espace laissé libre entre ces deux portières sert de coulisses, de foyer et de loges aux acteurs ; c'est là qu'ils changeront cinq ou six fois de costume, par là, qu'au moment venu, ils effectueront leur entrée et leur sortie.

Des hommes de toutes conditions, des femmes, des jeunes filles, des enfants forment le public habituel de l'Orta Oyounou. Et durant tout le spectacle, ce monde fume, mange, grignote. Des marchands de pistaches, de limonade et de sucreries passent et repassent, débitant silencieusement leur marchandise, tandis que partent, comme des fusées, les lazzi des acteurs, alternés par les francs éclats de rires des hommes et les approbations discrètes des hanems dont on entend le gazouillis derrière les treillis de la grande cage.

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FEMMES TURQUES SE PENDANT AU SPECTACLE DE L'« ORTA OYOUNOU ».

Cl. Derjagin.



MUSIEM TURC DE L' « ORTA OYOUNOU ».

tique kurde, arrive à Stamboul, réclamer son dû. A cette nouvelle, Kavouklou se dérobe et dépêche sa nièce auprès du créancier. A la vue de la jeune fille, le marchand oublie sa colère et l'objet de son voyage : il entretient la Zéné de sa passion subite et pousse la hardiesse jusqu'à l'embrasser. Cris de la jeune fille, entrée de Kavouklou. Le Persan s'explique : il abandonne sa créance si Kavouklou lui donne sa nièce.

Le vieux barbon, plus ladeur qu'amoureux, accorde tout ce qu'on lui demande et l'on décide, séance tenante, que le mariage sera célébré le lendemain. Sevghulu, mis tout de suite au courant de tout, s'adresse à Peschekiar qui moyennant finances devient, comme Figaro, le serviteur dévoué de l'amour des deux jeunes gens. Il mande chercher aussitôt un Arnaute et un Monténégrin.

Sans perdre de temps, les deux gaillards enlèvent la jeune fille, ressentent d'importance Kavouklou, lui volent sa cassette, et préfèrent des menaces si terribles aux oreilles du Persan, qu'ils l'obligent à s'en retourner chez lui sans demander son reste.

Sur la promesse que sa cassette lui sera rendue, Kavouklou accorde la main de la Zéné à Sevghulu, qui ne manque pas de puiser largement dans les économies du vieux ladeur pour récompenser Peschekiar et les deux matamores.

Sur des canevas plus ou moins semblables, les acteurs de l'Orta Oyounou brodent des scènes d'un comique parfois très bien venu. Il leur arrive d'exposer des principes moraux et philosophiques, de faire une critique sévère, mais juste, des mœurs locales, des habitudes mondaines.

Mais, quelquefois aussi, ils développent leurs scènes d'amour de façon si obscène, ils emploient des mots d'un naturalisme tel qu'on est à se demander comment ces turpitudes sont tolérées par la censure préfectorale, si sévère, comme nous le verrons plus loin, pour des chefs-d'œuvre qui n'ont d'autre tort que de mettre en scène des têtes couronnées.

Malgré le genre nouveau qui a suivi l'Orta Oyounou, des représentations de ce théâtre se donnent encore assez souvent à Stamboul, dans la banlieue et en province.

Au mois de juin 1899, à l'occasion des fêtes de la circoncision du fils du Sultan, S. A. I. le prince Abdul-Rahim-Effendi, des représentations d'Orta Oyounou ont eu lieu dans tous les hôpitaux de la capitale où, suivant une ancienne et pieuse coutume, plus d'une douzaine d'enfants ont été circoncis aux frais de la liste civile.

ils improvisent le dialogue, développent les scènes, inventent les incidents, font des trouvailles, lancent leurs lazzi avec une verve inépuisable, une faconde sans cesse renaissante.

Non seulement ces acteurs doivent être des gens de beaucoup d'esprit, mais force leur est de posséder un certain fonds d'instruction. Il n'est pas de comédie où ne paraissent au moins un Albanais, un Bosniaque, un Kurde et deux Persans : les Persans jouent sur la scène turque le rôle que les Anglais jouent sur notre scène.

Aussi l'obligation s'impose-t-elle de connaître les idiomes de tous les pays d'Orient, de pouvoir imiter l'accent, dépeindre les mœurs, porter le costume, souligner le ridicule de chacun de ces peuples : résultat qui ne s'obtient qu'à la suite de longs efforts et d'une étude constante de la vie de tous les jours.

La donnée de ces comédies est uniformément une intrigue amoureuse.

Le scénario suivant, sur le patron duquel presque toutes les pièces sont découpées, confirmera les rapports qui existent entre la *Commedia dell'Arte* et le théâtre d'Orta Oyounou et donnera une idée précise de la charpente de ces farces dont le principal intérêt réside dans le bagoût plus ou moins vif, l'improvisation plus ou moins brillante des acteurs.

Sevghulu n'a pu voir la nièce de Kavouklou, la belle Zéné, sans s'en éprendre violemment. Il lui dit son amour, auquel la jeune fille répond avec un empressement d'autant plus grand qu'elle est lasse des assiduités de son oncle auprès d'elle.

Les jeunes gens sont en parfait accord : un enlèvement est projeté, lorsque leur plan est contrarié par les circonstances suivantes. Kavouklou a fait venir de Téhéran des tapis qu'il a bel et bien vendus, mais qu'il n'a jamais payés à son correspondant de Perse. Celui-ci, furieux, suivi d'un domes-

Cl. Abdouh.



ORTA OYOUNOU.
Costume de Bateleur.



TROISIÈME PÉRIODE

Théâtre contemporain (1869 à nos jours)

ORIGINES — HISTORIQUE — PRÉCURSEURS

Entre le *hatt* (édit impérial), prononçant la dissolution des Janissaires, dont le massacre effroyable et complet (1826) fit pousser un long soupir de soulagement à la Turquie entière, et le firman signé à Gulhané (3 novembre 1839), accordant aux Turcs d'innombrables réformes de liberté, désignées sous le nom de *Tanzimat*, les colonies européennes avaient commencé à faire jouer dans leurs salons des drames et des comédies du répertoire français. Des personnalités turques étaient invitées à ces représentations. Tous ces pachas aimaient beaucoup le *triatra* (théâtre), dont le mot s'était introduit dans leur langue au XVIII^e siècle, dès le commencement du règne de Sélim III.

Ces représentations firent les délices de la haute société de Péra et des personnages marquants de la Turquie, jusqu'au jour où un Vénitien, M. Giustiniani, jugea le moment venu pour le faire passer des petites scènes privées sur une grande scène publique. Il fit, à cet effet, construire, au centre même de Péra, un magnifique théâtre dans le style italien qu'il dénomma le *Théâtre-Français*.

Sous les auspices des ambassadeurs accrédités auprès de la Sublime-Porte, de ministres et de pachas, des troupes françaises de comédie et d'opérette furent spécialement engagées pour ce théâtre qui, patronné de la sorte, pouvait se passer de subvention. Ce premier succès eut pour résultat la création d'une scène lyrique d'opéra italien, le *Théâtre-Nahoum*. Un Alepin, Nahoum Effendi, en conçut l'idée et la mit à exécution, encouragé, soutenu par les dons du sultan. De beaucoup plus vaste et plus luxueux que son voisin le « Français », construit, comme lui, à l'italienne, le Théâtre-Nahoum n'eût pas été déplacé à Paris. Abd-Ui-Medjid, mélomane enragé, l'honorait toutes les semaines de sa présence.

Cette communion hebdomadaire avec des chefs-d'œuvre développa à tel point le goût musical du padischah qu'il ordonna la construction d'un théâtre particulier, tout près du palais impérial de Dolma-Baghtché. Il fit venir d'Europe architectes, décorateurs, peintres, mécaniciens : aussi put-il se flatter de voir sur sa scène privée les derniers perfectionnements de l'époque dans la construction, les décors, la lumière et la machinerie. L'orchestre fut confié aux deux corps de la musique et du *Hadémé* (garde impériale). Cette double institution, qui correspondrait chez nous à l'École polytechnique et au Conservatoire de musique, a été fondée par le sultan Mahmoud II, à la suite de la destruction des Janissaires.

Lorsque le souverain, qui préférait de beaucoup les pièces des répertoires français et italien aux grosses farces de l'Orta Oyounou, désirait une représentation dans son théâtre, on invitait au palais, suivant le programme impérial, la troupe du Théâtre-Français ou celle du Théâtre-Nahoum. Le corps de la musique impériale avait charge alors de renforcer les chœurs et l'orchestre de l'œuvre lyrique, tandis qu'aux élèves du Hadémé incombait le soin d'augmenter la figuration des ouvrages dramatiques.

Sur ces entrefaites, grand émoi, un jour, au palais. Les ministres ont perdu la carte et la police ne sait où donner de la tête. On croit être sur la

d'un complot, supposé d'autant plus hardi que les conspirateurs font tous partie des corps de la musique et de la garde impériale, d'autant plus séditieux que l'endroit choisi pour les sourdes menées est un *cououch* (chambre abandonnée) appartenant même au Hadémé. Au lieu de s'absenter, comme d'habitude, pendant les heures réglementaires de la sortie, les élèves quittent la caserne pour y rentrer aussitôt après, un à un, séparément, avec des airs mystérieux et inquiets. Un à un, séparément aussi, sans doute, pour ne pas éveiller les soupçons, ils se dirigent vers le *Hadémé* où ils restent enfermés, des heures durant, sans que rien au dehors transpire de leur complot. Quelques jeunes gens, étrangers à l'École, accompagnent les élèves et prennent part aux conversations. C'est grave, très grave. Voilà le rapport de la police. Liste est dressée des suspects et ové le Conseil d'Etat arrive de veiller, de surveiller. Un service d'espionnage s'organise, les plus habiles agents de la préfecture sont mis en mouvement et de méticuleuses précautions sont assurées pour empêcher le fin mot de la trame et prendre, comme en une souricière, les factieux. Le grand jour est venu. Comme à l'ordinaire, les élèves sortent, rentrent, se dirigent vers la chambre en silence. Mais, conspirant dans l'ombre. Tout le monde à son poste. On guette, on attend de découvrir la répétition théâtrale.

Le jour de voir sur la scène du padischah des pièces *français* (européennes) et de prendre part à ces représentations qui se donnaient, ces jeunes gens, piqués au vif dans leur amour-propre national, ont conçu l'ardent désir de fonder un théâtre, le théâtre turc. Ils avaient composé une pièce, — la première comédie écrite en turc, — ils avaient formé une troupe, ils étaient même pourvus d'un souffleur : mais les décors leur manquaient, ainsi que les actrices : les plus jeunes, parmi eux, et les plus capotés, se proposèrent leur tentative : l'orgueilleux espion se proposait de jouer leur pièce devant le souverain et de lui prouver que les Osmanlis pouvaient aussi jouer les *Français* réussit dans l'art d'exciter le rire ou la



SULTAN ABD-UI-MEDJID.

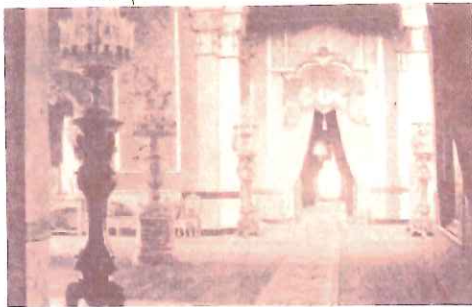


LE THÉÂTRE DE DOLMA-BAGHTCHÉ.



SULTAN ABD-UI-AZIZ.

Cl. Abdullah frères.



GRANDE SALLE D'HONNEUR DU PALAIS DE BEYLERBEY.
Grande salle d'honneur où le sultan Aziz faisait donner des représentations.

très forte attraction charmaient ces rapports artistiques : l'intimité des familles arméniennes où ils représentaient leurs pièces, avec, pour partenaires dans les rôles de femmes, non plus les camarades imberbes qui singeaient les filles d'Eve, mais les dames et demoiselles de céans, créatures superbes, au teint mat, aux grands yeux noirs et veloutés, aux lèvres rouges comme des grenades entr'ouvertes.

A l'encontre de Medjid, le sultan Abd-ül-Aziz, qui lui succéda, préférait le théâtre turc au théâtre européen. Un incendie ayant détruit la scène de Dolma-Baghtché, le nouveau souverain faisait souvent dresser les tréteaux de l'Orta Oyounou dans les grandes salles d'honneur des palais de Tchéragan et de Beylerbey ou dans les chambres immenses des kiosques impériaux de Tokat et d'Alem Dagh. Là, entouré de ses ministres, de sa suite, de ses eunuques et de son harem, — qu'on devinait aux éclats de rire partis du mystère des *caffess*, — le padischah prenait, goulûment, plaisir aux improvisations burlesques de ses acteurs attitrés et aux saillies facétieuses de son bouffon de cour, un nain pétri d'esprit, qui ne le quittait presque pas et qui, sur sa demande, traça plus d'une fois le scénario des pièces jouées.

Cette préférence marquée du monarque pour la scène ottomane trace la voie du théâtre osmanli, jusqu' alors désorienté, et le mène promptement à la conquête de chefs-d'œuvre.

Entre temps, M. Soulié, un écuyer français, débarquait à Constantinople avec quelques acrobates et faisait construire, à Guédik-Pacha, un hippodrome pour sa troupe. Au départ de cette troupe, des notables musulmans achetèrent le cirque et le convertirent en théâtre. Ne pouvant cependant pas engager comme actrices des femmes, ils se trouvèrent dans l'obligation de recourir à un homme de paille et de faire figurer comme directeur-propriétaire de leur théâtre un Arménien, Vartov, dit Agop-Gulli Effendi.

Badigeonneur de son état, mais doué d'une intelligence remarquable et d'une merveilleuse entente scénique, le directeur du théâtre de Guédik-Pacha se mit résolument à l'œuvre. Ainsi que le directeur du Théâtre-Antoine, avec lequel il a plus d'un point de ressemblance, Agop-Gulli aimait passionnément le théâtre et fut en même temps directeur, metteur en scène et principal acteur de sa troupe. Il recruta parmi les Arméniens tous ses acteurs et actrices. De la sorte, les Arméniens présidèrent à la naissance du théâtre turc contemporain.

Après quelques tentatives sans portée, dues à de jeunes écrivains, la scène ottomane se trouva définitivement constituée (1869), grâce aux premières œuvres du poète Ekrem-Bey et d'un fin lettré, Aaly-Bey.

EKREM-BEY (1). — *Ajife Angelik* (la Chaste Angélique), tel est le titre du premier drame turc qui sortit de la plume d'Ekrem. C'est l'histoire d'une jeune fille qui sacrifie à la pudeur son amour et sa vie.

Ce premier essai fut un coup de maître. D'emblée, la littérature ottomane était dotée d'un chef-d'œuvre.

AALY-BEY. — Aaly-Bey, ex-gouverneur de Trébizonde, partage avec Ekrem l'honneur d'avoir fondé la scène turque. Fils d'Ali-Pacha, l'ancien ministre des affaires étrangères, Aaly-Bey est l'esthète, homme du monde par excellence, à la répartie spirituelle, très fin *xix* siècle et très « smart ». D'une famille riche, il reçut une éducation complète que soignée. De bonne heure il avait appris le français et s'était initié aux beautés de notre littérature.

AHMED-VEFIK-PACHA. — Continuant l'œuvre d'Aaly-Bey, Ahmed-Véfik-Pacha, alors grand-vizir, fit traduire et publier la traduction nouvelle des œuvres complètes de Molière. Si toutes ces comédies n'ont pas encore été représentées en Turquie, la traduction se recommande par des qualités de premier ordre, dont la principale est une assimilation complète de notre grand Comique.

On montre encore sur le Bosphore, près de l'ancien palais de Mahomet II, — l'année d'avant la prise de Constantinople — une maison blanche émergeant d'un bouquet de palmiers et de jasminiers, le *honak* où, loin des importuns et de tout bruit, le président du conseil se retirait pour traduire Molière et oublier les tracasseries des audiences ministérielles dans l'étude de la comédie éternelle de nos jours.

(1) Ridjaî Zadé Ekrem-Bey est né, en 1845, à Constantinople. Le premier, il donna son pays d'un code littéraire *le Talimi-Sedehiyat*, où toutes les lois, tous les préceptes sont formulés par des exemples pris dans la littérature exclusivement ottomane. Il a écrit aussi une *Lettre sur la Poésie*, restée célèbre à plus d'un titre.

A. T.

Cl. Abdullah frères.



GRANDE SALLE D'HONNEUR DU PALAIS DE TCHÉRAGAN,
où le sultan Aziz faisait donner des représentations.



Le Bourgeois

TROISIÈME PÉRIODE

Les Maîtres du Théâtre Contemporain

KEMAL-BEY. — Le branle dramatique était donné, lorsque Kemal-Bey, avec son lyrisme puissant et cette perfection dans la forme qu'on retrouve dans toutes ses œuvres, écrivit un drame en cinq actes : *Silistri yahot Vatan* (Silistrie ou la Patrie), considéré encore aujourd'hui comme le chef-d'œuvre incontesté du Théâtre Turc.

Ainsi que le titre l'indique, le sujet du drame est puisé dans l'histoire nationale. La scène se passe dans la petite ville bulgare de Silistrie, vainement assiégée par les Russes pendant la guerre de Crimée.

Un jeune Albanais, de religion musulmane, Islam-Bey (1), sur le point d'épouser une jeune fille qu'il adore, apprend que la guerre est déclarée contre l'ennemi héréditaire de la Turquie. Comme tout croyant, en pareil cas, il fait taire la voix du cœur pour n'écouter que la voix de la conscience, cette voix qui crie à tous les mahométans que la guerre contre l'infidèle est un devoir sacré et le premier de tous. A l'insu de la bien-aimée, il s'engage comme volontaire dans l'armée qui se prépare à aller défendre Silistrie et, au moment du départ, communique sa résolution à sa fiancée. La scène des adieux entre les deux amants est d'une maîtrise superbe et, à coup sûr, la plus belle de



Ekrem Bey, poète turc.

Cl. Abdullah Frères



Cl. Abdullah Frères

tout le répertoire turc. Le sentiment patriotique dont Islam est animé, les arguments qu'il emploie pour persuader celle qu'il aime que défendre la patrie c'est défendre son amour, la façon dont il commente le verset du Coran qu'« un jour de guerre vaut mieux aux yeux d'Allah que tout un mois de jeûne », font un contraste saisissant avec l'amour de la jeune fille, suspendue aux bras de son fiancé et criant toutes les raisons du cœur pour le retenir et le garder. L'émotion croît à chaque réplique, à chaque phrase, à chaque mot et, à la fin de la scène, atteint son summum d'intensité. Sous l'action de la voix charmeresse, Islam est prêt à oublier le drapeau, quand au loin les clairons de son régiment sonnent l'appel. Il se dégage alors des bras qui lui forment un collier et, dans un magnifique élan lyrique : « C'est pour défendre nos mères, nos filles, nos fiancées, nos épouses que je vais me battre, s'écrie-t-il. Lorsqu'il est des êtres faibles, des femmes qui n'hésitent pas à partir en guerre, n'impose pas à un homme majeur, sain de corps et d'esprit, et de condition libre, la honte d'avoir failli à son devoir. Adieu ! »

La jeune fille éperdue, affolée de douleur, ne pense plus qu'à rejoindre celui qu'elle aime, le défendre au besoin ou mourir avec lui. Puisqu'il est des femmes qui n'hésitent pas à partir en guerre, eh bien ! elle fera comme ces femmes, elle partira. A son tour, elle n'écoute ni prières, ni larmes. Il n'existe de place dans son cœur que pour son amour, agrandi par la crainte des dangers qu'Islam va courir. Elle se fait apporter un uniforme, le revêt crânement, et crânement aussi va s'engager comme infirmier dans un régiment qui marche au secours de la garnison de Silistrie.

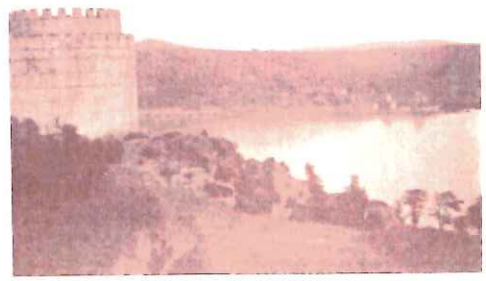
Elle arrive devant la petite ville bulgare invaincue, juste au moment où les Turcs font une sortie. Le champ de bataille est couvert de morts et de blessés : la victoire est aux Turcs, et c'est Islam qui conduit la victoire. Elle le reconnaît, cherche à s'approcher de lui, au moment où les Russes, vaincus par le nombre, commencent à battre en retraite. C'est alors qu'un coup de fusil tiré des rangs ennemis atteint le jeune héros en pleine poitrine. Il tombe et sa fiancée le reçoit dans ses bras. La scène finale de la reconnaissance est le digne pendant de la scène des adieux du premier acte.

Ce drame, interdit presque immédiatement, excita dans toute la Turquie un enthousiasme indescriptible, dû, sans doute, à l'actualité implicite du sujet, à l'élévation des sentiments, et à la noblesse d'une écriture très claire, très pure et à la portée de tous les esprits.

Cette question du style dramatique a beaucoup préoccupé Kemal. On le voit très longuement étendu dans une *Lettre sur le Théâtre*, aussi dans son *Manuel de Poésie* que la *Lettre sur la Poésie* d'Ekrem. Dans son *Manuel de Poésie*, à page 11, d'une logique remarquable, il donne la définition de la poésie turque. Les traits de la scène turque naissante, s'étend sur les mœurs, les coutumes, les idées, les croyances, les aspirations morales et sociales de leur pays, mais encore sur la destinée

(1) *Islam* n'est pas un nom propre turc, mais un nom commun, dont la traduction est « la religion Musulmane » et d'où nous avons fait *islamisme*. En donnant un nom pareil à son héros, l'auteur a voulu symboliser en lui les aspirations et les croyances de la Turquie entière.

AD. TH.



KONAK D'AHMET-VÉNIK PACHA, à Rouméli-Hissar, sur le Bosphore.



NAMIK KEMAL, auteur dramatique turc.

des peuples, fait ressortir la grande difficulté de faire du bon théâtre, disserte sur l'imitation et les traductions, développe la théorie d'une langue théâtrale aussi simple que possible et conclut par quelques conseils aux comédiens sur l'art de la diction.

Elle est toute marquée, ici, la place de ce précieux document après lecture duquel mon maître et ami Jean Jullien s'écriait avec enthousiasme : « Avouez que voilà un turc qui parle d'art dramatique infiniment mieux que beaucoup de ghiaours de notre connaissance ».

La traduction de cette *Lettre*, parue intégralement, pour la première fois, en regard du texte original dans la *Revue Orientale* que j'ai fondée et dirigée à Constantinople, est due à la plume autorisée de M. Louis Charrel, professeur de littérature française et de langue turque au Lycée Impérial de Galata-Sérai.

LETTRE SUR LE THÉÂTRE

A mon point de vue, le théâtre n'est pas, essentiellement, une école de connaissances générales ou de mœurs; en réalité, il est tout simplement un divertissement. C'est ainsi que, même dans les drames les plus lugubres, les théâtres ne sauraient cesser d'amuser.

Je ne sais à quelle étrange épreuve le « Maître des fourbes » (1) a bien voulu soumettre l'humanité, mais ce qui devrait inspirer la joie la plus vive éveille dans les cœurs une profonde tristesse et ce qui devrait provoquer ce dernier sentiment crée l'impression la plus gaie.

Que l'on pense, par exemple, un magnifique coucher de soleil, une brillante aurore et que l'on réfléchisse à l'impression produite. Existe-t-il un être « possédant un cœur » dont les yeux ne se remplissent de larmes d'attendrissement à ce magnifique spectacle ou qui détourne de cette vue ses regards « rendus » humides par l'émotion? Qu'y a-t-il, dans ce monde, qui puisse divertir davantage l'homme qu'un beau spectacle? Que trouvera l'homme, dans ce monde, qui puisse lui inspirer plus de tristesse qu'un beau spectacle?

Y a-t-il rien qui puisse donner à l'homme un plaisir comparable à celui que lui procure un chagrin d'amour auquel il est lui-même étranger? Y a-t-il rien qui puisse l'affliger autant que l'immense bonheur d'un amour heureux dont il n'est pas l'objet? Je le répéterai donc : le théâtre est un divertissement, mais il est préférable à tous ceux qu'a imaginés l'esprit humain et il en est le plus utile.

En disant qu'il est préférable, je m'en suis rapporté à mon goût personnel. Je ne puis donc, naturellement, présenter mon sentiment comme une preuve, car il n'est pas question d'arracher aux concerts de Péra et d'amener chez Agop Gulli (2) un homme, devenu tout yeux et tout oreilles pour entendre ou voir Sarah (3). Chacun s'amuse où il veut et comme il veut.

Mais j'ai dit que « c'est le divertissement le plus utile » et je crois pouvoir soutenir cette assertion. Si donc, je dois présenter des preuves de ce que j'avance, je les emprunterai au domaine public.

- Qu'est-ce que le théâtre?
- C'est une imitation.
- Qu'est-ce qu'il imite?
- Les incidents de la vie de l'homme.

Je crois qu'il résulte manifestement de ces quatre petites phrases que le théâtre est le divertissement le plus utile. Peut-on en effet imaginer quelque chose de plus utile que l'exemple moral trouvé dans le plaisir même?

Oui! « on trouve le plaisir dans le travail, tandis que le travail ne se trouve pas dans le plaisir » (4), et l'on peut dire que toute espèce de travail peut divertir l'homme et l'attacher, mais que tout homme ne peut se divertir par le travail.

C'est donc de ces considérations qu'il résulte que le genre humain a grandement besoin de divertissements utiles.

Le théâtre est un rêve poétique qui a pris corps et âme. Il semble qu'on nous prenne par la main et qu'on nous fasse visiter les plus mystérieux recoins du cœur, en en soulevant les voiles un à un et jusqu'au dernier.

Les spectateurs voient personnalisés sous leurs yeux toutes les grandeurs et toutes les perversités de la nature humaine; ils voient portés à leur paroxysme l'amour et la haine, ces sentiments si forts, ces mobiles si puissants. Quand ces passions heurtent au moment même où le cœur est le plus accessible à la tendresse ou à la joie, elles produisent alors leur effet le plus considérable. C'est pourquoi l'on regarde les services rendus aux mœurs par le théâtre comme plus grands que ceux redevable aux journaux et aux livres.

C'est là aussi ma conviction, car je n'ai jamais vu dans les journaux ou livres faire verser autant de larmes que le théâtre.

Je ne me figure point que le magistrat, le littérateur puissent flétrir les vices — tels que l'hypocrisie, l'avarice — au même degré que l'acteur sur la scène.

L'utilité du théâtre est telle qu'il est compté en Europe comme un facteur principal des grands actes de civilisation.

(1) Cette dénomination qui paraît bizarre, au premier abord, est une traduction approchée de l'expression turque *Khair-al-Makrin* qui se trouve dans les livres sacrés et s'emploie fréquemment en turc. Le sens est que Dieu ne peut avoir son supérieur. *Khair*, en rien, s'agit il mépris de tromper.

(2) Agop Gulli, l'un des plus célèbres acteurs turcs, dont il a été question plus haut.
(3) L'auteur fait allusion à Sarah Bernhardt, qui jouait au théâtre de café-concert.
(4) Dictionnaire Turc.



PALAIS ET THÉÂTRE DE YILDIZ-KIOSK, résidence du Sultan actuel.



37 Scène de ...

César (1), une tragédie de Shakespeare, a été une des principales causes qui ont favorisé, en Angleterre, le cours des événements au temps de Cromwell.

En France, les comédies de Molière, probablement, et, à coup sûr, la plume mordante de Voltaire ont fait le plus grand tort aux prêtres et aux nobles.

A l'époque de la grande Révolution française, le peuple a fait preuve d'un indomptable amour de la liberté et d'un grand patriotisme : les œuvres viriles de Corneille ont, peut-être, contribué à ce résultat plus que toute autre chose.

Si l'on voulait réunir et enregistrer tous les effets qu'ont produits, sur les mœurs allemandes, les pièces de Goethe, de Schiller, un gros volume ne suffirait point.

Pour nous, nous venons à peine de produire un théâtre ; nous ne pouvons naturellement pas vouloir que, dès maintenant, il soit parfait.

Réclamer d'une œuvre qui fait son apparition toutes les qualités, ce serait tomber dans l'erreur d'une mère qui voudrait mettre au monde des enfants savants dès leur naissance, mais il nous est justement permis de vouloir que les imperfections de notre scène soient minimes et de travailler, quelles qu'elles soient, à les amoindrir de jour en jour. Certains défauts, en effet, ne peuvent admettre l'inexpérience pour excuse. D'après moi, le plus grand défaut du théâtre consiste dans la mauvaise diction.

Ce défaut annule, tout d'abord, les profits que la langue pourrait retirer du théâtre ; en second lieu, il rend impossible, jusqu'à un certain point, d'éviter le ridicule et détruit d'une façon absolue l'impression que devrait produire la pièce.

Mais venons-en au fait que la plupart de nos pièces sont traduites des langues européennes (2). Si c'est là un tort, la responsabilité n'en retombe pas sur le théâtre, mais sur les écrivains. Et, du reste, je ne vois pas un si grand mal dans ces traductions.

On voit au théâtre l'imitation de tous les actes criminels ; cependant, les docteurs de la loi ne se sont pas levés pour s'opposer à ces reproductions en se basant sur le mauvais effet qu'elles peuvent produire. A l'homme disposé à subir la contagion des mauvais exemples, il ne manquera pas de s'en présenter chaque jour et de tous côtés.

Je ne pense pas que personne soit forcé de rechercher dans la littérature le chemin du vice.

Un « écrit instructif » (3) n'a pas de patrie. Si une pensée est juste, l'effet qu'elle produit dans une langue, elle l'obtiendra exactement égal dans une autre. Un très grand nombre de pièces anglaises, allemandes ont été traduites en français et sont jouées sur les théâtres. Dans la traduction, la seule chose qui perde c'est l'éclat du style de l'œuvre originale, mais le plaisir qu'elle donne et l'effet qu'elle produit ne sont en rien diminués.

Que l'on voie une jeune fille donner sa vie au nom de son amour et pour sa pudeur, que l'on voie un homme courageux mais ignorant tomber aux mains d'hommes au langage choisi et à l'esprit délicat, se préoccupera-t-on de savoir quelle est la nationalité, quel est le costume des uns et des autres ?

Quelle serait, en effet, l'influence de ces détails sur les sentiments qui agitent le spectateur ?

Un point encore est digne d'attention. Le théâtre est le genre littéraire le plus difficile. C'en est au point que, sur plus de dix mille littérateurs que compte actuellement la France, il n'en est pas dix qui fassent de bon théâtre. Si l'on en vient donc à considérer l'état de notre littérature, combien trouvera-t-on chez nous d'écrivains dramatiques !

Et si l'on pense qu'en Europe une pièce de théâtre est jouée jusqu'à cent fois, tandis qu'à Stamboul, on ne va la voir que de trois à cinq fois, on en conclura que pour le théâtre seul d'Agop Gulli, il faudrait une production littéraire supérieure à celle que requiert le plus grand théâtre de France ! Où trouvera-t-on toutes ces pièces ?

Corneille, qui passe pour le grand maître du Théâtre français, a emprunté des pièces à l'Espagne, et Goethe, ce promoteur de la littérature allemande, en a pris en France. Oserons-nous dire, en présence de ces faits, que toutes nos pièces doivent être tirées de notre propre fonds ?

Ce que je désirerais surtout pour notre théâtre, c'est que les artistes améliorassent leur diction et que les auteurs dramatiques eussent la générosité et la condescendance de bien vouloir se départir de leur amour pour le style grandiose et recherché. Autrefois, l'accumulation inintelligente des mots prétentieux et des phrases obscures (4) était réservée à la langue écrite, et c'était vouloir prêter au ridicule que d'user de pareil procédé dans la conversation. Maintenant que la langue a été et reste si grandement simplifiée, si nous commençons à employer, dans le dialogue, des conjonctions composées (5), enchaînant des membres de phrase les uns aux autres, ou bien des génitifs (6) amoncelés et se commandant réciproquement, ce sera, en vérité, une chose fort étrange.

(1) Julius Cæsar.

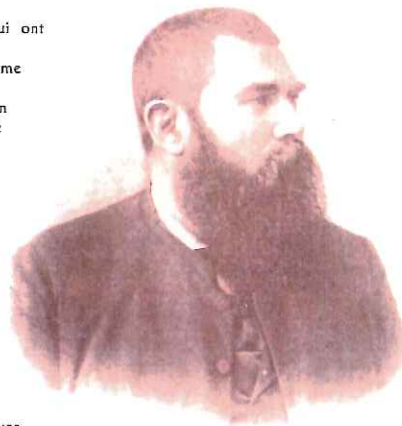
(2) A l'époque où cette lettre fut écrite, quelques littérateurs ottomans regardaient comme une honte que la plupart des théâtres turcs jouassent des traductions de pièces européennes. Ils estimaient — se plaçant au point de vue d'un amour-propre incompréhensible — honteux d'imiter un autre pays, fût-ce même sur une chose qu'ils n'avaient pas et sur laquelle les autres nations en étaient arrivées à la perfection. (Note d'Eb-Uzla Tcvhik Bey).

(3) *Ed Bıyıl*. Cette locution comprend en turc, d'une façon générale, tout écrit instructif, qu'il soit purement littéraire ou scientifique. Elle n'a pas, en français, d'équivalent rigoureux.

(4) Le turc contient l'expression populaire *istilah parelemek* qui signifie mot à mot : « Faire par morceaux avec des termes », et qui correspond comme sens à « rechercher des tournures de phrases incompréhensibles et en faire usage exclusif. »

(5) Le texte offre l'expression *rabılb* qui signifie la méthode que l'on suit et les mots qu'on emploie pour combler de phrase les uns aux autres et suppléer ainsi aux conjonctions et aux pronoms relatifs dont se sert le turc proprement dit.

(6) *İsafet*. C'est un terme grammatical par lequel on entend le moyen employé pour enchaîner les verbes et les adjectifs.



AHMED-MIDHAT EFFENDI, auteur dramatique turc.



MÂFİR NEVÂRİ, actrice ottomane, interprète d'une traduction de *La Dame aux Camélias* d'Ahmed Midhat.

Si Abdullah Irétes.



La « TCHINGHI ». Type de Tchinghami, discute de bonne aventure.

La langue que chacun recherche au théâtre est la voix de la simple conscience; si on ne l'y trouve pas, mais qu'on la voie remplacée par un langage provincial (1), par un galimatias à la Nerguissi (2), qui pourrait supporter cette littérature et vouloir travailler à en éclairer les obscurités?

KEMAL.

Pour se bien pénétrer de l'importance de ces deux paragraphes sur le style, il faut se souvenir que Kemal fut un des champions les plus ardents, les plus décidés de la réforme philologique, tendant à affranchir la langue ottomane de la domination des langues arabe et persane. Je ne puis rapporter, ici, la longue lutte soutenue pour cette indépendance linguistique. Commencée, timidement, au XVIII^e siècle, par Aji-Chir-Baikrai et Ibn-Kemal, poursuivie stérilement, sous Mahmoud I^{er} par Hadji-Kalfa, et sous Selim III par Assem, reprise ardemment vers 1850 par Chinassi, elle n'a dû sa solution victorieuse qu'à la fougue et à l'opiniâtreté avec lesquelles Kemal Bey, vaillamment, et Ahmed-Midhat Effendi, triomphalement, ont combattu pour elle.

Joignant l'exemple au précepte, Kemal a, dans toutes ses œuvres théâtrales, mis en pratique les théories de sa *Lettre sur le Théâtre*. Aussi les trois drames en prose qui ont suivi *Vatan* et qui ont pour titres : *Akif-Bey*, *Zavallev Tchodjouck (Pauvre enfant!)* et *Gul-Nihal* (Le rejeton de la rose), larges études de mœurs turques, se recommandent autant par l'ample conception du sujet, la fière noblesse des sentiments, la haute moralité de l'intrigue que par un dialogue d'une simplicité et, en même temps, d'une élévation déconcertantes. Le seul reproche qu'on puisse leur faire est de manquer parfois d'invention scénique, d'action, au sens théâtral du mot.

A Kemal et à Ahmed-Midhat appartient également l'honneur d'avoir élargi la scène ottomane en écrivant des drames et des comédies exclusivement turcs. Jusqu'alors, les auteurs s'étaient contentés de traductions, d'imitations, de plagats et de quelques pièces originales dont l'action se passait à l'étranger ou chez les peuples musulmans de l'Orient, pour la raison bien simple que la défense faite à la femme turque, de par le Coran, de paraître en public avec des hommes, réduisait presque à néant les données indigènes et mettait les dramaturges dans l'obligation de chercher des sujets de quelque intérêt en dehors du monde mahométan. Kemal et Ahmed-Midhat comprirent que suivre cette voie c'était étouffer au berceau le théâtre turc. Aussi, réagirent-ils avec autant de vigueur que de courage, mais, hélas! ces vertus, comme nous le verrons dans la suite, furent payées par l'exil et l'interdiction sur les théâtres ottomans de toutes les pièces dont le sujet, de près ou de loin, se rattachait à des idées réformatrices ou portait une atteinte, — si petite fût-elle, — au texte du livre saint.

Aujourd'hui encore l'interdiction qui pèse sur *Vatan* n'a pu être levée soit à cause d'une tacite concession diplomatique faite à la Russie, soit, surtout parce que l'idée de *Patrie* ne peut pas, ne doit pas exister chez le turc de façon abstraite, mais dans une forme tangible. Le Commandeur des Croissants représente et résume d'une manière concrète, aux yeux des Osmanlis, l'idée de religion et l'idée de patrie.

Si grande que soit la valeur intrinsèque de son théâtre, Kemal a, comme poète et comme romancier, des titres plus sérieux encore à la gloire. Son volume de poésies *Namih*, son roman national *Djezmi*, ses études biographiques *Evraki Perichan* (feuilles éparées) considérées comme son chef-d'œuvre, à tous les points de vue, ont attribué à leur auteur la première place dans la littérature contemporaine de son pays. Un ardent enthousiasme lyrique, une clarté, une harmonie de style inimitables caractérisent son œuvre. Sans conteste, c'est le plus pur des écrivains turcs et le culte voué à sa mémoire par la génération actuelle ressemble à celui que les anciens rendaient aux dieux et aux héros.

Héros, il le fut aussi. Sait-on à quel point Kemal s'exaltait pour les nobles, pour les grandes causes? Se trouvant à Paris, au moment de la guerre de 1870, il n'hésita pas un seul instant à s'enrôler dans nos rangs avec ses trois amis, Kechad-Bey, Mehmet-Bey et Hadji Nouri-Bey. Soldat anonyme, il fit toute la campagne et se battit près des siens, — comme les Turcs savent se battre, — avec cette belle vaillance que met au cœur le fatalisme (3).

AHMED-MIDHAT EFFENDI. — Tandis qu'une loi censuriale interdisait les représentations de *Vatan*, un nouvel auteur dramatique se levait à l'horizon : Ahmed-

(1) Kemal dit : « *Van aghze* » c'est-à-dire dialecte de Van. Van est une province de l'Empire dans laquelle on parle un dialecte turc regardé comme grossier et méprisé en conséquence par les effendis de Constantinople. En réalité, le dialecte de Van contient beaucoup de mots et d'expressions dont l'osmani devrait regretter la perte, ou plutôt l'abandon, au lieu de s'en glorifier.

(2) Nerguissi est un prosateur ottoman dont les compositions littéraires sont reconnues comme bonnes et même classiques, mais aussi fort difficiles à comprendre. Son ouvrage le plus généralement étudié est le *Khamsi Nerguissi*, recueil de compositions divisé comme le nom l'indique — *Les cinq œuvres de Nerguissi*, — en cinq parties. Ce littérateur était constantinopolitain et a vécu vers la fin du XVIII^e siècle.

(3) Né en 1837, à Constantinople, du *Serdar* (commandant) Mousrapha Bey et de la fille d'Arnaoutlou Abd-El-Latif Pacha, Kemal mourut en 1888, à Rhodes, son ancien lieu d'exil, après avoir été nommé, par le Sultan actuel, gouverneur du *Sandjac* (province) de Rhodes et plus tard de celui de Mételin.

A. T.



SCÈNE DE LA « TCHINGHI », opérette d'Ahmed-Midhat Effendi.

Midhat Effendi, l'écrivain le plus extraordinaire de toute la littérature ottomane. Son œuvre stupéfiante fait songer à Voltaire, tant elle est variée, à Balzac, tant elle est immense, à Dumas père, tant elle est féconde.

Hormis la poésie, — Ahmed-Midhat fait exception à la règle qui veut que les littérateurs ottomans écrivent des vers. — il a abordé tous les genres, et tous avec un égal succès : le théâtre, le roman, l'histoire, la philosophie, la critique, les sciences, la philologie, la morale, la musique même. L'œuvre de ce colosse, — encyclopédie vivante, — tient dans près de deux cents volumes in-8^e, non compris les articles des journaux auxquels il collabore quotidiennement et régulièrement depuis plus de quarante ans. Et le dernier mot n'est pas dit, car Ahmed-Midhat, né en 1841, à Constantinople, plein encore de verdeur et de santé, toujours d'une activité surprenante, n'a point l'air de vouloir de si tôt renoncer à la lutte.

Colosse, j'ai bien dit, il l'est, superbement, au moral comme au physique. Sa belle tête, sa haute taille, sa large carrure font penser aux géants des plateaux d'Altaï et aux athlètes des montagnes géorgiennes de sa famille est originaire. Ses traits, — lorsque animés, surtout, par la conversation, — ont plus d'un rapport avec ceux de l'auteur du *Maître*, mon ami Jean Jullien : mêmes yeux vifs et scrutateurs, mêmes lèvres plissées par un sourire ironique, même barbe abondante et tant soit peu inculte. Oh ! la riche, la belle nature, tout à la joie de vivre et consciente de la plénitude de ses forces. Comme à le voir on comprend qu'il ait réfuté Schopenhauer et déclaré « que la philosophie a pour mission de relever le courage de l'homme et non de l'éveiller, de lui faire aimer la vie et non de la lui montrer sous certains aspects pessimistes qui, pour être vrais, n'en sont pas moins exclusifs et malsains ».

Il ne m'est guère possible de parler comme je le voudrais de cet écrivain illustre, considéré présentement comme le grand maître de la littérature osmanlic; la simple énumération de ses ouvrages, avec quelques lignes de critique en regard de chacun d'eux, remplirait les pages de cette Revue.

Son œuvre théâtrale, la plus variée du répertoire ottoman, comprend le drame, la comédie de mœurs, celle de caractère, le vaudeville, voire l'opérette.

Eivab! (Hélas !), drame en quatre actes, sa première pièce, écrite en 1871. Rompant hardiment en visière avec les usages d'une nation où la polygamie est admise, il s'élève avec force contre cette tolérance de l'islam, dans une pièce à thèse où l'intrigue dramatique roule sur la bigamie. Il faut ignorer du tout au tout les mœurs de la Turquie et la force de ses *adbet* (usages), lorsque, surtout, ils sont d'ordre religieux, pour ne pas s'étonner du courage inouï de notre auteur de s'attaquer ainsi à des habitudes faisant partie intégrante de sa nation.

A elle seule, une tentative pareille suffisait pour le mettre en suspicion auprès de quelques vieux croyants rétrogrades qui, au lieu de constater dans *Eivab!* l'effort superbe tenté pour l'affranchissement moral du pays, l'accusèrent, comme d'un crime, de vouloir fonder un théâtre national, et, sourdement, à l'ombre, commencèrent les démarches qui devaient aboutir à l'exil de ce grand écrivain.

Ahmed-Midhat eut vent de ces menées. Avec une hardiesse inexplicable il tint tête à l'orage et répondit à ses détracteurs par une comédie en cinq actes : *Atchik-Bach* (Tartufe) (1), étude satirique d'un mordant plein de verve, sur la fausse piété des hypocrites.

La comédie jouée pour la première fois en 1873, au Théâtre de Quédik-Pacha, cette comédie eut un succès immense, unique dans le répertoire des théâtres turques. Elle obtint une série de plus de cent représentations, chiffre incroyable pour un pays où une première pièce n'a pas l'affiche plus de huit jours. Ce triomphe, dû autant à l'esprit critique de l'auteur qui, avec un entrain et un prestige — le vice, qu'à l'étude très approfondie des personnages, s'est renouvelé à toutes les reprises d'*Atchik-Bach*. Le rôle principal est tenu par *Asny-bey*, ce vieux beau qui se fardé et se teint la barbe, et combien son mariage avec *Hesna Hanem*, la jeune femme, pour qui il aime par des « moyens magiques », est d'une amusante cocasserie ! Quelle satire de nos mœurs dans *Hesna Hanem* ! Une jeune fille turque instruite à l'européenne, et si proche parente de *Lucy Watson*, de la comédie de *Lucy Watson* ! *Atchik-Bach*, le fourbe, le faux dévot qui abuse de la crédulité de tout le monde, avec quel soin, avec quel art il se fait passer pour un saint !

Malgré cela, les jeunes littérateurs ambitionnant les lauriers d'Ahmed-Midhat ne rêvent qu'à enrichir de chefs-d'œuvre le répertoire ottoman. De 1871 à 1873, les pièces se multiplient ; c'est l'époque la plus fertile et la plus indépendante de la littérature osmanlic. Pour ne citer que les noms qui méritent d'être retenus de la pléiade concourant à cette renaissance et se consacrant à la grandeur du théâtre national, je mentionnerai : Eb Uzia-Tewfik-bey, critique d'art éminent que son beau drame



Schéa de Zeibechler.
drame héroïque avec musique et danses d'Ahmed-Midhat Effendi

(1) *Atchik-Bach* signifie littéralement « tête nue, tête rasée ». Les *hodjas* (prêtres turcs) ont la tête rasée sous leur turban.



PERSONNAGE DE *Euzdenler*,
drame héroïque d'Ahmed-Midhat Effendi.

Edgeli-Koza (La mort par accident) place au premier rang; Hodja Haki, qui fit applaudir *Haqq* (la Justice), pièce à tendances socialistes; Bédri-Bey, dramaturge fécond, tiré hors de pair par *Gbiorenek*, une comédie très fine sur les coutumes populaires turques; enfin Sami-Bey, l'auteur de *Bessab* (l'Engagement), développant une action du plus haut intérêt dans une étude magistrale de la vie albanaise.

Cette extension d'idées nouvelles émut, épouvanta les partisans des opinions rétrogrades. Ils intrigèrent tant et si bien auprès du sultan Aziz qu'ils arrachèrent au Padischah une sentence inique contre les promoteurs du mouvement théâtral. Kemal, Ahmed-Midhat et Ebuzzia-Tewfik, dépêchés à Rhodes, payèrent par trois années d'exil leur tentative osée de progrès et d'indépendance.

Ce bannissement porta un coup terrible à la scène ottomane. La jeunesse littéraire, terrifiée, cessa ses écrits et le théâtre turc, terrorisé, fut, pendant de longues années, exclusivement alimenté de pièces traduites des langues européennes. On adapta Shakespeare à la scène osmanlie et le grand tragique fit, avec Molière, les frais de cette époque de crainte et de désarroi.

Après les malheureux événements de 1876 et la mort du sultan Aziz, qu'on « avait si tragiquement suicidé », un des premiers soins de son successeur, Mourad V, fut de rappeler Kemal et ses amis. Trois mois après, le monarque actuel, Abd-ul-Hamid Khan II, confirma la grâce de son libéral prédécesseur, admit les exilés à sa cour, leur fit servir, sur sa liste civile, de somptueuses pensions et les investit de hautes charges gouvernementales et publiques. Kemal est nommé gouverneur général de Rhodes, puis de Métélin, et Ahmed-Midhat reçoit, avec le titre d'« Excellence », la direction générale de l'Administration sanitaire de l'empire.

S'assurant ainsi par le pardon et la magnificence l'esprit et la plume de ces fiers révoltés fut un des actes les plus adroits, sinon des plus politiques, du commencement du règne du sultan Hamid.

Avec le retour des exilés, le théâtre se réveille de sa léthargie. Trois pièces d'Ahmed-Midhat, d'ordre différent, composées dans sa prison de Rhodes et qu'il avait clandestinement envoyées à Constantinople, sont représentées coup sur coup et remportent un succès d'autant plus grand que depuis de longues années le théâtre turc s'était vu sevré d'œuvres originales.

Tinlikam (Vengeance), drame en quatre actes, où l'auteur prend bravement le parti de la bourgeoisie contre la noblesse *Arnooultar* (les Albanais), scène de la vie de ce peuple guerrier, et *Kurd-Kizé* (la Fille kurde), pièce tragi-comique étudiant de très près les mœurs d'un pays annexé aujourd'hui, en partie, à la Turquie.

Ayant obtenu justice des ignares censeurs qui pensaient arrêter l'essor dramatique, et libre, désormais, de continuer l'œuvre régénératrice, Ahmed-Midhat se remet à la tâche et donne successivement *Zeibekler*, la *Tchenghi*, *Euzdenler* et *Tchiaouch*.

Zeibekler (les Zeibekes), drame héroïque en cinq actes, avec musique et danses. La scène se passe à Aidin, chez les zeibekes de la montagne, ces volontaires de l'armée du croissant, mi-soldats, mi-bandits, vivant de rapines, d'enlèvements et de meurtres en temps de paix, s'organisant en corps francs en temps de guerre et — poussés par un enthousiasme fanatique autant que par l'espoir prochain du butin, — n'hésitant pas à imposer leur enrôlement à l'Etat. Ce drame a une portée de haute moralité. Tout en vantant l'ardent patriotisme des zeibekes, l'auteur enseigne aux masses que point n'est besoin d'être bandit pour être bon patriote. L'adresse et l'art avec lesquels il charge son sujet même de faire le procès de ces condottieri turcs sont d'autant plus grands qu'il s'agissait de ne pas froisser une partie de la nation, très autoritaire, il est vrai, mais sachant vaillamment répandre son sang pour le drapeau. L'acte de la fête à Aidin, au cours duquel se noue l'intrigue amoureuse qui fera le fond du drame, est un vrai régal pour le cœur et l'esprit, les yeux et les oreilles. La scène d'amour est d'une joliesse exquise et l'on ne se lasse pas d'admirer ces aventuriers, — si fiers dans leur costume chamarré non de passementeries, mais d'armes de toutes sortes et de toutes dimensions, — dansant leurs *Zeibekes* (danses) de la montagne sur des rythmes notés par Ahmed-Midhat lui-même. Comme Jean Richepin, notre auteur se plaît à écrire la musique de ses œuvres, soit que la pièce se rapproche d'un opéra-comique comme *Zeibekler*, soit que ses allures rappellent l'opérette comme la *Tchenghi*.

La *Tchenghi* (la Danseuse), vaudeville en quatre actes, s'attaquant aux superstitions populaires, enracinées en Turquie plus que dans tout autre pays de l'Europe, à cause, sans doute, du long séjour des Ottomans parmi les peuples conquis, ces peuples d'Orient si enclins aux croyances chimériques, si prompts dans les pratiques superstitieuses, à cause aussi de l'ignorance crasse dans laquelle se débat le bas peuple en Turquie. Notre auteur n'épargne pas plus les astrologues et les chiromanciens que les tireuses de cartes et les liseuses de marc de café; c'est avec un bel éclat de rire qu'il châtie les *mires* (diseuses de bonne aventure) et les *Tchenghis* (chanteuses et danseuses populaires), espèces de bohémien-



ABDUL-HAMID-HAMID BEY

Cl. Abdéllah Néres.



NAZIM PACHA.

en Orient et qui, entre un *mani* (chanson) et une danse du ventre, tirent l'horoscope, prédisent l'avenir et conjurent le mauvais sort en distribuant des ailes de chauve-souris en putréfaction, dont la vertu, affirment-elles, « préserve des embûches ennemies ».

Zeibekler et la *Tebengi* obtinrent un succès d'autant plus persistant que leur musique devint très populaire. Pendant longtemps, les pianos des *baneums*, sur le Bosphore, et les orgues de Barbarie, dans la rue, répétaient les motifs de ces partitions.

Euzdenler (Les Nobles de la Circassie), drame héroïque en quatre actes, à grand spectacle. Tableau saisissant et mouvementé de la chevalerie circassienne, traversé par une idylle sanglante.

Tchiaouch (un ancien prince persan), drame historique en cinq actes, tiré du *Schah-Namé* (histoire des Rois), qui jette un jour nouveau sur la rivalité politique entre l'Iran et le Touran (la Perse et le Turkestan) sous le règne d'Ephrassiale.

Lorsque j'aurai mentionné la *Ziba* (la Belle), opérette en trois actes, paroles et musique d'Ahmed-Midhat, et *Merdoud Kiz* (la Fille maudite), un grand drame en cinq actes, adapté du roman à la scène, qui n'ont ni l'un ni l'autre été encore représentés, et quelques piécettes en un acte, sans autre importance qu'une « fantaisie réaliste », j'aurai donné un aperçu aussi complet que possible de l'œuvre théâtrale de notre auteur, le plus fécond et le plus dramatique de la scène ottomane, dont il fut, avec Kemal, l'âme et le défenseur.

ABD-UL-HAKK-HAMID-BEY. — Jusqu'ici, le théâtre turc s'était, pour les ouvrages de longue haleine, limité à la prose. Le premier, Abd-ul-Hakk-Hamid-Bey, qui, avec Ekrem et le regretté Nadji, forme la trinité

poétique de la Turquie contemporaine, écrivit pour la scène dans la « langue des dieux ».

Sans parler ici de son œuvre poétique, de tous points admirable, il est nécessaire de rappeler le jugement formulé sur lui par Ekrem-Bey dans sa *Lettre sur la poésie* : « Parmi les grands poètes de notre temps, c'est Abd-ul-Hakk-Hamid-Bey, écrit-il, dont la poésie me fait réfléchir le plus souvent. Sa poésie est ma bien-aimée spirituelle ».

Les trois qualités maîtresses qui ont placé Abd-ul-Hakk-Hamid au premier rang des poètes de son pays. — élévation soutenue de la pensée, beauté sculpturale de la forme, intransigence opiniâtre d'un art qui ne sacrifie à aucune école, à aucun anecdote, — se retrouvent dans ses quatre tragédies, où, magnifiquement, revivent les splendeurs de temps disparus.

Tarik (l'Abandon) reconstitue l'époque glorieuse des luttes des Maures de Grenade contre l'Espagne : *Echper et Douberti Hindou* (la Conquête des Indes) ressuscitent les exploits d'Alexandre-le-Grand sur la route des Indes, et *Sahara* (le Désert) évoque l'histoire de ces tribus nomades orientales, guerrières par excellence, animées d'un désir de conquête aussi grand que l'infini désert où, pendant longtemps, elles dressèrent leurs tentes.

En même temps que l'auteur répandait à profusion dans ces tragédies toutes les somptuosités de la poésie orientale, il était, malheureusement, personnage à personnage, entassait décor sur décor, avec l'altière indépendance d'un artiste bien personnel qui ne voit que son rêve. De sorte que, de ces tragédies, aucune n'a encore vu le feu de la rampe, Stamboul ne possédant pas une scène assez spacieuse pour permettre l'évolution des foules et le changement des décors entrevus par la fantaisie du

Abd-ul-Hakk-Hamid s'en console, très philosophiquement, à Londres où, depuis trois années, il occupe le poste de conseiller à l'ambassade impériale ottomane.

BEDRI et RIFAAT-BEYS. — *Temaschaâ* (la Scène), tel est le titre d'un recueil célèbre de vingtaine de pièces de théâtre, drames et comédies, tant originales que traduits, de la brillante collaboration de Bedri-Bey, l'auteur de *Gbiorekèh*, et de Rifaat-Bey.

Ces deux ouvrages parurent en deux fois : partie au moment de la guerre turco-russe et partie au moment de la guerre turco-serbe. L'idée patriotique anime les pièces du *Temaschaâ*, presque toutes militantes. C'est qu'alors tous les yeux étaient tournés du côté d'Alexinatch, tous les cœurs vers les nouvelles de Plevna, cette place dont la capitulation fut plus glorieuse que toute victoire.

NAZIM-PACHA. — La scène refléta le sentiment national qui fut le coup au succès de *Zeibekler* et inspira plus d'une œuvre embrasée du feu de la guerre. Parmi les plus célèbres, il faut citer le drame en cinq actes *Ya-Ghazi-Ya-Chéhid* (la Victoire ou la Mort), traitant exclusivement de la guerre turco-serbe ; et deux tragédies de Nazim-Pacha, l'ancien ministre de la Guerre et gouverneur général de Syrie, d'un bel élan patriotique et d'un grand talent. Ce sont : *Medjoun-e-Leila* (Medjoun et Leïla), inspirée par l'idylle du poète persan, et *Alexinatch*, épisode du siège de la ville serbe et de sa défense.

Il faut aussi mentionner *Moudgir* (l'Émigrante), esquisse saisissante de l'émigration des musulmans de la péninsule, et même Nazim-Pacha, la liste est close des ouvrages de Nazim-Pacha, terminant le répertoire littéraire du théâtre turc contemporain.

(1) La police, à Constantinople, est un *tarz*, et non une préfecture — attribué à un ministre spécial.



BEY RIFAAT-BEY.

TROISIÈME PÉRIODE

Le Théâtre Musical



ATKIAN.

Plus il donna successivement : *Arif*, *Keussé-Kobaya*, *Lebledji Horhor Agha*, trois opérettes qui furent représentées un peu partout, notamment au Caire et à Athènes, et provoquèrent, — *Arif* surtout — l'enthousiasme général.

Le livret d'*Arif*, dû à la plume de M. Alboreto, est une adaptation pour la scène ottomane du *Nouveau Seigneur du Village* de Boieldieu. Dans l'opérette turque, Frontin s'appelle *Arif* et Babet *Handji-Kidi*.

La partition est un chef-d'œuvre, unique en son genre. Entre autres fragments redemandés par le public, figurent, au premier acte, le duo *Tene teneni* (Tra la la la) et le chœur final, *Sefa gheldini* (Soyez le bienvenu). Le duo final du troisième acte, *Arif, artik ouzalma* (Arif, c'est assez, ne continuez pas), considéré comme le « clou » de la partition, ne manque jamais d'être bissé, trissé même par le public.

Son dernier opéra-féerie, *Zémireh* (Zémireh), créé d'abord, en 1891, au Théâtre d'hiver de la Concordia (1), par la troupe française de M^{me} Bennati, fut repris, en 1894, par la troupe d'opéra italien de M. Franzini, avec un grand luxe de décors et de costumes, sur la scène du Nouveau-Théâtre-Français. A l'occasion de cette reprise, Tchouhadjian refondit son œuvre : des déclamations de haut style remplacèrent le dialogue primitif. Aussi le succès fut-il prodigieux. Entre temps, l'orchestre de la « Splendide-Taverne » (actuellement « Parisiana ») joua de nombreux morceaux de son répertoire qui excitèrent l'admiration des auditeurs.

Doué d'une facilité de production extraordinaire, l'œuvre qu'il laisse est immense.

Seul, entre les musiciens ottomans, il coula la musique turque en une facture qui permit son introduction à l'orchestration européenne. L'originalité de ses idées, la fraîcheur de son écriture, le coloris de son style, sa science de composer brillent comme une radiation dans son œuvre. Il rendit son art intelligible à nos Français et eut droit aux fortes appréciations dont le témoignage lui arriva de toutes parts. Sa science de l'harmonie, son goût point fait à ses compositions, sa maîtrise et le charme dont son œuvre est imprégnée, les moindres détails de son œuvre intense.

A San-Stefano, après la guerre de 1878 entre la Russie et l'Empire ottoman, Nicolas le découra et le récompensa. De la satisfaction de voir son art apprécié et récompensé à plusieurs reprises.

Il fut décoré à deux reprises : une fois pour ses représentations à l'Opéra et un théâtre à Constantinople et les spectacles d'été.



DIKRAN TCHOUHADJIAN.

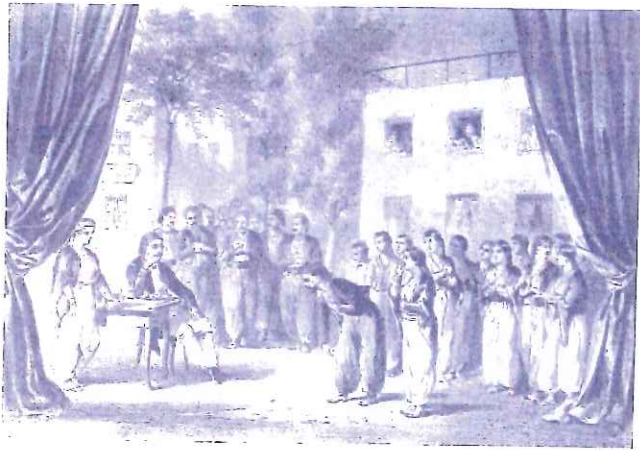


MUSICIENS DE THÉÂTRE TURC.

De nombreux critiques musicaux parisiens, entr'autres Weber, du *Temps*, consacrèrent de longs et élogieux articles à l'étude des œuvres musicales de ce compositeur qui mourut, presque misérablement, à Smyrne, exploité de toutes façons et sans la suprême joie, si ardemment rêvée, de voir Paris consacrer son talent.

Il est à souhaiter que sa mémoire reçoive cet hommage tardif et qu'un de nos directeurs de théâtres d'opérettes (pour l'heure, je ne vois que Samuel) s'aventure à monter un de ces ouvrages si pimpants d'allure, d'une gaieté si communicative, et dont l'originalité ne fait pas le moindre mérite.

Son collaborateur assidu fut M. Pierre Anméglian, le poète et publiciste bien connu à Constantinople, établi depuis sept ans à Paris. Nous lui devons la traduction française des opérettes de Tchouhadjian. Pour qui connaît la différence caractéristique qui existe entre la poésie française et la poésie turque, où rien ne se ressemble, ni rythmes, ni rimes, ni mesures, les difficultés à vaincre apparaissent énormes, et l'on ne peut que sincèrement féliciter le poète qui est parvenu à les surmonter et à les aplanir.



Arif. — GRAND CHEUR DU 1^{er} ACTE. — SEPA CHELDINER. (SOYEZ LE BIENVENU).

INFLUENCE DE TCHOUHADJIAN SUR LA SCÈNE TURQUE. — L'influence de Tchouhadjian fut considérable et décisive pour la scène ottomane lyrique et même dramatique. On peut affirmer que tout le théâtre turc contemporain tient son origine de l'initiative du maître arménien.

C'est seulement à partir des représentations d'*Arif* que se dessine nettement le mouvement littéraire du théâtre turc contemporain. Le mouvement musical suivit l'impulsion. Edifiés, par le succès, sur la valeur d'un genre qui, du jour au lendemain, devenait populaire, les Turcs ne furent pas longs à suivre l'exemple du jeune compositeur. Il y eut même, à ce sujet, entre la troupe de Tchouhadjian, installée dans un théâtre bâti à la hâte dans la cour de Mussafirhané de la place Sultan-Bayazid, à Stamboul, et la troupe d'Agop-Gulli, établie, comme nous l'avons vu, au théâtre de Guédik-Pacha, des querelles rappelant les querelles des Celosi avec les confrères de la Passion, des rivalités pareilles aux différends qui excitent les Comédiens du Roy contre ceux de l'Hôtel de Bourgogne.

Ces dissensions artistiques contribuèrent — pour le grand bien de l'art — à donner à la scène turque un développement qu'elle n'aurait jamais acquis sans cet antagonisme.

A la longue, cependant, ce duel paralysa les bonnes volontés, prépara la débâcle des troupes et fut cause, en partie, du marasme présent de la scène ottomane.

Quoiqu'il en soit, les promoteurs heureux de cette action parallèle furent Chakir-Pacha, ancien ambassadeur de la Porte à Saint-Petersbourg, Aghiah-Effendi, ancien ministre turc à Athènes, et Bedri-Bey, l'auteur de *Ghiorenek*. Aidés de quelques amis, ils traduisirent successivement : *la Belle Hélène*, *Orphée aux Enfers*, *Giroflé-Girofla*, *les Brigands*, *la Fille de Madame Angot*.

L'étude et la mise en scène en furent confiées à M. Ménadier, — régisseur français de la troupe de Gulli-Effendi, — lequel, quoique ne sachant pas un mot de turc, parvint, à force de volonté et de persévérance, à initier les acteurs de la troupe aux secrets de l'opérette française, qu'il possédait à fond.

Le succès de ces représentations fut considérable et, comme il était facile à prévoir, contrebalança celui de la troupe Tchouhadjian.

Ainsi que nous l'avons vu, seul, Tchouhadjian a écrit sa musique orientale pour l'orchestre européen, tel que nous le connaissons, composé du quatuor des cordes, des bois, des cuivres et de la batterie.

Quant aux autres compositeurs ottomans, entr'autres Ahmed-Midhar-Effendi, ils écrivent leurs opérettes pour les musiciens du théâtre turc dont l'orchestre spécial, — ainsi qu'on peut le voir sur la gravure, — est exclusivement composé de guitares, de tambours, de cithares et de violons. Encore ces instruments sont-ils tous différents de ceux que nous connaissons : les tambourins sont munis de cinq paires de cymbales minuscules, la cithare est archaïque, les guitares ovoïdes, et on joue sur ces violons, d'une forme bizarre, en les plaçant sur le genou.

C'est là l'orchestre idéal de la musique turque, proprement dite, dont la gamme, toujours en mode mineur, diffère de la nôtre, et dont le chant, étrangement monotone voluptueux, charme et crispe, en même temps, et l'oreille et les



Arif. — DUEL FINAL DU 1^{er} ACTE (Tous tenent).



Arif, opéra comique de Tchouhadjian, rôle de Handji-Kidi.

Atteinte de la poitrine et ne se faisant aucune illusion sur son état, elle ne recula pas à demander à Ahmed-Midhat-Effendi d'adapter pour elle à la scène turque la *Dame aux Camélias*. L'illustre auteur acquiesça au désir de l'artiste phthisique. Oh ! spectacle humainement intense de cette Marguerite Gautier, jouée — vécue, plutôt — par une enfant qui sait se mourir et même mal qui emporta l'héroïne du drame. Tous ceux qui ont assisté à cette représentation d'un réalisme flagrant — car la pauvre fille pleurait de vraies larmes et une toux non « piochée » secouait son être frêle — ont gardé de M^{lle} Nevart un souvenir qu'aucune actrice, dans ce rôle, n'effacera. Le jeu sincère, exquis et contenu de la divine Bartet a des analogies avec la manière de l'artiste osmanlie.

M^{lle} *Ehkimian*, qui prit la succession de M^{lle} Nevart fut une actrice de grande valeur : elle eut d'éclatants succès, mais ne parvint pas à faire oublier sa géniale devancière.

M^{lle} *Adjémian*, la Germaine Gallois de Stamboul, une créature superbe, faisant valoir, avec une rare intelligence servie par un organe bien timbré, la musique de Tchouhadjian dont elle a créé tous les ouvrages.

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Parmi les hommes :

Agop-Gulli-Effendi fut le premier acteur en vogue. Quoique médiocre, comme l'a prouvé plus tard le jeu de ses succès, il a laissé dans le peuple qui l'aimait et dont il a fait longtemps les délices, un souvenir qui tient de la légende.

Aïmian — un Arménien — le plus grand des artistes dramatiques osmanlis, en même temps qu'un peintre remarquable et un poète distingué, ainsi qu'en font foi deux recueils de vers publiés en Russie. Une espèce de Mounet-Sully oriental, oubliant complètement sa personnalité pour entrer dans « la peau » du héros. Grâce à lui, les Turcs ont connu, applaudi, aimé Shakespeare dont il a été un inoubliable interprète. Il poussait la conscience artistique jusqu'à aller étudier, vivre ses rôles sur les lieux mêmes où se déroule l'action. C'est ainsi qu'il s'est identifié avec Othello à Venise et à Chypre, avec Roméo à Vérone, avec Hamlet à Elsenour. Le gardien et les fossoyeurs du cimetière da vois vous parleront de ce « maniaque » qui venait s'entretenir avec eux et s'oubliait à monologuer, des heures durant, dans « une langue incompréhensible ». La nature primesautière, nerveuse, sensible à l'excès de l'artiste avait soif d'émotions pareilles. Quand on pense qu'il considérait l'art du

Théâtre Contemporain

ACTEURS TURCS ET THÉÂTRES DE STAMBOUL

La femme musulmane ne pouvant, de par la loi, paraître en public accompagnée d'un homme — cet homme fut-il son frère, son père, son mari même, — et à plus forte raison monter sur une scène au milieu de plusieurs hommes qui n'ont aucune attache avec sa famille, les auteurs et directeurs furent obligés de recruter leur personnel féminin parmi les Arméniennes.

On en a vu de très habiles parmi les deux cents et quelques étoiles en herbe — comme aurait dit notre pauvre « oncle » — qui brûlèrent les planches turques et firent les créations variées du répertoire.

Je ne citerai que celles qui ont atteint à la célébrité.

Dans le drame, la comédie et l'opérette, M^{lle} *Yéranouh* (Véronique) *Caracashian*, la Croizette, et, en même temps, la Schneider de la scène turque. Je n'oublierai jamais la verve, le jeu endiablé de cette artiste — enfant de la balle, grandie sur la scène — la première chanteuse de la troupe, une étoile qui a brillé de tout son éclat à Stamboul et qui ne se serait certes pas désorientée à Paris, sur la scène des *Folies-Dramatiques*, des *Bouffes-Parisiens*, voire des *Variétés*. Ce qui surpasse, c'est que cette même actrice, si alerte, si spirituelle dans l'opérette, possédait au suprême degré le don des larmes. Elle excellait aussi dans le drame où les premiers rôles lui étaient dévolus. Ainsi que chez M^{lle} Jane Hading et Jeanne Granier, il y avait en elle une divette d'opéra-bouffe et une grande actrice dramatique. Comme tel, son nom, doublement glorieux, est inséparable de la scène ottomane.

M^{lle} *Eugéni* (Eugénie) *Caracashian*, sa sœur, inoubliable dans la comédie, une M^{lle} Kolb ottomane, sachant faire ressortir avec une jovialité communicative et une finesse très personnelle le comique d'une situation.

M^{lle} *Marie Nevart*, enlevée par une mort prématurée, elle ne recula pas à demander à Ahmed-Midhat-Effendi d'adapter pour elle à la scène turque la *Dame aux Camélias*. L'illustre auteur acquiesça au désir de l'artiste phthisique. Oh ! spectacle humainement intense de cette Marguerite Gautier, jouée — vécue, plutôt — par une enfant qui sait se mourir et même mal qui emporta l'héroïne du drame. Tous ceux qui ont assisté à cette représentation d'un réalisme flagrant — car la pauvre fille pleurait de vraies larmes et une toux non « piochée » secouait son être frêle — ont gardé de M^{lle} Nevart un souvenir qu'aucune actrice, dans ce rôle, n'effacera. Le jeu sincère, exquis et contenu de la divine Bartet a des analogies avec la manière de l'artiste osmanlie.

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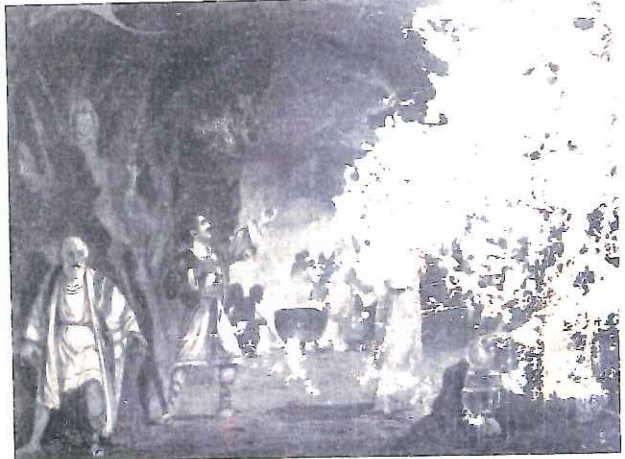
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Une scène de *Zimireh* opéra comique de Tchouhadjian.



COMÉDIENS DE LA TROUPE DE THÉÂTRE OSMANLI,
dirigée par M. MINAKIAN, célèbre tragédien.

Triantz, Hamdi-Effendi et Kutchuck Ismaël, trinité de collègues qui a nom Abdul-Rézak.
Le reste ne vaut pas l'honneur d'être nommé.

THÉÂTRES DE STAMBOUL

Le Théâtre-Nahoum, brûlé en 1870, lors du terrible incendie qui, en moins de sept heures, réduisit en cendres les deux tiers de Péra, n'a pas été réédifié. Il en est de même du Nouveau Théâtre-Français qui a été également la proie des flammes. Des maisons de rapport s'élèvent aujourd'hui sur leur emplacement.

Le Théâtre de Guedik-Pacha, démoli par la municipalité, a été remplacé, il y a quelques années, par un superbe Madressé (école).

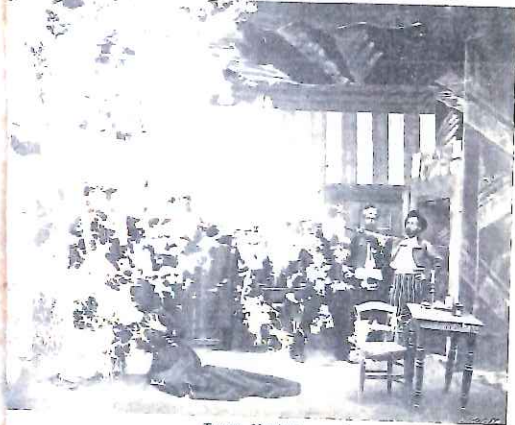
Quant au Théâtre-Français (Palais de Cristal), — où tout enfant j'ai plaudi Maesmacker, dans le répertoire d'Offenbach, et, plus tard M. Cui-er, dans le rôle d'Anna des Danicheff, et M. Riga, dans le type excellent Oétilion, le répétiteur de Bibé, — il y a beau temps qu'il menace et qu'on n'y donne plus de représentations.

Outre le théâtre privé que le sultan Abd-UI-Hamid a fait construire au Palais Impérial de Yildiz (l'Etoile), sa résidence habituelle, bien autrement confortable et luxueux que la scène élevée sur l'ordre de son père en environs de Dolma-Baghtché, Constantinople possède aujourd'hui :

A Péra : le Théâtre-des-Petits-Champs, la Concordia et le Cirque de Péra, transformé, il y a cinq ans, en un charmant théâtre. Ces trois théâtres, quartier européen, sont alimentés presque exclusivement par des troupes françaises, italiennes et grecques renouvelées tous les ans, ou en représentations. Très rarement, les Turcs vont y donner des spectacles.

On joue de tout à Péra : le drame, la comédie, le vaudeville, l'opéra, l'opéra comique et l'opérette. Il arrive même assez souvent que les Constantinopolitains aient bien avant nous les primeurs musicales italiennes : ainsi l'Aïda, la Cavalleria et la Gran Via, et I Pagliachi, joués là-bas des années durant avant d'être connus chez nous.

Il y a aussi le Théâtre des Variétés, où le célèbre comique Hassan-Effendi et sa troupe donnent des représentations en langue turque.



Troupe Minakian
NEUVIÈME TABLEAU DE Simone et Marie

comédien comme un sacerdoce, on ne peut qu'admirer, que respecter cet « entraînement », tellement sincère qu'il fut cause de sa mort. Un soir, dans *Kean*, d'Alexandre Dumas, il joua avec tant de conviction et de feu la fameuse scène des affronts : « Je suis Polichinelle ! Un bâton à Polichinelle ! », qu'il fut pris de syncopes sur la scène même. On l'emmena agonisant. Il mourut quelques jours après d'un transport au cerveau. Ernesto Rossi, le célèbre acteur italien, qui assistait à cette représentation et accompagna le moribond chez lui, a dit d'Atamian que « c'était la plus belle âme d'artiste qu'il ait connue ». Sa mort fut un deuil pour le théâtre turc.

Minakian-Effendi, qui prit sa succession, est un comédien de grande valeur et de rare intelligence : il lui manque cependant le coup d'aile qui, de son devancier, faisait l'artiste de génie. Tout à la fois acteur, régisseur, décorateur, il est actuellement directeur du théâtre qui porte son nom et où se jouent le drame et la tragédie.

Abd-ul-Rézak-Effendi, le plus brillant des comiques, le comique par excellence, le Coquelin aîné de la scène turque. Brio, gaieté, finesse alliés à un superbe « panache », il réalise au naturel l'immortel héros de Beaumarchais. Comme son collègue Minak, il dirige un théâtre portant son nom, qui donne l'hospitalité à la comédie et dont il est aussi le régisseur, le décorateur et le principal acteur.

Il y a aussi deux autres troupes de comiques excellents, mais dont la gloire est éclipsée par le génial



Troupe Minakian
Le venant français ou Sculpteur.

A Galata : deux anciens cafés-concerts, d'assez pauvre aspect, le *Eyzarce* et l'*Amérique*, ont pompeusement usurpé le nom de théâtres. On y donne, communément, des pièces originales turques et la comédie se déroule autant sur la scène que dans la salle bariolée de turcs, de grecs, d'arméniens, de bulgares, d'albanais, d'arnauts et de monténégrins, venus tous là, en costumes nationaux, applaudir les facéties des comiques de l'endroit.

A Stamboul : le croirait-on ? Il n'existe pas actuellement une scène digne de ce nom. Quatre baraques en bois, assez vastes et convenables, voilà les théâtres du quartier turc. Deux seuls valent la peine d'être cités : Le Théâtre-Osmanli dirigé par Minakian, et le Théâtre d'Handchany-Osmani, dirigé par Abdul-Rézak. Paix aux deux autres.

Les baraquements qui servaient au Grand-Théâtre Ottoman, à Chahzadé-Bachi, dirigé par Chevki Effendi, ayant présenté des dangers sous tous les rapports, le conseil d'État (section civile), a décidé d'empêcher les troupes de jouer dans ces théâtres et invité les propriétaires à les faire rebâtir en pierre.

Détail à noter : le banlieue et les environs de la capitale : Makrikeyu, San-Stefano, Ortakeuy, Emirghian, Calender, possèdent des



Troupe Minakia
1^{er} TABLEAU DU REPENTIR INCIÈRE.

plus que dans tout autre pays, manie là-bas, sans trêve, sans répit, sans raison souvent, son énorme paire de ciseaux ? Croirait-on que, de nos jours, *Ruy-Blas* ne peut être joué en Turquie que si la Direction du théâtre consent à changer sa reine en marquise, par la bonne raison qu'il n'est pas « convenant » qu'un laquais soit amoureux d'une reine ? C'est grâce aux instances de M. Constans, notre ambassadeur à Constantinople, que Mounet-Sully a pu, dans la tournée faite en 1899, jouer en Turquie *Ruy-Blas*, *Céaipa-Roi* et *Framlet* sans « ripatouillages ». Croirait-on que le roi de la Favorite doit abdiquer et devenir un duc quelconque, s'il tient à être applaudi par le public pérote ? Pourquoi ? Je vous le donne en mille. Parce que, comme c'est un très grand honneur d'être choisi par le sultan pour devenir l'époux d'une de ses *ikbal* (favorites) — nom donné aux odalisques qui ont partagé la couche impériale, — et que cette faveur est toujours acceptée avec une vive reconnaissance, la censure ottomane ne voit dans le ténor Fernand qu'un révolté, d'autant plus dangereux qu'au lieu de remercier son souverain de la faveur spéciale dont il est l'objet, il repousse l'*ikbal* d'Alphonse XI et se permet de chapitrer son roi en pleine cour, de briser son épée et de fouler aux pieds l'ordre de la Toison d'or !!!

Dernièrement encore, — il n'y a pas cinq mois, — M^{lle} Jane Hading n'a pu, lors de sa tournée, jouer la *Princesse Georges* sous ce titre. Il a fallu, — pour que la comédie de Dumas fils pure être représentée à Constantinople, — modifier sur les affiches : *La Duchesse Georges*.

Aussi point n'en faut de ces spectacles qui peuvent faire perdre le respect qu'on doit aux monarques et aux grands. L'interdiction s'étend jusqu'aux opérettes que la fantaisie de nos librettistes égaye parfois d'un roi imaginaire. Certes, la sévérité de la censure, la dislocation et la pénurie des troupes homogènes, le manque d'une salle nationale, la dernière discorde civile, ne sont pas motifs indifférents à la crise que traverse la scène turque ; mais leur poids est presque nul devant la cause première inhérente, malheureusement, à l'organisation de la société musulmane.

Cette cause est la condition faite par les lois à la femme turque. « Voilà l'ennemi du progrès en Turquie », s'écriait le grand-vizir Fuad-Pacha, en montrant le mur des harems : tant que ce mur existera, nous ne serons après à rien. »

Ce mot profond acquiert une valeur d'autant plus grande qu'il se trouve placé dans la bouche d'un musulman. Oui, tant que la femme, en Turquie, sera considérée comme « un être sans âme, passif et nul », que l'indépendance du cœur et l'indépendance de l'amour lui seront refusées, qu'elle n'aura pas conscience du rôle admirable qui la fait, dans la création et la société, l'égal et non « l'esclave de l'homme » ; en d'autres termes, tant que ce mur existera, les arts périront. Et comme les arts, qu'on croit un luxe, ne sont en réalité que le pain de l'âme, du cœur et de l'esprit, les Osmanlis seront privés de la nourriture spirituelle qui, seule, rend les peuples grands et forts. Voilà pourquoi, peut-être, s'amoindrit, se morcelle et s'émiette le vaste empire qui fut la Turquie de Soliman-le-Grand. Et tant que ce mur existera, l'amoindrissement, le morcellement, l'émiettement continueront leur action néfaste et destructive jusqu'à l'heure du final. Alors, le mur tombera. Trop tard ! Pourquoi lutter contre le courant du siècle et ne pas vouloir, de son vivant, que qu'un jour ou l'autre la civilisation imposera fatalement ? C'est écrit. Si le théâtre turc ne produit plus, n'est-ce pas sûr qu'il est « vidé », qu'il a usé tous les sujets, hormis l'inépuisable éternel féminin ?

Si je me suis permis de traduire ici un sentiment général, c'est que j'aime l'Orient. J'y suis né, j'y ai vécu. Mes yeux sont encore pleins du ciel de sa lumière et plus d'une arrache rive mon cœur à son souvenir. C'est pourquoi je me dévouerai de mes faibles forces à son indépendance morale, fièrement heureux si mes efforts aident à donner un jour à la musulmane la place à laquelle, dans un monde et dans un siècle civilisés, a droit la Femme, cet être rose et charmant, et si frêle et si fort en sa mission doublement féconde, dont le corps, inspirant l'Amour, enfante la Vie ; dont l'âme, inspirant les Arts, engendre l'Immortalité !

ADOLPHE THALASSO.

M. ADOLPHE THALASSO prie les auteurs, critiques, hommes de lettres, et toutes les personnes qui s'intéressent au mouvement théâtral de la Turquie, la Perse, la Grèce, la Russie, la Roumanie, la Serbie et la Bulgarie, de lui adresser leur correspondance soit à la *Revue Théâtrale*, 60, rue de La Rochefoucauld ; soit à son domicile particulier : 191, rue Saint-Honoré, Paris. Ad. TH.

Le Gérant : CHARLES RICHARD

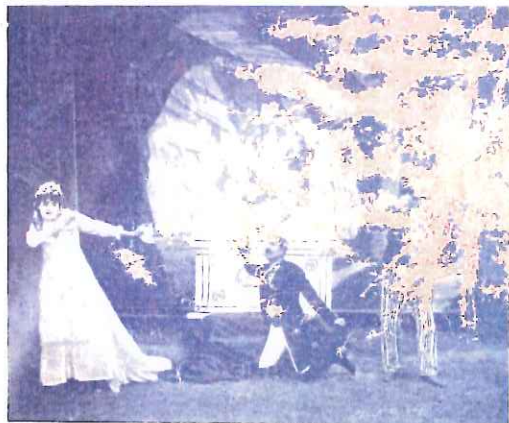
théâtres bien mieux construits et conditionnés que ceux de Stamboul. Durant la saison d'été, il n'est pas de jardin public, dans la ville et à la campagne, qui ne se transforme en théâtre à ciel découvert. L'exemple est suivi partout, dans les environs, de Tchamlidja et Baïlarbachi aux Îles-des-Princes, et dans le Bosphore où toutes ces scènes improvisées font d'assez fructueuses recettes.

CONCLUSION

Quel est l'avenir de ce théâtre qui, en moins de trente ans, a fourni une des carrières les plus fécondes qu'aient eues à enregistrer les annales dramatiques ?

Lorsque des succès brillants sont remportés, tous les jours, par des Osmanlis, dans l'histoire, la philosophie, la linguistique et les sciences en général, pourquoi leur littérature imaginative progresse-t-elle si lentement ; pourquoi les arts restent-ils stationnaires ; pourquoi, surtout, en ces dernières années, aucune œuvre marquante, aucun nom nouveau ne se sont-ils imposés à la scène ? En matière d'art, n'est-ce pas reculer que de ne pas avancer ?

Faudrait-il rechercher la cause de cet arrêt dans la censure préfectorale, dans l'implacable Anastasie musulmane qui, mieux et



TROUPE MINAKIAN. — 1^{er} TABLEAU DE LA DÉFINITIVE VOIE.

APPENDIX B:

Scripts Published Between 1908-1923.

Cover Note:

This list intends to give an improved list of the scripts published between the years 1908-1923. Since the late Ottoman cataloging differs from the contemporary citation system, the information of the scripts can be missing in some catalogues, but present in some others. Therefore I cross-checked the reference works to prepare this list; which, I am sure will be revised in further researches.

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APPENDIX C

An Example of 'Milli Facia' Genre:

The Transcription of Dr. Kamil's *Canlı Cenaze Yahut Yıldız'da Meşrutiyet Telaşları*.¹

Cemiyet Kütübhanesi Numara 2
Doktor Kamil
Canlı Cenaze Yahud Yıldızda Meşrutiyet Telaşları
Tiyatro 4 Perde
(...*...) Birlikde Her Hakkı Mahfuzdur
Babiali Caddesinde Arşak Garibyan Matbaası, 1325.

EŞHAS

Resne, Ohri, Milli Çete Gönüllüleri
Birinci Gönüllü... Çete Efradından
İkinci Gönüllü... Keza
Üçüncü Gönüllü... Keza
Çete Kumandanı... Kolağası Niyazi Bey
Peri-i Hürriyet... Bir Kız (Muhayyel)
Bir Doktor... Mektebi Harbiye Doktoru Kamil Efendi
Bir Eczacı... İzmir Fırkası Eczacılarından Bir Zat
Bir Kaymakam... Mektebi Harbiye Müdürü Kaymakam Nuri Bey
Bir Binbaşı... Ders Nazırı Vahib Bey
Bir Topçu Yüzbaşısı... Bolulu Habib Bey
Bir Kolağası... Erkanı Harb Kolağası Cemil Bey
Bir Mülazım... Ressam İbrahim Şakir Bey
Orkestracılar... Nüzhetiye Bağçesi Orkestrası
Zabıtlar... Her Sınıf Zabitan
Başkatib... Serkatib Tahsin Paşa
Levazım Reisi... Manastır Levazım Reisi Mirliwa Haşim Paşa
Erkanı Harbiye Reisi... Manastır Erkanı Harbiye Reisi Mirliwa Hasan Paşa
Katibi Sani... İzzet Paşa
Sermusahib... Cevher Ağa
Bir Kız... Yıldız Köçeklerinden
Abdülhamid... Hakamı Zalim
Yıldız Erkanı İstibdadından Birkaçı: Katib-i Sani, Kabasakal, Ebulhüda
Bir Jöntürk... İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyetinden Bir Zat
Galabalık... Hürriyet Nümayişçileri...

¹ (Dr.) Kamil, *Canlı Cenaze Yahut Yıldız'da Meşrutiyet Telaşları* (İstanbul: Arşak Garoyan Matbaası, 1325).

* "(...)" signifies the words that I was unable to read.

BİRİNCİ PERDE

EŞHAS: Resne, Ohri Çeteleri, Birinci Gönüllü, İkinci Gönüllü, Üçüncü Gönüllü, Çete kumandanları, Peri-i Hürriyet.

Sahne: Dağlık

Ormanlık bir mahali irae ider. (Bülbül nağmeleri işidilir.) Efrad dağılık oturub birbiriyle konuşuyorlar: (...*...) ya Kanun-i Esasi, ya ölüm. Ya hürriyet, ya ölüm!

Birinci meclis

Gönüllüler

Birinci Gönüllü: Arkadaşlar kumandanlarımız Çerçis Beyle uyuşmağa gittiler. Bir kere uyuşulsun! Bütün Toskalık bizimle beraber olacak zaten (...*...) Hemen hepsi yoluna girdi. Orduda bulunan zabitan ve memurların pek çoğu kumandanlarımızın fikrindedir. Daha doğrusu bütün millet istibdadın aleyhindedir.

İkinci Gönüllü: Millet istibdadın hem aleyhindedir hem de elinde.

Birinci Gönüllü: Canım o nasıl söz! hem aleyhinde hem de lehinde nasıl olur?

İkinci Gönüllü: Lehinde dimedim! Elinde, elinde!

Birinci Gönüllü: Ha!.. Anladım... Evet. Evet, hem aleyhinde hem de elindedir. İşte yapacağımız iş istibdadın o melun elini kırub parçalamaktan ibaret değil mi ya? Bizi kısıkvrak bağlayub ezen o alçak el kırılmadıkça bu millet selamet bulamaz.

İkinci Gönüllü : (Cebinden Bir Kitap Çıkarır) Gizli Figan İsmindeki şu kitab bak İstibdad için neler yazmış!

Birinci Gönüllü: Aman oku da hep dinleyelim.

İkinci Gönüllü: (Kitabdan Bir Sahife Açup Okur Herkes Dinler): “İşte gülizarı vatan mahv oldu istibdad ile bizden istimdat ider her zerre bir feryat ile geçmesin eyyamımız beyhude istimdat ile nice (...*...) müktezi gaddar ile bidad ile zalim istibdad devri dur yeis eyyamıdır arkadaşlar kan dökün kan dökmenin hengamıdır. Arkadaşlar kan dökün (...*...). Kainat lerzençeş olsun cihana bizdeki azim ve sebat zilleti ömre müreccahtır. Şerefli bermümatı ümmete lazım değildir. Böyle efsarı hayat zalim ve istibdad devri durdu yeis eyyamıdır arkadaşlar kan dökün kan dökmenin hengamıdır.

Birkaç Gönüllü: Eyvallah hemşeri! Yazan da okuyan da var olsun!

Birinci Gönüllü: Ne kadar da doğru yazmış! Şu masum milleti istibdaddan kurtarabilmek ancak melus kanları dökmele olabilir. Biz bu dağlara niçün çıktık, bu silahları niçün taşuruz? “Ya Kanun-i Esasi, ya ölüm” diye niçün yemin ittik? Elbette lüzmanda kanda dökülecektir. (Kılıncını çekerek) Bu kılıçları niçün bileedik? Milleti

naili hürriyet itmek için değil mi? Vatanı, milleti, kurtarmak için her fedakarlığa katlanacağız, işimize engel olmak isteyenleri (kılıncı göstererek) kılıçlarımızla tepeleyeceğiz. Bakınız şairin biri ne diyor:

Şanlıdır tarihimiz pek şanlıdır.
Olmadı olmaz bu millet kanlıdır.
Müdafamız(?) doğrudur bürhanlıdır,
Kahramanız namımız Osmanlıdır. (Kılıncı uzatır)
Seyfi istiklali millet kanlıdır,
Hep fedayi hep fedayi zadeyiz,
Düşmanı kahr itmeğe amadeyiz,
Korkudan endişeden azadeyiz,
Kahramanız namımız namımız Osmanlıdır. (Kılıncı uzatır)
İşte şimşir celadet kanlıdır,
Canımız olsun fedayı hürriyete,
Başka şey olmaz bedel bu nimete,
Hadımız alayı şanı ümmete,
Kahramanız namımız Osmanlıdır.
(Kılıncı gösterir) İşte şimşir celadet kanlıdır.
(Hepsi alkışlarlar.)

(Biraz sonra çete kumandanları gelir... Hepsi kıyam edup saf teşkil iderler.)

(Kumandan şu nutku irad eder): Kahraman arkadaşlar! (Hatıratı Niyaziden tashih edilmiştir.) Bu günde hamd olsun alayımızın efradını iyice artırabildik. Mülazım Osman, Şevki, Yusuf Efendilerle Belediye Reisi Cemal ve polis Tahir, virgü katibi Tahsin Efendiler civar köyleri dolaşarak yüzlerce fedayi yazdılar. Ohri milli alayının birinci tabur kumandanı Kolağası Eyüp Sabri Beyle Mülazım İbrahim, Cemal, Hüseyin, Avni, Agah, Murtaza, Abdullah, Mazhar Efendilerle İstavoralı Adem Ağa ve Remzi Bey de bizim gibi gice ve gündüz Balkanlarda dolaşarak, köy ve kasabaları gezerek milli taburları teşkiliyle uğraşıyorlar. Erkanı harb binbaşısı Enver ve Hasan beylerle, erkanı harb kaymakamı Selahaddin Bey, mümtaz yüzbaşısı Necmeddin ve Yüzbaşı Şerafeddin ve Hayreddin, doktor yüzbaşısı Fehim daha birçok zabitan alayımıza iltihak itmek üzere firar itmişlerdir. Bunların hepside mukaddes vatanımız, mukaddes cemiyetimiz menfaatine fedayı hayatı göze aluyorlar. İnşallah az zaman zarfında milli alaylarımız, ordunun kahraman askerleri, cemiyetin fedakar azaları ile el ele vererek şu menhus idareyi müstebideyi ta temelinden yıkacağız ve bu icraatımızla yeni ve mesud bir devreyi hürriyet tesis iderek peri-i hürriyete mümtaz ve müstesna bir abideyi meşveret ithaf ideceğiz! Senelerden beri milleti kabusu leim istibdad altında ezen bu alçak idarenin mukarr habaseti İstanbul'da Yıldız isimindeki saraydır... Bu sarayda kasab çengelinden daha ziyade eğrilen ve etrafına kendi gibi eğri ve iğrenç vatan, millet hainlerini toplayan bir hükümdar zalim oturduğunu ve otuz iki seneden beri zavallı millet-i Osmaniye'nin başına püsküllü bela kesildiğini hep bilseniz gerek!

(Bir Ses): Külli tarife ne hacet ne çiçekdir biliriz. İşte bizi koklayanın burnunu düşürtecek derecede keskin ve müstekire zulm ve itsaf kokuları saçan bu gaddar padişaha isyan itdik... Kendisine de telgrafla malumat virdik ya Kanun-i Esasi'yi hemen kabul itmeli veyahud millet savleti kahramananesiyle kabul itdirtecektir.

Birkaç Kişi: Evet evet! Ya bu davayı gütmeli ya bu diyardan gitmeli! Arkadaşlar! Biz vatanın milletin selameti uğrunda her dürlü mahrumiyetlere katlanarak balkanlarda dolaşırken Abdülhamid'in dalkavukları olan milyonla alçak herifler saraylarında, köşklerinde, yalılarında iş ve işret zevk ve şehvete dalmış eğleniyorlar biz yalçın kayalar üzerinde tabanlarımızı patlatırken o millet düşmanları arabalar, yatlar, kotralar içinde keyf sürüyorlar. Hülasa yetimler sefil ve nalan kanlı gözyaşları dökerken, neferler çıplak ve perişan yırtık elbiselere bürünürken zabıtlar, memurlar fakr-ü sefalet içinde inlerken, menfiler ağlarken, o menhus müstebidler bütün bu hallere tahtaboşu kahkahalarla mukabele idiyorlar! Ve hepsi ihsanlar, rütbelere, payeler, nişaneler, milyonlar içinde mesudane yaşıyorlar! Vatanını seven hangi Osmanlı tasavvur olunur ki bu acı hakikatleri bu acı cennetsizlikleri bilsinde artık bıçak kemiğe dayandı illallah demesin! Arkadaşlar! Tehlikeyi azime içinde bulunan vatanın selameti namına vahdaniyeti rabbaniye üzerine ettikleriniz ahd ve misakı, yani vaadı fedakarlığı derhatır ediyor musunuz?

Birkaçı bir ağızla: Hay hay, ya ölüm, ya selamet-i vatan!

Şu anda içimizde canını evlad ve iyalini huzur ve aramini hatıra getirecek kadar zayıf kalpli bir kimsenin bulunmadığını bilirim. İhtimal ki içimizde hasbel beşeriye uzun müddet yayan yürüyemeyecek, susuzluğa, açlığa, çıplaklığa, sıcağa, soğuğa tahammül gösteremeyecek hayatın maddi ve manevi bütün müşak ve mezahmine takat götüremeyecek kimseler vardır onlara hitab ediyorum vicdanlarına müracaat etsünler. Hayatın bütün düşmanlarıyla cenkleşmeğe kendilerinde tahammül göremeyenlere hitab ediyorum. Kendine güvenemeyenler avdet idebilirler, onlara müsaade idiyorum. Gitsünler köylerinde bize dua itsinler. Kezalik hayata ebediyen veda iderek feleğin her meşiyetine dehrin büyük felaketine hain ve fesad bir hükümetin bütün kuvvet ve şiddetine karşı göğüs germeği, kahramanane olmağı vazifeyi mukaddese bilen bütün fedakaran arkadaşlarıma söylüyorum. Vazifeyi ulu cenab bizi rızayı bari daireyi. (...*...) fahresinde adilane harekete davet idiyor. Pek büyük fedakarlık diliyor. Bilatefrik cins ve mezheb bütün köylüleri ve bizi içtimayen bütün vatandaşların selametini emr idiyor.

Onların ırzını ırzımız, mallarını mallarımız gibi tanımak istiyor. Zulmü, sirkati katiyen nehy idiyor. Kanun-i Esasi medeniyet olan şeriati gazayı ahmediyenin tatbik ahkamı ile İslamlığın, Osmanlılığın alayı şanını cemiyetimizden bekliyor!

Binaenaleyh bu andan itibaren vazifemiz icrayı adaletle vatana temini selamettir.

Kahramanlar! bir kere ne olduğumuzu düşünelim: Biz evvel nesil kerimi düdei Osmanıyanız kim mahmurdur seraba mayemiz humı şehadetten. Millet-i istibdad denilen vahşi canavarın pençeyi tasallutundan, dandanı tağallübünden kurtarmadıkça

ve mukaddes vatanımızın kan ağlamasına bir nihayet virmedikçe, bu tarz revşden asla feragat itmeyeceğiz. Ya, zincir esareti parçalarız, ya ölürüz. Kemend (...*...) ejder kahr olsa celladın müreccahtır. Yine bin kere zinciri esaretden felek her dürlü esbabı cefasın toplusun gelsin dönersek kahbeyiz millet yolunda bir azimetten.

Birkaçı Bir Ağızdan: Esaret zincirini parçalamadıkça asla dönmeyeceğiz. Arkadaşlar cemiyetimizin maksadı meşru ve mukaddesine nail olmak için kanımızın son damlasını sarf idinceye kadar sebat ve metanet göstereceğiz avni hak ile mutlaka muvaffak da olacağız. O zaman ahrarı ümmet ne demek olduğunu, vatan fedaileri ne yolda çalışdığını bütün alemler insaniyet ve medeniyete göstereceğiz.

(Uzaktan peri-i hürriyet gözüdür, etrafında melekler mehtablar yakub şarkılar söylerler...)

Kumandan: (Peri-i hürriyeti görerek), İşte peri-i hürriyet aguş telakkisini açmış bizi bekliyor! Maksadımız zinciri esareti koparub hürriyetin aguş muazzezine atılmak değil mi?

(Peri-i hürriyet tarafından söylenen bir şarkı işidilir.)

(Aman dinleyelim... Ne kadar latif sadalar!)

(Şu sözler işidilir): Gönlünde akdes sevda vatan muhabbetidir. Vatan muhabbeti ömrün yegane ziyetidir. Vatan! Vatan! diyerek can viren aliyenin kalub ehli vatan kibri zi mehabetidir. Şafak değil kızaran safhayı semada bu (...*...) cerihalı vatanın aksi hunı mihnetidir. Binayı zulm yıkılsın temelden allahım ki hazreti vatanın menbai felaketidir! Fakat şu dağda gezen kahraman fedailer! Şu muhtazır vatanın harisi selametidir!

(Peri-i hürriyetin yaklaştığı görülür.)

Kumandan: Oh! Yarabbim hikmeti kudretinin hayranı azametiyyiz. Bize peri-i hürriyetin göstermekle artık naili hürriyet olmak zamanının yaklaştığını tebşir eyliyorsun!

Vatandaşlar! Bu beşareti ileyhadan daha büyük fal hayr tasavvur olunur mu? Sizi şimdiden tebrik iderim emin olunuz ki bundan sonra ejderi istibdadın zulm ve hıyanetle kabaran göğsü Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin, en küçük bir darbeyi hamiyetiyle birden ezilecek! Şeytan nicesinden daha aşına olan desti lain istibdad birdenbire kırılacaktır. Öyle ise ne duruyoruz geliniz bize doğru geleni şu mübarek timsali hürriyeti karşılamağa gidelim.

(Hepsi: “Yaşasın vatan , yaşasın hürriyet” sadalarıyla peri-i hürriyete doğru koşarken perde yavaşça iner!)

İKİNCİ PERDE

Eşhas: Her sınıf zabitan ve müşteriler, doktor, eczacı, mekteb müdürü, ders nazırı, bir erkanı harb kolağası, orkestra heyeti, kahveciler.

Sahne: Manastır'da kışla meydanı kurbinde nüzhetiye bağçesini irae ider. Bağçede müşteriler (orkestra muhtelif havalar çalar) bir trapez, etrafında da doktor, eczacı, müdir, ders nazırı İbrahim Şakir ve Habib beyler oturur.

Habib Bey: (Yanıdakilere) Bu akşam hayatımızın en mesud bir akşamıdır sevgili vatanımızın her köşesi otuz iki senden beri nüzhetiye bağçesinin bu akşam ki manzara-i (...*...) mahrumdur. Bu ruhla uhuvveti meskireye istibdad-ı idareyi temelinden yıkacak (...*...) haizdir. Vatan fedailerimizi itlaf itdirtmek arzuyu hainanesiyle hükümeti müstebidenin Manastır'a sevk itdiği İzmir fırkası arslanlarının maksadı meşru cemiyeti idrak iderek cemiyetle yekvücut olmaları tarihi inkılabımızın en parlak vakayini teşkil idecektir. Bakınız bağçenin her tarafı İzmir kahramanlarıyla dolu!

Redif Eczacısı: Uhhuveti askeriye'nin timsali güzinini teşkil iden Manastır heyeti askeriyesine iltihak itmek ve bahusus milletin istirdad hürriyeti gibi en mukaddes bir meşru için uğraşan vatan fedailerıyla birlikde çalışmak İzmir fırkası için asla unutulamayacak bir hatırayı kıymetdar olacaktır..

Doktor ve refikleri: (Ayağa kalkarlar) Yaşasın İzmir Fırkası, aslanlar!

Eczacı: Fırkayı askeriye'miz namına teşekkürler takdim iderim.

Doktor: Bu akşam ki ictimai askeriye'nin şerefine şurada "yaşasın İttihad" diye bağırmanın müsaade ider misiniz?

Yanıdakiler: Hay hay memnun oluruz.

Doktor: (Sandalye üzerine çıkar) Yaşasın İttihad! (Herkes alkışlayıp; "yaşasın, bravo!") (Doktor her tarafa selam virüb oturur) Oh! İttihad... Ne mübarek söz... Senelerden beri umku ruhumda esirane gizlendiğinden mi neden boğazımı yırtarcasına bir şiddetle fırlayub çıkdı! Gerçek İttihad ne soylu bir kelimedir hala cemiyetimizin namı ulviyesinin ihtiva itdiği terakki kelimeyi cazibesinin perestişkar visali olduğundan beri ne derecede güzelleşmiştir.

İbrahim Şakir Bey: Hakikatı muhterem cemiyetimize ne güzel isim virilmiştir bu ismin yani İttihad ve Terakkinin taraftarı olmayanlara vatanı sevmeyenler nazarı ile bakılabilir İttihadı Kanun-i Esasiye'mizin birinci maddesini izah iden kuvvet dimektir. Fakat bu Kanun-i Esasi her sene milletin gözünü boyamak için salnamelere sıkışdırılan Kanun-i Esasi taslağı değildir. İşte şu nüzhetiye bağçesinde ictima iden, Balkanlarda dolaşan milli alaylar, cemiyete mensub olan veya olmıyan vatanperveran millet tarafından (...*...) Allahu teala istirdad idilecek olan Kanun-i

Esasimizi demek isteyorum. Onun ilk maddesi, “yekvücut olan vatani Osmaniye’nin hiçbir zaman hiçbir vesile ile tefrik kabul itmeyeceğinden” bahsdir.

Doktor: Millet; naili hürriyet olur olmaz o madde üzerine mutlaka gözünü açacaktır. Bugün Bosna Hersek, Rumeli-i şarki, Girid, gibi en mümtaz kıtaatımızın kan ağlatan vaziyet siyasiyeleri hep o mukaddes maddenin kırılması ayaklar altında çiğnenişinden değil mi? (Teesürle) Ah.. Alçak müstebidler! Milletin başına açdıkları bu çaresiz derdlere karşı nasıl lakayd bulunuyorlar!

Habib Bey: Müteessir olma doktorcuğum! Her derdin olur çaresi her iğneyle olmaz! Hakikatini doktorlar daha iyi takdir iderler... Bir kere şu kahrolası idare rıza ile yıkılsın; bir kere hepimizce gayeyi emel olan idareyi adile tesis itsün! O zaman bütün bu acı derdlerin çareleri bulunacaktır!

Doktor: İnşallah! Fakat; Allah vire de hastalarımızı gayb itmezden evvel çareleri bulunabilse! Yahu! Bugün asabiyetim üstümde! Söylenüp duruyorum. Zaten Habib beyle buluşduk mu bizde başka laf aramayınız! Mutlaka ya gaga burnun zati menhuset sıfatından veyahud da ağzına burnuna sıvaşdırdığı idarei menhusundan bahs ideriz.

(Hepsi gülerler)

Doktor: (Gülerek) Şu çalgıcılara bir milli hava çaldırabilsem kusurum afv buyrulur değil mi?

Yanıdakiler: Estağfirullah! Pek iyi olur.

Eczacı: Bunlar alafrangadan başka bir şey bilmezler ki!.

Doktor: Öyleyse bir *Marseyyez!*

Birisi: Bizde *Cezayir* isteriz.

Doktor: *Cezayir* yüreğimi pek cızlatır, *Marseyyez* kafidir.

Müdür Bey: Bu akşam *Marsayyezi* dinlemek pek ömür olacak! Doktorumuzda ne donkişodtur ne donkişod! Tam gecesini buldu!

(Doktorun şefle konuşması işidilir...)

Doktor: Mösyö şef! Bir *Marseyyez* isteriz...

Şef: Aman beyim, nasyonal havaları çaldırma buralarda. Geçen ay buradaki polis müfettişi az kaldı beni habs idecekti. Bereket virsin ki parsaya çıkan köçek Anna’yı seviyordu da yakayı kurtarabildik!

Doktor: Hangi polis müfettişi?

Şef: İşte Manastır’ın esmer yüzlü!

Doktor: Ha! O sizlere ömür! Sizin köçek Anna'dan daha çok Şemsi Paşa'yı seviyormuş. Onunla görüşmeğe gitti! Onu tepelediler bilmiyor musun?

Şef: Pek güzel oldu!

Doktor: Elbette güzel! Daha o kadar güzel şeyler olacak ki! Bak şu bağçeye! Bu kadar zabiti bir arada gördük mü senin Avusturya'da bile böyle İttihad olamaz! Demin işitmedik mi? Ben iskemle üstüne çıkub "Yaşasın İttihad" bağırdım. Haydi bakalım sen de arkadaşlarına bir *Marseyyez* çaldırırver!

Şef: (Gülerek) Şimdi beyim!

Doktor: (Şefin elini sıkarak): Mersi! (Ayrılır sonra yerine gidip oturur.)

(Biraz sonra *Marseyyez* işidilir herkes ayakda dinleyüb şiddetle alkışlarlar! Orkestra başka havalar çalarken diğer bir trapezde iki zabitanın sözleri işidilir.)

Mülazım Atıf Bey: Şemsi Paşa gibi bir heykel-i istibdadı yere serdiğim gün bu kadar sevinmemişdim. Şu heyeti muazzama-ı askeriye'nin bir arada bulunuşu, doktorun 'yaşasın İttihad' bağırışı, orkestranın *Marseyyez* çalışı kalbimde pek büyük sevinçler peyda itdi. Hüsn-ü kablel vuku inandığım cihetle kalbimin bu hilafı mutad sevincini çokdan beri beklediğimiz hürriyet bayramının müjdecisi gibi telakki idiyorum. O mübarek bayram pek yakın olsa gerek! Şimdi ben ne düşünüyorum biliyor musun?

Yanındaki zabıt: Bayram şenliklerini mi?

Mülazım Atıf Bey: Şenlikler kolay şeyler! Ben ilerisini düşünüyorum. Muhterem ordudaki galeyan hamiyet, bu muhteşem İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyetindeki faaliyet sayesinde avnı hüda ve imdadı peygamberi ile binayı istibdadın yıkılacağına hem de pek yakında yıkılacağına kanaat kemali vicdaniyem vardır. Yalnız Millet Meclisi'nin toplanmasından evvel ve toplanışlarının ilk aylarında meşrutiyet idareye alık adamları bulabilmek müşkülâtını düşünüyorum. Hele başvekil bulmak ne kadar güç!

Yanındaki zabıt: Adam sende düşündüğün şeye bak! Bunlar sonralık işler adam kıtlığına gelmedik ya, elbette bir münasibini bulurlar.

Mülazım Atıf Bey: Sonralık dediğin ne oluyor? Cemiyetin maksadı ipe un sermek değil... Millete çok nafi olacak bir iş görmektir. Bana kalırsa eski kafalıları deliler içine gönderüb iş başına yeni fikirli, kalben bedenen meşrutiyet idareye merbut adamları getirmelidir. Belki ilk zamanları bir çok istibdad bakayası iş başına geçebilecek. Mesela bir baş vekil meclisi mebusana kafa tutmak, bir harbiye nazırı erbabı mesalihi müstebidane kırub dökmek isteyecek!

Yanındaki zabıt: Onların hepsinin çaresi bulunabilir. Nice tehlikenin en büyüğü otuz üç senelik ifrit istibdadı o makamı muallayı hilafetinde bırakmaktır. Atalarımızın "alışmış kudurmuşdan beterdir" sözlerini pek yabana atmamalı. Bu sürütün başında o insafsız, gaddar çoban bulunmalı vesselam!

Mülazım Atıf Bey: Pek doğru söylüyorsun! Fakat; herif cemiyetin matlubatını kabule mütemayil gibi! Ya kabul idiyorsa cemiyet hiç tükürdüğünü yalar mı? Hinzır (...*...) bu defalık yakayı kurtaracak sanırım. Lakin didiğin gibi alışmış kudurmuşdan beterdir fehvasınca bir müddet sonra cemiyete virdiği sözden dönüverecek olursa o zaman da millet elbette hakkından gelecek ve yalancı müstebid bir hükümdarın cezasını virecektir.

(Dışarıda araba sesleri!)

Yanındaki: Selanik şimendiferi geldi.

Mülazım Atıf Bey: Belki bir gelen var. Haydi, çıkalım umarım ki (...*...) haber vardır.

(Birlikde kalkub dışarıya giderler.) (Doktor, ders nazırını görüb oraya gider, öpüşürler, ders nazırı ile toka idüb otururlar herkesle selamlaşdıktan sonra erkanı harb Cemil Bey iskemlesini alarak ders nazırına doktora): Azıcık şöyle geliniz.

(Ders nazırı, doktor, müdir bey iskemlelerini alub biraz beriye otururlar.)

Erkanı harb kolağası (yavaşca telaşlı): Şimdi Selanikden geliyorum. (Cebinden bir takım evrak çıkarub ders nazırına verir) Merkezi Umumi'dendir. Selanik öbür gün ilan-ı hürriyet için hazırlanıyor.

Doktor: (Sevinçle)Ver ağzımı öpeyim! (Öpüşürler)

Ders nazırı: (Yavaşca) Biz şimdiden hazırız. Fakat tertibatımız yarın içündür millet hürriyet toplarını gümbürtecek! Yıldıza malumat virilmiştir. Hamid baba kabul ederse ne ala! Kansız bir Hürriyet Bayramı yaparız.

Doktor: (Gülerek) Kansız yaparsak milletin otuz iki senelik hürriyet orucunun Ramazan Bayramı olur.

Ders nazırı: Yok nasib Ramazan Bayramı değilmiş de Kurban Bayramı imiş! Öylesinde de eyvallah! İstanbul üzerine şanlı kanlı bir yürüyüş yaparsak onu da Kurban Bayramı sayarız vessalam!

Müdir Bey: Bayram olsun da biz hepsine razıyız. Elverir ki senelerden beri kan ağlayan şu millet azıcık da güliversin!

Ders nazırı: Haydi, gidelim yarın ki bayram için hazırlanalım.

Doktor: (Gülerek) Ben bayramın ismini koymadan bir yere gidemezsiniz.

Ders nazırı: Pek ala! Söyle bakalım.

Doktor: Bu ne Ramazan, ne Kurban Bayramıdır... Zira her ikisine de yalnız İslamlar gider. Yarın ki bayram bütün Osmanlıların "On Temmuz" bayramıdır.

Ders nazırı: Aferin, Doktor Bey! Pek güzel isim buldu inşallah bütün Osmanlılar elahirdevran On Temmuz'da bayram iderler. Çıkalım.

(Birlikde çıkarlarken talimhanede akşam yoklaması olur ve orkestra bir güzel hava çalarken perde iner.)

ÜÇÜNCÜ PERDE

Eşhas: Başkatib, Manastır levazım ve erkamı harbiye reisleri, Katib-i Sani, sermusahib, bir küçük kız.

(Sahne: Çit Köşkü'nde vükela kabul salonunu gösterir.)

Başkatib: (Yalnız) Topçu miralayı Hasan Rıza Beyden, Erkamı Harbiye Livası Ali Paşadan ve diğer celb idilenlerden sadre şifa virecek hiçbir söz alamadık. Manastır'dan gelen paşalar biraz yaşlıcadır. Belki bunlardan istifade idebiliriz. (Zile basar) (Hidmetçi Girer) Dışarıdaki paşaları içeriye al! (Hidmetçi çıkar.) Ah Şemsi Paşa ah! Ölmemeli idin ki bu işler düzelebsin!

(Biraz sonra reis paşalar girerler.)

Başkatib: (Mültefitane yer göstererek) Buyrunuz safa geldiniz! Reis paşalar (Selam virüb otururlar) (Biraz sükutdan sonra): Üçüncü ordu şevketmeab efendimiz aleyhinde hilafı sadakat ve ubudiyet bir takım efkarı sahife ve müfside neşr iden bir cemiyet muzırna var imiş! Paris'de, Mısır'daki Jöntürkler ayarında bulunan ve fezail ve mezayayı beşeriyeden asla nasibdar olmayan bir takım sebükmağzanın makamı muallayı hilafete karşı ceraitiyab oldukları hareket denaetkaraneye katiyen iştirak itmediğiniz velinimet ali efendimizce malum olmasına binaen sizi celb buyurdular... Rica ederim bu babdaki malumatınız neden ibaret ise açıkca anlatınız!

Erkamı Harbiye Reisi: Orduyu Hümayun'da bir cemiyeti muzırna teşkil idüb makamı akdesi hilafet aleyhinde bulduklarını ilk defa olarak zatı alilerinden işidiyorum. Ordu erkamı harbiye reisi sıfatıyla arz eylerim ki üçüncü orduyu hümayunun makamı muallayı saltanat ve hilafete karşı mevcut merbutiyet ve vicdaniyesi pek esaslı ve pek katidir, yalnız Rumeli vilayeti şahanesinin bugünkü hali tezebzübü karib olvaka bir müdahale Avrupa kıtasından hakimiyeti Osmaniye'nin zevali ile (...*...) sevletimizin inkıraz ve izmihlalinin kuvvei karibeye gelmesini mucib olması mülahazası hemen bütün orduya yayılmış bir endişei vicdan halini almışdır. Şan-u şevket hükümraniyi ihlal ve kudreti azimet devleti tenkid iden müdahalatı ecnebiyye tehlikesini bertaraf itmek için hükümeti seniyyece takib idilen siyaset devri endişaneye layıkıyla akıl irdiremeyen ordu ümera ve zabitanı arasında maruzu mesele hakkında selameti mülk ve millet namına izhar idebilen ihtisasatı askerane sui tevil idilerek ihtimal ki makamı alilerine cemiyeti muzırna şekl ve suretinde ihbar idilmiştir.

Başkatib (Levazım reisine): Birazda siz anlatınız?

Levazım Reisi: Arkadaşımın sözlerini tamamen tasdik iderim. İlâveten söyleyecek hiçbir sözüm yoktur.

Başkatib: Bakınız hiçbir eziyet yapmaksızın ifadenizi istiyorum katibi saniyenin eline düşseniz kızgın demirle dil yakarak, makine ile parmak büzerek, (...*...) kafatası delerek daha bin dürlü işkenceler icad ederek ya söyletmek veya öldürmek usulünü pek güzel bilir.

Levazım Reisi: (Sakalını tutarak hiddetle) Bu yaşıdan sonra bize de mekteb çocuğu muamelesi mi idiyorsunuz? Üçüncü ordudan geldiğimizi ne çabuk unuttunuz. Saçımın sakalımın ağardığına mı bakıyorsunuz! Katib-i Sani değil! Bizzat zatı şahane gelse bir kılımaza bile dokunamaz. Hele bir dokunulsun! Bütün rumeliyi ayaklanmış görürsünüz. Deminden beri söyletmeğe çalışdığınız cemiyeti muhteremenin kefaleti kuvvayesini istihsal itmeseydik otuz iki seneden beri menbaı fesade çevirdiğiniz bu melus Yıldız'a ayak mı basardık ayak mı?

Başkatib: Paşa paşa burasını Selanik mi yoksa Manastır mı sandınız, işte kendi sözünüzle kendinizi yakdınız! Şimdi velinimet, (odadan çıkmak üzere iken)

Erkanı Harb Reisi: (Sözünü keserek) Buradan bir karış öteye bile gidemezsiniz! Kemal istihfaf ile tahkir itmek istediğiniz o Selanik ile Manastır'ın bu hükümetin mukadderatı müstakbelesi üzerinde ne büyük rol oynayacağını pek yakında göreceksiniz!

(Hidmetci elinde kağıdlarla girer)

Başkatib: (Paşalara itidal ile) Rica iderim, azıcık oturalım. Keskin sirkenin zararı kendi küpünedir. Daha mülayim görüşelim belki anlaşabiliriz!

(Hepsi otururlar. Başkatib evraka göz gezdirir)

Başkatib: İşte gördünüz mü? Yine bir cinayet! Manastır mıntıka kumandanı Osman Hidayet Paşa'yı kışla dahilinde ümera zabitan ve efrad muvacehesinde bir iradeyi seniyyenin hengamei karaitinde bir şahsı mechul ağırca yaralamışdır.

Paşalardan biri: Vah vah... Pek yazık Osman Hidayet Paşa pek namuslu bir zattır.

Birinci Paşa: Belki Tatar Osman Paşa'yı sandılar: Mamafih o da fena bir değildi. Kim bilir nasıl ölmüş...

Başkatib: (Diğer kağıdları karıştırır) Buyrun bakalım! Bu da 23 Haziran sene 324 de (...*...) taalluk idilen ve Manastır valisine virilen muhtıra sureti imiş! Lütfen biriniz okuyunuz da birlikde tedkik idelim..

(Erkanı Harb Reisi alub okur.)

Hükümeti hazurunuz gayri meşrudur..

Başkatib: Bu söz yutulur söz müdür? Hezeyan değil de nedir?

Erkanı Harb Reisi: “Çünkü” süne bakalım “çünkü”sü var... Elbette isbat idebilecek bakınız ne diyor: Çünkü kavanini devlet onun meşrutiyetini temin itmişken tarzı idare tahvil idilmeğe çalışılarak hükümeti mutlaka ilminde idare olunmakta bu uğurda birçok masumiyenin demleri araka idilmektedir. Bugün muhakemeyi insaniyet hakkını talep iden milleti kavanin mevcudeyi hükümetle tasdik ve teyid ve şekli idareyi otuz senden beri tağyire çalışan hükümeti tekzib ve itham eyler. Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin vücudu mukaddes ve nizamını hükümeti hazuranızca artık temin eyledi. Pek ala anladınız ki bu heyeti mukaddesenin şahs itibarıyla hiçbir ferd hakkında hiçbir suiniyet yoktur. Hukuku meşrua (...*...) ümmeti istirdaddan başak bir maksada çalışmaz azm ve kasdı asrı hazırın şiddetle istilzam eylediği 1294 idareyi medeniyesinin temin ve tatbikinden süfehanın ameli gayrı meşrualarına artık bir had taayyününden başka bir şey değildir. Kanunu teyit her ferde müdafaai hayat hakkını ita eylemiş ve bu uğurda istimal cebr ve şiddetde kendisine mezuniyet virmişdir. Bu layetegayyer bir kanundur kuvvei kanun ile tağyir idilemez. Taarruzatı cinayetkarane müdafaatı meşrua muhakemeyi istilzam eyler. Gerek hükümetin ve mensubiyeti olan bazı adaniyenin mesti şehvet ve ikbal ile Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti aleyhinde uzatmağa başladıkları hatvei taarruzları bugünkü hududunda tevkif eylemelidir. Artık kılıfından çekilmiş olan seyfi adalet ve celadet millete kendisini çarpanların sui akıbetleri, mesuliyeti ancak kendilerine aid kalacaktır. Güruhu süfaha ve cühela bilmelidirler ki Osmanlı Hükümeti bir millet ve birde timsali milleti padişahdan ibaretdir. Bu ikisinin arasında denilere şehvet esirlerine, rezillere, ikbal sarhoşlarına bir mevki mahsus yoktur.

Başkatib: Ne kadar da uzun yazmışlar daha var mı?

Erkanı Harb Reisi: (Yaprakları çevirtüb bakarak) Daha dört sahife kadar var... Alt tarafını bizzat mütalaa buyurursunuz. Bizden öğrenmek istenilen acı hakikatleri işte pek güzel ve zübdeten yazmışlar bizden bundan fazla malumat istemek abesle işigal itmektir. Başkaca bir işimiz yoksa müsaadenizle çıkalım...

Başkatib: Lütfen ikmal buyurunuz.

Reis Paşa oturur: Bu gibi edani artık sahte hayatı ümmetden çekmeli. Menhus ve meşum olan mevcuyitlerine aguşu hürmet muhabette atılacaktır bu ikisini (...*...) İttihad ve haletde ağyar (...*...) mahal ve mevki yoktur. Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti kendi aleyhinde Selanik'e gönderilmiş ve birkaç gün mukaddem, otuz senedir darül fiskeye tahvil eylemiş oldukları asitaneyi vatana iltica etmiş olan o iki leiman bu taraflara avdet itmemelerini bilhassa kendilerinin menfaatına olarak Tosya ve Manastır, Selanik, Üsküb, mevkiilerine sokulmağa çalışan fasikine ricat eylemelerini emr ider. İşbu cemiyet mukaddesi ecanibden haliler, maaşlar, rüşvetler kabul iden ve sahayı serabı ikbalden kendilerinede bir mevki hayli tedarikine yeltenen leimi-tab süfehanın ve emsaliyenin uslu oturmalarını halisane ihzar ile hakkı meşruyu hürriyetini müdafaa istihsale kıyam ve azim eylemiş olan ümmeti mukaddesi muhteremenin hıfzı vasiyanet hakkı uğrunda zulme mutaarızın ile atiyen vuku mütehakkık görünen musarra ve müsademesinden tabiiyi hasıl olan kanlı ve

feci manzaraların mesuliyet maddiye mauniyesinin kamilen zulme müstebidine raci olduğunu beyan eyler. Mahkemeyi insaniyet ve medeniyet kabli temyiz olmuyan hükmünü ita ve umum samiin ile müttehimlere tebliğ tefhim eyledi. Bu dakikadan sonra işbu katı (...*...) Hükmü adilinin tatbiki icab itdi. Ey milletvekilinin vekili! Sen ki Manastır Vilayetinde hakkı vekaleti ifaya halife ve vükelanın saffeti gayrı (...*...) olduğu vechle (...*...) hakkın hakını kendisine itaya memur ve bununla mükellefsin, maiyeti memuriyenin içindeki zulme ve erazilin tecavüz ve taarruzlarına bir had çek. Umumunuzun ahvaline seni vekil ideni vekil nasb eyleyin bu millet nigehtandır. Nikabı riya ile tesir eylemiş olan edaniyenin (...*...*) menkuş olan cümle cinaiyyeyi bu millet okumaktan aciz değildir. Bu milletden pare yiyüde istikametsizlik gösterenlerin akıbeti ahvali elbette yaman olsa gerekdir! Bu hakikati onların menfaatine olarak onlara (...). Bilirsiniz ki sana millet yüzlerce binlerce liraları ancak bunun için veriyor elbette bunun bir hesabı vardır. Aldığın pare ile gördüğün hizmet mukayese edilecek ve sorulacaktır. Vazifeyi insaniyetin sana emr itdiği tarikin üzerinde yürü! Maaiyetinde bulunan memurlardan akdi (...*...) eyleyenleri biz pek ala tanırız. Bunlara ihtarını hayr havahanemize lütfen tebliğ ile, müdafaayı meşruamızın intac edeceği kanlı neticelere mahal kalmamak için haksız taarruzlarına nihayet virülsün. Biz kan dökmek hevesinde değiliz zira dökülen kanlar kafidir. Fakat (...*...) düsturunun haritayı icrayı atimizin bir kenarında (...*...) hakikat ile yazılmış olduğunu görmekteyiz. Alemi insaniyete (...*...*) olan (...*...) sahayı hayatda ifayı muzırat eylemelerine artık meydan virilmeyecektir. Cinayetler, rezaletler, zulmler, nihayet bulsun, kanunu insaniyet hükümlerine olsun. Ey milletin Manastır vekili! Ma fevkine arz itmek üzere ilam eyleriz ki bir milletin kanunu her yerde siyyan ve her mevkiide hükmüfermadır. Binaenaleyh hükümeti hazırai müstebide ve zalımaneniz tarafından tabı hak eylediği için maznun olarak istenilmiş olan zevatın (...) İstanbul'a celbinde hiçbir lüzum kanunu yokdur. Kanun ve muhakim ümmet her mevkiide vardır. Maznun tanıdıklarınızın mensub oldukları mevaki muhakimine tevdi idilmeleri icab iderken İstanbul'a celb idilmeleri o menfur engizisyon hatıralarını uyandıracığından şiddetle redd idilecektir. Bu usule nihayet veriniz. Hükümeti zalımanenizce müttehim tanıdığınız zevatı mensub oldukları muhakime tevdi idiniz. Yıldız, Taşkışla, Bab-ı Zabtiye ki engizisyon müvasatına masum göndermek istemiyoruz. Buna nihayet veriniz! Aksi takdirde mesuliyet size aiddir. Biz maruzatımızı kavlen değil fiilen nazarı hükümete arz ideceğiz. Maksadın sözle değil fiilen ele gireceğini çokdan anladık. Hükmü kanun her yerde vardır ve kemal ihtiram ile kabul edilir. Fakat devri istibdad artık olanca hiddet ve şiddetiyle cevalane (...) olan kanları son damlasına kadar sarf için ahrara azm ve metanet bahş idiyor (elhakkülülulaleyh(?)) bugün enzarı fasikin Manastır vilayet ahrarı üzerine maatufdur. Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti de işbu muhtırasını bu vilayet valisine takdime lüzum görmüştür. (...*...) Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihad Cemiyeti Manastır Merkezi

İşte bitdi. Başka emirleri?

Başkatib: (Dalgınca) Estağfirullah, kusura bakmamanızı rica ederim yalnız İstanbul'daki adresinizi yazub gidebilir ve Manastır'da serbest bulunduğunuzu ve hakkınızda bir dürlü sui muamele yapılmadığını da yazabilirsiniz efendim.

(Paşalar adreslerini yazub çıkarlar.)

Başkatib: (Yalnız) Bir ay istintakı celb idilenler müdhiş, Resne, Ohri, Tikveş, Balkanlarına çıkub isyan idenler müdhiş... Cemiyetin telgrafları, beyannameleri idhaş!

(Hidmetci bir kağıdı getirüb çıkarken Katib-i Sani girer.)

(Başkatib kağıdı alır selamlaşub otururlar.)

Başkatib: Manastır Valisi'nin şu uzun boylu telgrafını lütfen oku bakalım belki bir hayrı havadis var!

Katibi sani: O herifden hayır haber beklenir mi? Kim bilir yine neler yumurtlamışdır.

Başkatib: Canım hele bir oku bakalım. Şimdi falcılığın sırası değil Ebulhüda'nın sanatında mı gazab ideceksin.

Katibi sani: (Gülerek okur) Huzuru samiye cenabı sadaretpenahiye 3 Temmuzuna 324 Niyazi ve avenesinin takib ve derdest emri varide buyrulmakda ise de mevcudiyeti icrayı atı şedide malumesiyle tahkik iden cemiyetin tarafgirani yalnız merkumdan ibaret olmayub evvel ve ahir takdim kılınan varakalarda beyanı mutalebi istihsal hususundan umum zabitan müttehid ve ahali dahi bunlarla hem fikir olduğu anlaşılmaqda olmasına ve dünkü gün mintika kumandanı Osman Paşa'ya vukubulan taarruzla dahi mertebe-i sübuta vasıl olduğu üzere takibat şöyle dursun tahkikat ifasını taahhüd için dahi kimseden cerait görülemiyor. Şükrü Paşa'nın riyaseti altında teşkil olunan tahkik komisyonu azası hafiyen vukubulan tehdidat üzerine işden el çekmeğe mecbur oldular. Ohri'den ahaliyi karaya nesaihde bulunmak üzere çıkarılan heyeti nasiha küşadı güzarda devamları halinde idam olunacakları cemiyet tarafından (...*...) ihtar olunmasından dolayı avdete muztar kaldıkları kaymakamlıktan bildiriliyor. Çakerleri de dahil olduğu halde memuriyenin kaffesinin hayatları tehlikede bulunuyor. Tahkikatde ileri gitmek isteyenler katil ile tehdid olunmakda ve cemiyetin tehdidini ika iktidarı görülmekte olduğundan ve Osman Paşa'yı cerh iden zabıt iradeyi seniyyeye hazreti hilafet penahiye meblağ telgrafnameyi telakki için ictima iden heyeti askeriye içinden çıkub umumun gözü önünde üç el silah endahit itmiş iken mütecasir derdest olunmakdan başka ismi ve şahsıda kimse tarafından taayin olunmayub mamafih mütecasirin zahire ihracı için taayin olunan komisyon heyeti balada arz olundğu vechle tehdid oldundüğundan dolayı zabıta ve adliye memurları sıkışdırılacak olursa hayatlarını muhafazaten terki hidmet fikrinde bulunurlar. Kolları dört yüz seneden beri eben an cedd nanu nimet devletle perverde olmuş asdikadan olduğu bilanefs dahi kırk dörd seneden beri hidematı muhtelifeyi devlette bulunduğum cihetle böyle gaili bir zamanda isifayı küfranı nimet addederek efradı aileyi çakiranemle beraber maaruz olduğumuz

mehalike rağmen ifayı vazifeye devama yani asker zabitleriyle esas maksadda fikren müttehid olan ahalinin fiilen bunlara iştirak itmeleri esbabını istihsale çalışmakta isem de hakayık ahvali ber tafsili arz eylemeği dahi vacibeyi sadakat ve hamiyet add eylerim. Efkarı malume efradı askeriyeeye dahi sirayet eylemiş olduğundan takibata teşebbüs edilse askerin cemiyet aleyhine istimali silah itmeyeceğini Resne'ye sevk olunan altı taburun orada tevkifde kalmasından ve kumandanlarının itirafı acz itmelerinden anlaşılıyor. Şemsi Paşa'nın muhafazayı şahsı için getirdiği Arnavudlara mahali vakada hazır olan asker ve jandarmaların sui kasd iden şahsı takibe tasaddi için silahları havaya endahit itmiş olmaları dahi buna delildir. Hafiyen istihbar edildiğine nazaran takibat için Anadolu'dan gönderilecek askerin istimali silahdan imtina eylemesi kuvveyen mülahuzdur. Bu ahval yalnız buraya münhasır olmayub istihbar olunduğuna göre Selanik ve Kosova vilayetleri dahi aynı haldedir. Binaenaleyh işin ehemmiyeti ve bir sürati fevkaalade ile etrafa sirayet ve günden güne keshbü vüsaat itmekte olan ittihadın esası devletce nazarı dikkate alınarak daha vahim ahval hadvesine meydan kalmamak üzere zamanı geçmiş olan nasihat ve cebr ve şiddetten ziyade hesabı zamanı müessir olacak tedabir acele lüzumu ilcayı sadakatile arz olunur ferman.

Manastır Valisi Hıfzı

Başkatib: (Telaşla) Şimdi ne yapmalı?

Katib-i Sani: (İtidal ile) Hiç telaş istemez. Ben şimdi huzura girer, bu müfsidlere karşı bir büyük harb açdırılması hakkında iradelerini istihsal iderim.

Başkatib: Pekala ama valinin ifadesi de şayanı ehemmiyet değil mi? Baksana! Cebr ve şiddetden ziyade hesabı zamanı müessir olacak tedabir acilenin lüzumundan bahs ediyor.

Katib-i Sani: Ben ondan ne demek istediğini anlıyorum. Adeta cemiyetin matlabatını kabul edüb acilen Kanun-i Esasi iradesi istihsal edilmeli demek istiyor. Hey gidi budala hey! Aklınca bizi kandıracak! Bizde efendimizi ikna iderek kendi elimizle kendi kuyumuzu kazacağız! (Müstehziyane güler) Şaşarım kendinin çamaşır yıkamasına!

Başkatib: (Baş sallayarak) Haklısın haklı! Bunlara harb açmaktan başka çare yokdur. Hiç durma! Zaten Anadolu taburlarına hareket emri virmişdik varsun birbirlerini boğazlasunlar! Onlar çarpışırken biz işleri yoluna koyacak vakit bulabiliriz!

Katib-i Sani: Hay hay kerataları bize sayı ile virmediler ya! Zaten bu miskin Rum ilinden ne hayr bekliyoruz. Nasıl olsa elden çıkacak değil mi? Ben şimdi huzura girüb efendimizin beynini iyice yoğuracağım! Neylersin ki mayesi bendedir.

Başkatib: Birlikde çıkalım. (Çıkarlar)

(Biraz sonra Cevher Ağa girer)

Cevher: Pek sıkıya gelir ise jönlerin istediğini virecekmiş! Haya, Jönleri yerin dibine batırsun! Herifler efendimizi bayağı korkutmuşlar ah ben onun yerinde olsaydım. Dünyada bir jön bile bırakmazdım. Sade jön mü ya? Bütün gavurları da tepelerdim! (Kapu Vurulur) Gel!

Cevher Ağa: (Bir kız girer, Cevher Ağa'yı görünce alıklaşır Cevher, kızını tanıyarak) Vay köçek başı burada işin ne?

Kız: (Mahcub gibi görünerek) İzzet Paşa çağırtmışdı da!

Cevher Ağa: (Kendi kendine) Vay gidi İzzet vay! Bunu da baştan çıkartmış... (Kıza) Senden ne istiyor?

Kız: (Tebbesümle) Hiç! Bazen çağırtır azıcık oyun oynatır sonra, bir kese bahşiş verir.

Cevher Ağa: Evdeki pazar çarşıya uymaz. Bugün İzzet Paşa huzurda kalacak!

Kız: Öyle ise gidelim efendim.

Cevher Ağa: O nasıl söz! Hazır gelmişken hiç gidilir mi? Biraz da beni eğlendir bakalım.

Kız: (Sırıtarak) Baş üstüne efendim! (Oradaki dolabdan bir rakı takımı çıkarır Cevher Ağa'nın önüne koyar. Bir kadeh doldurub Cevher'e verir.

Cevher: (Kadehi alarak içer)

Kız: (Çatalla meze virir)

Cevher: (Yılışarak) İzzet'in mezesinden İzzet'in!

Kız: (Başka meze verir)

Cevher: (Ayağa kalkarak) İzzet'in mezesi bu değil mi? (Kızın boynundan tutub öper.)

Kız: (Gülerek çekilir.)

Cevher: (Bir kadeh doldurub kıza virir.)

Kız: (Acele içer, meze yer, oynamağa başlar.)

Cevher: (Sıkca sıkca içüb fesini çıkarır.) Oğlan bende jönleşivirdim. (Kıza) Oyna şekerim oyna!

Kız: (Oynamaya başlar)

Cevher Ağa: (Zil zurna sarhoş olur... Kalkub kendisi de oynamağa başlar.)

Kız: (Arab havası çalar)

Cevher Ağa: (Arab havası oynar)

Cevher: (Biraz sonra sızub uyur)

Kız: (Kendi kendine) Budala Arab! (...*...) oliverdi... Şimdi ceblerini araklamalı! (Cevher'in üstünü başını arar, banknotları, liraları alub Cevher'in elini tutarak sallır gülerek) adiyö Cevher Ağa adiyö!

Kız: (Acele rakı takımlarını kaldırıub yerlerine kor, tekrar Cevher'in yanına gidüb): Cevher Ağa ceblerinizde ne varsa cebime doldurdum. Sonra kendinize gelince aşırılmış, falan sanmayınız! E mi? (Reverans yapıub gülerek çıkar).

Cevher Ağa: (Sayıklar) Ben padişah olsaydım dünyada bir jön bile bırakmazdım! Kız bir çifte telli oyna bakalım. Bak hele bak! Yorulmuş diyerek nazlanıyor. Kız kırma beni, kırma! Sana efendimizden rütbelere, nişanlar alır, istersen sana bir iki memleket de bağışlatır. (Biraz sonra kalkmak ister, düşer... Tekrar kalkmak için uğraşır... Nihayet kalkub sendeliyerek yürür...) Tuhaf şey! Şevketmeab efendimizle bu kadar içki içeriz, hiç böyle olmamışdım. Kız gel elimi tut, gel İzzet'in mezesinden vir. (Etrafa tutunurken kapuya dayanır kapu açılır, odadan dışarıya düşer.)

(Dışarıda bir gürültü olur. Birkaç kişi kapunun önüne koşarlar.)

Birisi: Ay Cevher Ağa bayılmış!

Diğeri: Vay zavallı bak ağzından köpükler geliyor. Demek saraya tutulmuş, yavaş sarsmadan (...*...) odasına götürüb doktor çağırtalım. (Cevher'i götürürler kapıyı kaparlar.)

(Biraz sonra)

(Katib-i Sani elinde kağıdlarla gelir, telaşla gezinmeye başlar...)

Katib-i Sani elindeki kağıdlardan birini okur: Ettibba-ı Şahane'ye: Firzovik tarikiyle Üskübe gelen [20.000] Arnavud devairi hükümeti basarak bilimum memurini Terakki ve İttihad Cemiyeti namına alenen tahlif itdiler. Bu hafta zarfında Kanun-i Esasi irade buyrulmadığı takdirde rızayı aliyi mugayir olarak derbarı şevketkarare doğru hücum ideceklerini (...*...) itdiler. Henüz telgrafhaneye gelmediklerinden hakikati hali bir an evvel kemal ehemmiyetle arz eylerim ferman. Muhbir Sadık.

Hay arz eylemez olaydın!..

(Diğeri telgrafi okur): Huzuru Akdes Hazreti Hilafetpenahiye: İradatı seniyye mütekkireleriyle tebayı ve zir dasitanelerine bahş ve ihsan buyrulan Kanun-i Esasi'nin tatbikatı fiileyesine müsaade ve icabı halin irade buyrulması suretiyle sadakat ubudiyetimizin halelden vikayesini istirham ve Pazar gününe kadar Meclis-i Mebusanın küşadına dair fermanı hümayunları sadır buyrulmadığı halde rızayı şehriyarilerine muhalif olacak ahvalin vukuu derkar olub bu hususda memurin

mülkiye, erkan, ümera ve zabitanı askeriye ile bilimüm asakiri şahane ve bilatefrik cins ve mezheb sigarü kibar millet vahdaniyeti hidaye karşı ahd ve misak umumi altında bulunduğunu arz eyleriz ferman.

9 Temmuz sene 322

Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihad Cemiyeti Manastır Merkezi

(Üçüncüsünü okur): Huzuru Akdes Hazreti Padişahiye, Huzuru Sadaretpenahiye: Bu gece kolağası Eyüb ve Niyazi Efendilerin tahtı kumandasında ahali ve efrad asakiri şahaneden mürekkeb iki bin kadar müsellaah bir kuvvet manastıra gelüb acizlerinin ve daha bazı ümeranın ikametgahları abluka edilmiş saat altı buçukda da sekiz yüz kişi müşir paşa hazretlerinin ikametgahlarını sararak ve paşayı müşarüileyhin muhafazasına mahsus olan kıtayı askeriyenin silahlarını toplayarak müşarüileyh hazretlerini kaldırub götürmüşler ve manastır kuvveyi askeriyesinin kaffesi ve efrad ahali den dahi üç bin beş yüz kişi onlara iltihak itmiş olduğu berayı malumat maruzdur.

Vali Hıfzı

Eyvah... Şimdi ne yapmalı? Hayalimde korkunc manzaralar görüyorum... Bir dakika bile durmağa bile gelmez... Bu meseleye dair sürati fevkaladede ictimaa itmiş olan meclisi vükelaya şu telgrafı da götürmeli üçüncü ordu aleyhine bir harb açdırtmalı. Şimdi meclisi vükela inkad itmiştir. Zatı şahane meclis odasının yanındaki odada bulunacaklar. Ben kendileriyle meclis arasında vasıtayı muhabere olacağım. Kalbim fena halde çarpıyor. Eğer Kanun-i Esasi ilan edilirse benim için Avrupa'ya kaçmaktan başka çare yoktur. Etdiklerimin cezasını çekmek zamanı yaklaştı! (Arka odaya geçer, bir müddet sonra başkatible birlikte avdet ider.)

Başkatib: Bitdik İzzet bitdik. Nasıl oldu da efendimizi kandıramadık.

Katib-i Sani: Meclisin verdiği karar mucebince üçüncü orduyla harb itmek veya Kanunu-i Esasi'yi olan işlemek icab itdiğini arz iylediğim zaman pek dalgın düşünüyordlardı. Daha doğrusu böyle lastikli bir karara hiddet buyurmuşlardı! Kati (...*...) bir kararı münasib virilmesini ferman buyurmaları üzerine tekrar meclise avdet idüb vükelanın harb mesuliyetini deruhte itmeyesi şeyhülislamın 'büyük mühim bir meseledir fetva emininin mütalası olmalıdır' diyerek yükü üstünden atmış, fetva emininin ukalalık idüb Kuran-ı Kerim'i araya sokması, müneccimbaşının sükut itmesi nihayet Said Paşa'nın Kanunu-i Esasi'nin meriyet ahkamı lüzumuna dair bir mazbata tanzim itdürüb bütün vükelaya imza itdürmesi üzerine mazbatayı alub getürdiğim zaman tedabir lazimenin ittihaz idilmesini ferman buyurdular. Ben de söz söyleyecek iktidar kalmadığı gibi cesaretim de tamamen kırılmıştı. Titreye titreye çıkub iradeyi seniyyeyi tebliğ itdüm. Aman fenalaşıyorum azıcık su! (Sık sık (...*...) alarak) Can evime bir sancı kapandı. Kalbini tutar.

Başkatib: (Su getirir) Gayret birader, gayret asil metanet sırası şimdidir.

Katib-i Sani: Pek doğru söylüyorsun! Hem metanet hem başımızın çaresine bakmak lazım! Sen şimdi meclisde yazılan iradeyi üçüncü orduya tebliğ et. Yarınki gazetelerde aynı iradeyi sıkıştırırsınlar, üçüncü orduyu avutup biraz teskini izahını elde itdikten sonra yeni bir fırlıdak çevirerek efendimizi caydırır, müşevvikleri yakalar, sarayburnunda boca itdiriyoruz. Bakalım iş ne renk alacak hayat ve servetimize karşı küçük bir tehlike hiss ider itmez ben Avrupa'ya firar itmeliyim. Sen bana imzalı bir memuriyet tezkiresi hazırla!

Başkatib: Adam sende! Çocuk gibi düşünüyorsun! Sanki Kanun-i Esasi ilan idilince biz mevkiyi iktidardan düşecek miyiz? Milletın yuları bizde olduktan sonra Rumların cemiyet hakkındaki hissi zanlarını şübheye düşürüb Yunanistan'la bir gaile çıkarabilirsek veyahud Bulgarları hükümet aleyhine tahrik itdirirsek yine eski hamam eski tas olmaz mı?

Katib-i Sani: Şübhe yok! Fakat ihtiyatlı bulunmalı bize tebliğ idilecek iradeyi oku bakalım.

Başkatib: (Elindeki evrak arasından bir kağıd çıkarub okur) Tesisi celili cenab hilafetpenahi olan Kanun-i Esasi'de sureti teşkil beyan olunan Meclisi Mebusan'ın ictimai davet olunması şerefi müteallik buyrulan iradeyi seniyeeye hazreti hilafetpenahi icabatı aliyyesinden bulunmuş ve hükmü celili bilcümle vilayet-i şahane valilikleriyle elviyeyi gayrı mülhaka mutasarrıflıklarına tebliğ kılınmış olmağla oracada kanunu mezkurde münderic sıfatı haiz aza intihabının icrası.

Katib-i Sani: Onlar icrayı intihab idinceye kadar aylar geçecek. Biz onlardan daha evvel denize atılması, köprü başına asılması lazım gelenleri (...*...) yine gel keyfim gel alemine dalarız. Sen hiç merak itme Kanun-i Esasi ile milletın ağızına bir parça bal çalınacak biz onu yine zehire kalb ideriz!

Başkatib: Bütün ümidlerim sendedir İzzet sende! Gözünü dört aç şu cemiyete bir külah giydir bakalım!.

Katib-i Sani: Millet adam olduysa söz viremem.

Başkatib: Adam sende! Bu cahil milletde o kabiliyet var mı?

Katib-i Sani: Her halde biz yine ihtiyatlı davranmalıyız. Avrupa'ya geçmekliğim daha hayırlıdır. Oradan para kuvvetiyle idareyi alt ve üst idüb tekrar mevki ikbale çıkmak daha kolay olur.

Başkatib: Aman beni yalnız bırakma, bu millet ne oldum delisidir. Korkarım anamızdan emdiğimizi burnumuzdan getirmesünler.

Katib-i Sani: Size hiçbir halt idemezler, lakin benim düşmanlarım çokdur. Bize gidelim de bir plan tertib idelim Ebülhüda'yı, Cevher Ağa'yı da beraber alub efendimizi de arz ideriz. Bu milletde bizim gibi paraya tapanlar var iken dolablar dönmez, ne dolablar...

Başkatib: Efendimize de arz ideriz diyorsak ama (etrafına bakınarak) bu belaların hepsi onun başı altından çıkmadı ya?

Katib-i Sani: Aman yavaş söyle! Duvarın kulağı var! “Jön Türklerin askeriden, şeyhden, küttabdan, hazreti şahcihanın it kadar casusu var” didiklerini yabana atmamalı!

Başkatib: Sen kararı firara tebeddül itdikten, efendimizde it kadar casusdan cüda düşdükdün sonra duvarın kulağından kim korkar ki!

Katib-i Sani: (Yavaşca) Söz aramızda kalsın! Efendimiz hal idilmekten pek korkuyor. Telaşından adeta bir canlı cenazeye döndü. Hani üfürsek yire yuvarlanacak!

Başkatib: O canlı cenazede biz ne hale girdik... Hepimiz mezar kaçgınına benziyoruz. Bir bana bak, bir de aynaya!

Katibi sani: Gerçek öyle aman acele olalım! Haydi çıkub gidelim de bizde görüşürüz.

(Perde iner)

DÖRDÜNCÜ PERDE

Eşhas: Abdülhamid, Cevher Ağa, Saray Erkanı Müstebidesi Galabalık, bir Jön Türk.

Sahne: Çit Köşkünde, odada Abdülhamid ile Cevher Ağa.

Birinci Meclis

(Abdülhamid, Cevher Ağa)

Abdülhamid: Gelen telgrafları görüyorsun ya. Dağ gibi yığıldı! Her taraftan tebrikler yağıyor... Budalalar Kanun-i Esasi’yi kendi isteğimle verdim sanıyorlar...

Cevher Ağa: Öyle olduğu daha iyi... Efendimiz Kanun-i Esasi’ye sadık göründükçe herkes apışub kalacaktır. O zaman milletin alıklığından, istifade itmek, ilk fırsatta Kanun-i Esasi’yi lazım gelenlerin başında parçalamak ve meclise gönderecekleri seçme Jön Türkleri cehennemın alt başına göndermek pek kolay olacaktır...

Abdülhamid: Göreyim seni Cevher! Söz aramızda kalmak şartıyla dün verdiğim plana göre işe başlamalı... Her fırsattan istifade itmeli. Cevherliğini göstermeli!

Cevher Ağa: Fermanınız başım üzerine... Dün buyurduğunuz gibi şeriatımızda en iyi bir alet olacaktır. Kulunuz hemen gidüb lazım gelenleri göreceğim, yalnız bu herifleri paraya doymak lazım!

Abdülhamid: (Bir küçük çantadan birkaç banknot çıkarub verir) Bu günlük bu kadar kafi. Lazım gelenlere verirsek, kabahat mahfi ibadet mahfi didiklerini unutma! Saman altından su yürütmeli. Gördüğünüz işlerden şeytanların bile haberi olmamalı!

Cevher: İradeyi şahanelerini harfiyen tatbik ideceğimize itimad buyurub müsterih olunuz efendimiz. (Banknotları alır hakpaya yüz sürüb çıkar.)

Abdülhamid: (Yalnız) Şu büyük sakalımı boyayım da tebrike gelenlere azıcık şık görüneyim. (Tuvalet takımını alub aynanın karşısında uğraşır.) Genç Türklere genç görünmek lazım! (Tekrar aynaya bakar) Uğursuz herifler! Telaşdan ne hale getirdiler. Adeta canlı cenazeye döndüm... Lakin zarar yok! İlk fırsatta keyfimce bir intikam alınca gelişüb toplanmak pek kolaydır. (Biraz dolaşdıktan sonra) Kanun-i Esasi'yi ilan itmek keyfimi kaçırıldığını belli itmemek için azıcık kızları çağırtayım da biraz keyifli görüneyim. (Pencereye doğru gider dışarıya eliyle işaret ider biraz sonra birkaç kız gelüb oynayub çalmağa başlarlar.)

Abdülhamid: (İç odaya geçer) Bakalım Cevher'den ne haber var... (Oda kapusını kapar.)

(Biraz sonra kabul salonuna yıldız erkanı müstebidesi gelir...)

Başkatib: Ah bu Selanıkliler ah! Gaztelere sıkışdırılan tebliği resmiyi görür görmez bayrakları ellerine almışlar. Hem nasıl bayraklar kiminde kelimatı memnuayı muzzıradan olan hürriyet, adalet, müsavat kiminde Kanun-i Esasi, vatan, millet yazılı. Yaşasın hürriyet sesleri ile nümayiş yaparak bütün İstanbul'u ayağa kaldırmışlar! Kapu kapu dolaşub içimizden çoklarını istemediklerini alenen bağırıyorlarmış. İş çığrından çıkmadan bir çare arayalım.

Ser Hafiye Paşa: Şimdiden sonra çığrı mığırı kaldı mı ki! Nümayişçiler yalnız birkaç Selanıkliden ibaret olsa yeddi icabına bakılırdı... Aldığım jurnallere nazaran işin içinde hafiyelerimizden maada dahil olmayan yok gibi bir şey. Gerçi mevcut hafiyeler nümayişçilerin birkaç mislü ise de biz burada kapandıktan sonra onlar ne yapabilirler?

Başkatib: Madem ki hiçbir şey yapılamazmış, sende aldığın jurnalleri başına çal!

Ser Hafiye: O nasıl söz? Şimdi gider efendimize arz iderim.

Başkatib: Sen kendini pabucu büyüğe okut? Ben senin arz idişini kaç a alırım ki!

Ser Hafiye: Kaça aldığınızı birkaç gün sonra anlarsınız. Siz galiba bu işleri böyle gidecek sanırsınız!

Başkatib: Böyle gitsün deyin kahr olsun!

Ebulhüda: Telaşı bırakın da ben bu lanet ayı bir afsunlayım!

Ser Hafiye: Canım sende, afsunlayacak mısın, üfürecek misin, her ne yapacaksak bir dakika evvel yap! Zira bu Temmuz ayı pek uğursuzdur. Malum ya hep inkılablar bu ayda olmuşdur.

Başkatib: O kadar bedbin olmayalım! Efendimizi caydırmak, Kanun-i Esasi'yi nümayişçilerin başında parçalamak imkanı da vardır.

(Dışarıdan gürültüler işidilir, içeridekilerin hepsinde telaş ve heyecan görülür.)

Ser Hafiye Paşa: Saltanat kapusu kapalı değil mi? Buraya girmesünler de, saray kapusu önünde ne isterlerse yapsunlar!

(Gürültü ziyadeleşir)

Ebulhüda: Lakin gürültü ziyadeleşir, galiba bağçeye girdiler. Ya buraya gelirlerse?

(Dışarıdan “yaşasın hürriyet, kahrolsun istibdad, mahvolsun hafiyeler!” İçeridekiler birbirine bakarak kaçışmağa başlarlar.)

Tüfenkci Halil Bey: Yahu tabansızlığın lüzumu yok. Ne oluyorsunuz, ne kaçışıyorsunuz. Kuzum Ebulhüda şunları afsunlayırsene!

Ebulhüda: (Titreyerek) Afsunlamak o kadar kolay olsaydı, ben hiç durur muydum... Bana da bilmem ne oldu. Birkaç günden beri mümkün değil celbi ervaha muvaffak olamıyorum.

(Dışarıda nümayişcilerin sesleri.)

Ser Hafiye: Aman Şeyh Baba, rica ideriz, bütün buradakiler sana sığındık. Kudsietini gösteriver de nümayişcilerin şerrinden kurtulalım.

Ebulhüda: Telaş itmiyeceğinizi vaadi iderseniz şu kapuyu tılsımlamağa çalışırım.

Birkaçı: İtmeyiz, itmeyiz..

(Dışarıda: “Yaşasın Kanun-i Esasi, yaşasın İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti, yaşasın hür padişahımız!” sesleri)

(Hepsinde telaş)

Ebulhüda: (Titreyerek) Canım hani ya telaş itmeyecekdiniz. Dışarıda merak idecek bir şey yok hür padişahımıza dua ediyorlar. Bizde onlara karışub dua idelim.

Ser Hafiye: Hür padişah mı değil mi sonra anlaşılacak! Şeyh Hazretlerinin fikri pek münasib şimdilik bizde onlara karışalım. Hem kim bilir, nümayişcilerin içinde bizim fikirliler vardır.

(Dışarıda sesler: Kahrolsun hafiyeler! Mahv olsun müstebidler. Yaşasın hür Padişahımız.)

(İçeridekiler: Titreyib kaçışmağa başlarlar.)

(Kapu vurulur)

Ser Hafiye: Aman açmayın! Dışarıda küfrün bini bir paraya gidiyor!

(Kapu tekrar vurulur)

Tüfenkci Halil Bey: Yabancı vuruşu değildir, Cevher olsa gerek, açalım da işi anlayalım.

(Dışarıdan: Cevher'in sesi gelir): Benim, açsanıza, efendimiz gönderdi.

Tüfenkci Halil Bey: Yavaşca kapuyu aralık ider, Cevher içeriye girer, kapuyu kaparlar.

Ebulhüda: Hayrolsun!

Cevher: (Telaşla) Dışarıda milyonla halk var. Hepsi kudurmuş köpek gibi bir yerde durunamıyor. Neyse, efendimizin cümledenize selamları var, mümkün olduğu kadar hürriyetperver görünmeğe çalışub nümayişçileri alkışlamanızı irade buyurdular. Şimdilik başka çare yok imiş! (Paltosundan birkaç bayrak çıkarır, birkaçına verir. Bayrakların üzerinde "Yaşasın Kanun-i Esasi" yazılı) Bu bayrakları göz boyamak için efendimiz acele haremde yaptırdılar. Ellerimizde bu bayraklar olduğu halde nümayişçileri karşılayalım. Şeker şerbet dağıdalım.

Ser Hafiye: (Sözünü keserek) Zift içsünler!

Ebulhüda: Amin!

Hepsi: Amin!

Cevher Ağa: Canım şimdi duayı bırakın. Yakında hepsi kahr olacaktır fakat şimdi efendimizin düşüncesi başkadır. Milletın budalalığı malumunuzdur. Birkaç gün ne oldum delisidirler. Bu delilik zamanında biz akıllı görünmeliyiz ki onları idare idelim. Bir kere delilikleri bitüb apışub kaldılar mı? Sonra bizdeki deliliği anlarlar o günler kurşuna dizilenlerin, köprüde asılanların, denize dökülenlerin sayısını Ser Hafiye Paşa'dan (...*...).

(Dışarıda: "Yaşasın hürriyet yaşasın adalet, buradadırlar, burada" sesleri.)

(İçeridekilerde korku.)

Cevher: (Titreyerek) Buraya geliyorlar, bayrakları hazırlayın bayrakları!

(Hepsi titreyerek bayrakları tutarlar.)

Cevher: (Kapuyu açarak elindeki bayrağı uzatır.) Buyurunuz efendim. Buyurunuz! Yaşasın hürriyet! Buyurunuz! Yaşasın adalet!

(Dışarıdakiler içeriye girerler.)

Kolunda İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti yazılı kurdela olan bir zat: Otuz üç seneden beri aldatdıkları elvirmemiş gibi şimdi de ellerinde tuttukları hürriyet bayrakları ile birer timsali riya kesilen bu istibdad telakkilerini görmüyor musunuz! (Zangır zangır titrerler) Bakınız nasıl titriyorlar? İki üç gün evveline kadar koca Osmanlı milletinin başında birer püsküllü bela kesilen bu güruhu rezale, pardon; vüzera diyecektim,

vatanı seven hürriyetperveran millet önünde neden bu derece zelil ve hakir oluyorlar? Hiç şüphe yok ki on Temmuz kadar milleti zelil ve hakir gördüklerinden değil mi?

(Müstebidler bozulub küçülürler, birinin elinden bayrak düşer... Nutuk iden zat acele koşub bayrağı kaldırır, öpüp başından yukarı tutar.) Müstebidler eline yakışmıyan şu hürriyet bayrağı bizim bütün Osmanlıların ser tacı imtihakımızdır. Bu mukaddes Osmanlı bayrağını sizler ve sizler gibi millet düşmanları pek kıymetden düşürmüşdünüz. Fakat "saadeti ezeli kalbi zeval olmaz, güneş yer üstüne düşmekle paymal olmaz." Hakikatine nazaran o yine kıymetinden düşmemiştir. Hele 10 Temmuzdan beri cihandeğer bir kıymet kazanmıştır, ve saye-i hürriyette günden güne daha kıymetdar olacaktır.

Yaşasın Osmanlı sancağı!

Hepsi: Yaşasın! Hürriyete taraftar buldukca yaşasın Osmanlı padişahı!

Hepsi: Yaşasın. On Temmuz ile beraber ve esaretden kurtulan bütün hür Osmanlılar yaşasın.

Hepsi: Yaşasın! On Temmuzun ne büyük bir kudreti ilah olduğunu anlamak isterseniz bir kere esirliği bir kere serbestliği düşününüz.

Payidar olsun 10 Temmuz!

Hepsi: Olsun. (Jandarmalara göstererek) Şunları doğru Bekirağa Bölüğü'ne, ellerinde tutmağa layık olmadıkları o bayrakları da alınız!

Müstebidlerden biri: Aman! Biz masumuz; biz millete fenalık itmedik, padişah başı için afv idin.

(Müstebidlerden bir diğeri): Padişah madişahı karışdırma. Şimdi hürriyet var herkes müsavidir. Onun başı ne ise bizimde odur. Beriki (...*...) layık oldukça millet de kendisine hürmet borcludur. Madem ki müsavidir, bırakınız bizde sizlere müsavi olalım. Siz hürriyet düğünü yaparken biz niçün zindanlarda ağlayalım. Bizde mesud günleri dört gözle bekliyorduk karibi Sultan ateşi suzan didikleri yalandır?

Cevher: Hep bu günleri bekliyorduk! Hep müsavvatı istiyorduk!

Nutk iden zat: Haydi, oradan kara vicdanlar! Sizler şimdi müsavvatdan ziyade adaletden istifade ideceksiniz. Bu dünya, iden bulur dünyasıdır. İyilerin iyilik, kötülerinde kötülük bulması adaletdir. Yaşasın adalet!

Hepsi: Yaşasın!

İşte yaşasın diye dua itdiğimiz adalet, millet kan ağlarken, lakaydane gülenlerin, millet gülerken, ağlamalarını emri diyor. Buna adalet denildiği gibi intikam-ı millet dahi denilebilir. Zulm ile abad olanın ahri berbad olur!

Galabalıktan bir sada: Ah ne olurdu! Bunların çeribaşısından da intikam alınsaydı!

Nutk iden zat: Şimdilik onu intikamı ilahiye terk idiyoruz. Elbette onunda sırası gelir!

Galabalıktan sesler: Mūnasib, mūnasib!

Nutk iden zat: (Jandarmalara) Jandarmalar arş bakalım. (Ahaliye) Haydi, bizde şarkılarımızla gidelim...

(Jandarmalar müstebidleri önlerine katub götürürler...)

(Nūmayişciler “Biz ne idik ne olduk” şarkısını okuyarak (...*...*...) giderler.)

(Perde yavaşca iner...)

APPENDIX D

Some Illustrations

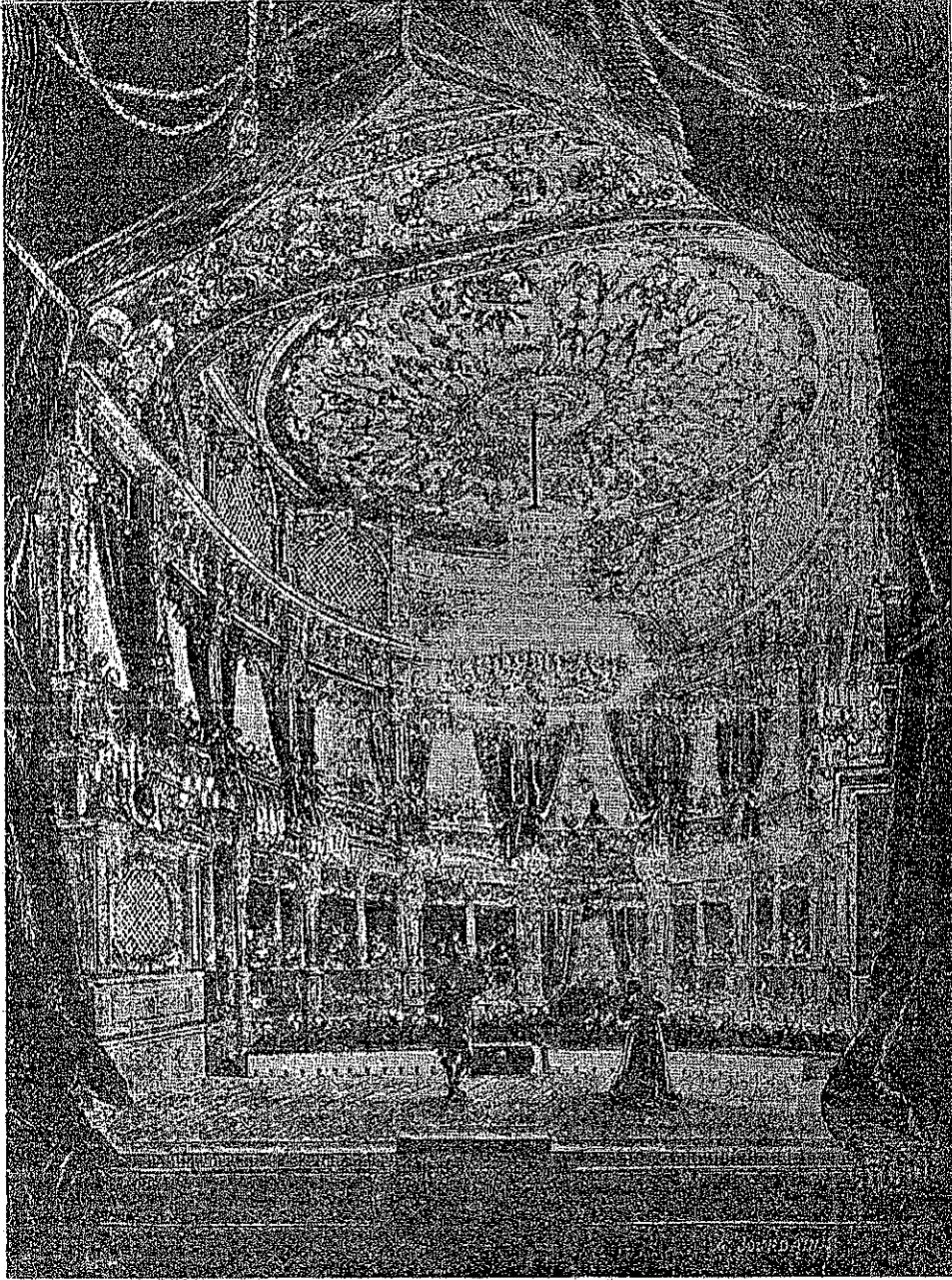


Illustration of the ball held for the reception ceremony of Sultan Abdülaziz at London. (Ali Kemali Aksüt, *Sultan Abdülaziz'in Mısır ve Avrupa Seyahati* (İstanbul: Ahmet Sait Oğlu Kitabevi, 1944), p. 176).



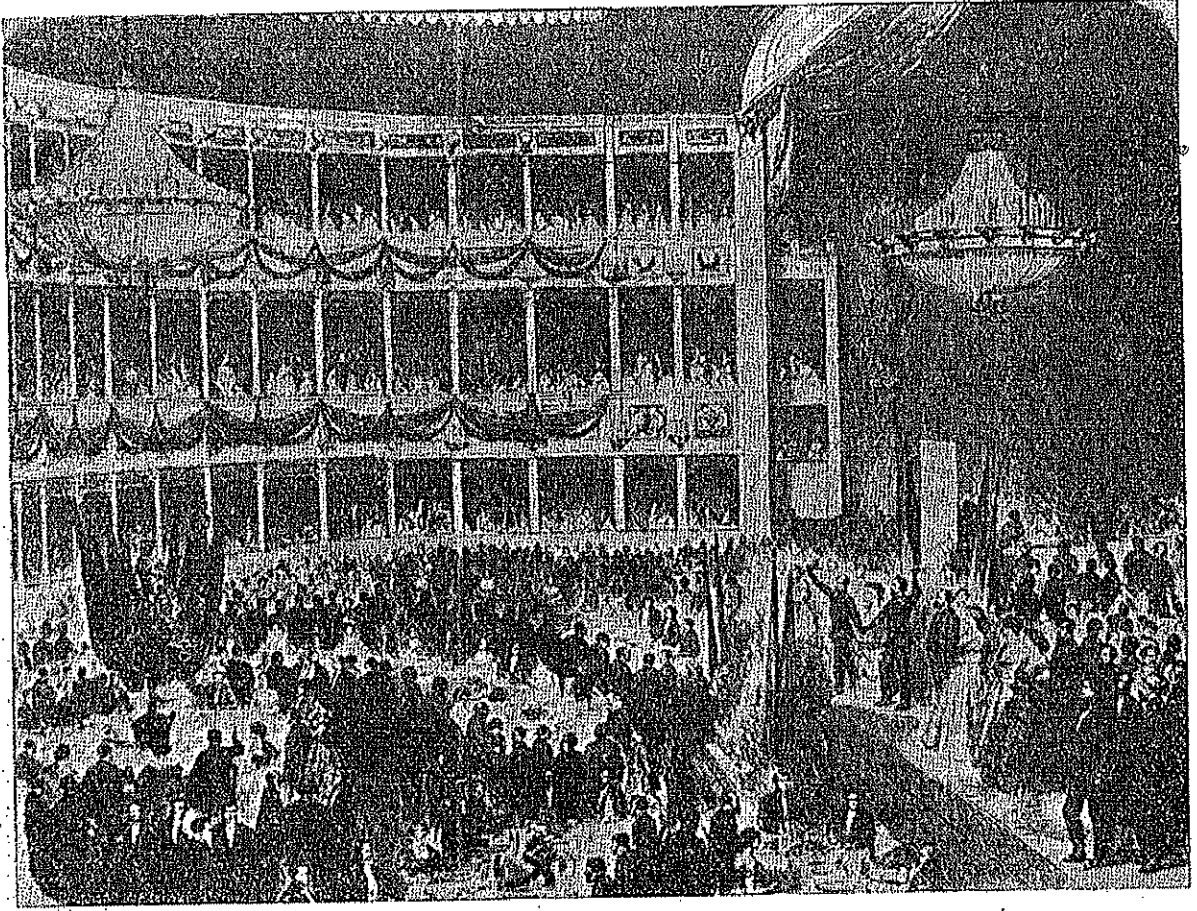
Üçüncü Napoleon'un karısı İmparatoriçe Eugenie 1869 yılında İstanbul'da Beylerbeği sarayında Abdülâzizle birlikte bir kabul töreninde

From the Ottoman imperial reception ceremony held for the French Empress Eugenie in 1869. (Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1962), p. 210).



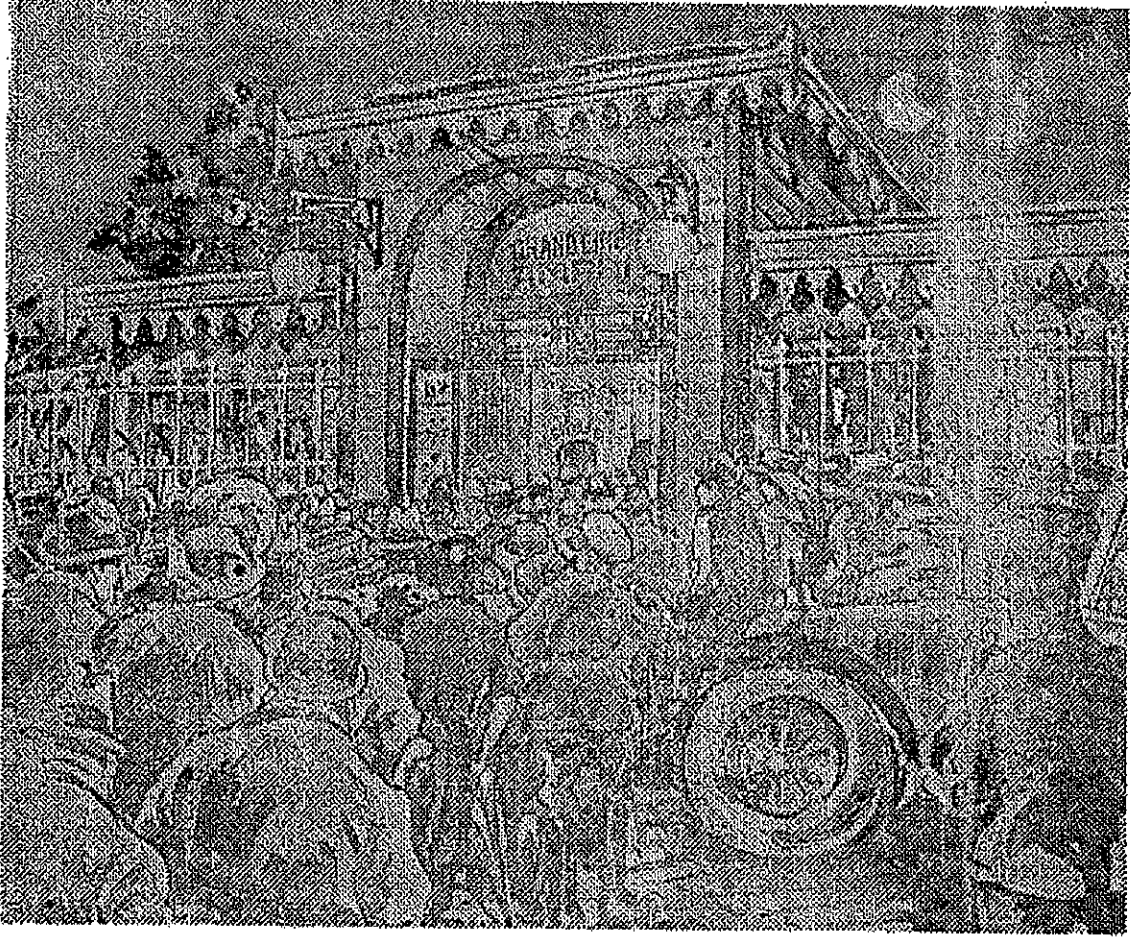
Abdlmecit tarafından 1857-1858 yılında yaptırılan Dolmabahe tiyatrosunda bir opera temsili.

An opera performance at the Dolmabahe Theater. (Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Milli Eēitim Basım Evi, 1962), p. 199).



Beyoğlunda zaman zaman Abdülmecit ve Abdülâziz'in de gittiği Naum Tiyatrosu'nun içi (1862 yılında İtalyanların Garibaldi bayramı dolayısıyla düzenledikleri bir toplantı.)

Naum Theater (Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1962), p. 206).



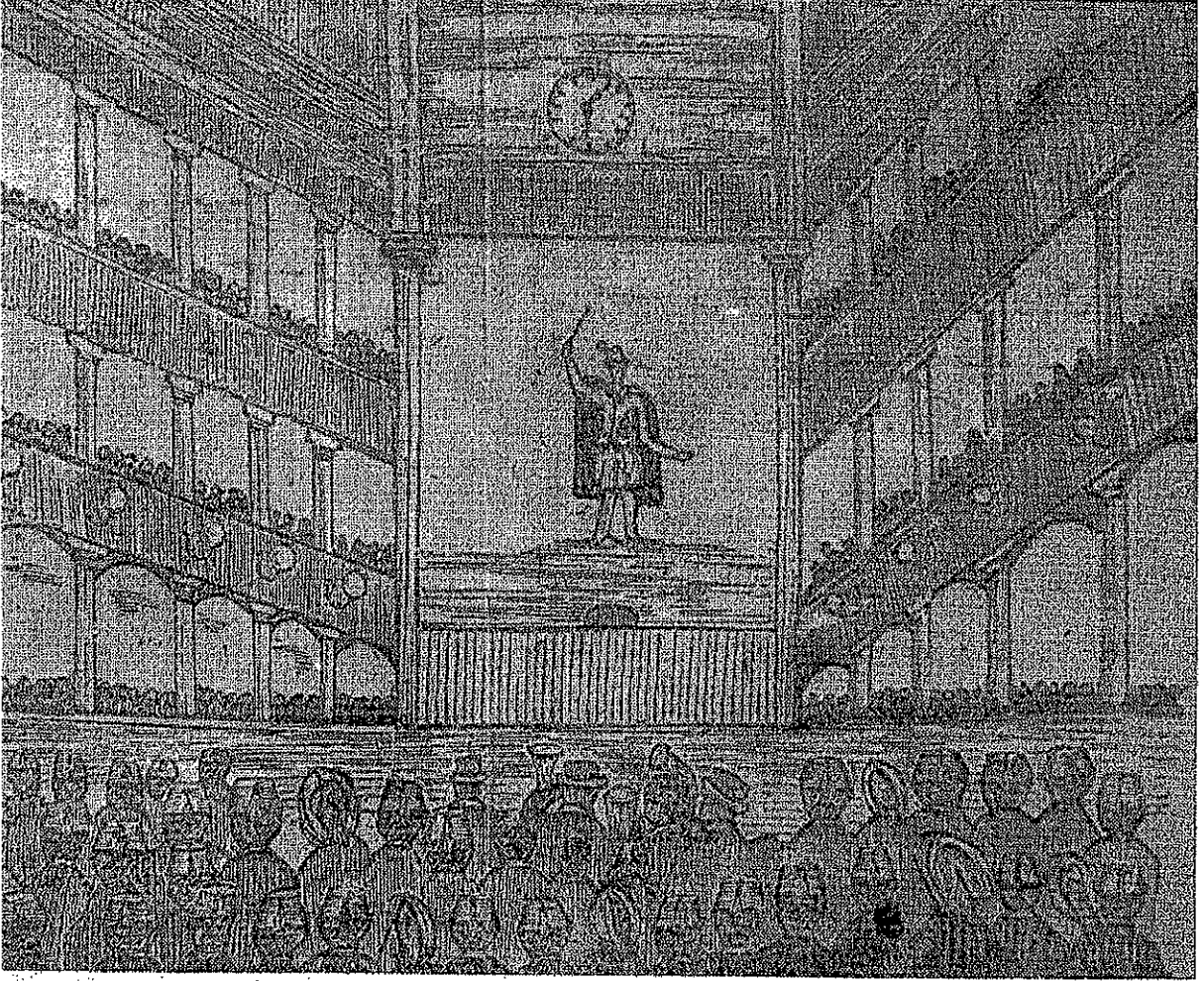
Tepebaşı yazlık veya Amphi Tiyatrosu'nun sinema olarak kullanıldığı sonraki yıllardaki bir resmi.

Tepebaşı Summer Theater (Metin And, *Tanzimat ve İstibdat Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, p. 219.)



Amfi'de Meşrutiyet'in ilk yılında
Vatan yahut Silistre temsilinde seyirciler.

From the mass spectacles of *Vatan* after the declaration of the Second Constitution. (Metin And, *Meşrutiyet Döneminde Türk Tiyatrosu*, (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1971), p.16).



Gedikpaşa Tiyatrosu'nun içi (O yıllarda çizilmiş bir kroki)

Illustration of the Gedikpaşa Theater. (Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1961), p. 303).

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