

ASLINUR MEMİŞ BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION: AHMET MİDHAT'S POETICS AND POLITICS OF RECONCILIATION Bilkent University 2023

BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION AHMET
MİDHAT'S POETICS AND POLITICS OF
RECONCILIATION

A Master's Thesis

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July 2023

To my parents



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The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN TURKISH LITERATURE

THE DEPARTMENT OF
TURKISH LITERATURE
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

July 2023

ABSTRACT

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July 2023

This thesis examines the narrative strategies employed by Ahmet Midhat to reconcile science and Islam. Focusing on Midhat's works, including *Müdafaa*, *Ben Neyim?*, *Hikmet-i Maddiye*, *Müdafaa*, *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*, *Fenni bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları*, and *Acayib-i Alem*, it argues that the Tanzimat was a translation project enabling transmission of Western concepts and discourses to the Ottoman intellectual field. Midhat, acting as a cultural agent, sought to appropriate materialist discourses concerning the relationship between science and religion by engaging in dialogue with his Western counterparts. These counterparts included materialists, Protestant missionaries, and figures like John William Draper. These counterparts contributed to Midhat's redefining conflict thesis and forming scientific arguments and new discussion methods. In his pursuit of reconciling science and Islam, Midhat attempted to adapt and employ these strategies and

arguments within the Ottoman context, aligning them with the service of Islam. His novels, serving as a medium for conveying his ideas to a broader audience, Midhat created a literary chronotope where the self confronts the other regarding scientific development, civilizational progress, and moral values. Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogue and abstract chronotope and approaches from descriptive translation studies, this thesis presents a portrayal of Ahmet Midhat as an active agent of cultural transfer rather than a passive receiver and implementer of Western ideas and concepts. In doing so, it offers a comprehensive portrait of Midhat's role in reconciling science and Islam within the Ottoman intellectual field.

Keywords: Science, Islam, Ahmet Midhat, Ottoman novel, the conflict thesis

ÖZET

BİLİM VE DİN ARASINDA: AHMET MİDHAT'IN UZLAŞTIRMA POETİKASI VE POLİTİKASI

Memiş, Aslınur

Yüksek Lisans, Türk Edebiyatı Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Mehmet Kalpaklı

Temmuz 2023

Bu tez, Ahmet Midhat'ın bilim ve İslam'ı uzlaştırmak için kullandığı anlatı stratejilerini incelemektedir. Midhat'ın Müdafaa, Ben Neyim? Hikmet Maddiye Müdafaa, Niza-ı İlm ü Din, Fenni bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları ve Acayib-i Alem eserlerine odaklanarak, Tanzimat'ın Batılı kavram ve söylemlerin Osmanlı entelektüel alanına girmesini sağlayan bir çeviri projesi olduğunu savunur. Bir kültürel aktör olarak Midhat, Batılı düşünürlerle diyaloga girerek bilim ve din ilişkisine ilişkin materyalist söylemleri, çatışma tezini bilimsel argümanlar ve tartışma yöntemlerini uyarlamaya çalışmıştır. Bu düşünürler arasında materyalistler, Protestan misyonerler ve John William Draper gibi figürler vardır. Bilim ve İslam'ı uzlaştırma arayışında, Midhat, bu strateji ve argümanları İslam'ın hizmetine sunarak Osmanlı bağlamına uyarlamaya çalıştı. Midhat, fikirlerini daha geniş kitlelere aktardığı bir araç olan

romanlarında bilimsel gelişme, uygarlık ilerlemesi ve ahlaki değerler açısından benin ötekiyle karşılaştığı soyut kronotoplar oluşturmuştur. Mikhail Bakhtin'in diyalog ve soyut kronotop kavramlarıyla beraber betimleyici çeviribilim yaklaşımlarından yararlanan bu tez, Ahmet Midhat'ı Batılı fikir ve kavramların pasif bir alıcısı ve uygulayıcısı olarak tasvir etmektedir. Bu tez, Midhat'ın Osmanlı entelektüel alanında bilim ve İslam arasındaki uzlaşmayı sağlamadaki rolünün kapsamlı bir portresini sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bilim, İslam, Ahmet Midhat, Osmanlı romanı, çatışma tezi

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is very difficult for me to reduce this thesis to a three-year effort since it is possible to trace the intellectual curiosity underlying it until about ten years ago. If one asked me which event changed my perception of existence, I would mention the Soma Mine Accident. In 2014 when 301 coal miners lost their lives due to negligence, it made me think of life and death and how we make sense of them deeply. Political authorities offered to use religious rhetoric to make sense of it. However, it would be more effective to implement scientific measures to prevent these kinds of so-called disasters from happening. Also, the intellectual atmosphere of the 2010s in Turkey was shaken by TV debates on the relationship between science and religion. These debates were so banal that they were as if two caricature characters were debating: an atheist mad scientist and his clever, younger, religious counterpart. Nowadays, the media has taken on a similar atmosphere due to the February 6 earthquakes centered in Kahramanmaraş, but the medium has changed. As repressed feelings and memories return, after nine years, I felt the same bitterness when February 6 earthquake happened. My feelings are similar to my feelings for Soma. I can admit that these cyclical memories were the unconscious of this thesis.

I owe thanks to many people during my time in Bilkent and my thesis writing process. Starting from my professors, I am thankful to Professor Mehmet Kalpaklı for being my thesis advisor, listening to my problems, and providing an atmosphere conducive to scholarly production. He always supported me whenever I attempted to

take a step toward realizing my potential. I thank Professor Özer Ergenç not only for his intellectually stimulating classes but also for encouraging me to be a historian in the future, being a role model, and showing me how a professor communicates with his students in a witty way. I cannot summarize my gratitude for Professor Berke Torunoğlu's support in such a short remark. He read and commented on every piece I wrote during my time in Bilkent, opening new horizons in my mind. But the most important one was his moral support. He believed in me more than I believed in myself. I thank Professor Owen Miller for reading and commenting on this thesis. I thank Professor Suavi Aydın, Professor Nil Tekgül, and Professor Orhan Tekelioğlu for supporting me during my Ph.D. applications. Last but not least, I thank Professor Alper Yalçınkaya for taking part in my examining committee and giving in-depth feedback.

The hugest thanks are to my family. I am grateful to have my parents, Fikriye and Mustafa, with me. They gave me a peaceful home, which turned me into a peaceful soul. Not only they gave me a peaceful home but also my elder brother Ismail, my dearest friend, a partner in crime, and a shoulder to cry on. He always encouraged me to take the little steps towards realizing my career goals by respecting my ideas, capabilities, and enthusiasm. I thank my friends Gizem and Kübra, who gave me a sense of sisterhood. I can especially mention Kübra's support as the turning point in the thesis writing process. As I have never regretted listening to her advice, I will not regret listening to her motivational statement, "Go to the library and write your thesis now," during the weeks that I could not add even a word to my thesis. The most grateful feeling about being in Bilkent is meeting Yeşim, my wittiest

friend. I am thankful to her for reading and commenting on every part of this thesis. It was a great pleasure to know such a unique character and be in solidarity with her during such stressful times. I owe special thanks to my fluffy friends Binnaz, Tomtom, and Şayeste. Binnaz and Tomtom, the joys of my life, made me homesick during my stay in Ankara. Şayeste made me feel at home whenever I saw her in front of the dormitory. She always gave me the feeling of “Everything is okay; Şayeste is here.”

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 Conflict Thesis in Western Literature

In the nineteenth-century intellectual field, the shift in the meanings of science and religion led to the broader assumption that science and religion are antithetical. This assumed dichotomy between the two concepts was later called conflict thesis (Harrison, 2010; 2015). Studies by Ian Barbour (1966) in the late 1960s challenged the conflict thesis with the systematical study of the interaction between science and religion. Many of the field's essential notions, such as the comparison of methodology and theory, were put forth in Barbour's *Issues in Science and Religion*. While methodological issues occupied early studies of science and religion, scholars from the late 1980s to the 2000s developed contextual approaches, including in-depth historical analyses of how science and religion (Brooke, 1991). Likewise, Peter Harrison (2010) problematized the conflict thesis by claiming that in the seventeenth century, Protestant theology conceptualized nature and humanity in a way that led to

the development of science. In “Science and Religion: Constructing the Boundaries” (2010), Harrison (2010) examines the historical process when science and religion became binary categories and states that in the nineteenth century, these two categories were divided due to their independent formations in the West. He gives reasons for the division— for example, he points to the change in the way of imagining science and religion in the post-reform and post-enlightenment periods. Also, he underlines the development of the field of science as a profession, and natural philosophy’s decline in importance.

The in-depth analysis of the early modern European context led Harrison (2010) to trace the shift in the way of imagining categories of science and religion. Harrison indicates that in the early modern period study of nature was integral to studying religion through textual analysis of early modern natural philosophers, such as Johannes Kepler, John Johnston, and Robert Boyle. Regarding the understanding of early modern natural philosophers, nature is an image of God’s book (Harrison, 2010). According to Simon Schaffer (1986), in the nineteenth century, the end of natural philosophy went hand in hand with the emergence of science as a separate modern discipline in the European context. Harrison (2010) accepts the emergence of the scientist as a professional title as an indication of this division process. In addition, the foundation of the institutions in England providing a space for promoting and developing science and bringing together practitioners of science was an indication of the emergence of science as a separate discipline (Harrison, 2010). Another indication of the shift in the categories of science and religion is the diminishing of the clergy’s domination in the study of nature. Thanks to the legitimization acquired from non-clerical authorities, new disciplines of biology and geology achieved gradual independence from religious authorities (Harrison, 2010).

Harrison argues the new group of people practicing science had conflicted with religious authorities. This power struggle led to the idea that science and religion are separate and conflicting categories (Harrison, 2010).

1.1.2 Literature on Science and Religion in the Ottoman Context

In the Ottoman context, Şerif Mardin (2000) examines the Islamic origins of Young Ottoman thought to understand the basis for their political demands. While doing this, Mardin distinguishes between the Islamic understanding of nature from Enlightenment philosophers and the Medieval Christian world. In order to understand this distinction, he traces the origins of natural law separate from divinity to Christian tradition. According to Mardin, there is a distinction between “natural law as the will of divinity and natural law as an order of things existing independently of the will of divinity” in Medieval Christian thought (Mardin, 2000, p. 86). Such distinction paves the way for examining nature, which is autonomous from the divine order and leaves room to secularize natural law gradually (Mardin, 2000). In Islamic tradition, the natural law was thought to be revealed by God and cannot be regarded as an autonomous category (Mardin, 2000). Mardin (2000) asserts that while the Western understanding of nature, which has its rationality and autonomy, made it possible to investigate the natural law apart from divine law, this investigation is restricted in Islamic thought due to the unity of the categories of natural and divine.

At this point, Mardin (2000) and Harrison (2010) disagree about the separation of science and religion in the European context. While Harrison (1998) thinks, it was an institutional process, Mardin (2000) considers this division of natural and divine innate in Medieval Christian understanding with origins dating back to Aristotelian thought. Although they disagree on the beginnings and reasons for this process of division Mardin’s ideas are remarkable indicating the situation in the late Ottoman

context. Suppose it is inferred from Mardin's analysis of the differences in understanding the relationship between science and religion in the context of the West and the Ottoman Empire. In line with Mardin's argument, religion and science were not separate categories for Ottoman thinkers, and they justified their political demands by turning to Islamic philosophy. In that case, Islam has become the subject of discussions on the relationship between science and religion.

In regard to the formation of the conflict thesis, Harun Küçük in "Islam, Christianity, and the Conflict Thesis" (2010) explains the reasons paving the way for the process where Islam became the subject of this debate. Based on the idea that Christianity and Islam were thought to be intertwined and complementary to each other in the nineteenth-century sources, Küçük proposes that these sources produced two counter-Islamic representations: A representation of Islam that is open to intellectual development and a science-friendly and backward and anti-scientific one. For Küçük, the representation of Islam as an anti-scientific religion was a critical tool for understanding all religions in an ahistorical way. Two reasons for the representation of Islam as an anti-scientific religion were that Islam was thought to be the purest of Semitic monotheistic beliefs and that data on Islam was historically more available because it emerged later (Küçük, 2010).

Hence this representation of Islam is suitable not only to criticize the medieval church but also to produce generalizations about the nature of religion and, therefore, Christianity. Thus, studies on Islam become integral to the philological, historical, and anthropological critique of monotheistic beliefs, especially in Protestant theological faculties. This role played by Islam in religious studies later expanded to Catholic Christianity (Küçük, 2010). One of the most significant factors in transforming the criticism of Islam into the criticism of Catholic Christianity is the

translations from Arabic. These translations played a vital role in developing Catholic scholasticism in the twelfth century. In these translations, Islamic philosophy created European scholastic thought and Aristotelianism, and this interaction between Catholic Christianity and Islam attracted the attention of historians in the nineteenth century. As a result, the approach to Islam considerably overlaps with the approach to Christianity and the dogmatic thoughts of the Catholic Church (Küçük, 2010).

1.1.3 Islam and Science in the Late Ottoman Context

The debate over the relationship between science and religion in the West led to the question of whether Islam is an obstacle to scientific development and, modern civilization in the Ottoman context. Seda Uyanık (2013) argues in *Osmanlı Bilim Kurgusu: Fenni Edebiyat* that Ottoman intellectuals conceived science as a civilizational matter. Referring to the accounts of Mustafa Sami Efendi, Sadullah Paşa, and Şemseddin Sami, Uyanık suggests that Ottoman bureaucrats' and intellectuals understood Western modernity in terms of scientific development. Şemseddin Sami, for instance, highlights that Ottomans should import science from European civilization in order to civilize Ottoman *ilm* (Uyanık, 2013).

To introduce modern science to Ottoman society, there were attempts to reconcile Islam with science in the Ottoman context. Şükrü Hanioğlu (2005) indicates in “Blueprints for a Future Society” that the circulation and translation of materialist ideas in the Ottoman context led to the emergence of a heated debate on the relationship between science and Islam through examination of the ideas of Beşir Fuad, Abdullah Cevdet and Baha Tevfik. According to Hanioğlu, in order to establish a basis for a new society based on scientific truth and empirical methods they looked for ways of presenting an Islamicized version of materialist philosophy (Hanioğlu, 2005). Hanioğlu warns his audience about mistaking these

thinkers' attitudes with Islamists' attitudes that produce arguments in favor of the reconcilability of Islam with science. Hanioğlu positions Ottoman materialists' attempts to reconcile Islam with science on the opposite side of Islamists: while materialists thought religion and science were incompatible at the same time, they attempted to reconcile materialism with Islam (Hanioğlu, 2005). On the side of the *ulama*, they wrote refutations to counter materialist arguments. Hanioğlu states, *ulama* used Islamic concepts, Quranic verses, and *hadith* to defend Islam as pro-science yet they failed to be recognized by Ottoman materialists (Hanioğlu, 2005). He categorizes the refutations of materialist theories until the 1920s as criticisms "in the form of classical Islamic refutations based entirely upon the Islamic tradition" (Hanioğlu, 2005, p. 81).

Jale Parla (1990) argues that during the Tanzimat Era, an epistemological shift caused by the Ottoman encounter with the West occurred in the Ottoman mentality. According to Parla, during Tanzimat, new reforms modeled by observing the West were carried out under the traditional Islamic frame. She traces this frame's roots to the Ottoman idea of *nizam-ı alem*, which imagines a stable and ideal order. Accordingly, she asserts that Tanzimat is a series of attempts to sustain the perfect order that Ottomans imagined rather than a modernization project. These new attempts were adapted to old Islamic concepts such as *nakl*, *ayet*, and *hadith*. The new knowledge is oriented to the old Islamic epistemological framework (Parla, 1990). Jale Parla (1990) named this adaptation process translation (*terceme*) in the Ottoman sense rather than a cultural synthesis. She states, Ottoman intellectuals attempted to add a few Western innovations to Ottoman norms and cultural codes. She emphasizes Ottoman intellectuals' strong belief in dealing with the task of coherently adding Western innovations to the Ottoman frame. However, according to

Parla, these intellectuals were unaware of the conflicting epistemological bases of East and West (Parla, 1990).

To prove her arguments, Parla gives place to close readings of Tanzimat novels. More importantly, she mentions Namık Kemal's and Ahmet Midhat's apologies. She criticizes *Renan Müdafaaamesi* for using Islamic concepts while responding to Ernest Renan. In addition, she highlights Ahmet Midhat's epigraph to *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*, which states, "The book written against those who invite Muslims to Christianity." She remarks, the book was written to defend Islam against Christianity propaganda but it ended up opposing the scientific revolution and empiricism instead (Parla, 1990). Parla misses the point of the interrelatedness of scientific criticism of Islam and Christianity, as Harun Küçük (2010) indicates. Moreover, it should be reminded that Ahmet Midhat wrote his apologies against Protestant Missionaries. It implies that Ahmet Midhat did not defend Islam against scientific revolution and empiricism but criticized the Protestants' claim of using scientific arguments.

Regarding terminology, Jale Parla (1990) mentions a lack of communication between counterparts— i.e. advocates of conflict thesis and Islamic apologetics. This lack of communication, according to Parla, stems from the absence of modern scientific terminologies to discuss science and religion in the Ottoman context. She problematizes Namık Kemal's criticism for Renan's ambiguous terminologies, such as the Arab education system, Arab civilization, Islamic sciences, and Islamic civilization. She interprets the terminology Renan uses to bring a scientific discourse to religious studies by setting terms and concepts (Parla, 1990). Because of that, she considers Namık Kemal's and Ahmet Midhat's criticisms mentioned above an anti-scientific attitude and lack of knowledge of modern science. However, by idealizing

Renan's scientific terminology for religious terms, she overlooks Renan's and Draper's ahistorical approach and orientalist discourse in the guise of "scientific" terminologies. In addition, Parla's attitude sustains the imagined dichotomies between science and religion, modern and traditional.

Seda Uyanık (2013) criticizes Parla's attitude of imagining intellectuals of Tanzimat as a monolithic group. Uyanık's criticism shows that Parla is selective when she attempts to create a grand theory on the intellectual atmosphere of the Tanzimat Era. According to Uyanık, Parla does not consider intellectuals that subscribe to rationality rather than religious learning— such as Şinasi and Sadullah Paşa and Şemseddin Sami. Besides Uyanık's criticisms, Parla also selectively analyzes the texts by overlooking the power relations between conflicting discourses to fit them into her theoretical framework.

Alper Yalçınkaya (2015) explains how the relationship between science and religion became a debate on civilization. He comes up with questions, such as "What were the Ottomans talking about when they talked about science?" He points out the significance of translation at this point since all Turkish-speaking Muslim Ottomans engaged in the act of translation. He accepts the translation not only as a cultural translation but also as a social act that entails a study of social settings and interaction (Yalçınkaya, 2015). He translates the term *la science* as *ilm* and *fen* for late Ottoman intellectuals. According to him, *ilm* has religious connotations with considerable prestige, which was used as the equivalent of science. The *ilm* has two branches of knowledge which are intellectual and transmitted ones. While intellectual *ilm* includes fields of astronomy and medicine, transmitted *ilm* includes teachings and life of the Prophet and study of the Quran. At this point, Yalçınkaya (2015) warns his reader not to imagine this distinction as religious and secular. He points out that it is

not a secular and religious binary, but the distinction is religious and shaped by the Islamic perspective.

On the other hand, he introduces a new type of knowledge in the name of *fenn*, which connotes practical knowledge. According to Yalçinkaya's analysis of nineteenth-century Ottoman texts, *fenn* refers to the sciences of Europeans (Yalçinkaya, 2015). Yalçinkaya's analysis of the Ottoman terms about science reminds Jale Parla's comments on Namık Kemal's apology mentioned above. Her conclusion on Namık Kemal's lack of understanding of modern science in Renan's terms falls short of comparing the difference in the conceptualization of science. Rather than a lack of understanding, the difference stems from the difference in mentalities, as Yalçinkaya (2015) indicated. However, Parla's other conclusion on Tanzimat intellectuals' resistance to new knowledge is also disputed when the invention of new terms such as *fenn* is considered. Accordingly, as indicated by Yalçinkaya (2015), rather than a lack of understanding of modern science and resistance to modern scientific discourse, Ottoman intellectuals attempted to seek ways to adapt modern science into an Islamic frame.

Yalçinkaya (2015) explains that the new type of European knowledge created a new type of people, and the new type of knowledge was a matter of civic virtue. He asserts, European intellectuals' conceptualization of science led to a new categorization of civilizations in terms of scientific development. Informed by this new categorization, the debate between science and religion was extended to East and West, Islam and Christianity, religious and scientific, and modern and traditional. The emphasis on *terceme* by Parla (1990) and the translation by Yalçinkaya (2015) are remarkable in deconstructing these binaries and conceiving and contextualizing the shift in the mentality during Tanzimat as a transcultural phenomenon. Analyzing

these apologies by regarding the issue of translation not only as a linguistic term but also as a cultural phenomenon provide a reciprocal approach and better insight to the debate. It enables us to conceive how new knowledge was transmitted from one context to another.

Nur Gürani Arslan (2002) introduces a new context to make sense of Ahmet Midhat's Islamic apologies. Ahmet Midhat's apologies and science fiction novels can be understood better when American missionary activities are taken into consideration. She states, one of the early figures mentioned America in their writings was Ahmet Midhat. According to her, Ahmet Midhat has an attitude towards American Protestant missionaries in Ottoman Empire. For instance, in the epigraph on the *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*, Midhat states that the book was written against those who invite Muslims to Christianity. In addition, he published the first volume of *Müdafaa* to defend Islam against Christianity propaganda, which attracted the interest of Henry Otis Dwight, the minister of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, enough to write a response against it. Another remarkable book regarding Americans and the relationship between science and religion is *Fenni Bir Roman Yahut Amerikan Doktorları* which introduces America as a place of extremeness. He evaluates Americans' enthusiasm for scientific progress regarding morals, and takes it for the symbol of civilization (Arslan, 2002). As Arslan points, these examples suggest that reaction to American Protestant Missionaries is essential to debate the relationship between religion and science for Ahmet Midhat.

As Arslan (2002) indicates, while Ahmet Midhat wrote Islamic apologies against the idea that Islam is not compatible with modern science, at the same time, he introduced the theme of science in his novels. These novels are significant in understanding how Ahmet Midhat communicated his ideas on the relationship

between science and religion to a relatively broader and less educated population. In addition, Midhat's science fiction is significant to indicate how the debate on the relationship between science and religion transformed the way of literary writing in terms of both form and content. In terms of literary style, he wrote an experimental novel, *Acayib-i Alem*, to indicate how a novel based on science should be written in return for Beşir Fuad's criticism of the lack of science in Tanzimat novels.

1.1.4 Science and Religion in Ahmet Midhat's Novels

Regarding Tanzimat Literature, Alper Yalçınkaya (2015) paid significant attention to the representation of the relationship between science and religion in the Tanzimat novels by emphasizing the representation of the ideal type of scientist in Tanzimat novels (Yalçınkaya, 2011). While focusing on literature gives insights into the cultural representation of science and scientists, stylistic features of the novels also provide a lens demonstrating how the concept of modern science in the Ottoman context transformed literary style. However, instead of conceiving the literary text as unmediated reflection of historical context, focusing on form and style in relation to historical context of the literary works provide an in-depth analysis of impact of the new western concepts to the literary field.

In addition, Ercüment Asil's study (2021) is remarkable in indicating the representation of the tension between *ilm* as prestigious knowledge and *fenn* as a newly coined Western science in Ahmet Midhat's famous science fiction. He argues that reconciliation between these two sides was only possible in an unknown geography like America. Also, Asil (2021) states, thanks to writing about science in America as independent from the field of religion, Ahmet Midhat remains in a neutral position without having to deal with Islamic morality. By doing so, Asil

ignores the interrelatedness of the categories of science and religion in the Tanzimat literature.

Moreover, Nur Gürani Arslan (2002) states, it is unimportant whether *Fenni Bir Roman Yahud Amerika Doktorları* took place in America, and the geographical distance of America enabled Ahmet Midhat to write a novel without taking into consideration the reality. Asil (2021) agrees with Arslan (2002) in considering America a suitable space to discuss science without dealing with Islam's authority. Although Seda Uyanık (2013) attempted to contextualize the representation of America by taking it as a character of its own, above mentioned studies leave out the fact that speaking of the other is speaking of the self. Geographical references to America in Ahmet Midhat's novels are meaningful when considering his non-fiction works written to respond to the other regarding science and religion. Ahmet Midhat's non-fiction works examined in this thesis were written to develop a counter-discourse against the American Protestant missionaries operating in the Ottoman Empire. The representation of America in Ahmet Midhat's novels is significant at this point. By writing a story set in America, Ahmet Midhat localizes America and has the right to talk about the other in the literary universe. In this way, America enters the literary text as a discursive space in his fiction and non-fiction.

1.2 Objectives, methodologies, and key concepts

As indicated, during the Tanzimat, a new discourse asserting science and religion are antithetical entered circulation through translations. The circulation of these ideas made Ottoman intellectuals consider technological and scientific progress regarding civilizational frameworks based on religion. The perception and conceptualization of science concerning religion, especially Islam, were shaped by

nineteenth-century intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire. The notion of science was conceived in terms of imagined civilizational frameworks which established dichotomies such as east-west, Islam-Christianity, and Muslim-non-Muslim. Among most nineteenth-century Ottoman intellectuals, this gave rise to the thought that Islam was an obstacle to scientific development. However, some intellectuals attempted to reconcile science with Islam. In this context, science and technology were implicitly a matter of identity. When Ottoman intellectuals wrote about science, they also wrote about civilization, religion, ideal Ottoman citizen (Yalçinkaya, 2015).

In the adaptation process to new Western knowledge, translation became a key concept for Ottoman intellectuals— also Jale Parla (1990) and Alper Yalçinkaya (2015) indicates this. Accordingly, this thesis proposes that Tanzimat was a project to translate and integrate Western ideas and concepts to the Ottoman context (Berk, 2004; Karadağ, 2014). As Monica Ringer suggests, Tanzimat was not a process of dissemination of ideas from Europe to the Ottoman Empire but rather a more complex and interactive process of different societies responding to similar changes in different ways (Ringer & Charrière, 2020). Here, I take the notion of translation with its multiple meanings: such as transfer [*nakl*], adaptation [*tahvil*], borrowing [*iktibas*], modeling [*imtisal*], response [*tanzir*], importing [*idhal*] as the meaning of translation in a broad spectrum for Ottoman intellectuals (Demircioğlu, 2009; Dolcerocca, 2021; Paker, 2006). As a result of this translation project, multiple conflicting discourses emerged and were to be reconciled. To achieve this objective, the authors developed both political and poetic strategies. They used old and new strategies to frame and appropriate Western discourses and reach a reconciliation. To this end, this paper focuses on Ahmet Midhat's both fictional and non-fictional works on the relationship between science and religion.

What makes Ahmet Midhat significant for this thesis is that he was an effective agent for literary production and translation as a polymath and a prolific author (Demircioğlu, 2009). Ahmet Midhat's inclusion of conflicting discourses in his fictional and non-fictional works to be reconciled in a dialogical way also makes him remarkable for this thesis. In his works, he circulates new Western concepts and ideas in the Ottoman context, and he appropriates these ideas. Also in his fiction and non-fiction, he extensively responded to questions on the relationship between science and religion, as well as science and literature.

Correspondingly, his fictional works, *Fenni Bir Roman Yahud Amerika Doktorları* and *Acayib-i Alem*, will be analyzed as the former—according to literary critics—is one of the early examples of science-fiction in Ottoman Turkish. The latter, as posited by Ahmet Midhat, is a novel written based on science. In addition, this thesis focuses on Ahmet Midhat's *Niza-i İlm ü Din* because it is a response directly to American scientist John William Draper's conflict thesis. Applying the method of *muhâvere*, Ahmet Midhat juxtaposes two conflicting discourses on science and religion by translating Draper's ideas and writing responses to his ideas in the same text. He then reaches a reconciliation by appropriating Draper's ideas in the Ottoman context. Likewise, *Müdafaa* has a dialogical discourse by entering an argument with American Protestant missionary Henry Otis Dwight. Lastly, *Ben Neyim?. Hikmet-i Maddiyyeye Müdafaa*, through which Ahmet Midhat developed a counter-discourse to materialist accounts on science and religion, will be focused.

As indicated, approaches borrowed from translation studies are key in conceptualizing Ahmet Midhat's reconciliation of science and religion and adaptation of modern science in the Ottoman context. Throughout this thesis, the concept of translation will not only be conceived as a linguistic term. However, it will also be

conceptualized as a transcultural act of appropriating Western science¹, civilization, and concepts. At this point, Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogue acquires its significance in terms of understanding the process in which the concept of modern science was translated to the Ottoman context. The Bakhtinian semiotics, which is an instructive tool to conceptualize the above-mentioned process of translation, will be implemented throughout this thesis.

Dialogue is the fundamental concept for the semiotics of Bakhtin, who is credited with coining the term dialogism. According to Bakhtin, dialogue is essential to human communication that involves the interaction of several voices, each of which has a different viewpoint. This covers both spoken communication between people and mental communication that occurs when a person processes and makes sense of their experiences.

Bakhtin considers dialogue a dynamic and open-ended way of generating meaning and understanding. He stresses the need to appreciate the multiplicity of voices and viewpoints that create language and meaning rather than regarding language as a closed system with fixed meanings. Such a definition of dialogue can help to understand how other relations work, such as signifier/signified, text/context, system/history, rhetoric/language speaking/writing. For Bakhtin, dialogue between self and other is key for understanding these dualisms that he conceptualizes as a relation of simultaneity, which deals with ratios of the same and different in space

¹ The concept of western science is a problematic term in that the concept of science in the west does not have a singular meaning and it is necessary to conceptualize science in non-western contexts. Kenan Tekin and Marwa el-Shakry's articles are important studies as they show that science is conceptualized in different ways in non-Western contexts. I would like to thank Professor Alper Yalçınkaya for his reminder on this subject. For more information see. Elshakry, M. (2010). When Science Became Western: Historiographical Reflections. *Isis*, 101(1), 98–109. doi:10.1086/652691; Tekin, K. (2022). Islamic Philosophy and the Globalization of Science: Ahmed Cevdet's Translation of the Sixth Chapter of Ibn Khaldun's Muqaddimah. *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 55(4), 459–475. doi:10.1017/s0007087422000346.

and time (Holquist, 1990).

Dialogism renders, all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relationship between two bodies occupying simultaneous but different spaces. These bodies can be physical, political, and ideas in general (Holquist, 1990). Bakhtin conceptualizes the analysis of dialogue through the relation between the self and the other as follows:

Not an analysis of consciousness in the form of sole and single *I*, but precisely an analysis of the interactions of many consciousnesses; but precisely an analysis of many equally privileged and fully valid consciousness. Nonself-sufficiently, the impossibility of the existence of a single consciousness. I am conscious of myself only while revealing myself for another, through another, and with the help of another. (...) Not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the *boundary*, between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the *threshold* (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 287).

Informed by such a definition of dialogue, he conceptualizes selfhood in a way that the self is an event with a structure that is organized around the categories of space and time (Bakhtin, 1990). Therefore, the self perceives existence from a unique position. In other words, the meaning is shaped by the place from which the self perceives.²

Accordingly, the self may be conceived in terms of three elements: “a center, a not-center, and the relation between them”(Holquist, 1990, p. 29). Bakhtin considers this relationality in terms of language. The exchange between the self and the other is mediated by language through which words fix meanings. Language orders things in real life and gives a pattern through its linguistic structure (Holquist, 1990). Since both of their aims is to mean, there is a close connection between the project of language and selfhood for Bakhtin. Therefore, the study of language is central to the

² Holquist explains the relationship between self and other with an analogy of two bodies looking at each other. See. Holquist, M. (1990). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*. London: Routledge.

study of the self for Bakhtin as he accepts the self as a sign (Holquist, 1990). By doing this, he becomes able to conceptualize selfhood through a linguistic approach.

Bakhtin's conceptualization of dialogue is different from the former theories on dialogue. Dialogue is basically a conversation: two people's talking to each other in which speaking and exchange have a significant role. However, Bakhtin highlights the difference in dialogue. In other words, speakers in the Bakhtinian sense are different, and their utterances are different even if they use the same words. (Holquist, 1990) One of the reasons for this difference is that signs have different values for different speakers, contexts, and cultures (Bakhtin, 1994). Bakhtin conceptualizes these values as an evaluative accent:

Any word used in actual speech possesses not only theme and meaning in the referential, or content, sense of these words, but also value judgment: i.e., all referential contents produced in living speech are said or written in conjunction with a specific *evaluative accent*. There is no such thing as word without evaluative accent (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 36).

This conceptualization of the values of signs implies that the meanings of words are not fixed and are open to change. Bakhtin considers the transfer of one word to another context as the process of reevaluation and dispossession of its values:

A change in meaning is, essentially, always a *reevaluation*: the transposition of some particular word from one evaluative context to another. A word is either advanced to a higher rank or demoted to a lower one. The separation of word meaning from evaluation inevitably deprives meaning of its place in the living social process (where meaning is always permeated with value judgment), to its being ontologized and transformed into ideal Being divorced from the historical process of Becoming (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 37).

Dialogue plays a significant role in the replacement of signs and words since, through dialogue, speakers translate a sign into another system of signs (Holquist, 1990). For the signs' translation process, appropriation of the sign is key in understanding dialogue. To transfer a sign, one needs to appropriate the vision of the

other:

To understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context. For each word of the utterance that we are in process of understanding, we, as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words. The greater their number and weight, the deeper and more substantial our understanding will be. Thus each of the distinguishable significative elements of an utterance and the entire utterance as a whole entity are translated in our minds into another, active and responsive, context (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 35).

Accordingly, entering a dialogue means the transfer and translation of signs from one context to another. Moreover, to transfer and translate a sign into another context, one should enter a dialogue as meaning is created in the dialogue. Bakhtin explains the process through which signs are transferred by means of speech. The same process can be applied to written dialogue by considering utterance as a sign in a metonymical way:

Any true understanding is dialogic in nature. Understanding is to utterance as one line of a dialogue is to the next. Understanding strives to match the speaker's word with a *counter word*. Only in understanding a word in a foreign tongue is the attempt made to match it with the 'same' word in one's own language (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 35).

Through dialogue, speakers not only translate signs but also responds to pre-existing utterances. At this point, Bakhtin's use of the term differs from that of Ferdinand de Saussure's parole. In contrast, Saussure considered parole a free act of choice, and Bakhtin's utterance entails a certain amount of constraints due to pre-existing utterances. Therefore, for Bakhtin, the utterance is not a thing in itself, but it is always an answer to another utterance that Bakhtin names addressivity (Holquist, 1990).

When Bakhtin's concept of utterance is applied to literary theory, literary texts are considered utterances, a form of communication and knowledge (Holquist, 1990). As far as the Bakhtinian meaning-making process considered, the author is not the

only actor but the place literary work occupied with respect to in the social and historical context becomes an actor in the meaning making process as well (Holquist, 1990).

Moreover, in a literary text, its author, characters, and reader enter a dialogue, which gives it a polyphonic character. Bakhtin names this polyphony of social and discursive forces heteroglossia (Holquist, 1990). At the cognitive level, Bakhtin considers the literary text, especially the novel, a form of human consciousness judged not by singularity and unity but by multiplicity and variety. Thus, the novel has a particular place in the history of human consciousness through which human consciousness does not become aware of itself but aware of the other (Holquist, 1990). Namely, novelness is an intrinsic aspect of the human consciousness of the other.

Regarding dialogism in Bakhtin's literary criticism, there is a dialogical relationship between history which connotes particular and unrepeatable, and poetics, which focuses on recurring figures and unchanging patterns. Bakhtin names this seemingly contradictory approach to literary criticism historical poetics. This approach to literary text embodies the term chronotope, composed of the words *chronos* and *topos*, i.e., time/space (Bakhtin, 1981). Chronotope pays attention to the dialogical relationship between time and space in the novel. Bakhtin abstains from offering a full definition of the term, but he concisely defines it as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature"(Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84). He defines a type of plot whose space of chronotope is abstract (Bakhtin, 1981). Holquist characterizes this kind of chronotope as follows:

The plot opens with a catastrophe; the main body of the story consists of a potentially endless number of adventures as the hero

repeatedly attempts to save the bride from monsters, brigands, and so on; and in the conclusion the two lovers are united. (...) The time is “empty” in the sense that events are not connected to each other in any causal relation; none of the events is linked in a sustained consequence. (...) And the space of this chronotope is “abstract” in the sense that the adventures in it could occur anywhere.

Chronotope at this elementary level of application seems to have something like the status of “motifs” or “functions” in Structuralist analyses (...) (Holquist, 1990, pp. 109-110)

Bakhtin considers the type of chronotope of Greek romances as this type of “abstract chronotope”(Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 87-92). Holquist (1990) expands this category by including detective stories, post-industrial products of popular culture, and, more importantly for this study, serialized forms.

Holquist (1990) puts an emphasis on Russian Formalist’s approach to such chronotopes. According to him, Russian Formalists deem such chronotopes as an ahistorical and universal type of form that can be studied in itself. On the contrary, Holquist asserts that “even the most elementary form of the chronotope, abstract adventure, is subject to intertextual and historical conditions that make any appropriation of its repeatable features an utterance, that is, a text with a particular meaning in a specific situation”(Holquist, 1990, p. 118).

Bakhtin asserts chronotopes are not disconnected from the cultural environment in which they arise: “Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in work”(Bakhtin, 1981, p. 253). In other words, while Bakhtin differentiates the literature and the real world, he accepts that they belong to the same environment. He conceives the real world and literature in terms of dialogue which is composed of the “interaction of heteroglossia of words, values, and actions” (Holquist, 1990, p. 109). Holquist states that Bakhtin conceptualizes the chronotope as not only a technical device for the service of literary criticism but also a concept

that helps to understand the relationship between the world and literature:

Chronotope may also be used as a means for studying the relation between any text and its times, and thus as a fundamental tool for a broader social and historical analysis, within which the literary series would be only one of several interconnected types of discourse (Holquist, 1990, pp. 111-113).

Based on Bakhtin's conceptualization of dialogue, Ahmet Midhat's strategies for reconciling science and religion can be better understood. He employs dialogue form in *his Mūdāfaa, Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyeye Mūdāfaa* and *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*. He puts his ideas in dialogue with his opponents' ideas and writes apologies for Islam by refuting his opponents rather than defending Islam. By doing so, he fashions a self around the relationship between science and religion by producing discourse on the other using the meaning-generating function of the dialogue form. Thus, he attains the task of knowing oneself through knowing the other in Bakhtin's terms. He attempts to achieve this task by using language in an effective way. As Bakhtin asserts, he uses the same methods and concepts with his opponents, however; as the same signs have different values in different contexts due to speakers' unique positions, he becomes able to appropriate the other's concept of science to the Ottoman context by orienting his discourse to the other's discourse. Thus, he becomes able to locate the concept of science in an Islamic frame.³ As Bakhtin's highlighting the constraints of the former utterances indicates, he not only orients his discourse to opposing ideas but also to former Islamic apologetics. Therefore, he creates a new meaning for the concept of science by entering a dialogue with Christian apologetics, Ottoman materialists, and advocates of conflict thesis.

³ I thank Professor Alper Yalçınkaya for pointing out that Islam does not have a singular definition and that, while importing the modern concept of science, Islam was opened to different interpretations in the nineteenth century. For more information see Yalçınkaya, M. A. (2010). Science as an Ally of Religion: A Muslim Appropriation of 'the Conflict Thesis.' *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 44(2), 161–181. doi:10.1017/s0007087410000749.

Regarding the medium through which he conveyed his ideas to a broader audience, Ahmet Midhat employs the above-mentioned dialogism in his novels. Bakhtin's concept of the novel as a form of human consciousness and giving importance to the place literary work occupies within historical and social concepts open *Fenni Bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları* and *Acayib-i Alem* to a more historically and poetically informed reading. Considering the novel a form of human consciousness by which one does not become aware of itself but aware of the other, *Fenni Bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları* is a significant novel in how Ahmet Midhat produces discourse on scientists in America to testify his discourse on the relationship between science and religion. Bakhtin's term chronotope enables the novel to be read in self and other relationships. Fashioning the time and space in the novel as an abstract chronotope, he juxtaposes the context in which the novel was written and the American context of the relationship between science and religion. In the same way, Bakhtin's dialogism opens the other novel to be examined in the scope of this thesis, *Acayib-i Alem*, to a dialogical approach. In *Acayib-i Alem*, the interplay of time and space in the novel makes Russia a place of otherness. The characters who pass by Russia for scientific investigation delve into the debate on civilizational hierarchies and religion. Thus, in *Acayib-i Alem*, Ahmet Midhat locates science at the heart of the debate on religion and civilization as well as he does in *Fenni Bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları*

CHAPTER II

AHMET MIDHAT'S APOLOGIES FOR ISLAM

2.1 Islamic Apologies That Were Written Before Ahmet Midhat

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the *ulama* wrote apologies for Islam as a response to increased missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire (Aydın, 2012). Along with the increasing translation and publishing activity of the Christian missionaries, the Ottoman *ulama* needed to convince the public that Islam was superior to Christianity. Ahmet Midhat mentions in *Müdafaâ Food for Reflections Being a Historical Comparison Between Mohammedanism and Christianity*, written by Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle. It was translated by missionaries under the name *Gidaü'l- Mülazahat* in 1873, asserting that the superiority of Christianity over Islam could be observed by the prosperity of Christian lands in comparison with ruinous Muslim lands. Moreover, Christian neighborhoods in Muslim lands are more prosperous than Muslim neighborhoods, he argued (Ahmet Midhat, 2021a). In addition, Islam's being violent and noncivilized religion was among the main claims of the book. In his apologetic book, *Ziya'ul Kulub*, Harputlu İshak Efendi criticizes

the *Food for Reflections* by reconsidering the idea that Islamic law abolished the laws of Christianity, miracles of apostles, and the Trinity (Puse, 2010). Harputlu İshak's first book, *Şemsü'l-hakika* where he wrote an apology for Islam against Protestant missionaries in İstanbul, received no comment or answer. He assumed that his book was so successful in refuting Christianity that missionaries were not able to respond to it— as he asserted in his second refutation. Therefore, he continued to write another apology, *Ziyau'l-kulub*, to take the task of discouraging missionaries a step further (Puse, 2010). The lack of interest of missionaries and the public in his writings is remarkable when Harputlu İshak's career background is considered. He took his *icazetname* from *Sahn-ı Seman Medrese* in Fatih, and on his second arrival in İstanbul, he gave lectures there. During his years in İstanbul, he was invited to give lectures in Abdulaziz's *huzur dersleri*, which gained a ritual status during the reign of Mustafa III (Kara, 2000). In these classes, prominent figures among *ulama* were invited to court and lectured in the presence of the Ottoman sultan every Ramadan (İpşirli, n.d.). Writings of Harputlu İshak's remaining unanswered as an influential figure in İstanbul among *ulama* and court circles reminds Şükrü Hanioglu's remarks on waning interest in writings of the *ulama* (Hanioglu, 2005).

The other book that Ahmet Midhat mentions among the publishing activities of missionaries is *Dürer-i Münciye-i Mesihiye* by an anonymous author. Another book by Koelle also seemed significant to mention in Ahmet Midhat's *Müdafaa*. Lastly, a Protestant missionary, Karl Gottlieb Pfander's *Mizanü'l-hak* is significant in proving Christianity's supremacy over Islam through a critique of the Quran (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b). Ahmet Midhat mentions *İzharü'l-hak* as a significant one among apologies for Islam. This is compiled into a text after the debate between Pfander and Rahmetullah el-Hindî in 1853 in Agra. *İzharü'l-hak* was published in Urdu and

Persian and was translated into Arabic in İstanbul in 1864. By the request of Abdülhamid II, Ömer Fehmi Efendi, and Nüzhet Efendi translated *İzharü'l-hak* into Ottoman Turkish by the name of *İbrazü-l-hak* in 1876 (Aydın, n.d.). Mehmet Aydın mentions Hacı Abdullah Petricî's *İzahü'l-meram fi Keşfi'z-zalam* and Harputlu İshak's *Şemsü'l-hakika* as preceding apologies before Ahmet Midhat (Aydın, 2012).

In the introduction of *Müdafaa*, after informing his reader on former refutations of Christianity written by the *ulama*, Ahmet Midhat distinguishes his *Müdafaa* by stating his use of Christian sources of theology and method while refuting Christianity (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b). Although he comes up with a new method to refute Christianity, he uses former refutations of Christianity, such as Abdullah Tercüman's *Tuhfetü'l-erib fi'r-red ala Ehli's-Salib*.⁴ Abdullah Tercüman, formerly Anselmo Turmeda, a Spanish priest, wrote his refutation to Christianity in 1420, immediately after his conversion from Catholic Christianity in Tunisia (Harman, n.d.). Ahmet Midhat's making use of his refutation is remarkable in terms of using his comprehensive knowledge of both Christianity and Islam.

2.2 Ahmet Midhat's Twofold Agenda of Apology for Islam

Ahmet Midhat's Islamic apologies were distinguished from former ones in terms of causing public debates and finding an audience among missionaries and intellectuals. Ahmet Midhat's receiving responses and interest from intellectuals and missionaries not only owed to publishing his writings in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* but owed to a wide knowledge of both Islam and Christianity and the latest texts among the European intellectual circles. He explains in the introduction of *Müdafaa* the reasons for receiving the interest of missionaries by comparison with former refutations. According to him, former refutations only attempted to vilify and belittle

⁴ *Tuhfetü'l-erib fi'r-red ala Ehli's-Salib* was translated from Arabic by Said Efendi and Zihni Efendi in 1876.

Christianity and paid little attention to the sources of Christianity. Accordingly, former refutations remained unanswered and were paid no attention. As distinct from the former refutations, Ahmet Midhat suggests using Christians' own methods of discourse [*usul-i kelam*]⁵, arguments, and sources (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b). Moreover, his agenda of apology for Islam not only remained limited to the refutation of Christianity, but he also devoted his apologies to a greater project. At the end of the *Müdafa*, he frames and confines his response in a way that he locates the conflict between Islam and Christianity in the debate between science and religion. After praising the works of progress in Europe and admitting the Ottomans' aspiration to import this progress, he asserts that this progress is not a result of Christianity but the recent indifference to Christianity in Europe. According to him, Islam is not an obstacle to the progress of science [*hikemiye*]⁶, but Christianity is (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b).

2.2.1 Disputing Materialism

As introduced in the former section, Ahmet Midhat's task of apology for Islam is a twofold project by advocating Islam not only against Christian missionaries but also against materialism. He devotes his *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyeye Müdafaa* to the task of refuting materialism, which was published in a pamphlet in 1890 immediately after the end of its publication in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* as feuilleton. The discussion over the ontological inquiry into the existence of the soul is the central task of the book. To prove the existence of the soul, Ahmet Midhat uses the arguments of naturalists, Descartes, and Aristotle's unmoved mover argument.

His way of opening the discussion is noteworthy in terms of indicating that

⁵ Kelam's multiple meanings and connotations such as to produce discourse and exegesis of Quran enrich the method of Ahmet Midhat.

⁶ Although the word hikemiye has several connotations to philosophy, Islamic mysticism and physics, in this context it refers to sciences.

discussions on science were also related to the concerns on social order, morality, and identity. His first argument against materialism is that since materialists refute nature and spirituality [*tabiiyat ve maneviyat*] by reducing them only to matter, knowledge of existence became conceivable easily to the ignorant part of society in a narrow way (Ahmet Midhat, 2016). According to him, this narrow way of ordering things related to existence leads to demolishing of social and moral institutions in society, such as maternal bonding, paternity, fraternity, and matrimony (Ahmet Midhat, 2016). Moreover, preventing society from such demolishing is only possible through proving the existence of the soul and then Islam indirectly (Ahmet Midhat, 2016).

Şükrü Hanioğlu (2005) explains an emergent conflict as the result of materialism's encounter with Islam in the mid-nineteenth century. According to him, since materialists claim that scientific truth and empirical method are superior to all kinds of episteme, materialism's innate opposition to religion and the charge of atheism leveled by the *ulama* made this encounter a violent one. Advocators of materialism in the Ottoman Empire, informed by German popular materialism, *vulgärmaterialismus*, attempted to bridge the gap between Islam and materialism. Hanioğlu indicates that reconciling Islam with materialism was thought to be the only way to root scientism in the guise of Islam among the masses. He warns not to mistake materialists' attempts to reconcile Islam with materialism with Islamist arguments on behalf of the reconcilability of Islam with science.

Ahmet Midhat's *Ben Neyim? Hikmet-i Maddiyeye Müdafaa* falls into the category of Islamist arguments that endeavor to reconcile science with Islam. In the book, Ahmet Midhat pays significant attention to refuting *vulgärmaterialismus* through the critique of Ludwig Bücher's *Kraft und Stoff*. He considers Büchner's

ideas as a philosophy unsophisticated enough to attract the attention of only blacksmiths and coal miners, as it reduces reality to matter and excludes nature and spirituality (Ahmet Midhat, 2016). The following statement that Büchner's philosophy can only examine realities that can be seen, touched, and calculated with mathematics and geometry (Ahmet Midhat, 2016) makes it clear why he uses blacksmiths and coal miners as examples. Here, the use of smiths and coal miners as examples is not to underestimate Büchner's ideas by signifying lower-class professions but to attract attention to Büchner's understanding of reality which is only conceivable through scientific experiment, observation, and sensory experience by choosing professions that only deal with the matter and practical knowledge upon it.

Ahmet Midhat's criticism of materialism bears similarities with that of the *ulama* in terms of their retorting the innate opposition of popular materialism to religion. However, the point where Ahmet Midhat's criticism is distinguished from the *ulama* is that in the book, he prefers not to use Islamic sources to provide evidence proving the existence of the soul but instead employs scientific arguments. Midhat, in fact, reinterprets materialism in the service of the existence of the soul and then of Islam indirectly. To present his arguments, he creates imaginary dialogues with materialists by summarizing their arguments and by responding to them. While summarizing materialist arguments, he mimics materialists' discourses and transforms his own toward scientific proof of the existence of the soul. To conclude that he could legitimize Islam through scientific discourse. After discussing the cell process with his imaginary materialist, he admits that it is impossible to refute his own arguments because he applies his ideas to science (Ahmet Midhat, 2016). Ahmet Midhat's usage of the act of application is note-worthy to indicate his positioning of

science as a tool for the legitimization of ideas. He is aware that the ground for debate is changed, and he cannot struggle against them by using Islamic sources and terminology anymore. Elsewhere, he mentions materialists' abuse of science in the service of denying the existence of God using scientific sophistry [*mugalatat-ı fenniyye*]. According to Ahmet Midhat, even if what materialists asserted is a fallacy, they strengthen their arguments by using scientific sophistry (Ahmet Midhat, 2016). His awareness of science as an influential tool leads him to prove the perpetuity of the soul by scientific evidence (Ahmet Midhat, 2016). Consequently, he puts his scientific evidence in the service of Islam.

2.2.2 Disputing Christianity

Even though science seems to be a tool for convincing that Islam is superior to all religions and philosophies in his apology against materialists, his way of framing the conflict between Christianity and Islam in *Müdafaa* implies its significance as an integral part of Ahmet Midhat's agenda of apology for Islam. Ahmet Midhat published *Müdafaa*'s first volume in 1883 in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* as feuilleton, and then after the end of the first volume's publication, he formed it into a pamphlet in 1884. Different from *Ben Neyim?* in terms of entering a dialogue with his imaginary respondent *Müdafaa*'s first volume found its real audience among Protestant missionaries in the Ottoman Empire. Although Islamic apologetic writers intend to attract attention and form a public opinion, as Harputlu İshak Efendi's experience indicated, thanks to the response of Henry Otis Dwight, *Müdafaa* was formed in a real dialogue unintentionally. Ahmet Midhat publishes Dwight's response, sent through a mail to Ahmet Midhat to be published in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, without defacing the text, and begins publishing his responses as feuilletons. Ahmet Midhat's separating Dwight's responses into chapters and responding to them individually in

rows indicates his interest in dialogue form. The last chapter of Dwight's response was written by an Armenian pastor in Maraş, Avedis Constantian. Avedis Constantian was also a notable figure for taking part in the commission for translating the Bible into Turkish and having discussions with Hagia Sophia's preacher Ali Efendi (Şahin, 2004).

The first volume of *Müdafaa* composes of thirty chapters. After allocating a considerable amount of space to the method of the discussion, Ahmet Midhat discusses the history of the emergence of Christianity, Christianity's rising during Constantine, Catholicism's overcoming of the other sects, religious wars in Europe, the Inquisition, and indulgence, the violence of Knights of Saint John, the emergence of the Protestantism and Christians' violence during America's discovery. Throughout the book, Ahmet Midhat pays attention to the continuities and power struggles among different sects of Christianity. He considers Christianity a heretic sect emerging from Jewish tradition. His conception of Christianity consists of contextualizing Christianity in its history by focusing on continuities through reducing the driving force of historical change into a political power struggle and conflict of interests rather than differences in theological understandings among different theological perceptions of each sect. For instance, he asserts that the emergence of Protestantism was not because Martin Luther opposed indulgence but because he was exhausted by the low salary he received and attempted to abolish indulgence as a whole institution (Ahmet Midhat, 2021a). In the introduction of his response, Dwight remarks that he accepts Ahmet Midhat's *Müdafaa* as history-writing and problematizes the question of objectivity (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b).

The method of debate Ahmet Midhat used in *Müdafaa*'s is significant in the way he adopts, appropriates, and forms a counter-discourse to those he opposed.

Since non-Islamic sources are not acceptable and authentic for Muslims, he considers refusing Islam by using sources other than Islamic ones, such as Bible, is a fallacy that Christians fall. He proposes that he will not fall into the same error as Christian apologetics and will not use the Quran and *hadith* to refute Christianity because Quran and *hadith* are also not accountable sources for Christians as well (Ahmet Midhat, 2021a).

Ahmet Midhat regards that to turn an idea or act into a cause [*dava*], there should be opposition to these ideas and acts (Ahmet Midhat, 2021a). The way he explains the concept of cause implies that his ideas are reactive and need a respondent to defend them. Ahmet Midhat's conceptualization of the cause is an implicit reference to former Islamic apologetics, as most of the former Islamic apologetic writings remained unanswered and did not provoke a public debate. To initiate a debate, Midhat needed to attract attention by using Christian sources.

The second principle of Midhat's method is also a reference to former Islamic apologetics to legitimize himself as a defender of the Islamic cause. According to Ahmet Midhat, one should be given the right to represent a side of the debate, or one should use his responsibility to reveal the truth to represent an idea and act (Ahmet Midhat, 2021a). Although it remains unclear in which category he takes part— i.e., given the right to represent or take the initiative to represent— he legitimizes speaking for Islam without having religious authority in any case.

To represent Islam and convince Christians of the truth of Islam, he designates dialogue as a method of apology. He suggests that counterparts of the debate should penetrate into each other's discourse:

Bu halde ikisinden hangisi kuvvetine itimat etmekteyse diğerin mezhebine girmek ve o mezhepte görünmek yolu vardır. Ama bu lüzum, itirazı eden ve karşısında bulunanı kendi davasını teslim ve kabule davet eden içindir. (...) Bu maksat ve emelinin husulü içinse evvelemirde

müterizun-aleyhin fikir ve itikadında olan butlanı yine kendi fikir ve itikadına muvâfık gelecek bürhanla ispat etmelidir (Ahmet Midhat, 2021a; p.50).

What he suggests here is to perform the other's speech by adopting the other's discourse, suspending his own value judgment for a while, using the other's terminology, and appropriating it in accordance with his own discourse.

The way Ahmet Midhat concluded the first volume of *Müdafaa* reveals its devotion to a greater task of refuting Christianity. He writes a paragraph in the mouth of former Islamic apologetics asserts that although Christians claim that Muslims fall behind the latest progresses in trade, arts, and politics, and especially in science, Muslims contributed to civilization through the works of Avicenna, Averroes, and Razi (Ahmet Midhat, 2021a). Positioning science at the heart of the Christian and Muslim debate reveals the twofold task of his apology for Islam. Science is not only in the service of Islam; also, progress in science is a great ideal to achieve for Islamic civilization. Likewise, the last section of the second volume is also devoted to science. In these last remarks, Ahmet Midhat states that scientific development owed nothing to Christianity. In history, progress in science went hand in hand with progress in Islam (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b). He asserts that science is the signifier of civilizational progress and a battleground for civilizations that were framed in terms of religion.

2.3 Ahmet Midhat's Conceptualization of Science in Relation to the Islamic Civilization

In the second volume of *Müdafaa* Ahmet Midhat devotes more space to the struggle over putting in a claim for science as the latest product of progress in civilization. Dwight responds to the last remarks of Ahmet Midhat on the contribution of Christian civilization to science by stating that Christianity civilized

Roman Empire's morality, liberated women in Europe, and civilized Germanic peoples (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b). Dwight envisions a shared civilization of humankind that progressively developed thanks to the contribution of different civilizations. Although which civilization contributed to humankind most is hard to identify, during the time of Jesus, seeds of progress spread all around the world, he asserted (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b). Ahmet Midhat attempts to bypass Dwight's claims by tracing its history back to Roman history as an already civilized empire. Midhat's references to Islamic Golden Age to contribute to Christian civilization's progress are of his arguments (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b).

Ahmet Midhat accomplishes his task of representing Islam as a pro-science religion and superior to other religious traditions through his *Niza-ı İlm ü Din* in a more holistic way. Ahmet Midhat's *Nizâ-ı ilm ü Din* was published between 1897 and 1900 in *Tercümân-ı Hakikat* newspaper as a response to John William Draper's *The Conflict between Religion and Science*. Ahmet Midhat translates the book, explains it, and responds to Draper's claims. With the encouragement of the Oxford Evolution Debate through which compatibility of Darwin's *On the Origins of Species* with Christianity was discussed in 1860, Draper published his *The History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* in 1874, which covers various topics such as the history of various religions, the duality of body and mind, differences between the neural system of humans, animals and, plants, theological debates on the existence of the soul. Draper aims to write the history of the conflict between science and Christianity and the Papacy by considering the history of sciences in the context of its relation to religion. According to Draper, the conflict between religion and science emerges hand in hand with the emergence of Christianity. It continued throughout the centuries, and in the nineteenth century, science became free of the

pressure of religion (Draper, 1887). Following this, Draper (1887) asserts that the history of sciences is not only the history of scientific innovations but also the conflict between human intelligence's capability to progress and the pressure that is put by ancient beliefs on this capacity.

Regarding the conceptualization of the relationship between religion and science in the nineteenth century, Monica Ringer (2020) emphasizes the impact of the historicist view of that era on this conceptualization. According to her, culminating around the concept of context, the ideas of progress, universalism, comparativism, evolution, civilization, humanism, and science were included in the nineteenth-century historicist approach. According to this approach, each society has a particular time and space in history. Its ideas, customs, and institutions reflect the features of the context to which each society belongs. Thereby, nineteenth-century historicist understanding of history implies that due to the idiosyncrasies of the different contexts, societies are fundamentally different and foreign to each other. This corresponds to the idea that each society must be comprehended on its terms. Ringer (2020) suggests that one of the possible consequences of this understanding is the emergence of the belief in the essence, which is absolute, permanent, and transcends context. Accordingly, Draper's views on the relationship between science and religion and the history of religions consider the foreignness of contexts to each other beforehand then; they attribute identical characteristics to each context by comparing the levels of evolution and progress of each context in terms of their attitude towards modern science, categorizing them in terms of civilizational levels and finally identifying the concept of civilization with religion. Informed by the conceptualization of progress, civilization, and religious essence mentioned above, Draper identifies religion as a category of analysis to understand the relationship

between religion and science and chooses monotheistic religions as his unit of analysis. Draper writes an overall evaluation of religions through Semitic religions.

Ahmet Midhat responds selectively to the conflict thesis. While he accepts the incompatibility of Christianity with science, he asserts that Draper's conclusions about Islam are not true. Therefore, Draper's book provides Midhat a platform to discuss and appropriate the conflict thesis in the service of Islam. In his response to Draper, Ahmet Midhat distinguishes Draper from his counterparts by asserting that his ideas deserve a response since Draper intends to reach an objective truth (Ahmet Midhat & Draper, 2018).

After translating Draper's main arguments, Ahmet Midhat indicates his awareness of Draper's theoretical framework in his mind:

Bu münâzaa alel-ıtlâk “din” ile ‘ulum arasında cereyan eylediğinden İslamiyyet dahi bit-tabi münazaaya teşrik ediliyor. Vakıa Draper pek çok hususatda din-i İslam'ı haklı bulup lehinde hükümler veriyorsa da bu hükümler menafi-i diniyemize muvafık olmakla beraber bazı cihetlerce hakikat-i katiyyeye muṭabık olmadıkları için mücerred nefimize uygun olmakla bizi aldatarak sevindiremiyorlar. *Zaten* bunların hubb-ı İslam ile söylenmeyip buğz-ı Nasraniyyet'le söylenmiş olmaları dahi bizi ikaza kâfidir (Ahmet Midhat & Draper, 2018; 30).

While Ahmet Midhat rejects the criteria of comparison that Draper set, at the same time, he points out the possible problems that would stem from generalizing the judgments based upon critiques of Christianity to the whole category of religion. In the quote above, Ahmet Midhat warns his readers about the criticism of Islam in the guise of the criticism of Christianity and, therefore, the whole category of religion.

One of the most significant factors in the transformation of the criticism of Islam into the criticism of Catholic Christianity is Arabic translation's role in the development of Catholic scholasticism in the twelfth century. Through these translations, Islamic philosophy created European scholastic thought and Aristotelianism, and this interaction between Catholic Christianity and Islam

attracted the attention of historians in the nineteenth century. Because of that, the approach to Islam considerably overlaps with the approach to Christianity and the dogmatic thoughts of the Catholic Church (Küçük, 2010).

In his book, Draper (1887) uses Renan's ideas on the interaction between Islamic philosophy and the Catholic Church and agrees with the idea that Islam is the archetype of monotheistic religions and the purest form of the Semitic monotheistic tradition. At this point, medieval Islamic philosophy and its influence on the formation of Christian scholasticism became an interesting area for intellectuals. Ibn Rushd's philosophy especially draws the attention of Draper. He deemed Ibn Rushd's philosophy influential in developing European secular thought (Draper, 1887). However, Draper (1887) traces its origins back to Aristotle. Following, he explains the emergence of Aristotelianism in West Asia and its impact on the Alexandrian school. After Arab expansion to the West, Aristotelianism encountered Arab philosophers and paved the way for the emergence of Averroism. While explaining how Ibn Rushd's ideas circulated and had an impact on Italy, Germany, and England, Draper does not attribute a foreign origin to Ibn Rushd's philosophy (Draper, 1887).

Regarding Ahmet Midhat's thoughts on the exchange of ideas between Islamic philosophers and Catholic scholasticism, he deepens the debate on the origins of medieval Islamic philosophy and Catholic scholasticism by problematizing the issue of translation. He is suspicious about how Ibn Rushd's works were transmitted. He highlights the impossibility of literal translation and problematizes indirect translations while circulating Ibn Rushd's ideas. His understanding of translation implies that translation is not a transparent process, but it transforms and distorts the meaning (Ahmet Midhat & Draper, 2018). Thus, he ignores Islamic philosophy's role in Christianity's alleged hostility towards science by reconsidering the philosophical

encounter between Christianity and Islam.

With respect to the question of origins, Ahmet Midhat reveals his approach by responding to Draper's drawing parallels between Islamic philosophy and the philosophy of China and India. Draper (1887) compares these philosophies and classifies them in the same place regarding their insistence on the endurance of matter and force. By expanding his hypothesis to what he calls East, Draper attributes an essence to ambiguous geography through generalizations. In response, after having mentioned that similarities between other philosophical traditions would not harm Islam, Ahmet Midhat explains that while Christianity is obsessed with being the origin of all philosophies, on the contrary, Islam's central claim is to be the last religion. Following this, he proposes that through prophets, wisdom [*hikmet*] is given by God to people from all around the world (Ahmet Midhat & Draper, 2018). He uses the word wisdom as a predetermined and universally valid truth. Thus, since Islam has each and every piece of information on the universe, other philosophical traditions' bearing a resemblance to Islamic philosophy is not a contingency (Ahmet Midhat & Draper, 2018). By proposing these ideas, Ahmet Midhat constructs a transhistorical narrative on the history of religion and ideas since he deems Islam as beyond time and space. Such an understanding of the history of Islam provides Ahmet Midhat with evidence that Islam was pro-science throughout history.

Thanks to Draper providing key terms, concepts, arguments, and criteria to categorize civilizations regarding religion and science, Ahmet Midhat responds to Draper's arguments selectively by accepting his arguments against Christianity and responding to arguments about Islam. Publishing Draper's book with his criticisms and organizing it into the dialogue form enables Ahmet Midhat to appropriate conflict thesis and put it into service of Islam.

2.4 Public Responses to Ahmet Midhat's Apologies

As indicated in the former sections, Ahmet Midhat's apologies for Islam differ from former ones regarding having a wider audience and respondents. Towards the end of *Müdafaa*'s first volume, he mentions the need to shift apologies' writing style to lure the attention of a more diverse audience other than Muslims. He describes former apologies as attributed to already believers in Islam's superiority. According to Ahmet Midhat, former apologetics responds to their counterparts with a Muslim pride that owes its existence to Islamic Golden Age:

Siz bugün millet-i Müslimeyi ticaret, sanat, siyaset hususunda geri kalmış olduğu gibi ilim ve hikmet hususunda dahi tedenni etmiş zannediyorsunuz ama pek büyük hatalarda bulunursunuz. Zira ilim ve hikmet hiçbir vakitte tedenni etmez. İbni Sinalar, İbni Rüştlar Raziler ve sair uzema eserleriyle hay oldukları gibi ilmin teceddüdatı arkası sıra koşanlarımız dahi sağdırlar. (...) biz sizin ekazib ve ebatılınıza taarruz ediyor muyuz? Lekum dinukum ve liye din diyoruz (Ahmet Midhat, 2021a; p. 270).

These expressions written by Ahmet Midhat in the mouth of former apologetics reveal Ahmet Midhat is aware of the need to form a more effective discourse rather than relying on the old successes of Muslims not by explaining the virtues of Islam but by explaining the deficiencies in Christianity. Engaging in Christians' arguments against Islam seems to be key to achieve writing more effective apologies. Dialogue form enables Ahmet Midhat to engage in counter-discourses and transformed its own discourse and way of thinking. His apologies' circulation and being the object of public debates indicate that his new way of thinking and writing reached a wider audience. For instance, Johann Strauss (2014) mentions Ahmet Midhat's apologies, especially his *Müdafaa*, were translated into the Tatar language and were appreciated by Turks in the Russian Empire.

Ahmet Midhat gives significant clues about the way his *Müdafaa* was received by the Christian audience in the introduction of the second volume of *Müdafaa*.

Afterward, he is surprised by the reaction of Christians; when he communicates with Christians about his apology, he understands that since former apologetic writings belittles Christianity, they do not respond to them. According to him, due to engaging in Christians' discourses and sources and criticizing Christianity within its history and theology, Ahmet Midhat gains a critical status for Christians (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b). Ahmet Midhat mentions reactions in the Greek and Karamanlı newspapers in such a way that authors of Greek and Karamanlı newspapers used insulting words. Even though authors in Karamanlı newspapers know that the author of *Müdafaa* was Ahmet Midhat, they mentioned him as likely a Jew or atheist. Although he found some letters inappropriate, Ahmet Midhat wished to publish some reactionary reader letters (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b). He mentions that thanks to the pressure from the reader letters sent to European and Athenian newspapers, some reactionary articles to *Müdafaa* were published. Moreover, he states that Christians in the Ottoman Empire encouraged Henry Otis Dwight to write a response to *Müdafaa* due to the fear of *Müdafaa*'s leading to a mass refutation of Christianity (Ahmet Midhat, 2021b).

Lastly, a public debate between Nureddin Ferruh and Fatma Aliye gives some clues on the way Ahmet Midhat's *Niza-ı İlm ü Din* was received among Muslim Ottoman intellectuals. Immediately before *Niza-ı İlm ü Din* was published, Fatma Aliye announced the book in one of her articles on Ibn Rusdh's philosophy. She recommends the book for further information on the circulation of Aristotle's philosophy to Europe. She criticizes Draper for his lack of knowledge in Islam, especially on the methods of exegesis of the Quran. According to Fatma Aliye, if Draper knew the exegesis of the Quran, he would not think that Islam is antithetical to science (Fatma Aliye, 1896, as cited in Yavuz, 2010). Nureddin Ferruh criticizes Fatma Aliye's attribution of lack of knowledge of Islam to Draper (Nureddin Ferruh,

1896, as cited in Yavuz, 2010). He states that Draper does not have to know Islam as a Muslim would know and that Draper has no hostility towards Islam; on the contrary, he is fond of Islam. Nureddin Ferruh reads Draper's book without Ahmet Midhat's critical remarks and advises Fatma Aliye to read other books by Draper (Nureddin Ferruh, 1896, as cited in Yavuz, 2010).

In his article published in *İkdam*, Ahmet Midhat summarizes Draper's book as a group of arguments composed of proving the need for other sciences to surpass the religious sciences. He believes that public opinion will benefit from Draper's book thanks to his critical edition. He expects that a critique of the book convinces public opinion of the idea that Islam is open to science (Ahmet Midhat, 1896, as cited in Yavuz, 2010).

When Fatma Aliye's announcement, Nurettin Ferruh's criticisms of Fatma Aliye's remarks on the book, and Ahmet Midhat's expectations are considered, Ahmet Midhat intervenes in the reception of Draper's book through his criticism, comments, and dialogue form. Nureddin Ferruh's remarks on Draper indicate differences in the reading experiences between the book with and without Ahmet Midhat's comments.

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE AND SCIENCE

3.1 Tanzimat as Translation Project

Imagining the notion of reform as a translation process, Monica Ringer offers a new perspective to conceptualize the process of Tanzimat reforms. She highlights that rather than a more direct and linear understanding of translation, various understandings of translation also operate within cultures and languages (Ringer & Charrière, 2020). Thanks to the conceptualization of Tanzimat reforms as translation, she offers a more authentic definition of Tanzimat rather than Tanzimat as a non-western reaction to the West. With a definition of translation within cultures and languages, undermining the concept of cultural encounter as an interaction between binaries of non-west and west, she also sheds light on the traditional local sources of the period of Tanzimat reforms (Ringer & Charrière, 2020). Accordingly, she undermines the equation of being modern with being Western. Her approach provides an understanding of Ottoman modernization as not a mere imitation of the responses of the West to the challenges of modernity, instead of portraying Ottoman

reformers as passive receivers and implementers of Western knowledge and practices. Rather she offers a portrayal of Ottoman reformers as active agents of cultural transformation who has a wide category of options in the spectrum from traditional to new (Ringer & Charrière, 2020).

Informed by the abovementioned conceptualization, on the one hand, Ringer identifies Tanzimat as the Ottoman Empire's own responses to the challenges of modernity and attempts to integrate itself into the transnational landscape by reforming the political, economic, military, commercial, and financial system. On the other, she highlights the internal motivations to reform the Empire's institutions for the sake of responding to administrative and bureaucratic needs (Ringer & Charrière, 2020). This two-fold approach to the Ottoman Empire's experience of modernization enables a conceptualization of modernization not only informed by European experience or made as a reaction against European powers but a more complex and dynamic process.

While doing this, conceiving Tanzimat as a translation process is key for tracing the shift in knowledge production and the ways in which new concepts were introduced in the intellectual field of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. As the European sources of knowledge were introduced in the nineteenth-century intellectual field of the Ottoman Empire, not only did the metaphorical meaning of translation become central to the conceptualizing the process in which European ideas and institutions were adapted to the Ottoman context but also its literal meaning acquired significance as a practical tool for the production of a new epistemology and knowledge.

As far as translation as a practical tool for Ottoman reformers is concerned, Ayşe Banu Karadağ's (2014) emphasis on the increasing translation activities of

European sources during the Tanzimat period helps to indicate Ottoman reformers' inclining to Western modernity. She contextualizes the translation activities during and after Tanzimat around the concept of civilization. Examining the curriculum of *Tercüme Odası* and the proclamation of the establishment of *Encümen-i Daniş* published in *Takvim-i Vekayi*, written by Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, she concludes that for Ottoman authorities to civilize Ottoman society, Ottoman subjects should be educated, and translation activities are key to provide sources for education (Karadağ, 2014). According to her, during Tanzimat Era, translation was conceptualized as a translation of the West as a text. Conceiving the West as a text to be translated into the Ottoman context, Ottoman authorities carries the anxiety of preserving the literalness of this translation and the compatibility of the Western sources with the Ottoman context (Karadağ, 2014). Karadağ (2014) emphasizes the prefaces and epilogues of these translated texts as symptoms of such anxiety.

Besides prefaces and epilogues, also various practices of translation are symptoms of this anxiety. Tracing the tensions that the problem of translation created, Neslihan Demirkol (2015) indicates that originality and imitation were the major concerns among the intellectuals of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire. She presents an overview on the discourses on the translation practices in the nineteenth century. She highlights the general view among early Republican literary critics and historians, stating that new genres were introduced by imitating European genres and their translations. She finds this discourse that modern Ottoman genres were only the imitations of European genres in the writings of the prominent literary historians Fuad Köprülü, Mustafa Nihat Özön, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Cevdet Perin, Olcay Öner toy, Berna Moran (Demirkol, 2015). According to Demirkol, this discourse establishes a binary opposition between the original and the imitation by

accepting the Tanzimat literature as copies of an original text. She highlights a break in the discourse of imitation in the 1990s in Turkey thanks to the introduction of descriptive translation studies (Demirkol, 2015). This approach enabled a more historically informed evaluation of Ottoman translation practices rather than ones based on binary oppositions of original and imitation.

Saliha Paker was one of the prominent figures who introduced the descriptive translation studies approaches informed by Itamar Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory. Using this new approach, Saliha Paker was the first scholar of translation studies to examine translation practices of the Tanzimat Era in its historical context (Demirkol, 2015). Paker (2014) problematizes the change in the meaning of the concepts of originality and imitation over time, and the problems stem from an anachronistic approach to Ottoman practices of translation. According to her, putting the source text and the target text in a relation of opposition leads to establishing the binaries of the original [*telif*] and translation [*terceme*]. She highlights that although both practices of text production refer to producing a text in Turkish before the nineteenth century, they are deemed completely different practices in the nineteenth century. However, the limit between these practices was not as sharp as considered at the present time. For instance, although today, *telif* refers to the original text, *telif*'s historical meaning is a text written partly through using sources in a foreign language, partly through translation, and partly through its author's original contributions (Paker, 2014). According to Paker, in addition to the difference between the concepts *telif* and *terceme*, there is also a difference between the meanings of *terceme* and translation:

In summary, translation encompassed both the literal translation from language to language, and the extension or reduction, in other words, a tradition of rewriting, adhering to the source text to some extent, but also based on the translator's personal views or other sources; The traditional

Ottoman understanding of translation, which included a wide variety of re-writing practices, pointing to difference and change from the source text, was different from the understanding of translation, which was in accordance with the norm of full adherence to the source text, which is dominant/respected today (Paker, 2014; p. 42).

Paker explains why Ottoman translators preferred not to make a literal translation of the text by emphasizing the difference in value judgments of the contexts of the source text and target text. Since translation is a value-laden activity, Ottoman translators preferred to adapt the source text in the literary, social, and historical context of the target text by extensions or reductions (Paker, 2014). Hence, the Ottoman practice of *terceme* is not basically word-to-word translation but is a practice of cultural transfer, which refers to re-writing practices. Accordingly, the binaries of imitation and originality are not valid criteria for evaluating the practice of *terceme*.

Paker (2014) highlights a shift and critical position of Ahmet Midhat towards the traditional practice of *terceme* in his *telif* texts since Midhat emphasizes the foreignness of the source text, accepts and highlights where the target text is in accord with or differentiated from the source text, explains his strategies of transfer. Thanks to Paker's undermining of the binary approach to translation, she provides a wider spectrum of translation practices during Tanzimat Era. Laying out a wide spectrum of choices among translation practices enables researchers to open a more detailed analysis of concerns regarding translation as both a linguistic and cultural transfer. Based on Paker's remarks, Cemal Demircioğlu's and Işın Bengi's studies on Ahmet Midhat's practices of translation offer a more focused study of Ahmet Midhat's concerns about the process of cultural translation, which will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 Ahmet Midhat as an Agent of Cultural and Literary Translation

Thanks to Saliha Paker's (2006) raising attention to Ahmet Midhat's critical stand towards the traditional Ottoman practices of translation by remarking on the "classics debate", Ahmet Midhat's practices of translation acquired considerable attention in the mid-2000s in the studies of Işın Bengi and Cemal Demircioğlu. Informing by Itamar Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory, Işın Bengi (2006) portrays Ahmet Midhat as an active agent of translation and cultural transfer as opposed to portrayals of early Republican literary historians as a passive and uninformed translator. According to Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and İsmail Habip Sevük, deficiencies in Ahmet Midhat's translations are his betrayal of the source texts by intervening in them for domesticating purposes and his haphazard preference from popular literature instead of high literature among the European classics to translate. Instead of evaluating Ahmet Midhat's translation practices with the binary criteria of originality and imitation and high and low literature, Işın Bengi offers an examination of these practices by focusing on the prefaces and epilogues of Ahmet Midhat's translations. For instance, Ahmet Midhat explains that since Emile Zola only points out to negative aspects and immorality of French society, it is not suitable to translate Emile Zola into the Ottoman context due to its incapability of being a model for both French and Ottoman society. Elsewhere Ahmet Midhat explains the reasons for not doing a literal translation from Octave Feuillet:

[S]uret-i tercüme harfiyen değildir. Zira her lisanın kendisine mahsus bir şivesi olmak itikadında sabit bulunduğumuzdan harfiyen tercümede inadla güzel lisanımıza frenk kokusu vermeyi tecviz etmiyoruz. Müellifin Fransızca olarak tefhim etmeye çalıştığı meramı mütercim dahi tercüme olarak ifadeye çalışacaktır. Ümid ederiz ki karilerimiz bu hizmet-i acizanemizden memnun olacaktır (Feuillet, 1872, as cited in Öner, 2006; p. 340).

These justifications indicate that Ahmet Midhat conceives translation not as a direct practice of linguistic transfer but as a more cultural and pedagogic practice. He

accepts the foreignness of the source texts and attempts to domesticate them for pedagogical purposes. Instilling a taste for literature in the reader and translating literary texts that would be moral models for readers seem to be the key concerns for Ahmet Midhat. The expressions of “frenk kokusu” and “her lisanın kendine mahsus bir şivesi” demonstrate that for Ahmet Midhat, translation is a dialogue between two cultures and languages and a value-laden process. While he accepts the foreignness of the source text, at the same time, in order to enter a dialogue with it and his local audience, he prefers to domesticate the meaning and the style of the source text.

3.3 *Muhavere* as Translation

The ways in which Ahmet Midhat domesticates the source text are several. Demircioğlu (2009) makes a list of Ahmet Midhat’s choices among several practices as “translation” [*terceme*], “borrowing” [*iktibas*], “dialogue and the translator’s response as a part of dialogue” [*muḥâvere*], “conveying” [*nakl*], “summary” [*hulasa*], “stolen text” [*müsterak*], “conversion” [*tahvil*], “emulation/imitation” [*tanzir/taklid*]. Demircioğlu explains the reasons for developing new translation practices that result in deviation from the source text by portraying Ahmet Midhat as an agent for cultural transfer and a mediator between languages and cultures. As means of these practices, Ahmet Midhat adjusted foreign elements in source texts to the Ottoman context, established a cross-textual relationship in order to make use of the story, plot, and theme of the source texts and appropriate it to place in the local cultural and literary environment, assimilate source text into “the Ottoman system of culture and literature that was in formation”(Demircioğlu, 2009, pp. 143-151).

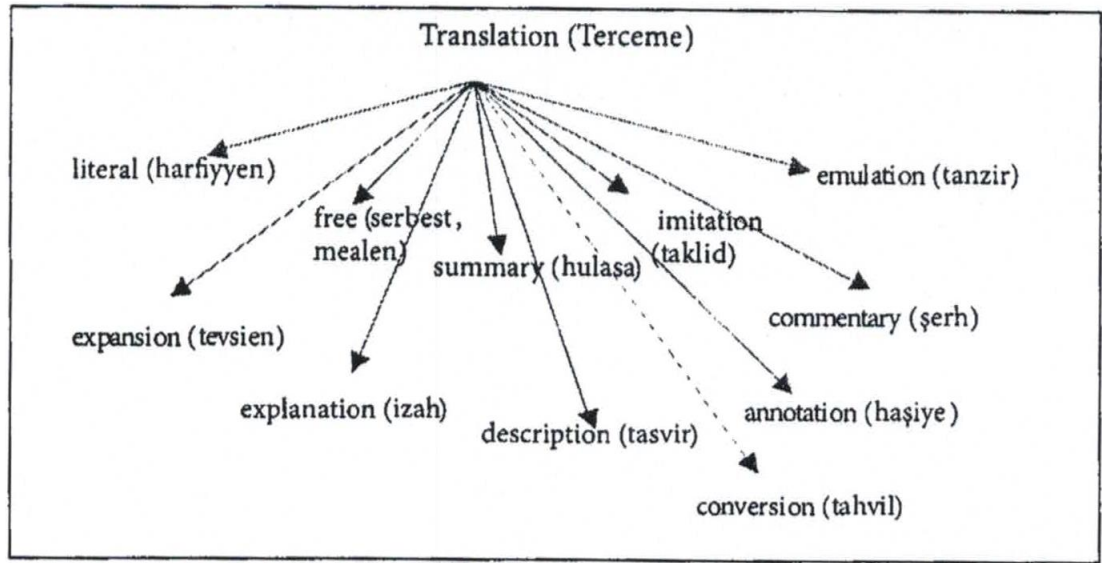


Table 1: A map of Ahmet Midhat's strategies of Translation (Demircioğlu, 2009)

As indicated, the practice of dialogue [*muhâvere*] is central to this thesis.

Demircioğlu (2009) pays considerable attention to this translation practice by focusing on *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*. He emphasizes the paratextual data in the book, such as the title page and prefaces. Ahmet Midhat does not call himself the translator of the text due to presenting the book as two books packed together on the title page but as the author of the responses to Draper. In the preface, he names his practice of translating Draper's book as a literal translation (Demircioğlu, 2009). Demircioğlu draws attention to the fragmentary arrangement of the book and the changing font sizes according to the writer of each fragment. The font size of Draper's fragments is smaller than the fragments including Ahmet Midhat's commentaries. The reason for such a difference in font size is to enable its reader to compile each author's fragments and read them as a separate text for Ahmet Midhat (Demircioğlu, 2009). However, it seems that it gives weight to the commentary of Ahmet Midhat more than it gives to Draper's arguments.



فکر و مطالعہ سنی متعاقب بزم فکر و مطالعہ
لعمری کورمک دخی مباحثات واقعہ دہ
بشقہ جہ بر لطافت حصولہ کتورر.



بزم مقدمہ من

کریمہ مغنویہ من فاطمہ علیہ خاتم
افندی حضرت تری بر کون اثنای مباحثہ دہ
بالمناسبہ :

— درایہ رک « علم و دین آره سندہ
منازعہ » نام اثرینی کوردیکز می ؟
دیہ ایراد ایلد کلری سئوالہ طرف
عاجزانہ مزدن جواب نفی آملری اوزرینہ
کتاب مذکور اهدا ایدرک بعد المطالعہ

Figure 1. Ahmet Midhat's Preface to *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*

دراپهرك مقدمه سی

و

مطالعاتم

دراپه مقدمه سینه شو سوزله باشلا یور.
دیورکه :

— اورو با و آمریقا اهالیسندن صنوف
منوره نك احوال فکریه و ذکائیله لرینی بیلنلره
معلومدرکه صنوف مذکور عقیاید مؤسسه دینه دن
یوما فیوما تباعد ایتمکده درلر. بونلرک شو مباعدت
و مخالفتلرینی بعض کیمسه لر تعیب ایدیورلر
ایسه ده افواج مهمه اهالی عقیاید دینه دن انقطاع
و تباعدلرینی کیزلیجه و ساکتانه بر صورتده
ینه ادامه ایتمکده درلر. بو حرکت او قدر قوی

Figure 2. John William Draper's Preface to *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*

Demircioğlu (2009) argues that Ahmet Midhat draws attention to the interpreter's task of faithfully interpreting the original utterance of Draper. When it is thought together with the case of font size, while Ahmet Midhat preserves Draper's "original utterance," —i.e., arguments and ideas, without intervening in the meaning of them through literal translation, at the same time, he attempts to intervene in the way that his Ottoman audience received the Draper's arguments. As indicated in the former chapter, Nureddin Ferruh's reception of Draper's book without Ahmet Midhat's commentary leads to a different way of reception of Draper when compared to reading Draper's ideas with Ahmet Midhat's comment. Framing Draper's text with his commentaries without intervening in its original meaning, Ahmet Midhat first introduces the conflict thesis with Draper's own utterance. Then he frames and appropriates it in the Ottoman context through commentaries.⁷

3.4 Translation of science as a sign through *Muhavere*

Cemal Demircioğlu's (2009) remarks on the role of translators in the making of cultural repertoire; he conceptualizes translators as those who engage in option making, material or semiotic import and transfer. Here, the semiotic import is significant in terms of the theoretical framework of this thesis. In addition, Demircioğlu's emphasis on the utterance in the source text evokes examining science as a sign which is exchanged in the dialogue between cultures in the Bakhtinian sense.

Regarding Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogue, Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1984, 1990, 1994; Holquist, 1990) considered dialogue a dynamic and open-ended process for producing knowledge and meaning. Instead of viewing language as a closed system

⁷ For a detailed study of appropriation of the conflict thesis see Yalçınkaya, M. A. (2011). Science as an ally of religion: a Muslim appropriation of 'the conflict thesis.' *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 44(2), 161–181. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007087410000749>

with predetermined meanings, he emphasized the need to appreciate the diversity of voices and perspectives that shape language and meaning. Bakhtin views these relationships as asymmetric dualism rather than binary oppositions. To grasp these dualisms, which Bakhtin conceptualizes as a relation of simultaneity that deals with ratios of the same and different in space and time, one must engage in conversation with oneself and the other. In his notion of selfhood, the self is viewed as an event with a structure centered on the categories of space and time. As a result, the self has a unique viewpoint on existence. In other words, the perspective where a sign is observed shapes its meaning.

To import science as a sign into the Ottoman cultural repertoire, Ahmet Midhat enters a dialogue with the other. In Midhat's case, the other has several personalities, such as Protestant Missionaries, Ottoman materialists, and John William Draper. In each case, during the encounter with the other, although Ahmet Midhat highlights the foreignness of the other, yet, he borrows something from the other and appropriates it into the Ottoman value system through translation. In the dialogue with Protestant Missionaries and materialists, Ahmet Midhat borrows the method of discussion, the method of forming arguments and sources of the other. In the dialogue with Draper, he borrows the conflict thesis, yet, he appropriates it in order to indicate that categories of science and religion conflict, as Draper asserted; however, Islam is an exception and a science-friendly religion for Ahmet Midhat.

The centrality of science in the debates is the common ground of these dialogues. Taking science as a sign uttered in Ahmet Midhat's dialogue with the other, it is essential to remember Bakhtin's remark on the values that a sign carries:

Any word used in actual speech possesses (...) value judgment: i.e., all referential contents produced in living speech are said or written in conjunction with a specific *evaluative accent*. There is no such thing as word without evaluative accent (Bakhtin, 1994; p.36).

While explaining his attitude towards translation, Ahmet Midhat puts an emphasis on the accent that every language has by naming it “kendine mahsus bir şive” (Öner, 2006; p.340). The word choices of Ahmet Midhat points to Bakhtin’s concepts of accent, selfhood, and utterance. Elsewhere, he translates science as a concept by referring to its utterance in French:

“Bit-tetebbu bilinebilecek şeylerin kaffesi Avrupalıların “siyans” dedikleri ve bizim mütefenninlerimizin “ulum ve fûnun” tabir eyledikleri hudud dahilinde mahdud olup bunların ötesi artık bilinebilecek şeylerden olmadıklarını felasife dahi itiraf eylemektedirler” (Ahmet Midhat & Draper, 2018; p. 239).

Here, Ahmet Midhat preserves the utterance of the word science in French and attempts to meet its meaning with a local equivalent of the term. He is aware of the difference between these two utterances due to the evaluative accent inherent in their meanings. The process in which Ahmet Midhat transfers science as a sign is realized in the conditions that Bakhtin mentions. He orients his discourse to understand the other’s discourse, looks for a suitable place for the other’s utterance in the corresponding context, and sets down his own answering words. (Bakhtin, 1994).

As indicated throughout the former chapter, Ahmet Midhat at first preserves the utterance of science in the other’s discourse; he suspends his value judgment and then finds the word that will be able to meet its meaning in his own language. While translating “siyans” into Turkish, he engages in the task of tearing away the concept of science from “all referential contents produced in living speech are said or written in conjunction with a specific *evaluative accent*” (Bakhtin, 1994; p.36). Ahmet Midhat’s writings on science, religion, and civilization serve the task of sorting out the concept of science as a sign from its anti-religious and anti-Islam references in the Western context. After cleaning the concept of science from its references

incompatible with Islam, he brings useful references of science to the Ottoman context, such as material progress and civilization, into the forefront. By doing so, he introduces the concept of modern science and then accords it with Islamic values.

3.5 Chronotope in the Service of the Dialogue with the Other

As indicated, Ahmet Midhat attempts to achieve the task of purifying the concept of science from its anti-religious references and lading it with pro-Islam references in his apologetic writings. Explaining the compatibility of Islam with the concept of science through producing a discourse on the other was the main task of these apologies. In the field of literature, Ahmet Midhat applies the same method of producing discourse by using abstract chronotopes in order to conceptualize the concept of science in dialogue with the other.

As indicated in the first chapter, chronotope is the relationship between time and space in the novel. Regarding the abstract chronotope, Holquist (1990) identifies this type as a story composed of an endless number of adventures whose time is empty in the sense that events are not connecting to each other in any causal relation. He highlights the unimportance of the space in this type of chronotope in which events could occur anywhere and the fact that this type of chronotope functions as a motive and function in the Structuralist approach. While Bakhtin (1981) identifies abstract chronotope with ancient Greek romances, Holquist (1990) expands this identification by including “detective stories, post-industrial products of popular culture, and serialized literature” (Holquist, 1990; p. 117). According to Holquist (1990), while Russian formalists deemed abstract chronotope as an ahistorical and universal type of form, Holquist emphasizes the historicity of even the most basic kind of chronotope, that is, abstract one. Holquist (1990) asserts that, for Bakhtin, chronotopes are devices for analyzing literary texts in relation to the cultural

environment in which they are written by conceptualizing literature as the dialogue of heteroglossia of words, values, and actions. This characterization of chronotope makes it a tool for analyzing the text's relation to its broader social and historical context.

3.6 Ahmet Midhat's Dialogue with America: *Fenni bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları*

Basing on the above-mentioned theoretical framework, Ahmet Midhat's *Fenni Bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları* and *Açayib-i Alem* are Ahmet Midhat's endeavors to produce a discourse on the other for the exchange of the concept of science as a sign through the composition of abstract chronotopes. Regarding the construction of the time/space in *Fenni Bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları* Nur Gürani Arslan's and Ercüment Asil's remarks on the representation of America in the novel significant in terms of indicating the abstractness of space in the novel. Arslan (2002) asserts that since events in the novel would occur anywhere, the novel's setting in America makes no difference. Using America in the novel's setting as a distant place, Ahmet Midhat aims to create a story regardless of reality. Ercüment Asil (2021) also regarded America as a distant and suitable place to produce discourse on science without concerning the Islamic values in the Ottoman context. Their approach to the relationship between time and space in the novel is similar to Russian Formalists' attitude towards abstract chronotope, who deemed such chronotope as ahistorical and non-related to the cultural context in which they are written. However, thanks to Bakhtin's conceptualization of the chronotope, which is in dialogue with its cultural and historical context, Ahmet Midhat's choice and representation of America for writing a *fenni roman* and discussing science becomes comprehensible.

Before discussing the representation of America and its serving the purposes of dialogue, I will discuss the elements that enable it to be classified as abstract chronotope. In the novel's preface, Ahmet Midhat uses future tense while presenting what he will narrate throughout the novel and reveals why he uses future tense. Since he writes his novels in serialized form and even he does not know what to narrate next, he cannot use past tense as if the novel is completed text, he asserts (Ahmet Midhat, 2020b). As he presented the novel as an open text, in the novel, one event follows another, as in Bakhtin's and Holquist's identification of abstract chronotope. There is no interaction between one character with another, one character with his/her environment and inner world. The novel is only composed of actions and dialogues. The geographical references do not exist outside of the literary text. For instance, Doctor Gribbling lives in the city of Jefferson at Farvest, which does not refer to a real place in America. The opening scene of the novel starts with a geographical location of America on the world map. The narrator emphasizes that if one wishes to locate America on a world map, there is no Turkish source for such a map, and one needs to look to French sources, which is still not enough to get acquainted with America. Instead, the narrator recommends reading travel writing, the history of America, and the biographies of the great men of America (Ahmet Midhat, 2020b). These references indicate that the narrator's knowledge of America is bookish. There is no reference to storytime or any reference to a significant historical incident that readers could figure out storytime. The events occur in indoor spaces like apartments and laboratories, which would be located anywhere in the world. Thus, America stands as a sign in itself in the novel.

The narrator fills the sign of America with references to acts of transgression. While describing America, the narrator states that America is a public asylum where

everything extreme is prevalent (Ahmet Midhat, 2020b). The extravagance of America is visible through transgressive social codes such as duello, strange marriage patterns, religion, love of progress, and innovation (Ahmet Midhat, 2020b). These social codes are transgressive compared to Ottoman social codes for the narrator.

While the narrator highlights the extravagances in the social codes of America, he praises the material progress of it. The repetitive juxtapositions of Ottoman and American contexts in the novel highlight the representation of America as a space of innovation and modernization. For instance, the narrator juxtaposes Ottoman doctors and American doctors and the urbanization of America in comparison with Ottoman cities (Ahmet Midhat, 2020b). In addition, he praises medical education in America in terms of standardization and the high number of specialist doctors. Regarding urbanization, he praises the construction capacity that enables American cities to grow rapidly. Moreover, the narrator describes it as a positive feature that due to this urbanization capacity, to make it easier to find addresses in fast-growing cities, giving numbers to streets and apartments instead of naming them, and therefore the practicality of the postal service (Ahmet Midhat, 2020b).

In the novel, there is an ambivalent attitude towards such rapid transformation. While the narrator praises these developments in America, at the same time, there is anxiety about the corruption of moral and religious practices that could stem from overdevelopment in his attitude. He introduces this anxiety through the representation of galvanoplasty, that is, coating an object with a thin layer of metal through electricity, as an alternative way of burial. Doctor Gribbling, the inventor of galvanoplasty, reproaches that Americans are still using old practices, such as burying, burning, and embalming dead bodies in such an age of progress; he offers to use galvanoplasty as an alternative. For Gribbling, galvanoplasty is a more hygienic

and memorable way to protect dead bodies (Ahmet Midhat, 2020b).

The narrator approaches the subject in a different way. He comments on the different funeral practices by comparing the attitudes of different cultures toward the dead body. According to the narrator, while Ottomans wish to bury the dead body immediately not to see them even if they love them while they are living, Europeans are inclined to remember them by preserving the body's shape through statues and photography of the dead body (Ahmet Midhat, 2020b). Here, the narrator makes a distinction between the remembrance practices between Europeans and Ottomans. For the narrator, after death, Ottomans become estranged from dead bodies; on the contrary, Europeans have more material ways to remember the dead.

Through associating scientific development with funeral practices, Ahmet Midhat conceptualizes science in relation to cultural, moral, and religious codes, as far as the fact that funeral practices are organized in accordance with cultural and religious codes is concerned. Throughout the novel, there is a dichotomy between social codes and the material progress of America. While Ahmet Midhat praises the material progress that emerged in America due to scientific innovation, he highlights the decadence in social codes through an ironic attitude. Thus, he represents America developed in terms of scientific and material progress and decadent regarding social and moral values, as a photographic negative of the Ottoman Empire. Producing discourse on the other makes otherwise invisible details of selfhood visible, as Bakhtin's theory of dialogue foresees.

3.7 Ahmet Midhat's Dialogue with Russia: *Acayib-i Alem*

Ahmet Midhat published *Acayib-i Alem* in 1882 in *Tercüman-i Hakikat* as a series. On the title page, the statement of "Esas-ı fûnun üzerine mübteni bir hikayedir." is written. Although this statement could evoke reading the novel as

science fiction, in fact, the novel is in the category of travel or adventure literature. It is the story of two friends who are fond of nature and science, Suphi and Hicabi. The narrator gives a little information about the protagonist of the novel, Suphi, who is portrayed as a madman due to his love of science and nature. He resides in a house in one of the villages in Bosphorus, where there are books in Arabic and French, samples of plants and insects, a microscope, and a telescope. After the day when he convinces his only friend Hicabi to take a trip to the north pole to observe the movements of the Sun, they decide to go there by passing through Russia. The novel is about the events of a year when they crossed Russia, reached the North Pole, and returned to Istanbul.

The interplay of time and space in the novel gives significant clues to infer the authorial intention of Ahmet Midhat. The reference to the Battle of Sadowa in the novel indicates that the events took place between 1866 and 1867. Regarding the narration time, the novel opens with the narrator's statement, "twelve years ago, from now on in March." That is to say, the narration time of the novel is March 1878, which is the time immediately after the end of the Russo-Turkish War in March 1878. Considering the tension of narration and story, the narration of the time they spend in Russia takes more place than their time outside of Russia in the novel. The narration time in Russia slows down, and the narrator gives detailed information on the places that Suphi and Hicabi visit. After they leave Russia, narration time quickens, and the story immediately reaches its climax with the marriage of Suphi and English traveler Miss Haft who studied astronomy and natural history. These details give clues that Ahmet Midhat intended to represent Russia as the other of the Ottoman Empire. Other than the plot and story, characterizations and the narrator's voice makes *Acayib-i Alem* possible to be read as the dialogue between self and

other. The relationship between the narrator and characters, between each character, and between characters and their environment are disconnected. The narrator has no access to the characters' minds. The only way to have information about characters is through dialogue and letters that they send to their relatives.⁸ Until the Russian princess and Miss Haft enter the story, Hicabi carries out the task of making Suphi speak on culture, civilization, and science. The narrator is isolated from the characters and only gives bookish information about the places that Suphi and Hicabi visited. In any case, the reader understands that Suphi and Hicabi moved to another city through the narrator's interruption of the story. Whenever Suphi and Hicabi move to a new place, the narrator interrupts the story and speaks through pages-long passages which include bookish information about the new environment. The relationship between the characters with their environment is so flat in the sense that there is no clue about how they experienced the new spaces. The characterizations add to this flatness; as introduced above, there is no clue about the social environment and psychological depth of Suphi and Hicabi. When Miss Haft enters the story, also Suphi's role is reduced to the task of making Miss Haft speak through leading questions. Most of the dialogues between Suphi and Miss Haft are about disputing Christianity by proving the superiority of Islam in terms of the morals and social virtues of Muslims.

The use of dialogues in the novel reveals itself in the passage that includes the juxtaposition of silhouettes of Odessa and İstanbul. The narrator states:

Vakıa İstanbul'un haricen temaşası kadar latif bir panoroma bütün cihanda adimü'l emsal olduğu müttetikun aleyh ise de İstanbul'da doğup yine İstanbul'da büyüyerek o letafete alışmış olanlar onun kadrini tamamiyla takdir edemezler. (...)

Vakıa Odessa şehri İstanbul'un ancak onda birisi kadar küçük bir şehirdir. Lakin henüz asr-ı ahirin vücuda getirdiği mamurelerden birisi

⁸ Letters' function in the novel is to reveal the emotions of Miss Haft and Suphi for each other.

olmakla bu kadar güzel, bu kadar zengin görünür ki İstanbul'da böyle bir temaşaya nail olmak için şehrimizin ebniye-i aliyyesini kamilen bir mevkîe cem ederek hariçten nazar eylemek lazım gelir”(Ahmet Midhat, 2020a; p. 76).

In this passage, there is Ahmet Midhat's mentality that operates in accordance with the binaries of self and the other. He constructs an indirect relationship between the one and oneself through knowing the other. In the novel, as the time/space relation indicated, the other is Russia, and one should know oneself through knowing the other and comparing oneself with the other. In the following pages, Ahmet Midhat criticizes Ottomans' indifference to other places and civilizations through dialogue between Ottoman travelers and the Russian director of a botanic school. The director is surprised when he hears that the visitors to the school are Turks and explains why he is surprised so much. Since only Ottoman officers pass by Odessa to reach Petersburg and in Odessa, there is no Ottoman traveler, the director was not expecting to see Ottoman travelers in his Botanic school. (Ahmet Midhat, 2020a; p. 81).

Elsewhere Suphi and Hicabi comment on the civilizational progress of Russia and Kazak's and Tatar's situation in Russia. Suphi explains to Hicabi the difference between the civilizational levels of Kazaks, Russians, and Tatars. Praising the Russians in terms of courtesy and hospitality, he remarks that Russians' encounter with European manners increased their courtesy. In addition, Suphi praises Russia due to the fact that it was a hard task to civilize eighty million people who are no different than savages (Ahmet Midhat, 2020a; p. 84).

The narrator subordinates the Kazaks and Tatars to Russia's civilizational progress elsewhere too. He shuns Tatars for their inability to refine their language enough to produce literature. Furthermore, those Tatars who know Russian lack

comprehensible knowledge of it enough to read and write in Russian. Moreover, the narrator reproaches that those Tatars who engage in Russian culture forget their own Tatar identity (Ahmet Midhat, 2020a; p. 85).

In these passages, Ahmet Midhat establishes the hierarchical order in which the highest civilizational level belongs to Europeans. Russia and Turks in Russia follow Europe in this order. The word choices of *terbiye*, *vahşiyye* and *mütemedin etmek* are remarkable. According to Ahmet Midhat, for the agenda of progress from the state of being savage to European civilization, one must civilize oneself with the values of Europeans. He reveals the concern for losing one's own identity to become civilized in European terms in the name of Kazaks.

While talking to each other, Suphi and Hicabi try to learn from the experience of the other but become more defensive during a real encounter with the other. From the time when they encounter the Russian princess, whose name is not mentioned in the novel, and the time the Russian princess hosts them, the cultural differences in the novel begin to be handled with a more defensive attitude. At this point, the intervention of Miss Haft, the friend of the Russian princess, becomes an element that balances cultural differences. Ahmet Midhat begins to write his own thoughts in Miss Haft's mouth. For instance, while the Russian Princess asks questions about *harem* and slavery in the Ottoman Empire based on the information she read in Western sources, Hicabi states that it is natural to have misinformation from foreign sources written about another culture (Ahmet Midhat, 2020a). On the contrary, elsewhere, Miss Haft expresses that if the European sources on Islam convinced her, she would not be friends with Suphi and Hicabi because these sources were written with hostility towards Muslims (Ahmet Midhat, 2020a). In the following sections, Miss Haft's discourse and arguments on Islam are similar to Ahmet Midhat's

arguments in *Müdafaa* and *Niza-ı İlm ü Din*.⁹ Such a way of composing dialogues prevents the novel's discourse from being polyphonic. From every character's mouth, the reader receives Ahmet Midhat's messages except for the Russian Princes. As a member of the other, the princess contributes to the composition of a quasi-dialogue as a representative of counter-discourse. Therefore, *Acayib-i Alem* is Ahmet Midhat's imaginary dialogue between self and the other through which he creates imaginary and ideal ways of reception of his ideas. As a Protestant and clever young woman who is fond of science and truth, Miss Haft receives Ahmet Midhat's arguments in his apologetic writings without any misunderstanding, and she is convinced of the moral and social superiority of Islamic civilization when compared to other civilizations. As Ahmet Midhat conceptualized science in his apologetic writings in *Acayib-i Alem*, he locates the concept of science at the heart of the debates on civilizational progress and moral values of Islamic civilization.

⁹ Here is an extended dialogue between Suphi and Miss Haft. Mostly Suphi asks leading questions to draw Miss Haft out about the differences between Islam and Christianity.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, my main aim was to examine Ottoman intellectuals' encounter with Western ideas and concepts on the relationship between science and religion, which was informed by materialist theories in the nineteenth century. Rather than portraying this encounter as a passive and one-way transfer of knowledge and ideas, I attempted to focus on the agency of Ottoman intellectuals. Another aim of this thesis was to examine how Western theories and perspectives on the relationship between science and religion transformed cultural representations and literary production. In order to achieve this task, I employed Bakhtin's semiotics and approaches of descriptive translation studies as analytical tools since these theories conceptualize the meaning-making process and cultural transfer in terms of agency. As an agent of cultural transfer and meaning-making, I focused on Ahmet Midhat's Islamic apologetic writings and "scientific novels." As I indicated throughout this thesis Ahmet Midhat was not a passive receiver and implementer of Western ideas and concepts in the Ottoman context. On the contrary, Ahmet Midhat creates a new

meaning for science by entering a dialogue with his opponents' ideas through his fictional and non-fictional works. As Bakhtin's theory of dialogue asserted, dialogue is not a transparent and one-way process of information transfer but is a value-laden activity. Even if Ahmet Midhat uttered the same words as his Western counterparts in the dialogue, he lades the Western concepts and ideas with Islamic values. Thus, he recreates and represents science as a signifier of civilizational development and material progress, while he purifies it from its anti-Islam connotations.

Regarding literary production and stylistic transformation, according to Bakhtin's theory of dialogue, one must engage with the other and the other's utterances in order to enter a dialogue. The interplay of time and space in Ahmet Midhat's novels is a way to engage with the other through the composition of abstract chronotopes. While he engages with America regarding scientific and material development in *Fenni bir Roman yahud Amerika Doktorları*, similarly, he engages with Russia regarding civilizational frameworks in *Acayib-i Alem*. While abstract chronotopes enable Ahmet Midhat to produce a discourse on the other, at the same time, they enable him to produce discourse on the self in an indirect way. Whenever he produces discourse on the other, he also produces discourse on the self.

Although Bakhtin's semiotics and approaches of descriptive translation studies enabled me to examine the process in which Ahmet Midhat transferred, represented, and recreated the concept of science in the Ottoman context, one of the challenges and pitfalls of these approaches is relying too much on the authorial intention and author's own rhetoric. Reader-centered approaches are key to avoiding falling into these pitfalls. As far as I could, I tried to catch clues on the reception of Ahmet Midhat's ideas. For instance, I tried to highlight Ahmet Midhat's remarks on the reception of the first volume of *Müdafaa* in the preface of the second volume. Yet,

doing inferences from these remarks is still based on the author's own rhetoric. Or, I researched the debates on Ahmet Midhat's Islamic apologies, yet I could find the debate between Nureddin Ferruh and Fatma Aliye. As far as the fact that Fatma Aliye was a protégé of Ahmet Midhat is concerned, to what extent the debate between Nureddin Ferruh and Fatma Aliye reflected public opinion is still a question mark.

The next task that will carry this research one step forward may be the examination of Karamanlı newspapers as Ahmet Midhat asserted that his discourse was so provoking that he achieved to create public opposition in Karamanlı newspapers. Such research may give clues on the reception of Ahmet Midhat's ideas among non-Muslim communities and answer the question of to what extent Ottoman intellectual modernization was inclusive to non-Muslim communities. In addition, reader letters sent to newspapers give significant clues for pursuing the way in which a reader received ideas and literary works. In other words, reader letters sent to newspapers would be an integral source for reader-oriented research. However, there is still the question of to what extent these letters reflect the opinion of a broader population as far as the literacy rates and accessibility of newspapers to a broader population are concerned. In addition, Ottoman reading practices may create challenges to such research as far as the fact that reading was not an individual but a social activity in the Ottoman context. However, as I indicated above, the possible questions may be raised from this research, so much more can be done with the Ottoman concept of science and its relationship with religion. I hope I contributed to such an endeavor with this thesis.

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