

AN EVALUATION ON THE LIFE OF PROSTITUTES IN THE LATE
OTTOMAN ISTANBUL THROUGH THE NOVELS OF AHMED MİDHAT EFENDİ
AND HÜSEYİN RAHMİ GÜRPINAR

by

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Master of Arts

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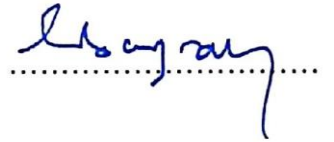
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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Ahmed Midhat Efendi, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, Prostitutes

This thesis aims to evaluate prostitutes in the late Ottoman Istanbul through the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar who were popular novelists in their time and aim to educate people through their novels. First, prostitution in Istanbul during this time and the state's regulation attempts are illustrated, then how Hüseyin Rahmi and Ahmed Midhat Efendi described prostitutes in their novels and their approaches toward them are assessed. The main objective of the study is to compare these two approaches and evaluate how these approaches were shaped by their world view and contemporary intellectual issues such as modernization, marriage, the place of women in the society and education of women.

ÖZET

İSTANBUL'DA BULUNAN FAHİŞELERİN GEÇ OSMANLI DÖNEMİNDEKİ
YAŞAMLARININ AHMED MİDHAT VE HÜSEYİN RAHİMİ GÜRPINAR
ROMANLARI ÜZERİNDEN BİR DEĞERLENDİRMESİ

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Ahmed Midhat Efendi, Fahişeler, Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar

Bu tez romanlarında halkı eğitmeyi amaçlayan ve dönemlerinde çok okunan Ahmed Midhat Efendi ve Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar'ın romanları üzerinden geç dönem Osmanlı İstanbul'undaki fahişeleri değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu kapsamda öncelikle bahsi geçen dönemde İstanbul'daki fuhuş ve devletin bu duruma yaklaşımından bahsedilip, daha sonra bu dönemdeki fahişeleri Ahmed Midhat Efendi ve Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar'ın romanlarında nasıl tasvir ettikleri ve onlara yaklaşımları değerlendirilecektir. Tezin asıl amacı bu iki yaklaşımı karşılaştırmak; kendi dünya görüşlerinin ve bu dönemde entelektüeller tarafında sıklıkla tartışılan modernleşme, evlilik, kadının toplumdaki yeri ve eğitimi konularının Ahmed Midhat Efendi ve Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar'ın fahişelere yaklaşımlarını nasıl şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymaktır.



Sevgili Anne ve Babama

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INTRODUCTION

From the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially during the Crimean War (1853-1856), brothel-style prostitution had begun to spread in Istanbul thanks to foreign soldiers who settled in Galata and began to involve themselves in the entertainment sector.¹ Parallel with this increase, the Ottoman government attempted to regulate brothels, especially in order to prevent venereal diseases.² However, these attempts could not be very successful, as it was also an international issue. Many brothel owners held foreign citizenship due to the capitulations hence Ottoman law could not be implemented in foreign-owned brothels.³ Moreover, Istanbul was one of the important centres for “white slave trade” dominated by Ashkenazi Jews. They mostly procured Jewish women from Romania to Istanbul.⁴ Although the capitulations were abolished with the First World War and the Ottoman government had a chance to regulate prostitution more effectively, prostitution spread more widely because of severe poverty.⁵

¹ Mark David Wyers, *“Wicked” Istanbul: The Regulation of Prostitution in the Early Turkish Republic*, (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 61.

² Zafer Toprak, “Fuhuş-Osmanlı Dönemi,” *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol.3. (Istanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 342.; Müge Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu (1875–1915),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, No.4 (2010): 557, accessed in March 30, 2018, doi: 10.1080/00263206.2010.492991

³ Wyers, *“Wicked” Istanbul*, 87.

⁴ Rifat Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople 1854-1922* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008), 23.

⁵ Wyers, *“Wicked” Istanbul*, 89; Kemal Yakut and Aydın Yetkin, “II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi’nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı: Fuhuş Meselesi,” *Kebikeç* 31, (2011), 285.

Although prostitution in the late Ottoman Istanbul was a multifaceted issue and there are many primary sources, such as archival materials, novels, memoirs and treatises on it, it had not attracted scholarly attention until the 2000s except for encyclopaedia entries written by Reşad Ekrem Koçu⁶ and Zafer Toprak⁷ who also has an article on this issue, and an article by Hakkı Arayan⁸. Looking at the archival records, one might realize a variety of records on several different issues about prostitutes, such as some prostitutes involved in spying especially in the time of the First World War.⁹ Some Muslims girls were deceived by procurers and sent to different parts of the world for prostitution such as Valparaíso in Chile¹⁰, Port Said, Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt.¹¹ Moreover, the government tried to take measures against venereal disease,¹² and also tried to rehabilitate prostitutes by providing them job opportunities or placing them in *darülaceze* (a poor house).¹³

⁶Reşad Ekrem Koçu, “Fahişeler,” *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vols.10. (İstanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971); Reşad Ekrem Koçu, “Fuhuş,” *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vols.11. (İstanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971), 5478.

⁷ Zafer Toprak, “Fuhuş-Osmanlı Dönemi,” *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol.3. (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994); Zafer Toprak, “İstanbul’da Fuhuş ve Zührevi Hastalıklar 1914-1933”, *Tarih ve Toplu* 39, (Mart 1987): 31-40.

⁸ Hakkı Arayan, “Tarihte İstanbul Fahişeleri” *Tarih* (June 1951).

⁹For some examples, see: COA, HR.HMS.İŞO. 237/21. (R. 24.02.1331) (7 May 1915): Prostitutes from the enemy states who involved in spying were expelled from the Ottoman land; COA, HR.SYS. 2267/44. (20 October 1916): Some Ottoman Greeks in Switzerland, they went to there in pretext of treatment, involved in spying against the Ottoman Empire by using prostitutes and owners of brothels in Istanbul; COA, HR.SFR.04.. 421/19. (21 May 1916) Prostitutes from the enemy states who involved in spying were expelled from the Ottoman land.

¹⁰ COA, Y..MTV. 48/48. (H.14.07.1308) (23 February 1891): A Turkish girl who ended up as a prostitute was brought from Valparaíso Chile to Istanbul.

¹¹ For some examples see: COA, DH.EUM.KADL 20/16. (H. 12.06.1329) (10 June 1911): The procurers who deceived Ottoman girls and sent them to Egypt for prostitution were punished; COA, ZB. 603/84. (R. 20.04.1325) (3 July 1909): The procurers who deceived Muslim girls to marry them wealthy men in Egypt and sold them to brothels in Port Said, Cairo and Alexandria were prevented.

¹² For some examples see: COA, DH.İD.. 46/82. (H. 16.05.1331) (23 April 1913): A regulation for prevention of spread of syphilis and examination of prostitutes was formed; COA, DH.İD.. 50/55. (H. 02.07.1329) (29 June 1911): A commission, under the chairmanship of Ömer Besim Bey, was formed to prevent spread of venereal diseases.

¹³ For some examples see: COA, DH.EUM.THR. 48/36. (H. 25.08.1328) (1 September 1910): A job opportunity for women who ended up as prostitutes due to financial difficulties in military tailoring; COA, DH.İD.. 47/11. (H. 15.01.1329) (16 January 1911): Hacer who came from Bulgaria to Istanbul and practiced prostitution was accepted to *Darülaceze* (poor house).

From the 2000s onwards, the subject of prostitution in the late Ottoman Empire have started to draw the attention of historians. One of the most comprehensive works on prostitution in the late Ottoman¹⁴ Istanbul¹⁵ is “*Wicked Istanbul*”: *The Regulation of Prostitution in the Early Turkish Republic* (2012)¹⁶ by Mark David Wyers. Although his main focus is the regulation of prostitution in the early Republican Era, he approaches the issue with a holistic view. He tries to show the continuity on the regulation process from the late Ottoman Empire to the early Republican period. By this way, he illustrates the regulation of prostitution in detail, based on archival materials, newspapers, and many different secondary sources in detail in the late Ottoman Istanbul. Wyers evaluates the relationship between the regulations and the issues of public health, civic duty, and the state’s nationalism.¹⁷

There are also some articles on the regulation of prostitution in the late Ottoman Istanbul. Müge Özbek in her article “*The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu (1875-1915)*” (2010)¹⁸ states that, from 1875 onwards, the Ottoman state tried to regulate prostitution especially to prevent the spread of venereal diseases. According to her, this policy was launched with a gender-biased approach since the measures were implemented only on prostitutes, but not on their clients.¹⁹ She further claims that the regulations did not aim to prohibit prostitution since it is seen as “necessary evil” by the government²⁰;

¹⁴ For the studies deal with prostitution before the nineteenth century see: Elyse Semerjian, “Sinful Professions: Illegal Occupations of Women in Ottoman Aleppo, Syria”, *Hawwa* 1 (2003): 60-85; Elyse Semerjian, *Off the Straight Path: Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008); Eugenia Kermeli, “Sin and the Sinner: *Folles Femmes* in Ottoman Crete” *Eurasian Studies* 1/1 (2002); Fikret Yılmaz, “The Line between Fornication and Prostitution: The Prostitute versus *Subaşı* (Police Chief),” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* 69, No. 3 (2016): 249-264; James Baldwin, “Prostitution, Islamic Law and Ottoman Societies,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, No. 1 (2012); Marinos Sariyannis, “Prostitution in Ottoman Istanbul, Late Sixteenth - Early Eighteenth Century,” *Turcica* 40, (2008): , doi:10.2143/turc.40.0.2037134;

¹⁵ For the studies deal with prostitution out of Istanbul in the Late Ottoman Empire see: Khaled Fahmy, “Prostitution in Egypt in the Nineteenth Century”, in *On the Margin of the Modern Middle East*, ed. E. Rogan (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002); Malte Fuhrmann, “Down and out on the Quays of İzmir: ‘European’ Musicians, Innkeepers, and Prostitutes in the Ottoman Port-cities,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): , doi:10.1080/09518960903488030.

¹⁶ Mark David Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul: The Regulation of Prostitution in the Early Turkish Republic*, (Istanbul: Libra, 2012)

¹⁷ Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 15.

¹⁸ Müge Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu (1875–1915),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, No.4 (2010): 555-568, accessed in March 30, 2018, doi: 10.1080/00263206.2010.492991

¹⁹ Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu,” 555.

²⁰ Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu,” 55.

it aimed to prevent the venereal diseases and its “social visibility to respectable people.”²¹ Kemal Yakut and Aydın Yetkin illustrate the government’s regulatory activities on prostitution in Istanbul in the Second Constitutional Period in their article “II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi’nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı: Fuhuş Meselesi” (A Social Ethic Crisis in the Second Constitutional Period: The Issue of Prostitution (2011)).²² They demonstrate that, during this specific time period, the spread of prostitution through Istanbul accelerated due to the Balkan and First World Wars, which caused severe poverty. In parallel with this, the complaints of the neighbourhood about prostitutes showed an increase.

In the same vein, there are two PhD dissertations written recently.²³ Müge Özbek wrote her PhD dissertation, *Single, Poor Women in Istanbul, 1850-1915: Prostitution, Sexuality, and Female Labor* (2017)²⁴, on prostitution in the Late Ottoman Istanbul. In this dissertation, she argues that the government tried to exclude the women, who were “sexually-active” and did not have familial ties, from the public spaces and enclose them in regulated “brothels as prostitutes, households as domestic servants and relief institutions as poor women”. By this way, the government aimed to control women’s sexuality and labour. Cem Doğan also wrote his PhD dissertation, *Dersaadet’te Fuhuş: Mekânlar, Aktörler ve Söylemler (1876-1923)* (Prostitution in Dersaadet: Places, Agents, and Discourses (1876-1923) (2018)²⁵ on the state’s intervention in prostitution. He argues that, from the reign of Abdülhamid II onwards, prostitution was regulated to maintain public health and the regulations were done as a part of the modernization process through which the state tried to strengthen its hegemony over the society.

There are some works which demonstrate the international side of the issue of prostitution and procurement. Rıfat Bali’s book, *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople 1854-1922* (2008)²⁶ is one of the important examples of these. The book

²¹ Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu,” 563.

²² ; Kemal Yakut and Aydın Yetkin, “II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi’nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı: Fuhuş Meselesi,” *Kebikeç* 31, (2011): 275-307.

²³ Since the accession of these dissertation restricted by the authors, I could only reach their abstracts via web site of Council of Higher Education, Thesis Center: <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/giris.jsp>

²⁴ Müge Özbek, *Single, Poor Women in Istanbul, 1850-1915: Prostitution, Sexuality, and Female Labor*, PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2017.

²⁵ Cem Doğan, *Dersaadet’te Fuhuş: Mekânlar, Aktörler Ve Söylemler (1876-1923)*, PhD diss., Hacettepe University, 2018.

²⁶ Rıfat Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople 1854-1922* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008).

consists of four sections. The first one is an extended version of Bali's article written in Turkish, titled "1900'lü Yıllarda İstanbul'da Yahudi Fuhuş Tacirleri" (The Jewish Procurers in 1900s Istanbul) (2003)²⁷. The second section discusses a pamphlet by Albert Attiges about a procurer Michael Salomonovich (Michael Pasha), "Michel Salomonovich Chef des Marchands D'esclaves et Agent de la Police Secrète a Constantinople" (1901). In the third section, includes Samuel Cohen's, the secretary of the Jewish Association for the protection of Girls and Women,²⁸ report, titled "Report of an Enquiry Made in Constantinople" (1914). In the last one, Bali includes the article "Adult Delinquency" (1922) from *Constantinople Today: The Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople*²⁹ written by Charles Trowbridge Riggs. In his article, Bali argues that Istanbul is one of the most important centres for the international white slave trade controlled by the Romanian Ashkenazi Jews from the Crimean War onwards. It is a rather descriptive article which gives wide coverage to memoirs and testimonials.

Malte Fuhrmann also emphasizes the role of late Ottoman Istanbul as an important centre for the international white slave trade in his article " 'Western Perversions' at the Threshold of Felicity: The European Prostitutes of Galata-Pera (1870-1915)" (2010).³⁰ He argues that the immigration of prostitutes of Austrian origin, especially from Eastern Habsburg Galicia and Bukovina, to Istanbul turned into an important problem between the Ottomans and Austrian diplomats with the effects of contemporary discourses on gender, imperialism and nationalism.³¹ The Austrian dignitaries were disturbed by the situation of these women and they did not want to see their countries' girls involved in an indecent profession outside of their "civilized" world.³² On the other hand, the existence of these prostitutes in Istanbul caused overgeneralization among the Ottomans about the indecency of all European women.³³

²⁷ Rifat N. Bali, "1900'lü Yıllarda İstanbul'da Yahudi Fuhuş Tacirleri," *Tarih ve Toplum* No.2 (July 2003): 9-19.

²⁸ Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 10.

²⁹ Clarence R. Johnson, ed., *Constantinople Today: The Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922).

³⁰ Malte Fuhrmann, "'Western Perversions' at the Threshold of Felicity: The European Prostitutes of Galata-Pera (1870-1915)," *History and Anthropology* 21, No.2 (2010): 159-172.

³¹ Fuhrmann, "'Western Perversions'," 159-160.

³² Fuhrmann, "'Western Perversions'," 162.

³³ Fuhrmann, "'Western Perversions'," 165.

Along the same line, Kezban Acar claims, in her article “*Procuring and Trafficking in Women in the Late Ottoman Empire*” (2017),³⁴ that the international issue of women trafficking in Istanbul, studied by Rifat Bali and Edward Bristow³⁵ based on European primary sources, can be pictured completely by using Ottoman archival materials. She shows that in addition to Istanbul, there were also other important centres for women trafficking in Anatolia such as Konya, Kayseri, Sivas, Tokat, Kastamonu, Bolu and İzmir.³⁶

This study is different from the above-mentioned literature in terms of primary sources and methodology, I will use the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar as my primary sources. The novels chosen for this study cover a period from 1875 to 1919 including crucial events for the late Ottoman history such as First and Second Constitutional Eras, and the First World War. In this particular time period, the Ottoman intellectuals were struggling to find ways to keep alive and modernize the empire.³⁷ The main aim of this study is, firstly, to identify the characteristics of prostitutes in the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi, then to demonstrate their attitudes towards prostitutes and how these attitudes were shaped by the important issues of the time like modernization of the Ottoman society and women’s roles in the new modernized society, and also their own notion of morality. In addition to that, their attitudes toward prostitutes will be compared.

Novels are not independent of the socio-political context in which they are written. In this regard, Susan Sniader Lanser states:

...the fictional speech act, because it is a speech act, appropriates the language of history. It is never wholly free from its ties to historical perception and communication; implied in every act of fictional speech, therefore, are acts of perception and communication having their roots in the “real world.”³⁸

³⁴ Kezban Acar, “Procuring and Trafficking in Late Ottoman Empire,” *Turcica* 48 (2017): 271-299.

³⁵ Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight against White Slavery, 1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

³⁶ Acar, “Procuring and Trafficking,” 282.

³⁷ Carter V. Findley, “An Ottoman Occidental in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gulnar, 1889,” *The American Historical Review* 103, No:1 (February 1998): 19, accessed in August 7, 2018., doi:10.2307/2650772

³⁸ Susan Sniader Lanser, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 3.

In the same vein, new historicism, which has been pioneered by Stephen Greenblatt from the 1980s onwards, has been trying to explore the complex relationship between literature and history. The new historicists “tend to read literary texts as material products of specific historical conditions... [According to them], texts of all kinds are the vehicles of politics insofar as texts mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations.”³⁹ They are concerned with “... the role of historical context in interpreting literary texts and the role of literary rhetoric in interpreting history.”⁴⁰ In addition, it is also possible to establish a worthwhile discourse between literary texts and primary texts like books, archival documents, journal entries within the same time.⁴¹ Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose illustrate the nature of Elizabethan society through Shakespeare’s literary texts.⁴²

What Hülya Yıldız states about the novels as a historical source is also worth mentioning:

Novels construct and convey the transmission of sensibilities, experiences and feelings that are otherwise not registered in other forms. As a form both private and public and as a form that both captures and produces the emotional and political nature of events and people, the novel can operate as a vector into the silences in the cultural archives of communities, can dissolve taboos and prohibitions in the act of simply representing them, and as such has the potential of questioning and opening up some of the less recorded, less dealt with, and less remembered issues of the past and present.⁴³

With the above-mentioned approaches in mind, I chose specifically the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi for this study as they had many novels including prostitutes compared to their contemporaries.

Ahmed Midhat Efendi, born into an artisan family in 1844 in Tophane district of Istanbul, indicated that he came from a poor family but was proud of it.⁴⁴ He lost his father when he was thirteen. Then, Ahmed Midhat and his mother went to his elder brother who was a civil servant under Midhat Pasha in Vidin. When Midhat Pasha was

³⁹ John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Brannigan, *New Historicism*, 4.

⁴¹ Brannigan, *New Historicism*, 11-12.

⁴² Brannigan, *New Historicism*, 12.

⁴³ Hülya Yıldız, *Literature as Public Sphere: Gender and Sexuality in Ottoman Turkish Novels and Journals*, PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2008, 31.

⁴⁴ Hakkı Tarık Us, *Bir Jübilenin İntibaları: Ahmed Midhat'ı Anıyoruz!* (İstanbul: Vakıf, 1955), 8.

appointed to a variety of administrative positions in different cities, Ahmed Midhat and his brother followed him.⁴⁵ First, they moved to Nish and there Ahmed Midhat graduated from the local *rüşdiye* (secondary) school. Then, in 1864, they went to Ruse and Ahmed Midhat began to work at the *Vilayet Mektubi Kalemi* (Provincial Chief Secretary). Appreciating his character and intelligence, Midhat Pasha encouraged him to study French. In fact, the very name of Midhat was given to Ahmed Midhat by Midhat Pasha during this time.⁴⁶ In 1869, when Midhat Pasha was appointed as the governor of Baghdad, they went together to Baghdad. Here, he met some prominent intellectuals and he was influenced by them. Among these, Osman Hamdi Bey introduced the Western culture to him while Muhammed Feyzi and Bakır Can Muattar instructed him on Eastern philosophy and madrasa culture.⁴⁷

In 1871, he returned to Istanbul and established his own printing house in Tahtakale, then he moved the printing business to Beyoğlu. In 1873, though he was not a core member of the Young Ottoman opposition, he was exiled to Rhodes as a part of a wave of the banishments of opposition. In Rhodes, he continued to write and publish his works, such as novels and textbooks. There, he also established a school for children named Medrese-i Süleymaniye.⁴⁸ Three years later, when Murad V acceded the throne, he was allowed to return to Istanbul. In 1878, he started to publish a newspaper named *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (Interpreter of Truth) and he earned his living through publishing and writing. He developed a close relationship with Abdülhamid II and thus he was patronised by the sultan.⁴⁹ In his literary works, Ahmed Midhat Efendi defended the superiority of Islamic culture over Western civilization through his idealized characters. In this regard, Orhan Okay claims that especially after the suicide of Beşir Fuad, a prominent materialist intellectual, he aimed to set proper example to young Ottoman men through these idealize characters.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Orhan Okay, "Ahmed Midhat Efendi," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1989), 100.

⁴⁶ Nükhet Esen, *Hikâye Anlatan Adam: Ahmet Mithat*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), 27-28.

⁴⁷ Okay, "Ahmed Midhat Efendi," 101.

⁴⁸ Okay, "Ahmed Midhat Efendi," 101.

⁴⁹ Okay, "Ahmed Midhat Efendi," 101.

⁵⁰ Okay, "Ahmed Midhat Efendi," 102.

The other author I will take into consideration, Hüseyin Rahmi [Gürpınar], was born in 1864, in Ayaspaşa, Istanbul. His father was a high-ranking soldier who worked as an adjutant of Sultan Abdülaziz. He lost his mother when he was very young. The death of his mother affected Hüseyin Rahmi's life deeply. Because of her untimely death, he was raised by his grandmother and his aunt.⁵¹ He had a writing about his mother which was not published until he met Refik Ahmet Sevengil. One day, he talked about this writing to Refik Ahmet Sevengil, and the latter persuaded him to publish this in the *Yeni Türk Journal* which was a press organ of the Halkevleri (People's Home)⁵², which established in 1932 and aimed to spread nationalism, secularist and positivist ideas throughout the country.⁵³

Hüseyin Rahmi started his education in Crete where his father's place of duty. One year later, he returned to Istanbul and was enrolled at the Yakub Ağa Primary School in Aksaray. Then he continued his education at the Mahmudiye *Rüşdiyesi* (secondary school), the Mahrec-i Aklam (School for Education of State Officials), and finally at the Mekteb-i Mülkiye (School of the Civil Service), respectively. In his second year in Mekteb-i Mülkiye, he got tuberculosis and dropped out the school. He went to Janina where his father held an official post. He never returned to school but continued to study especially French through an autodidactical manner.⁵⁴

In his childhood, Hüseyin Rahmi was surrounded by the old Istanbul ladies. Refik Ahmet Sevengil states that this had an impact on his character. "He clasps his hands together on his knees or on his chest while he is sitting, like a worldly-wise, traditionist and gentle Istanbul woman; he covers his mouth with his hand while laughing, his laughter is very polite, quiet..."⁵⁵ He was also able to knit laces, embroider pillows and do simple white embroidery.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Efdal Sevinçli, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar: İnceleme* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1990), 11.

⁵² Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar: Hayatı, Hatıraları* (İstanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1944), 26.

⁵³ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1992), 180.

⁵⁴ Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 41-43.

⁵⁵ Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 10-11.

⁵⁶ Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 11.

Hüseyin Rahmi never married during his life. Ahmed Midhat Efendi wanted to marry him with his daughter but he rejected this proposal politely.⁵⁷ When Sevengil asked the reason behind this, he answered as follows: “ I do not want any other breath in my bedroom, it makes me nervous, that is why I cannot stay as a guest anywhere....Sir, a writer who gets married becomes unable to write. Ernest Renan was also single, when people ask the reason of his celibacy, he answered that people are divided into two, the one type act with their brain, the other act with their body. Then he said that “I am belonging to the first one.”⁵⁸ Hüseyin Rahmi did not answer the questions about his love life. When Refik Ahmed Sevengil asked him some questions about his life, he answered all of them except one question about if he had ever fallen in love.⁵⁹

Hüseyin Rahmi was introduced to the literary world by Ahmed Midhat Efendi. His first novel *Şık* (Chic) (1889) was serialized in Ahmed Midhat’s newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (Interpreter of Truth) and Ahmed Midhat regarded him as his own son.⁶⁰ Also, he started to work in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* in place of Ahmed Cevdet (the former owner of *İkdam*).⁶¹ His writings in *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* were compiled and published by Ahmed Midhat Efendi with his comments under the title of *Müntehabat-ı Hüseyin Rahmi*.⁶² In contrast to their close relationship at the beginning of Hüseyin Rahmi’s career they have a different point of view in terms of religion, morality and modernization.

In addition to the abovementioned aspects, the main reason behind concentrating on these two authors is that they were quite popular and widely read novelists of their time and they wrote their works to educate the Ottoman people. That is to say, they reveal their thoughts about many issues and events more clearly unlike novelists who wrote their works for the sake of art. Many times, they interrupt the story and give some lectures and engage in imaginary conversations with their readers. Although this situation shows the technical weakness of the novels, it will undoubtedly present a historian with an

⁵⁷ Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 13.

⁵⁸ Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 12.

⁵⁹ Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 13.

⁶⁰ Sevinçli, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 16-18.

⁶¹ Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 49.

⁶² Sevengil, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, 49-50.

invaluable opportunity of studying and evaluating their thoughts, especially on prostitutes and prostitution which are crucial for this study.

There are some works which evaluate prostitution through novels⁶³, especially based on Ahmed Midhat's *Henüz 17 Yaşında* (Only 17 Years Old). Bahar Çolak's MA thesis, *Portraits of Women in the Late Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire from the Pen of Ahmed Midhat Efendi* (2002)⁶⁴, has a chapter on prostitution titled "*Prostitution in the Ottoman Empire and Ahmed Midhat's Approach to the Issue of Prostitution.*" In the beginning, Çolak gives brief information about prostitution in the Ottoman Empire based on Ahmed Rasim's,⁶⁵ Giovanni Scognamillo's⁶⁶ and Refik Ahmet Sevengil's⁶⁷ works. Then, she evaluates the novels of *Henüz 17 Yaşında* (Only 17 Years Old) and *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek* (An Angel on Earth), which include prostitute characters while arguing that Ahmed Midhat Efendi had a compassionate and tolerant approach toward prostitutes, who ended up in prostitution due to their misfortunes. Moreover, Ahmed Midhat thinks that these prostitutes deserve to be rescued from the brothel while the others, who perform this profession willingly, "are left to their bad fortunes."⁶⁸

Hülya Yıldız wrote an article about the same issue, "*Limits of the Imaginable in the Early Turkish Novel: Non-Muslim Prostitutes and Their Ottoman Muslim Clients*" (2012)⁶⁹, based mainly on *Henüz 17 Yaşında* (Only 17 Years Old). She argues that, in the early Turkish novels, authors preferred to establish a romantic relationship between non-Muslim women and Muslim men since the representation of a romantic relationship between Muslim men and women in a 'social sphere' was not regarded as morally acceptable according to contemporary social rules. She further claims that this situation enabled readers to evaluate the complex relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim communities. According to her, in *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, "the prostitute figure...functions

⁶⁴ Bahar Çolak, *Portraits of Women in Late Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire From the Pen of Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, Master's thesis, Bilkent University, 2002.

⁶⁶ Giovanni Scognamillo, *Beyoğlu'nda Fuhuş* (Istanbul: Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi, 1992).

⁶⁷ Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1998).

⁶⁸ Çolak, *Portraits of Women*, 113.

⁶⁹ Hülya Yıldız, "Limits of the Imaginable in the Early Turkish Novel: Non-Muslim Prostitutes and Their Ottoman Muslim Clients," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 54, no. 4 (2012): 533-562. doi:10.1353/tsl.2012.0024.

as an element that reproduces boundaries between different ethnic and religious groups in the Ottoman Empire.”⁷⁰

This thesis is a modest attempt to address the gap in literature by illustrating the prostitutes in the late Ottoman Istanbul through the eyes of two contemporary Ottoman intellectuals, Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi, in a comparative way while also dealing with the reasons for the spread of prostitution in this period and the current issues on modernization, women, and marriage which were crucial in shaping their attitudes.

In the first chapter general overview of the prostitution in the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century to the second half of the nineteenth century will firstly be given. Then, prostitution in the late Ottoman Istanbul will be evaluated by demonstrating the state’s regulation attempts, and international white slave trade. In the last section, three different treatises about prostitution based on observations will be examined to demonstrate how prostitution in the late Ottoman Istanbul was perceived and interpreted by contemporary people.

The main aim of the second chapter is to identify the characteristics of prostitutes in the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and his attitudes towards prostitutes. To make this identification meaningful, his approach to the issue of women and marriage, attitudes of men towards prostitutes, and the conditions of brothel will be illustrated.

In the third chapter, as in the second chapter, the characteristics of prostitutes in the novels of Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar and his attitudes towards prostitutes will be identified. Furthermore, his approach to the issue of women and marriage, society’s attitude towards prostitutes and setting of the novels will be demonstrated to identify his attitude towards prostitutes as a whole.

In the final chapter, the main objective is to compare Ahmed Midhat and Hüseyin Rahmi’s approaches towards prostitution and to find out how these approaches were shaped by the ideal modernized society in their minds, their notion of morality and their worldview. To make this comparison more robust, the context of the late Ottoman literature and hotly debated issues will be illustrated.

⁷⁰ Yıldız, "Limits of the Imaginable in the Early Turkish Novel," 555.

CHAPTER 1

PROSTITUTION IN THE LATE OTTOMAN ISTANBUL

Regarded as the world's oldest profession⁷¹, prostitution has existed in almost every period and region in the world. Istanbul was one of the well-known centres of prostitution since it is an important port city. In Byzantine times, there were many harlots practising their profession in bordellos, taverns and inns; also, some of them worked as an actress in theatres like Empress Theodora who allegedly was a former prostitute working there before her marriage with Justinian I in 525. Theodora saved many harlots by paying their debts to their owner, then she sent them to the monasteries, which she established for former harlots.⁷²

In the Ottoman times, prostitution continued in Istanbul. Already in the sixteenth century, some complaints about prostitution were recorded. For instance, in 1565, people from Sultan Cihangir neighbourhood, in the outskirts of Galata, wrote a petition to report the women, who practiced prostitution in their home overtly, named Arab Fatı, Narin, Giritli Nefise(Kamer) and Atlı Ases(Balatlı Ayni). Then, the qadi of Galata summoned them before him. While others went to the court, Arap Fatı was not present there. When the imam and muezzin of the neighbourhood came to Arab Fatı's home to arrest her, she cried: "Damn your imam, qadi and sharia."⁷³ Consequently, Arab Fatı was obliged to

⁷¹ See: Lujo Basserman, *The Oldest Profession: A History of Prostitution*, trans. James Cleugh (London: Barker, 1967), Nils Johan Ringdal, *Love for Sale: A World History of Prostitution*, trans. Richard Daly (New York: Grove Press, 2004), Tyler Stoddard Tyler, *A Revealing History of the World's Oldest Profession: Whore Stories* (Massachusetts: Adams Media, 2012)

⁷² Brigitte Pitarakis, "Fuhuş-Bizans Dönemi," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol.3. (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 34.

⁷³ Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicride İstanbul Hayatı* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2000), 67.

renew her faith and imprisoned until her husband, a Janissary, came to Istanbul whereas the others were banished from the city.⁷⁴ After two years, Selim II edicted a decree to round up and imprison prostitutes in every neighbourhood. He assigned imams and muezzins for this duty and also wanted them to keep records of the prostitutes. If some harlots hid during the investigation and appeared again after that, imams and muezzins of the neighbourhood would also be punished. Moreover, if some men had wanted to marry these prostitutes, they would have to leave Istanbul forever. In case of their return, they would be imprisoned immediately.⁷⁵ In 1571, further measures were taken against prostitutes who worked in disguise of laundresses. Accordingly, hiring out shops to laundresses was prohibited and these women were expelled.⁷⁶ On the other hand, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the prostitutes, named *Yeniçeri Avreti* (Janissary's Woman), in the neighbourhood of Ayvansaray, were allowed to have affairs with Janissaries since all these Janissaries were bachelors and not allowed to marry.⁷⁷

In fact, according to the Sharia, there are religiously sanctioned fixed sentences (*hadd* sentences) for fornication which is “one of the offences defined in Islamic law as ‘claims of God’” and required fixed punishments.⁷⁸ If the fornicator is a free married Muslim, they are to be stoned to death. But if they are a slave, a non-Muslim or unmarried, they are sentenced to 100 lashes. However, the implementation of these sentences was almost impossible. It requires at least four male Muslims eye-witnesses known for their good morals who observed the exact intercourse or the offenders must have confessed their fornication and repeated the confession four times.⁷⁹ During the Ottoman times, only one Muslim woman known as ‘the wife of Abdullah Çelebi’ is known to have been punished with stoning to death in 1680, in the reign of Mehmed IV as she committed adultery with a Jewish shopkeeper in her house and was raided by the neighbourhood.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Altınay, *İstanbul Hayatı*, 68.

⁷⁵ Altınay, *İstanbul Hayatı*, 68-69.

⁷⁶ Altınay, *İstanbul Hayatı*, 70.

⁷⁷ Reşad Ekrem Koçu, “Fahişeler,” *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vols.10. (İstanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971), 5478.

⁷⁸ James Baldwin, “Prostitution, Islamic Law and Ottoman Societies,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 55, No. 1 (2012): 121-122, accessed in March 30, 2018, doi: 63/156852012X628518

⁷⁹ Baldwin, “Prostitution,” 122-123.

The Ottoman State did not apply the sharia and the fixed penalty for fornication, to the prostitute. They were generally punished with banishment. The final item of Süleyman the Lawgiver's code, *kanunname*, mentioned:

...if the community of his [or her] [town-]quarter or of his [or her] village complains that a person is a criminal or a harlot and, saying "He [or she] is not fit [to live with us]," rejects him [or her], and if that person has, in fact, a notoriously bad *reputation* among the people, he [or she] shall be banished, i.e. ejected from his [or her] quarter or village. And if he [or she] moves, he [or she] shall be expelled from the town [altogether]. But [action] shall be suspended a few days to [see how things turn out]. If that person repents him [or her] for misdeeds and [henceforth] leads a righteous life, very well. If not, he [or she] shall be ejected from there too and be definitively expelled; he or she shall leave the town and go away.⁸¹

But only rarely were harsher penalties implemented to the prostitutes. For example, in the reign of Selim III, the sultan ordered to hang ten or fifteen prostitutes, who were reported by imams of neighbourhoods, in the crowded parts of Istanbul in order to make an example of them.⁸²

In this respect, James Baldwin explained why the fixed punishments were not implemented in the cases of prostitution as follows:

...under Islamic law the two legal forms of sexual intercourse were intercourse between a husband and his wife, and intercourse between a master and his female slave. Both marriage and concubinage involved a payment- the dower in the former case and the purchase price in the latter- and in both cases, the law conceived this payment as being in return for a form of ownership that included sexual rights. The relationship between a client and a prostitute resembled that between husband and wife or between master and slave, inasmuch as it also involved a payment in exchange for sexual intercourse. This resemblance created ambiguity as to the legality of the encounter between client and prostitute, and so the fixed penalties could not be applied.⁸³

But the offender should indicate explicitly that he gives the money in order to have sexual intercourse with the woman. Some jurists, Ibn Nujaym and Shaykhzadah, contends that

⁸⁰ Marc Baer, "Death in Hippodrome: Sexual Politics and Legal Culture in the Reign of Mehmet IV," *Past & Present*, No. 210 (February 2011): 61, accessed in November 19, 2018, doi: 10.1093/pastj/gtq062

⁸¹ Uriel Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 130, quoted in Mark David Wyers, "*Wicked*" *Istanbul: The Regulation of Prostitution in the Early Turkish Republic*, (Istanbul: Libra, 2012), 48. "Italics and brackets retained from Heyd's translation."

⁸² Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Fahişelerin Asılması Vak'ası," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vols.10. (Istanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971), 5480. For this article he gives reference to Ahmed Cevdet Paşa's *Tarih* vol.5.

⁸³ Baldwin, "Prostitution," 125.

he should use the statement like follows: “I give you this dower in order to commit Zina with you.”⁸⁴

Moreover, as seen in the examples above, imams, muezzins and neighbourhood residents were responsible for the policing of prostitution. “Neighborhood surveillance was used as a means of monitoring illicit sexual activity in Istanbul.”⁸⁵ For instance, in 1716, a correspondence showed the example of this responsibility:

Let it be known, you have been informed, you cannot say you do not know. As long as [the guilty ones] remain in your neighbourhood, there is no security for your own dwellings or your neighbourhood. You know: One day we saw with our own eyes the whoremongers with prostitutes as they entered the brothel. Also on Monday three whoremongers, with three Armenian prostitutes in tow, entered the brothel. We saw this. What kinds of men we have seen coming and going into the brothel! For the love of our revered Sultan!⁸⁶

1.1. State, Law and Prostitution in the Late Ottoman Istanbul

With the Crimean War (1853-1856), the brothel-based prostitution became wide-spread in Galata and Beyoğlu. During the war, many foreign soldiers came and settled there and started to get involved in the entertainment sector there.⁸⁷ In this regard, Aron Halévy, the local representative of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Istanbul, stated in his report to the Paris headquarters in 1890:

The establishment of a certain importance of Polish Jews at Constantinople seems to date from the year 1854. It is to the epoch of the Crimean War that some Russian-Jewish soldier taken the prisoner in the course of battle by the allied armies were transported to Constantinople where they received the order to live in the quarter that they still inhabit...[they] had been given the sad mission of opening public houses of prostitution in the locale of Yukseh Caldirim and the adjacent streets... To these unhappy people there came several Jewish families from Rumania, Hungary, and Russia who fled from persecutions of which they had been

⁸⁴Baldwin, “Prostitution,” 126.

⁸⁵ Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 52- 54.

⁸⁶ Hakkı Arayan, “Tarihte İstanbul Fahişeleri,” *Tarih* (June 1951): 285. in Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 54.

⁸⁷ Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 61.

victims or who wanted to rescue their children from the vigors of military service.⁸⁸

Since prostitution spread widely in the second half of the nineteenth century, the state became involved in regulating the prostitution in Istanbul, especially in Beyoğlu. The archival records show that prostitution took place even in a mosque⁸⁹ and a police station⁹⁰ and some state officials got involved in the procurement of prostitutes⁹¹. From 1878 onwards, the state took some measures to prevent the negative effects of prostitution. With the help of the mayor of the Municipality of the Sixth District, Edouard Blacque, Doctor Michel and Agop Handanyan formed a commission to sanitize brothels and establish a hospital to prevent venereal diseases.⁹² In 1880, they obtained necessary permissions from the government to promote licensed brothels, where the regular examination for venereal diseases was mandatory.⁹³ In 1884, *Emraz-ı Zühreviye Nizamnamesi* (The Venereal Disease Ordinance)⁹⁴ was mandated to inspect the brothels in the Municipality of the Sixth District by a commission. This commission was assigned to licence the brothels and register the prostitutes there with their pseudonym, name, age, nationality and address. Then, identities with photographs, where their regular examinations were recorded, were issued for them. If a prostitute carried a venereal disease, she would be sent to the venereal disease hospital.⁹⁵ The charge of this medical examination was met by prostitutes themselves. In this respect, Osman Nuri states:

⁸⁸ Aron Halévy, “Les Israélites polonais de Constantinople (Suite) Leur établissement a Constantionople-leurs,” 16 March 1890, Turquie 1C17, AIU in Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery 1870-1939* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), 87.

⁸⁹ BOA, ZB. 350/110. (R.12.03.1319) (25 May 1903): The Imam of Salih Paşa Mosque in Unkapanı were raided with Vasfiye in a room in the mosque.

⁹⁰ BOA, DH:EUM.AYS. 42/34. (h. 09.10.1338) (26 June 1920): Eight polices from the guards of Ferit Paşa brought a prostitute in a police station and had fun there.

⁹¹ BOA, DH.MB..HPS. 89/23. (H.05,12,1331) (5 November 1913): The guardian of the Prison for Women was accused that he took women away from the prison and sell these women; BOA, EUM.KADL. 4/39. (H. 13.01.1329) (14 January 1911): The officer of *Muzika-yı Hümayun* (The Royal Military Orcheastra), Tahsin Bey, prostituted some women.

⁹² Zafer Toprak, “Fuhuş-Osmanlı Dönemi,” *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol.3. (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 342.; Müge Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu (1875–1915),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, No.4 (2010): 557, accessed in March 30, 2018, doi: 10.1080/00263206.2010.492991

⁹³ Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 64.

⁹⁴ Osman Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umûr-i Belediyye*, 9 vols. (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1995), Vol 6, 3296-3314, in Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu,” 557.

⁹⁵ Özbek, “The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu,” 557.

In the statute, the fees [to be collected from the registered women] were not specified. Rather, they were left to the discretion of the [Sixth District Committee], which determined the fees according to the size of the brothel, the number of women working there, and the class of neighbourhood in which the brothel was located. Brothels were separated into four categories, and the women's monthly fees stipulated according to the category of the brothel she worked in. The fees were broken down as follows: twenty *piastres* per month for the lowest class brothel, to one lira, one and a half lira, and two lira for women working in the highest class brothels. Women who were not registered at a brothel, but determined by authorities to be prostitutes and forcibly delivered to the clinic, and also women who voluntarily went to clinics for venereal examinations, were charged thirty *kuruş*.⁹⁶

However, unlike Christian and Jewish prostitutes, Muslim prostitutes, who worked in licensed brothels were not required to register and not subject to medical inspection until 1914. By this time, they were generally registered in Üsküdar and Kadıköy.⁹⁷ Furthermore, in the case of venereal diseases, prostitutes were treated in different hospitals in accordance with religious denomination, non-Muslims prostitutes in the Beyoğlu Women's Hospital and Muslim ones in the Haseki Women's Hospital.⁹⁸

On the other hand, brothel-based prostitution was not unique to Beyoğlu in Istanbul. There were many famous Muslim-owned brothels in the historical peninsula. Ahmed Cevdet Pasha made an entry in *Tezâkir* about the death of Langa Fatma (1854) who owned a brothel in Edirnekapı. He states that she was doing her profession in a noble and elegant way. Even the *Zabtiye Müşiri*, responsible for urban order and security, could not intervene in her business. He further indicates: “..the biggest brothel of Istanbul was closed and after that, no brothel as splendid as it had been, would be opened.”⁹⁹ Previously, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, another Muslim woman Esmâ, who was known as the daughter of İpşir Ağa, ran a luxurious brothel in Ayvansaray, and her clients were mostly Janissaries.¹⁰⁰ In addition, Aksaray became famous for its brothels especially from the 1860s onwards. One of the most famous brothels in Aksaray was “The Persian's Brothel” which was established in the 1860s by a Persian man named İbrahim.

⁹⁶ Osman Nuri Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umur-i Belediye* (Istanbul: Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1995) vol.1, 3300, in Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 66-67.

⁹⁷ Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 171.

⁹⁸ Ergin, *Mecelle*, 3469-3470, in Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 172.

⁹⁹ Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir* vol.1, edited by Cevdet Baysu, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1953), 50.

¹⁰⁰ Giovanni Scognamiglio, *Beyoğlu'nda Fuhuş* (Istanbul: Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi, 1992), 67.

There were well-known prostitutes like Teranedil Mümciye, Şaşı İfakat, Kumru Hasibe, Uzunküpeli Firdevs and Perver.¹⁰¹ In addition to the Persian's Brothel, Ahmed Rasim mentions the famous Muslim brothels in Aksaray in his *Fuhş-i Atik*, such as Bahri, Kaymak and Hürmüz which were known by their owners' names, and Sena Yokuşu.¹⁰²

Prostitution in Istanbul could sometimes turn into an international issue and as a consequence the Ottomans could not take the necessary measures as they wished. In 1876, the Ottoman Ministry of Justice took a decision to arrest and deport all foreign prostitutes in Istanbul. After a while, they arrested women whose number was enough to load two ships. This decision was met by protests by the European powers and they compelled the Ottoman State to cancel this decision.¹⁰³ Moreover, despite the Ottoman State's efforts to regulate prostitution in 1884, as mentioned above, the spread of prostitution in the capital could not be prevented, as these regulations could not be implemented in foreign-owned bordellos. The owner of these brothels could hold foreign citizenship thanks to the Capitulations, and Ottoman state law could not be implemented upon them.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the dominant actors of this sector were generally the non-muslim Ottomans, the Greeks, Armenians and Jews, who held foreign passports.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Istanbul was one of the most important centres for white slave trafficking between 1880 and 1939 and the dominant actor in this trade was the Jewish community.¹⁰⁶ Romanian Jewry especially played a leading role in the white slave trafficking in Istanbul. Since they were not allowed to be involved in commercial activities in Romania, trafficking women was a beneficial way for them to make money.¹⁰⁷ In fact, these Ashkenazi Jews were already involved this trade in Istanbul since the Crimean War. They supplied prostitutes for eastern port cities such as Alexandria, Port Said, Bombay and Calcutta, also for Latin America.¹⁰⁸ In addition to existing foreign prostitutes, in 1917, the Russians began to

¹⁰¹ Scognamillo, *Beyoğlu'nda Fuhuş*, 24.

¹⁰² Ahmed Rasim, *Dükkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık: "Fuhşi Atik"* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1992), 56-57.

¹⁰³ Rifat Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople 1854-1922* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008), 30.

¹⁰⁴ Wyers, *"Wicked" Istanbul*, 87.

¹⁰⁵ Wyers, *"Wicked" Istanbul*, 81.

¹⁰⁶ Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 11-12.

¹⁰⁷ Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution* 23.

¹⁰⁸ Malte Fuhrmann, "'Wester Perversions' at the Threshold of Felicity: The European Prostitutes of Galata-Pera (1870-1915)," *History and Anthropology* 21, No.2 (2010): 160.

dominate the entertainment sector and prostitution since there was an inundation of Russian refugees in Istanbul because of the Bolshevik Revolution.¹⁰⁹

The “white slave trafficking” in Istanbul disturbed the European Jews since they did not want to see young Jewish girls ‘in misery’ in any part of the world. For instance, in 1914, Samuel Cohen showed his discontent about that in his “Report of an Enquiry Made in Constantinople on Behalf of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women”:

...a special Committee of the Consuls-General had to report that in spite of the promises made to supply them with lists of the traffickers who ought to be deported, nothing was done. It is as well to mention here that the Capitulations exist in Turkey. That is to say, each of the great powers has its own Consular Court with jurisdiction over all those people who claim its nationality. This has led to many difficulties, for when an attempt has been made to arrest an individual through one Consulate, he has claimed the protection of another, being easily able to procure passports or other papers to support his statement. Cases have been known where some of the traffickers have passports of various countries.¹¹⁰

A German Jewish feminist Bertha Pappenheim also criticised that, because of the capitulations, the Ottoman state did not intervene for the protection of Jewish girls. Also, Austrian and German consulates did not show any interest to solve the problems of these girls and avoid “white slave trafficking”.¹¹¹ Moreover, in 1910, the Ottoman Grand Rabbi, Haim Nahum, composed a list of pimps and procurers in Istanbul and sent this list to the Ottoman Ministry of Interior Affairs but the state did not take action against them.¹¹² On the other hand, Samuel Cohen also indicated that the police officers in the Ottoman Empire were paid a small amount of money, so they searched for different ways to earn money and accepted bribes from brothel owners and “white slave traffickers.” That is why the state could not prevent this “trade” effectively.¹¹³ The examples of this situation can also be found in the state’s records. For example, in 1892, the Minister of Police Hüseyn Nazım Paşa was reported to Abdülhamid II since his officials, who were

¹⁰⁹ Irvin Cemil Schick, “Nationalism Meets Sex Trade: Istanbul’s District of Beyoğlu/Pera During the Early Twentieth Century,” (paper presented at Crossing Borders: ‘Unusual’ Negotiations over the Secular, Public and Private, Amherst College, February 16-18 2009), 2.

¹¹⁰ Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 81; see also Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 89.

¹¹¹ Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 40-42.

¹¹² Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 46.

¹¹³ Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 30.

protected by him, took bribes from brothels. Also, they caused many chaste women to end up in brothels by the way of having intercourse with them by threat. If women did not accept this, they would arrest them by slandering. These women also generally would end up in a brothel or prison.¹¹⁴

With the Second Constitutional Era (1908), the *Kanun-i Esasi* which was enforced following the Young Turk Revolution, granted the right of immunity of residence which means that neighbourhood residents could not raid the houses they supposed that illicit intercourse took place.¹¹⁵ This development created favourable conditions for the spread of brothels in many neighbourhoods. For instance, in March 1910, residents of Şişli complained about newly opened brothels, which were seventeen former Muslim houses transformed into brothels. They indicated that they were upright families and these brothels could deprave their children's morals.¹¹⁶ Another important development during this time was an attempt to create employment opportunities for women. One of the reasons behind the promotion of female employment was "to 'protect' the honour of Muslim women by preventing them from taking up prostitution as a means of income."¹¹⁷ In 1909, the *Zabıta-i Ahlakiye* (Vice-Squad) was established to register prostitutes and prevent the spread of venereal diseases.¹¹⁸ The *Polis Sanat Mektebi* (The Craft School of Police) began to train the prostitutes, who wanted to quit their profession, in sewing and cleaning in order to provide them new occupation opportunities. They were also paid during their education.¹¹⁹ One year later, they tried to create job opportunities to prostitutes in Istanbul by recruiting them in the military tailoring in order to supply them 'honourable' life in which they earn their money in a "respectful" way.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Kemal Yakut and Aydın Yetkin, "II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı: Fuhuş Meselesi," *Kebikeç* 31, (2011), 277.

¹¹⁵ Yakut and Yetkin, "II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı," 279.

¹¹⁶ BOA, DH.MUİ., 69/33, (H.08.Ra.1328); BOA, DH.EUM.THR., 47/36, (H.21. Ş.1328), in Yakut and Yetkin, "II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı," 280-281.

¹¹⁷ Wyers, "*Wicked*" *Istanbul*, 216.

¹¹⁸ Yakut and Yetkin, "II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı," 283.

¹¹⁹ İhsan Birinci, "Ahlak Zabıtasının Tarihçesi", *Polis Emeklileri Polis Dergisi*, İstanbul Yıl.12, S. 161, s. 18. in Yakut and Yetkin, "II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı," 284.

¹²⁰ BOA, DH.EUM.THR. 48/36. (H.28.08.1328), see also Yavuz Selim Karakışla, "Arşivden Bir Belge: Askeri Dikimevlerinde Çalıştırılan Müslüman Fahişeler," *Toplumsal Tarih* 112(2003): 99.

When World War I broke out, the Ottoman Empire was able to abolish capitulations and by this way, the government could regulate prostitution more effectively.¹²¹ In 1915, Police Chief Osman Bey was authorised to tackle prostitution. He managed to arrest 168 slave traders from different nationalities and deport them. The great majority of them were the Russian, 100 slavers in total, and the Russians were followed by the Romanians and Austrians with 23 and 10 slavers respectively.¹²² Also, he closed down the synagogue of the white slave traffickers in Galata.¹²³ In spite of these efforts, the state could not stop its spread since the harsh conditions of the First World War caused many women to earn their livelihood by prostitution. For instance, a woman named Mediha lost her husband in the war and the state paid her 180 *kuruş* monthly whereas even a loaf of bread costed 20 *kuruş* at that time. Since she could not live on this amount of money, she returned to her family's house but she was not welcomed there. Her father got rid of her as he saw her as an extra burden. Consequently, she began to prostitute herself in order to continue her life.¹²⁴

In 1915, The Committee of Union and Progress introduced a new regulation on prostitution, which was the improved version of the 1884 regulation. Unlike the 1884 regulation, the legal definition of a prostitute was given in the first item as follows: "A prostitute is a woman who offers herself for the pleasure of others and in this way has relations with numerous men, for the purpose of monetary profit."¹²⁵ The new regulation specified certain places for opening a brothel. If someone set up a brothel outside these specified areas, the brothel would be immediately shut down. Moreover, the new regulation applied age limit, thus girls under eighteen years could not work in a brothel. Also, they could only work there by their own free will, and they could leave whenever they wanted. The owners of brothels were prohibited from forcing girls into debt in order to oblige them to stay in a brothel.¹²⁶ Moreover, in the 1915 regulation, the method of paying tax for the medical examination was changed. Though in 1884, it was paid by

¹²¹ Wyers, "*Wicked*" *Istanbul*, 89.

¹²² Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 56.

¹²³ Fuhrmann, "'Wester Perversions,'" 169.

¹²⁴ Yakut and Yetkin, "II.Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Toplumsal Ahlak Bunalımı," 285.

¹²⁵ Wyers, "*Wicked*" *Istanbul*, 67-68.

¹²⁶ Wyers, "*Wicked*" *Istanbul*, 68-69.

prostitutes themselves now “the owners of the brothels were required to pay ten lira per month to cover the costs of *réglementation*. ”¹²⁷ But prostitutes were still obliged to pay the charge of venereal disease treatment when they became infected.¹²⁸

The major specified red-light districts of Istanbul were Abanoz and Ziba Streets in Beyoğlu and Galata. While Abanoz and Ziba were largely occupied by Greek and Armenian women, the brothels of Galata largely recruited Jewish girls.¹²⁹ The worst brothels existed in Galata. Samuel Cohen described the brothels of Galata as follows:

...there is a maze of small, intricate, narrow hilly streets, all very badly paved, and at night almost entirely unlit. The houses are low and small and seem to be in an indescribably filthy condition.....The inmates of the brothel are seated on low stools or boxes or on low couches, with almost nothing on in the way of clothes. Their faces are painted and powdered, but the haggard look in their eyes cannot be hidden. In almost every case, each prostitute sits in a small compartment not more than 20 to 24 inches wide with a wire netting in front facing the street. Some few have small windows. ...The inmates of the houses appeared to me to be mainly Russian and Polish Jewesses, though there were many others....I have unfortunately had to declare that most of the prostitutes, brothel keepers and traffickers were Jews or Jewesses.¹³⁰

Moreover, Mabelle Phillips showed that, in 1921, Muslim widows, although they were paid by the state because of their husbands' death in the war, earned far fewer money than non-Muslim widows since non-Muslim women were more qualified in many professions such as sewing and washing. Therefore, Muslim widows could not find any other profession than prostitution to earn their livelihoods.¹³¹

On the other hand, in the Anatolian side, the brothels of Üsküdar and Kadıköy predominantly housed Muslim prostitutes. Samuel Cohen further indicated that the brothels of Üsküdar and Kadıköy could not be visited non-Muslim men since the women here were Muslim. But they were generally known as very clean.¹³²

¹²⁷ Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 71.

¹²⁸ Wyers, “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 71.

¹²⁹ Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 91.

¹³⁰ Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 76-77.

¹³¹ Mabelle C. Phillips, “Widowhood: A Study of Dependency Due to War,” in *Constantinople Today or The Pathfinder Survey of Constantinople: A Study in Oriental Social Life*, edited by Clarence Richard Johnson (Constantinople: The MacMillan Company, 1922), 313, in Wyers “*Wicked*” *Istanbul*, 221.

¹³² Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution*, 91.

1.2. Some Treatises about Prostitution based on Observations

In this section, three different treatises about prostitution based on observation, written in the early twentieth century will be examined to how aforementioned developments were perceived and interpreted by the contemporary people. In this way, prostitution in the late Ottoman Istanbul can be holistically evaluated.

Fahişeler Hayatı ve Redâ'et-i Ahlâkiye (The Life of Prostitutes and Immorality)¹³³ was written by Mustafa Galib, the director of the Police Academy in Istanbul, in 1922. In the book, he provides some factual information about prostitution and also on other issues he found 'immoral' such as lesbianism, sodomy, child and animal sexual abuse and made comments on these issues. According to him, theatre dramas, movies, and novels depict indecent scenes which deprave the morals of young Ottomans and make them inclined towards fornication.¹³⁴ Moreover, he believes that the spread of prostitution threatens the future of the Turkish nation since its expansion undermines the morality of young girls. As a matter of fact, these young girls generally prefer to learn details of the Western lifestyle and live in accordance with them instead of learning their own culture.¹³⁵ Another crucial reason for the proliferation of prostitution has been the First World War, as it caused great poverty and contagious diseases.¹³⁶

In the first parts of the book, he considers men the main guilty actors. He reports the interrogation of many girls who came to the police station. He finds out that these girls worked as maids in rich families' houses and lost their virginity to young sons of families or other workers in the house. Then they were kicked out of the house by the landlady or escaped from the house by their own will and ended up in the nearest police station. In police stations, they met experienced prostitutes who easily deceived these young girls to work with them. He states that these girls should be kept away from these

¹³³ I borrow the English translation of the title from Irvin Cemil Schick, Schick, "Nationalism Meets Sex Trade," 2.

¹³⁴ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı ve Redâet-i Ahlâkiyye* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1922), 7-8.

¹³⁵ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 6.

¹³⁶ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 7.

prostitutes.¹³⁷ According to him, the best way to prevent these situations would be displaying the rapists' names in the newspaper without revealing girls' names.¹³⁸ After this introduction, however, he begins to use rather offensive language against prostitutes in the continuing pages. For instance, in contrast to what he said in the beginning, he states that girls, who claim that they were raped, are inclined to cast aspersions on men in order to be able to marry them. For this reason, the police should investigate these events carefully and try to find out if she was really virgin before.¹³⁹

He contends that prostitutes constitute one of the most dangerous elements to society in every country. Even if they are aware that they have a venereal disease, they do not hesitate to have intercourse with young men. By this way, they intoxicate these young men's "pure" bodies and their "uncorrupted" minds. He further states that troubles they might cause are actually written on their faces.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, according to Mustafa Galib, although prostitutes are well-known for their 'stupidity', men should always be careful around them. They are highly pleased to see a man who ruins his life for them.¹⁴¹ More than this, they do not show any respect to the emotions of their clients, moral rules and even religion. Ridiculing these values forms their characteristic feature. They think only of their own interests.¹⁴²

Furthermore, Mustafa Galib states that many rowdies in the neighbourhoods subdue the prostitutes who are new in their profession by force and make money through them as a pimp. These pimps also push the prostitutes into crime such as murder and theft. He considers this situation as a result of lack of social order, and claims that these kind of pimps are more common in Istanbul compared to Europe.¹⁴³

Mustafa Galib displayed a gender-biased approach in the issue of prostitution. Although no one forced any young men to go to brothels, as they had their own free will,

¹³⁷ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 7-9.

¹³⁸ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 9.

¹³⁹ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 43-44.

¹⁴⁰ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 24.

¹⁴¹ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 28.

¹⁴² Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 28.

¹⁴³ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 31.

he believed that prostitutes, who most of the time ended up there under difficult conditions, were culpable in ruining these ‘innocent’ young men’s lives and morality. He saw them as a threat to the future of the Turkish nation.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, it is seen that when he gave examples about the “immoralities” in the Ottoman Empire in different cases, he immediately added several examples from Europe, in particular, France. By this way, he probably wanted to demonstrate, with a nationalist sentiment, that these were not unique to the Ottoman lands and they could be encountered in developed Western countries.

Another work is *Mütehhil ve Gayr-ı Mütehhillere: Sefalethaneler* (For the Married and the Unmarried: Dens of Iniquity)¹⁴⁵ by İbnülhakkı Mehmed Tahir. There is not much information about his life. It is known that he wrote some booklets on social and moral issues.¹⁴⁶ He indicates that he wrote this booklet to show how disastrous “dens of iniquity” for the society, he used this term of *sefalethaneler* (dens of iniquity) throughout the booklet instead of the brothel. He believes that these places started to be established in the Ottoman lands when the Europeans became influent there. The only things they brought were fake love, syphilis and gonorrhoea.¹⁴⁷ Before the western culture’s entrance into the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans were very powerful and constituted a moral society.¹⁴⁸

He recounts the story of his friend who was a good family man known with his conscientiousness and intelligence. Only one “mistake” turned his life upside down forever. One day this man was invited to a binge in Beyoğlu by his friends. While he did not want to accept their offer, he could not resist their insistence and accepted their offer under the condition that he would not stay at night.¹⁴⁹ But, once he entered the brothel, he drank a lot again with insistence of his friends and spent the night with a French prostitute. He immediately fell for her. In order to continue to meet her, he began to

¹⁴⁴ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı*, 5.

¹⁴⁵ I borrow the English translation of the title from Irvin Cemil Schick, Schick, “Nationalism Meets Sex Trade,” 10.

¹⁴⁶ See also: Mehmet Tahir, *Altun Perisi* (İstanbul: Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete Matbaası, H.1315/1899); *Hanımlarımıza Mahremane Bir Mektub* (İstanbul: Kader Matbaası, H.1328/1912); *Meşrutiyet Hanımları*, (İstanbul: Şems Matbaası, H. 1330/1914); *Meşrutiyet Erkekleri*, (İstanbul: Tevsi-i Tıbaat Matbaası, H.1330/1914); *Çarşaf Meselesi*, (İstanbul: Sancakçıyan Matbaası, 1331/1915).

¹⁴⁷ Mehmed Tahir, *Mütehhil ve Gayr-ı Mütehhillere: Sefalethaneler* (İstanbul: İtimad Kütüphanesi, R.1328/1912), 5.

¹⁴⁸ Mehmed Tahir, *Sefalethaneler*, 5-6.

¹⁴⁹ Mehmed Tahir, *Sefalethaneler*, 9-12.

neglect his family and job. After a while, he became fired from his job and caught syphilis. Therefore, he became unable to see the prostitute because of lack of money and also his wife because of syphilis.¹⁵⁰ In the end, he could not bear living under these circumstances and ended his life in misery. On the other hand, his wife and daughter suffered from hunger and his wife turned into a prostitute in order to earn their livelihood.¹⁵¹

Mehmed Tahir had strong nationalist sentiments, as it becomes apparent how he begins his booklet by describing the former glorious days of the Turks under the leadership of Mehmed II, then showing the “catastrophic effects” of the West, which weakened the empire. In this regard, he gives the impression that the prostitutes in Istanbul were composed of western women. He contends that these women damaged the Ottoman society in every possible way. They spread venereal diseases, ruined families, which were the core of the society, and the economy. When they collected enough money, they immediately left for their own countries.¹⁵²

The *Fuhş-i Atik* (Old Prostitution in the Former Times) was written by Ahmed Rasim, a well-known journalist, in 1922. In this book, he recounts his and his friend’s memories about prostitution in Istanbul before the closure of the brothels in Aksaray and made some comments on differences between old and new prostitution. In his early youth, he was a very religious boy and a total stranger to this lifestyle but with the influence of his friends, he gradually became familiar.

Ahmed Rasim scarcely mentions his own experience in bordellos; instead, he prefers to recount his friend’s stories about their first experience in a brothel or how they were raided in brothels by the neighbourhood people and the police. About himself, he speaks briefly of a prostitute named Agustina who worked in a beerhouse in Galata. She deceived him into believing that she was a chaste girl and made him dream about having a romantic relationship with her. But his close friend from Galata, who was more experienced, warned him that she was one of the most infamous prostitutes in Istanbul.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Mehmed Tahir, *Sefaletaneler*, 15-17.

¹⁵¹ Mehmed Tahir, *Sefaletaneler*, 18-19.

¹⁵² Mehmed Tahir, *Sefaletaneler*, 20.

¹⁵³ Ahmed Raism, *Dünkü İstanbul’da Hovardalık*, 97.

With this warning, Ahmed Rasim stopped seeing her but he kept thinking about her for a long time.¹⁵⁴

Fuhş-i Atik aims to demonstrate that prostitution in former times (he referred to the 1880s and 1890s) was more moral than the new one. According to him, "...the strike [on the brothels in Aksaray] scattered around all the dirt like throwing a stone into a slop."¹⁵⁵ He further contends that before the closure, this "ignominy" was practised in only two or three neighbourhoods, but now it spread across Istanbul. Many *koltuks* (a meeting place for prostitutes and their clients in secret) appeared in Galata, Beyoğlu, Şişli, Feriköy, Tatavla, Kadıköy, Samatya and the Princes' Islands.¹⁵⁶

Ahmed Rasim believed that raids were one of the most deterrent factors to prevent the spread of prostitution. Residents of neighbourhoods acted as a monitor¹⁵⁷ and in case of any suspicion they resorted to action, even urged the adjacent neighbourhoods to join the attack. Consequently, the "guilties" were disgraced and beaten severely.¹⁵⁸ By this way, prostitution could not be regarded as a normal society during that time. However, it later became a part of the culture and was practised recklessly with the new prostitution.¹⁵⁹ Probably the main reason behind giving considerable place to the stories of raids in the book was to demonstrate the effective strength of social control mechanisms to check prostitution during previous times. For instance, the author relates that one of his friends, a Şadi Bey, went to a brothel in a remote area in Selimiye with his friend. They were sure that no one saw them when they entered the house, as there were very few houses around and so they believed they could not be seen in the streets. However, they were seen by a man and he immediately let the neighbourhood know about their presence.¹⁶⁰

One might say that Ahmed Rasim approached the issue of prostitution in a rather hypocritical manner. Although he himself and his friends went to brothels, he was vehemently against its proliferation in neighbourhoods and its practice by people. He

¹⁵⁴ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 98.

¹⁵⁵ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 239.

¹⁵⁶ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 239.

¹⁵⁷ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 165.

¹⁵⁸ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 245.

¹⁵⁹ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 267.

¹⁶⁰ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 169-171.

stated that in his youth, people had respect for religious rules, family and neighbourhood, so prostitution was practised in secret and upright families did not witness that.¹⁶¹ Ideas of emancipation, which were imported from the West, undermined the Islamic ethics, and people began to lose their respect for family and neighbourhood.¹⁶² On the other hand, he was also aware of this hypocrisy in terms of manners of society and gave several examples for this. For instance, he states that if a *Kapama* (mistress), lived in her house like a ‘chaste’ married women and established good relationships with the residents of the neighbourhood, residents would think well of her and even praised her to the Imam. No one would think to raid her house.¹⁶³

To conclude, from the nineteenth century onwards, prostitution was gradually becoming widespread in Istanbul and the city became one of the important international centers for the white slave trade. Concordantly, the state’s intervention on this issue also increased through regulations. Especially, from the First World War onwards, it is seen that many women ended up as prostitutes, despite the government’s attempt to create job opportunities for them. This was because of severe poverty in the empire and thus prostitution underwent a transformation as indicated in the works of Ahmed Rasim and Mehmed Galib.

¹⁶¹ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul’da Hovardalık*, 247.

¹⁶² Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul’da Hovardalık*, 240.

¹⁶³ Ahmed Raism, *Düinkü İstanbul’da Hovardalık*, 281-282.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROSTITUTES IN THE NOVELS OF AHMED MİDHAT EFENDİ

Being one of the most productive writers of the late Ottoman period, Ahmed Midhat Efendi wrote thirty-five novels in different genres. In these novels, he dealt with the issue of women's place in society (in addition to others), but not in a modern sense. He approaches them compassionately, however, he did not see them as equal to men due to his patriarchal way of thinking. According to him, men and women are different in nature and have different roles in social life. Men are responsible for earning a livelihood for their families and show respect to their wives, whereas women have domestic responsibilities and should be loyal to their husbands.¹⁶⁴

Ahmed Midhat Efendi finds both western and eastern civilisations' perspectives on women extreme. He states that, in Europe, women have similar rights to men and they take part in almost all professions. This is not a positive development for him since these women find themselves in a competition with men and try to score points with them; consequently, they lose their chastity and modesty. For instance, he claims that, in Paris, women do not abstain from flirting with men in public places and display their bodies in different ways, such as wearing revealing clothes and riding a bicycle.¹⁶⁵ Although these women might look free and happy when looking from outside, they do not have an inner peace, which is especially true for married women. Since these women do not have feelings of bashfulness, innocence and modesty, that are indispensable for a true love,

¹⁶⁴ Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, (Istanbul: Dergah, 2017), 264-265.

¹⁶⁵ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Ana-Kız," in *Letaif-i Rivayat*, (Istanbul: Amire Matbaası, 1893), 24-26, quoted in Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 206-207.

they cannot be happy with their husbands for a long time. Therefore, they begin to look for passing fancies and flirts with other men, who show them only insincere interest.¹⁶⁶

On the other hand, Ahmed Midhat criticises contemporary treatments towards young girls in the Ottoman society. For instance, he contends that if a girl is oppressed too much by her family, she becomes incognizant about the outer world. Therefore, in this respect, families should be neither extremist in terms of exerting control over them nor leaving them in freedom and should exercise balance between them. Otherwise, this causes greater problems, since these girls might be easily deceived by malevolent men. He contends that this oppression also is not in harmony with Islam. If Ottoman women were treated according to the Islamic law, they would be in a far better position than western women.¹⁶⁷ He believed that as long as they comply with Islamic law men and women can even go to theatres or other entertainment venues together.¹⁶⁸ When these rights are not given to women, they become dazzled by the European ideas about women and try to imitate western women directly. Consequently, these women get confused between East and West, and live extravagantly, and thus they cause many problems both for themselves and their immediate circle, like Ceylan in *Jön Türk*.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, Ahmed Midhat Efendi always criticises the prearranged marriages and he contends that both young men and young women have rights to choose their partner according to Islam, but he was against flirting before marriage.¹⁷⁰

As Nüket Esen indicates, Ahmed Midhat Efendi's thoughts about women got changed in progress of time. In his early works, he is more open-minded and tolerant of women's rights and freedom. For instance, in the *Felsefe-i Zenan* (Philosophy of Women) (1870), a story from *Letaif-i Rivayat*, he illustrates three independent and well-educated women, who live on their family inheritance do not earn their livelihood on their own and

¹⁶⁶ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "İki Hudakar," in *Letaif-i Rivayat*, (Istanbul: Amire Matbaası, 1893), 29-30, in Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 208-209.

¹⁶⁷ Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 229-234.

¹⁶⁸ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Peder Olmak Sanatı*, (Istanbul: 1899), 139, in Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 209.

¹⁶⁹ Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 232-233.

¹⁷⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi" in *Çengi, Kafkas, Süleyman Musli*, ed. Erol Ülgen and Fatih Andı (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2000), 71.

are not willing to marry in order not to lose their independence. They spend their whole days reading books. When one of these women, Zekiye, falls in love and marries she is cheated on by her husband and this marriage ruins her life.¹⁷¹ In contrast to this story, in the *Hayal ve Hakikat* (Imagining and Reality) (1892), co-authored by Fatma Aliye Hanım, he finds this kind of women hysterical.¹⁷² Besides, in *Taaffüf* (Chasteness) (1895), he gives his opinion about a woman and expresses that “one cannot blame this woman, since no matter how much she tries and study, she cannot reach wisdom like men.”¹⁷³ Furthermore, in *Karı Koca Masalı* (The Story of Wife and Husband) (1875), he indicates that in a romantic relationship, men are always named as a lover while women are named as beloved. According to him, this classification is wrong because women do not have only a passive role in a relationship, she can also fall in love with a man and become his lover. However, in 1895, in one of his letters to Fatma Aliye, he states that a woman should not write love poems, since, in these poems, they exhibit their love for a man and it is not appropriate conduct for a woman. In addition, he confesses that when he went to Stockholm to the International Congress of Orientalists in 1889 as an Ottoman delegate and was given some literary works, including Nigar Hanım’s poem booklet to introduce there, he tore apart Nigar Hanım’s booklet since he did not find love poems written by a woman suitable to Ottoman morality.¹⁷⁴ Also, Ahmed Midhat Efendi often indicates that he does not regard Fatma Aliye as a woman in his letters to her because he thinks that her merit is exceptional, and one cannot see this among ordinary women.¹⁷⁵ In this respect, Nükhet Esen claims that, in his early years of career writing, he probably tried to demonstrate himself as an open-minded and intellectual young Ottoman man, who respects women and their rights. Also, he might have thought that these new ideas could be effective to draw readers’ attention.¹⁷⁶ This inference of Nükhet Esen seems possible

¹⁷¹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, “Felsefe-i Zenan,” in *Letaif-i Rivayat*, (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 2017), 83-85.

¹⁷² Nükhet Esen, *Hikâye Anlatan Adam: Ahmet Mithat*, (Istanbul: İletişim, 2014), 95.

¹⁷³ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, “Taaffüf” in *Cinli Han, Taaffüf, Gönüllü*, ed. Ali Şükrü Çoruk and Erol Ülgen (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2000), 72, quoted in Nükhet Esen, *Hikaye Anlatan Adam*, 96.

¹⁷⁴ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Fazıl ve Feylesof Kızım: Fatma Aliye’ye Mektuplar*, ed. Samime İnceoğlu and Zeynep Süslü Berktaş (Istanbul: Klasik, 2011), 68, quoted in Esen, *Hikâye Anlatan Adam*, 100.

¹⁷⁵ Esen, *Hikâye Anlatan Adam*, 96.

¹⁷⁶ Esen, *Hikâye Anlatan Adam*, 94.

but it is also possible that he might have not pretended in early years of his career and his ideas might have been changed through his forty-year career.

In this chapter, we will evaluate the life of prostitutes in late Ottoman Istanbul through Ahmed Midhat's novels while, also, examining his own and society's attitudes toward them. We include here only the novels that their setting is Istanbul and have a prostitute character in them. These are *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* (Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi) (1875), *Çengi* (The Dancer) (1877), *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek* (An Angel on Earth) (1879), *Karnaval* (Carnival) (1881), and *Henüz Onyedİ Yaşında* (Only Seventeen Years Old) (1881). The last one will be given special emphasis since it has deeper information on prostitutes and brothels.

2.1. The Characteristics of Prostitutes

Considering many of the prostitutes as victims of society, Ahmed Midhat Efendi approaches prostitutes mercifully and empathically in general. In his novels, there are usually two kinds of prostitutes, some of them are very moral at heart but somehow they ended up in a brothel. The other ones are happy with their situation since they enjoy and make money through this profession at the same time. Those prostitutes possessing morality are rewarded at the end of the novels and saved from a brothel by an Ottoman gentleman.

The main characteristic of the prostitutes, who are comfortable with their profession, is cunningness. These women do not refrain from any way, which enables them to take advantage of men. Ahmed Midhat Efendi usually uses these prostitutes as secondary characters with some exceptions such as Arife in *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek* and Sünbül in *Çengi*. The first example of this kind of prostitutes is Polini, a former French theatre actress, in *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*. Being an expert in the art of seduction, she bewitches Felatun Bey with her feminine wiles and coquetry, which is represented to be unique to French women. Also, for keeping his love for her alive, she sometimes pretends like resenting him on a simple pretext and will not forgive him unless he buys valuable presents.¹⁷⁷ Once he runs out of money, Polini immediately leaves him. Only

after that, Felatun understands that she is not sincere in her feelings and only takes advantage of him. Thus, he becomes regretful and tries to establish a new ‘honourable’ life with the help of one of his old friends. He will be appointed as a governor to an island in the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁷⁸

In *Henüz Onyedİ Yaşında*, Agavni, an Armenian prostitute, is one of the most experienced and deceitful prostitutes in the brothel. In order to make money, she handles two men at a night in secret. While her first client is sleeping, she manages to go to another client in secret. She says that it is risky, but she has enough experience and contends that she can even handle three of them at one night.¹⁷⁹ On another night, Agavni, Hulusi, Ahmed Efendi and Kalyopi, a very young Greek prostitute and female protagonist of the novel, enjoy together with drinks and the songs of Agavni but after a while she goes out and does not come to the room. Then, they ask about her to the owner of the brothel and find out that she went out for another troublesome client whom the owner could not stop. This situation makes Hulusi very angry, but he does not want to make a scene for a prostitute.¹⁸⁰

Agavni is proud of her experience in the profession and likes sharing her experience with others. Since she finds Kalyopi gullible, she sometimes gives advices to her about their profession’s specifics. She states that all men who come to the bordellos are the same, so she should not have sympathy for them. Her main aim should always be taking more money and presents, and the more a client gives the more he loves her. In this way, Kalyopi would manage to have regular clients and her value increase in the eyes of Maryanko, the owner of the brothel. Then, like Agavni, she can live in this house more freely.¹⁸¹

Not all these prostitutes live in brothels; some of them are kept as a mistress by their lover. One of the ways for finding a mistress is to walk around recreation areas, such as Kağıthane, Göksu, and contact the guardian, who is called *palikarya* which means ‘Greek young man’. These *palikaryas* are, in fact, charged to avoid young gallants but if a gallant

¹⁷⁷ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, ed.Ahmet Aydemir (İstanbul: Dergah, 2018), 135-136.

¹⁷⁸ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, 175.

¹⁷⁹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, ed.Nuri Sağlam (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2017), 46.

¹⁸⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 78.

¹⁸¹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 100-101.

is rich, they organise a meeting for him in return for a good deal of money.¹⁸² In *Karnaval*, Zekayi becomes acquainted with Benli Helena, a Greek prostitute in this way. She has also another lover, Nizami, who is married with two children. She meets Nizami at nights and Zekayi in the mornings, since he is engaged and not allowed go out at nights¹⁸³ When Zekayi becomes able to go out at nights thanks to the carnival season, he and Helena begin to spend all their days together. She always prefers Zekayi to Nizami because of his wealth but this situation makes Nizami furious since he cannot meet Helena. Therefore, he even attempts to set Helena's house on fire.¹⁸⁴

Helena beguiles men with her beauty and coquettish manners. Like Nizami, Zekayi also pushes his limits to keep seeing her. Zekayi even dares to steal money from his father's safe to continue his extravagant European life with Helena.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, they travel to Paris, even though he is married to Şehnaz, and here they spend money like water. Within months, Zekayi runs out of money, so Helena finds another lover, who is a rich American. Then, he comes back to Istanbul in despair, but he is not in comfort here either, since his debtors in Paris demand their money through the French Consulate. Therefore, he even dares to steal his wife's diamonds, but he is arrested by the police immediately. This final event ends his marriage.¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, Nizami embezzles money from his workplace and he has to pay back this money.¹⁸⁷

In *Çengi* and *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, Ahmed Midhat Efendi illustrates these deceitful and ambitious prostitutes by using deeper characters. These women are apparently intelligent and they make very elaborate plans to reach their target. For instance, in *Çengi*, Sünbül is a dancer who participates in binges to entertain men with her dances. Coming across Daniş Çelebi, an Istanbulite Don Quijote who sees hallucinations, at one of these binges, Sünbül pretends to be a fairy who is only seen by him.¹⁸⁸ Though she is just thirteen years

¹⁸² Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Karnaval*, ed. Kazım Yetiş (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2000), 107.

¹⁸³ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 109.

¹⁸⁴ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 177.

¹⁸⁵ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 275.

¹⁸⁶ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 294-295.

¹⁸⁷ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 280.

¹⁸⁸ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 22-23.

old, Sünbül is devious enough to deceive and bewitch Daniş Çelebi and begins to live with him.¹⁸⁹ After a year, she gives birth to a son, named Cemal.¹⁹⁰

When Sünbül secures her position in the house, especially after the death of Daniş Çelebi's mother, she organizes binges and parties and invites her old friends, who are also dancers like her, and also some men in the disguise of women behind her husband's back.¹⁹¹ These parties disturb Daniş Çelebi's nursemaid who still lives with them, so she decides to inform him about these parties and her theft of Daniş Çelebi's deceased mother's precious jewellery.¹⁹² Thereby, Daniş Çelebi and the maid organize a plan to kill Sünbül, but she hears about the plan and prepares a counter-plan. As a result, Daniş Çelebi kills the maid instead of Sünbül by mistake, and then she takes all jewellery and runs away from the house by leaving her baby.¹⁹³

After many years, Sünbül and her son Cemal meet again, but this time in her house; now she is the madam of the house and many dancers work for her, in Çamlıca. Cemal comes here for binges and to have affairs with dancers without knowing that Sünbül is his mother. One day, Sünbül deceives Cemal that she has a daughter Melek who is raised in seclusion by her father and asks him to bring her in order to take revenge on Melek's father. She leaves her house by Sünbül's bait through the help of Cemal.¹⁹⁴ Both Cemal and Melek fall in love and Cemal keeps going Sünbül's house to only see Melek. But Sünbül requests many precious pieces of jewellery from Cemal in return to have an affair with Melek. He loses all his wealth on this extravagant lifestyle.¹⁹⁵ After that, Sünbül never lets him see Melek and says that if he wants to have a pleasant time with a girl like Melek, he should make great sacrifices, otherwise there is always another man who is willing to pay more.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 26-27.

¹⁹⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 29.

¹⁹¹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 30.

¹⁹² Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 33-36.

¹⁹³ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 37-40.

¹⁹⁴ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 79.

¹⁹⁵ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 115.

¹⁹⁶ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, "Çengi," 123.

Moreover, Sünbül states that in these kind of houses, the most important thing is wealth; as long as he has money, he will be treated well. Once his money dries out, he has nothing to do there anymore.¹⁹⁷ This situation abases him deeply and he makes a scene in the house, therefore he is kicked out of the house and then arrested by the police. Then, he gets into great difficulties which are all inflicted upon him by Sünbül, but he succeeds to overcome all of the problems with patience. Thanks to this new life, previously unfamiliar to him, Cemal becomes wiser and feels sorry for wasting of his all money. Months after, Sünbül orders one of her men to bring Cemal back. Then, she tells the whole story to him and states that she does all of this only for his son because she does not want him to ruin his life with this extravagant lifestyle. She gives back all the jewellery to him and marries off Melek to her son Cemal.¹⁹⁸

When she sets the things right for Cemal and Melek, she leaves them because she thinks that her existence can damage their new ‘honourable’ life; also, she is not willing to give up her lifestyle and profession.¹⁹⁹ After a couple of years, her beauty is starting to fade, and she does not have many clients as before, so now she tries to keep near her old friends with her wealth. When she runs out of money, she becomes lonely and feels humiliated. Therefore, she chooses death rather than keep living in a miserable way.²⁰⁰

In *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, Arife is a very rich widow woman who leads a ‘perverted’ life and does not respect social norms. She falls in love with Şefik, the protagonist of the novel who, however, is in love with Raziye. Şerif encounters Arife when he comes to her house to treat her as a physician. The reason behind Arife’s controversial situation and being known as a hussy woman has its origins in her ex-lover Abdülkerim Bey’s acts. In the early months of her marriage, she receives insistent love letters from Abdülkerim but she never replies to him for months, but then she begins to write him to reject his love and proposals. However, in time he manages to establish intimacy with her. In the beginning, they are very happy but, as time passes his desires for her starts to fade and he begins to humiliate her. Abdülkerim talks about his love affair with Arife everywhere, so she is labelled as an ‘immoral’ woman. Furthermore, though he wanted the marriage at

¹⁹⁷ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, “Çengi,” 129.

¹⁹⁸ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, “Çengi,” 148-149.

¹⁹⁹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, “Çengi,” 150-152.

²⁰⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, “Çengi,” 152.

the beginning, he now rejects Arife's marriage proposals on the pretext of her 'immorality'. He expresses that if she has a love affair with him while she is married, she might also cheat on him with any other man, so he cannot trust her with his whole heart.²⁰¹

Arife criticises all men; in one of her tirades directed to Şefik, she contends that when a man establishes intimacy with a woman, he supposes that she is susceptible and treats all men as if they were her lovers. She further states that if a woman does not show her feelings and love to her lover, he reproaches her on the pretext that she does not love him sincerely. In the opposite case, he regards her as an immoral woman, and eventually, men want women to behave only according to their expectations, "acting like a monkey".²⁰² However, she thinks that Şefik is not this kind of man, he is kind and tactful. Therefore, since his rejection of her love makes Arife very disappointed, she sets her mind on attaining his love. Furthermore, she thinks that Raziye is not a suitable woman for him since she is married. She criticises women like Raziye who, although being married, have an affair with another man and pretend as if they were the most virtuous woman. Arife finds this situation very hypocritical, as they enjoy their liaisons and her being known as a moral woman at the same time. She states that she never hides her real character and does not deceive people. Therefore, she is much more virtuous than them in this respect.²⁰³

To take revenge on Şefik and Raziye, Arife makes an unthinkable plan. First of all, she provokes a raid on Şefik's house while he is having a conversation with Raziye and her maid Nimetullah there, by organizing his men who arouse the neighbourhood. Then, Şefik is arrested and exiled to Vidin. On the other hand, Raziye is fired from her home without money by her husband and starts to live under bad conditions. Moreover, Arife finds a girl, Cevriye, Şefik's best friend İsmail's love, who physically resembles Raziye and abuses her with love letters from rich men and expensive presents. After that, Arife procures her to rich men by inducing her to use the nickname Raziye in order to make them believe that she is the ex-wife of rich İskender Bey and spreads negative rumours

²⁰¹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, ed. Nuri Sağlam (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2000), 113-115.

²⁰² Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 85.

²⁰³ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 182-183.

about her. In this way, Arife both ruin the prestige of Raziye and also makes a lot of money through the fake Raziye.²⁰⁴

On the other hand, Cevriye is a virtuous woman inside, although she did ‘bad’ things under the influence of Arife. Once she finds out the truth she is filled by bitter regret. When Şefik and İsmail hear this story from Cevriye they, and especially İsmail, pity her and regard those men, who first seduced these women, as the main guilty parties²⁰⁵ Furthermore, İsmail has strong scruples to leave Cevriye alone in misery because he thinks that she already paid the penalty of her faults and if she repents, she would become a virtuous woman. Therefore, he wants to “give this chance” to her and marry her.²⁰⁶ On the contrary to İsmail’s wish, Cevriye does not accept his proposal because she thinks that it would be a disaster for him. Everyone would blame him for marrying a prostitute and would be excluded from the community.²⁰⁷

2.1.1. The Story of Kalyopi, A Very Young Prostitute, in *Henüz Onyedİ Yaşında*

The story begins in a brothel in Beyoğlu. Ahmed Efendi and his friend Hulusi go to a brothel to stay at night since they could not find any carriage to Muslim Istanbul because of rain and late hour, which makes finding a hotel all but impossible. When they enter inside, Maryanko, the owner of the brothel says that they can take whomever they want among her girls. However, Ahmed Efendi thinks that they should ask only two girls because if they invite more girls, the unchosen ones would become abashed and unhappy. Hulusi finds this idea strange because, according to him, in this place, bashfulness does

²⁰⁴ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 297-299.

²⁰⁵ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 308-309.

²⁰⁶ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 315- 316.

²⁰⁷ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 316-317.

not exist. Moreover, they pay for them, so they have the right to choose the most charming girls.²⁰⁸

In the beginning, Ahmed Efendi indicates that he has no intention to sleep with one of these prostitutes, but he is forced to choose one among the girls. Then, he asks Kalyopi, the youngest prostitute in the brothel who is assigned for his service, to leave him alone in the room after having a little conversation. Ahmed Efendi becomes surprised when he learns her age, she is just seventeen years old. She states that there are much younger girls, twelve or thirteen years old, in some other brothels, so there is nothing to be surprised about. Most of these girls are sold to brothels by their families.²⁰⁹ Only this information is enough to make Ahmed Efendi learn much about the lives of prostitutes and brothels, so he wants to stay there to learn some details from Kalyopi.²¹⁰

In the morning, when they meet again in Ahmed Efendi's room Kalyopi insists on staying with him at night. He finds her insistence very strange and asks the reason behind that. As a reply, Kalyopi states that it is the best way to charm a man and make him her regular client. She further states that normally they do not talk about their secrets with their clients, but she understands that Ahmed Efendi is a different man; though he stays in a brothel, he prefers to sleep alone. Men like Ahmed Efendi cannot have an affair with a prostitute since they find prostitutes disgusting. She further states that she admits that they are right because no one can compare prostitutes to 'honourable' wives because they love their husbands sincerely.²¹¹

Kalyopi states that prostitutes pretend that they cherish and love their clients, but they never show their true feelings in front of them.²¹² In fact, they do not have any compassion or mercy for their clients, who ruin their wealth and life for a prostitute; they think that these men already know the consequences of the passion for a prostitute and indeed one can see the examples everywhere, so it is nothing new for them.²¹³ But there are also some

²⁰⁸ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 35.

²⁰⁹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 50-51.

²¹⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 54-55.

²¹¹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 59.

²¹² Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 59.

²¹³ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 87.

exceptions. Some of her friends from the bordello have true feelings towards their lovers. For instance, Agavni loves a poor Armenian young man, Artin. Though Artin wants to marry her, Agavni does not accept the proposal because of her pride. She says that she is used to binging with wealthy men, and she cannot bear poverty anymore.²¹⁴ Kalyopi's other friend, Lisimaki, is in love with Cüneyt Bey, who works as a chief clerk. She wants to marry him so much but he does not accept this since he does not want a wife but a whore. When he gets bored of her, he immediately finds another, since he cannot stand to spend his life with one woman.²¹⁵

Contrary to what she said about prostitutes, she always tells the truth about life in a brothel. For instance, when Ahmed Efendi wants to order a meal through the servant of the brothel, she warns that he never brings a meal which is worth what was paid. Also, she says that if she finds another client while Ahmed Efendi is sleeping, she does not hesitate to go. Ahmed Efendi is impressed by Kalyopi's candour and develops compassion for her.²¹⁶ Therefore, he asks from her that she feels free herself for one day and that she does and asks whatever she wants. This request astonishes Kalyopi so much that this makes her think that Ahmed Efendi is one of the best men in the world.²¹⁷

After this visit, Ahmed Efendi wants to keep seeing Kalyopi. The main reason behind this drive is to learn about the life story of Kalyopi; he wonders how this sincere, naïve girl ends up in a brothel and thinks that there should be valid reasons. After several visits, one-night Kalyopi accepts to tell her story to Ahmed Efendi.²¹⁸

Kalyopi was a daughter of a wine house owner in Ayastefanos and she helped her father there. She met a rich Muslim young man, Yümni Bey, who fell in love for Kalyopi. At that time, she was just fifteen years old, and the expensive presents of Yümni Bey allured her. They met secretly and did not announce their relationship to the public because of the feared of their reactions because of their religious differences. Therefore, Kalyopi escaped with him and they got married in Yümni Bey's house.²¹⁹ The Greek community

²¹⁴ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 89.

²¹⁵ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 89.

²¹⁶ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 59-61.

²¹⁷ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 65.

²¹⁸ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 172-175.

of Ayastefanos showed overreaction to this marriage, in spite of her father's approval, and threatened her with death. Also, they promised that if she divorced her Muslim husband, they would give her a dowry and marry off to a good Christian man. Consequently, Kalyopi couldn't resist too much and accepted their offer. But after the divorce, her community did not keep the promise and she had to return to her poor life.²²⁰

Worse still, the Greek community did not let them continue to live in Ayastefanos because they were still angry, although she did what they wanted. Therefore, they moved to Kasımpaşa. Here, Kalyopi and her sister started to work as laundresses but the money they earned was not sufficient to feed their family. That is why, when a woman, Amalya, who worked as a tailor in Beyoğlu, made a job offer to Kalyopi to move to her place. To help her family, Kalyopi immediately accepted the job and went to Beyoğlu with her. But, after a while, she realised that Amalya had a second job, namely at nights she worked as a prostitute because of her very low income from tailoring. She constantly pushed Kalyopi to become a prostitute by saying that there is no other way to help her family.²²¹

Her first time, Kalyopi fainted and bled from her mouth and nose because of embarrassment and anxiety. Fortunately, her first client was a nice Turkish man and he empathised with her anxiety. He even tried to solace her and then gave more than the price they had decided earlier with Amalya.²²² With this money, she bought some fancy clothes, shoes and hats, which is indispensable for this profession. However, this was not sufficient for them, so she became indebted to different places. Unluckily, she could not find clients as she had thought before and she could not pay her debt. On the contrary, her debt increased day by day.²²³ Concurrently, her sister was stabbed by her lover, so Kalyopi again got into debt for her treatment's expense, but her sister died after a while. When she realised that she cannot pay her debt, she sold herself to Maryanko's brothel to

²¹⁹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 172-175.

²²⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 177-179.

²²¹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, 197-204.

²²² Ahmed Midhat Efendi, 208-209.

²²³ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, 211.

pay her debt.²²⁴ In the beginning, only her mother knew about the brothel before her father also noticed the situation but he treated her like he was unaware of her new profession.²²⁵

After hearing Kalyopi's whole life story, Ahmed Efendi decides to pay off all her debts and even give her a monthly stipend to her in order to save her from the brothel and establish a new 'honourable' life. In return, Ahmed Efendi only expects her to quit her profession forever and live in an 'honourable' way. This offer astonishes Kalyopi and she swears that if he saves her, she will never practice her old profession and will become a true penitent.²²⁶

Kalyopi's assurance gratifies Ahmed Efendi, and he immediately goes to Hulusi Bey to ask his opinion. Hulusi warns that he should take this issue very seriously, because, if he cannot support her after several months, she will have to return to her old profession. In reply, Ahmed Efendi states that no one can know what awaits us in our future, and includes that he believes in fate, so he should do all he can do today. When Hulusi sees his determination, he says that he stands behind him in this decision.²²⁷ On the other hand, Agavni and Maryanko do not display a positive attitude about Kalyopi's exit from the brothel. They think that Ahmed Efendi will be bored of Kalyopi after a couple of months and find another girl. Therefore, Kalyopi will have to go back to the bordello in order to earn her livelihood. Only if Ahmed Efendi gives her a great amount of money and pieces of precious jewellery, they can be sure that Kalyopi will never return to her old profession.²²⁸

In contrast to the predictions of Agavni and Maryanko, Ahmed Efendi brings Kalyopi to her family's house. When Ahmed and Hulusi see that her father is not old and looks like a strong man, they blame him for leaning on her daughter. They seriously warn him that he should never let her work as a prostitute, otherwise they take her along with them.²²⁹ Soon afterwards, Hulusi and Ahmed Efendi send a young man to Kalyopi's house; he

²²⁴ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, 217-218.

²²⁵ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, 218.

²²⁶ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, 219-220.

²²⁷ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 222-223.

²²⁸ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 229-230.

²²⁹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 240-241.

comes many times and offers money to have an affair with her but Kalyopi rejects him every time. Then, Ahmed Efendi becomes entirely certain that she is very sincere in her penitence. As a consequence, he decides to marry her off with a young Greek man.²³⁰

2.2. The Attitudes of Men towards Prostitutes

In these novels, the males protagonists are constructed as representatives of Ahmed Midhat Efendi. They come from low-middle class society but, with their diligence and merit, now, they manage to earn enough money and live in prosperity. Also, they are against the complete imitation of the West; however, they adapt some effective components of the West into their own life without losing their traditional values. For instance, Şefik is one of the best examples of this typology. He receives medical education in Paris but he never visits any of the ill repute houses there. When he comes back to Istanbul, he is one of the most respected young men in the city.²³¹

These men approach prostitutes and also other women emphatically and they tend to put the blame about women's misfortune on men. For example, when Şefik learns about Arife and Abdülkerim through the letters of her, he finds Abdülkerim's treatment towards her disgusting and feels ashamed for him and all other men. He thinks that these kind men flatter women until they reach their aim; afterwards they label these women as 'whore', 'hussy' or 'bitch'. According to them, the only guilty party is always a woman in these kinds of situations.²³² However, when his friend İsmail wants to marry Cevriye, he states that this marriage is not acceptable because the lives of people are designed by social norms, which take a dim view of prostitutes. For this reason, one cannot easily act against these norms because their existence is based on society.²³³

In the same manner, in *Karnaval*, Resmi criticises and warns Zekayi harshly for coming to the carnival with a prostitute and they behave 'shamelessly' in public since he is

²³⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 268-271.

²³¹ Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 53.

²³² Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 116.

²³³ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 316-317.

engaged with Şehnaz Hanım. But in contradiction to his criticisms, Resmi also comes to the party with a married woman. Resmi has an affair with that woman, Mrs Hamparson. But no one, except Mrs Hamparson's close friend Küpeliyan, knows about their affair. They love each other with genuine affection and even dare to join a carnival together in disguise.²³⁴

To examine the attitudes of male protagonists towards prostitutes clearly, Ahmed Efendi from *Henüz Onyedİ Yaşında* is the best example. He tries to make deep observations about their lives and finds a permanent solution to their problems. As soon as he enters the brothel he realises that Ahmed Midhat Efendi's short story *Mihnetkeşan*²³⁵ "describes brothels as they are in real life". Although Ahmed Efendi is not a total stranger to these kinds of places, he quit going to brothels and gave up this lifestyle eight or ten years beforehand with the influence of *Mihnetkeşan*.²³⁶ With the example *Mihnetkeşan*, Ahmed Midhat Efendi tried to demonstrate that his novels are based on reality, and one can easily find similar people to his character in society. However, in this example, his way of interpretation of this is contradicting. If Ahmed Efendi is not a total stranger to brothels, he should realise this while he was reading the story, not when entering in. In this respect, he criticises naturalists since they only depict ugly and miserable parts of life, but he, on the contrary, claims to depict both ugly and praiseworthy parts of life.²³⁷

What Kalyopi said about bordellos makes Ahmed Efendi very surprised. Whereas thousands of prostitutes and their clients spend their time in such locations, these places are almost totally unknown to society. He has difficulty in understanding why these places exist, though they have no benefit for society. He wants to find out whether men come to these places because they exist or bordellos are established due to their demand. After a while, he decides that their existence creates the *raison d'être* of their presence, and even Ahmed Efendi himself cannot go there if it does not exist. Therefore, he considers that he should first ascertain how girls end up in a brothel, and then solve the whole problem

²³⁴ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 156.

²³⁵ *Mihnetkeşan*(1870) is a short story from *Letaif-i Rivayat*. The protagonist, Dakik Bey, is a debauchee who spends almost his all nights in a brothel. One day, he encounters an innocent girl who is sold to the brothel. He pities her and wants to save her from there. Therefore, Dakik Bey decides to marry her.

²³⁶ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 30-31.

²³⁷ Berna Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış 1*, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2018), 63.

about this way of life in his mind.²³⁸ Then, Ahmed Efendi reaches the conclusion that brothels were invented by the Europeans. His friend Hulusi also agrees on that, the first example of such brothels in the Ottoman Empire are seen in Enderunlu Fazıl's *Zenanne*(1793). He claims that while Europeans introduced this concept to Istanbul, one still cannot find any brothel in the Anatolian parts of the empire. In his view, the tradition of dowry among the Ottoman Christians also comes from Europe, which is one of the main reasons behind the Christian girls ending up in brothels.²³⁹

To find a permanent solution, Ahmed Efendi keeps going to the brothel but he feels uncomfortable when he enters and exists from there. Once Ahmed Efendi and his friend Hulusi leave the bordello in the early morning, they feel very ashamed since shopkeepers smile at them hintingly. Especially, Ahmed Efendi feels embarrassed when he sees a woodcutter, who is occupied with his work and even does not notice them. Ahmed Efendi compares the woodcutter to themselves and finds themselves debauched and cursed. Then, Hulusi Bey consoles both himself and Ahmed Efendi on the pretext that it is also an experience for themselves and they can say that "they saw even this part of the world".²⁴⁰

Even outside of the brothel, Ahmed Efendi keeps philosophising about prostitutes and bordellos. According to him, one can appreciate the value of their life better when they examine the conditions of brothels very well. Many people assume that a poor man, who works under bad conditions to earn his family's livelihood, is miserable but he earns this livelihood with his elbow grease and his family can live with pride. On the other hand, prostitutes have nice dresses and food in the brothel but they have to lose their honour in order to have them. They live 'disgracefully' when they are compared to a poor man. However, Ahmed Efendi thinks that it is not the case in real life, people do not prefer to be preoccupied with these issues.²⁴¹

Towards the end of the story, Ahmed Efendi finds a solution in his mind to the problem of prostitution, which is seen as extreme by his friend Hulusi. According to him, in fact,

²³⁸ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 91.

²³⁹ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 154-156.

²⁴⁰ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 95-96.

²⁴¹ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 98.

the state does not want these places, but they do not close down them because of the demands of males. Therefore, they see bordellos as indispensable for these men. However, if sixty per cent of the society is against them, the opinion of the rest would lose its importance. Then, the state could close all bordellos, and even take a step further and collect tax from unmarried men. With these taxes, poor girls can be married off.²⁴² Hulusi is not convinced by this solution and insists that it is not realistic. Ahmed Efendi replies that even though the disappearance of brothels is impossible, at least they should do their activities in secret and should not disturb the ‘honourable’ families.²⁴³

Influenced by Ahmed Efendi and Kalyopi’s story, another good-willing man, a Ziyet Bey, also helps a prostitute to pay her debt and save her from a brothel. But when she leaves the brothel, she demands a house and a large amount of money from Ziyet Bey. Her extravagant demands make him very angry and he eventually leaves her. His leaving even makes her happy because now she can accept her clients in her own house and make more money. Thereupon, Hulusi Bey states that this means that not every prostitute deserves to be saved from a brothel.²⁴⁴

2.3. Brothel: Space for a Living

The brothel, in *Henüz Onyedî Yaşında*, is one of the most elite brothels in Istanbul. We see that the owner, Maryanko, is proud of her brothel’s cleanliness.²⁴⁵ Also, girls have regular health control by doctors and they go to a bathhouse as often as possible in order to prevent diseases as doctors advise.²⁴⁶ That is why it is very expensive to spend a night here. For example, when Ahmed Efendi calculates their expenses for two nights, he

²⁴² Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 157.

²⁴³ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 158.

²⁴⁴ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 264.

²⁴⁵ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 99.

²⁴⁶ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 50.

realises that this money is enough to feed five or six poor families, and this makes him both surprised and upset.²⁴⁷

Although it is an elite bordello, both the owner and the prostitutes never hesitate to make a scene with their clients and among themselves when it comes to money. For instance, as stated above, one of the nights Agavni does not spend the night with Hulusi and is taken by one of her clients forcefully. Maryanko, however, claims a one-night charge from Hulusi. This makes both Hulusi and Ahmed Efendi very angry, but nevertheless they pay it in order not to cause any scandal.²⁴⁸ It is a common problem in brothels since almost all men, including Ahmed Efendi and Hulusi, desire that when they go to the brothel, their prostitute should leave their other clients and immediately come to them. Therefore, many of them, lose their wealth and ruin their life because of this strong passion.²⁴⁹ On the other hand, when Agavni hears that Maryanko receives money in her name from Hulusi, she claims her tokens. Maryanko receives cash money from clients and gives girls shares in token after every client's visit.

At the end of the week they take their cash money in return for tokens, but Maryanko does not accept to give tokens since she spends her night with some other man. They have a quarrel and insult each other harshly, but at the end, Maryanko gives her share.²⁵⁰

Thanks to Ahmed Efendi's curiosity about the functioning of brothels, we are able to learn some details. The owner of the bordello, Maryanko, takes half of their nightly earnings. She provides them meals and laundry service for bed linens, but they have to pay for laundry service for their personal belongings like dresses and towels. Also, if they want to eat fruit or dessert, these are not provided by Maryanko. Instead, they should ask for these from their clients or buy them with their own money.²⁵¹

Almost all girls in the brothel of Maryanko owe money to her, so they cannot leave this place easily. To increase debt and make them dependent on herself, she sells them

²⁴⁷ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 84-85.

²⁴⁸ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 94.

²⁴⁹ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 97.

²⁵⁰ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 99-100.

²⁵¹ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 128.

handkerchiefs and socks forcefully. When they say that they do not need them, she picks a quarrel, then treats them badly. For instance, Kalyopi borrows money from Maryanko for her sister's medical treatment, or some other girls were sold by their family and they have to pay the price for liberation. Kalyopi states that if they do not have debt, none of them would stand to live in there. Instead they would settle in a house and receive their clients there; in this way, they could choose their clients by their own will. It would be much more comfortable than a bordello and they could receive more elite clients.²⁵² According to Kalyopi, the most humiliating thing about their profession is being sent back by a client when a client does not find them beautiful enough. She finds this as the worst thing that could happen to a young girl.²⁵³

Furthermore, she also confesses some other disgusting things about brothels. For instance, the towels and pyjamas in here are never cleaned properly but they deceive their clients claiming that they are clean. She further states that they wonder how these men, who have been raised in clean houses, can come to the brothel and do not find this milieu disgusting. She claims that the reason behind this confession is to make Ahmed Efendi feel disgust and prevent him from going to brothels since she thinks that he is not this kind of a man.²⁵⁴

2.4. Ahmed Midhat's Approach to Prostitutes

Ahmed Midhat Efendi states that none of the prostitutes were not born to pursue this way. According to him, in their early life they were all chaste but once they are deceived by a man, they usually end up as a prostitute. After a while, they get used to this life and practice their profession without showing shame like any other artisan. Moreover, he indicates that Islam, as written in the Qur'an, prohibits the act of fornication for both women and men; there is no differentiation between genders in this regard.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 132-135.

²⁵³ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 212.

²⁵⁴ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 81-83.

Ahmed Midhat Efendi claims that Ahmed Efendi's mercy and good treatments to Kalyopi is totally rightful and praiseworthy because girls in brothels are treated very badly and often their bodies become worn out by their merciless clients, who want to get pleasure in return for their money. Though their bodies are damaged, they have to work the next day; consequently, their bodies cannot tolerate this lifestyle too long, and their beauty starts to fade in very early ages.²⁵⁶ Ahmed Midhat Efendi further expresses that prostitution is a very humiliating profession for women since they always have to sell themselves to their clients. Some cruel ones among the clients even fire them with insults that are intolerable by a "normal" woman. Therefore, according to him, they are not 'real' women anymore but only wretches.²⁵⁷

Ahmed Midhat Efendi's second wife Hafize Melek was also a former Greek prostitute, whose former name was Angeliki Karakaş. Orhan Okay and Ahmed Midhat Efendi's grandson, Mehmet Tanberk,²⁵⁸ and her granddaughter's daughter-in-law, Terhan Ulusoy²⁵⁹, claims—that Kalyopi in *Henüz Onyedİ Yaşında* in fact depicts Angeliki Karakaş.²⁶⁰ On the other hand, Nühket Esen contends that Kalyopi is not her since the novel was written in 1881 but they married three years later.²⁶¹

About the issues on women, Ahmed Midhat Efendi generally considers men and society to be guilty. He gives his own opinions and advises about this issue between the lines. In this regard, Ahmed Midhat Efendi expresses that chastity is not only indispensable for women's morality but also for men. In *Çengi*, he states that Arife's only fault is her beauty, and if she were not a beautiful woman, no man would have tried to seduce her. Seducing a woman only for her beauty is a great enormity because these women are despised by the society and only men who want to take advantage of these women

²⁵⁵ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 201-202.

²⁵⁶ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 66-67.

²⁵⁷ Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 106.

²⁵⁸ Berivan Tapan, "Ahmet Mithat Efendi'nin Bilinmeyen Aşkları," *Sabah*, October 22, 2013, accessed on November 3, 2018, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/aktuel/2013/10/22/ahmet-mithat-efendinin-bilinmeyen-asklari>

²⁵⁹ Ayşe Olgun, "Ahmed Midhat'ın Gelini Soy Ağaçlarını Çıkardı," *Yeni Şafak*, September 17, 2017, accessed on November 3, 2018, <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/ahmed-mithatin-gelini-soy-agaclarini-cikardi-2795217>

²⁶⁰ Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 249.

²⁶¹ Nühket Esen, *Hikaye Anlatan Adam*, 61.

establish relationships with them.²⁶² Moreover, Ahmed Midhat Efendi contends that ‘decadent’ women are more inclined to abandon their “bad behaviours” with the help of their husbands than men who are incorrigible and cling on their European way of life no matter what others’ warnings may be.²⁶³

On the other hand, Ahmed Midhat Efendi adjures that women be careful with their demeanour and live in accordance with social norms. In this regard, he expresses that a woman has to protect her honour not only for herself but also for her father, mother and brother. If she does not protect her honour, this means that her family will be regarded as a pimp and consequently ruin her family’s prestige.²⁶⁴ Moreover, Ahmed Midhat Efendi contends that women, who have an affair out of marriage, must know that they are seen only as a valuable “hussy” by their lovers, who pretend as if they were ready to die for their love. He further states that no man cannot be that fool to believe these women since if she falls for a man for once, there is always a possibility for her to fall for another man. Only if she has the intention to marry and establish a good family can a man trust her.²⁶⁵

To conclude, Ahmed Midhat Efendi gives us important clues about the life of prostitutes in late Ottoman Istanbul. He indicates that they live a miserable life and approaches them compassionately. The main reason behind their misfortune is men’s cruelty and selfishness. They do not develop empathy for prostitutes. As mentioned above, he depicts the worst example of this situation through Arife who became transformed into a toxic woman for a society and also ruined her own life. However, Ahmed Midhat Efendi does not show the same compassion to those kind of prostitutes like Sünbül, Helena and Agavni, since they are comfortable with their profession and they do not have a decent character. On the other hand, prostitutes like Kalyopi and Cevriye are virtuous women at heart but they end up as prostitutes because of their bad fortune. That is why they deserve a chance of being saved from this ‘filthy’ lifestyle.

²⁶² Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, 117.

²⁶³ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Felâhâtı Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, 137.

²⁶⁴ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 241-242.

²⁶⁵ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Karnaval*, 242.

CHAPTER 3

THE PROSTITUTES IN THE NOVELS OF HÜSEYİN RAHİMİ GÜRPINAR

This chapter covers Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's novels which were written between 1889 and 1919. These novels are *Şık* (Chic) (1889), *İffet* (Chastity) (1896), *Mürebbiye* (The Governess) (1899), *Metres* (The Mistress) (1900), *Tesadüf* (Coincidence) (1900), *Hakka Sığındık* (We Took Refuge in God) (1919), *Toraman* (Sturdy) (1919), *Hayattan Sahifeler* (Pages from Life) (1919), and *Tebessüm-i Elem* (The Smile of Sorrow) (serialized in 1918 but published in 1923). There are also other prostitute characters in his novels written after 1923²⁶⁶ (which are not included here). This chapter is primarily concerned with the proclamation of the Turkish Republic since this thesis deals with the late Ottoman period.

In the above-mentioned novels, Hüseyin Rahmi illustrated the daily life of late Ottoman society vividly which enables us to see and evaluate many different aspects of the society such as the relations between neighbours, the structure of the neighbourhood units, the artisans there, and meeting places for the people, especially for men. These meeting places were generally coffeehouses, taverns, and brothels in Beyoğlu. Moreover, we find valuable information about the characteristics and lives of prostitutes which is crucial for this study.

Hüseyin Rahmi criticizes the social oppression of women especially prearranged marriages, keeping them in seclusion at home, and lack of education in almost all of his

²⁶⁶ These novels are *Can Pazarı* (1923), *Ben Deli Miyim?* (1924), *Kokotlar Mektebi* (1928), and *Gönül Bir Yeldeğirmenidir Sevdâ Öğütür* (1943).

novels. He defends the equality of women and men; according to him, gender inequality is the major reason behind the many social problems. For instance, when they commit adultery or illegal intercourse, women and men are treated very differently by society. Usually, men who fornicate are seen as normal by others, but women are condemned and labeled as “whore.”²⁶⁷ In addition, it is also normal for men to kill their wives who commit adultery to restore their honour.²⁶⁸

According to Hüseyin Rahmi, marriage is not an important criterion for morality. For instance, in *Şık*, Adel lives alone and earns her life by working in a tailor shop, unlike Potiş who is involved in prostitution.²⁶⁹ She has a relationship with Maşuk, and when their relationship progresses in time, they start to live together in the Maşuk’s house.²⁷⁰ He contends that Maşuk and Adel can live their love freely because they are not married and sees their affair as moral.²⁷¹ Moreover, he states that if one wants to marry, he should consider it seriously because once he satisfies his sexual desires, he might neglect his wife. The main aim of marriage should be being a good husband and father to his family and fulfil his responsibilities properly since one can have intercourse without marriage.²⁷² He also criticises men who have a relationship with a prostitute who do not want to divorce their wives and make them suffer from their treatment. For instance, in *Metres*, he states that if Hami does not love his wife, he should divorce her instead of neglecting her. This may give her a second chance to meet a man who will love her. By neglecting, her husband humiliates her and causes to lose her self-confidence.²⁷³

In these novels, the girls who have relative freedom and take some education are also not in a good position. They are never able to live as they wish. For example, İffet sees herself different from the other women, she says that her father thought that education would make her happy in her future life, but he was mistaken. If she were an ignorant girl like many others, she would not think too much about everything and live without a care in this world.²⁷⁴ Moreover, she talks about her school friend Antuanet who

²⁶⁷ Agah Sırrı Levend, *Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar*, (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1962), 67.

²⁶⁸ Berna Moran, *Türk Edebiyatına Eleştirel Bir Bakış 1* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 121-123.

²⁶⁹ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Şık* (İstanbul: Papersense, 2015), 82.

²⁷⁰ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 84.

²⁷¹ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 185.

²⁷² Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem* (İstanbul: Papersense, 2015), 166.

²⁷³ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Metres* (İstanbul: Papersense, 2015), 214.

²⁷⁴ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka* (İstanbul: Papersense, 2015), 137.

is a very romantic and intellectual girl like İffet. She loves a young painter, but her father does not let her marry him²⁷⁵. He marries her off with a rich merchant who does not give value to art and literature. İffet asks herself that if her father will marry off his daughter with an ignorant merchant, why he sent her to school in the first place.²⁷⁶

Another example is Bedia, the main character of *Bir Muadele-i Sevda*, who is also well-educated. Different from İffet and Antuanet, Bedia is a very ambitious girl and she takes her revenge on the men, his father, and a husband who destroyed her life by cheating on her husband.²⁷⁷ On the other hand, Some women think that women are not as smart as men. For instance, in *Metres*, Saffet's Armenian servant, Dudu, says that woman is not able to understand everything clearly, so they always need man's help. For this reason, Dudu and Saffet even cannot write a love letter on their own and go to a letter writer who agrees with Dudu in her opinion about women.²⁷⁸

In contrast, Hüseyin Rahmi did not have this empathetic and liberal approach to prostitutes, he described these women as evil who ruined men and their families' lives. But he did not have a one-sided view on this issue, he also criticised the men who have a relationship with a prostitute.

3.1 The Characteristics of Prostitutes

Hüseyin Rahmi illustrates the prostitutes from different parts of Istanbul as seductive, cunning, and disloyal women who have no mercy for others. Only Huriye, in *Hakka Sığındık*, does not have these characteristics because she is just eleven years old and has a miserable life. There is no chance for these women to be good persons since they get used to this 'filthy' life and enjoy it. The plots of these novels are very similar and both women and men protagonists alike have similar traits. In the following paragraphs some details about the lives and characteristics of these prostitutes are given.

Cunningness is the common trait of all of these prostitutes except Huriye, in *Hakka Sığındık*. They deceive their lovers easily and take advantage of them as they wish

²⁷⁵ Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 138.

²⁷⁶ Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 140.

²⁷⁷ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Bir Muadele-i Sevda* (İstanbul, Hilmi Kitabevi, 1946), 127.

²⁷⁸ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 260-261.

by use of their femininity since their lovers do not act with their logic but their instinct. In *Şık*, Madame Potiş, one of the worst examples of the prostitutes, is ugly and excessively immoral, and even got fired by many brothels because of her indecency.²⁷⁹ On the other hand, she was a very cunning woman and she wraps her lover, Şöhret, around her little finger and ridicules him every time. For example, when Şöhret wants a dog to accompany them during their tour in Beyoğlu, Potiş find a stray dog and dresses it in a red headdress. Then, she convinces him that it is a very rare and expensive kind.²⁸⁰ Moreover, she makes a deal with the restaurateur Baba Perdriks. When Potiş comes to his restaurant with Şöhret or another man like him, she makes them spend a lot of money and then get a commission from Baba Perdriks.²⁸¹

The second example is Anjel, in *Mürebbiye*, who is a beautiful but immoral French girl in her twenties. She comes from Paris where she earns her living by prostitution. She comes to Istanbul with her lover who engages in trade. When he sees Anjel with a Greek man, he banishes her from his hotel room.²⁸² Then, with the help of a French family in Istanbul, she starts to work in the Dehri Efendi's mansion as a governess, though she has no education and experience.²⁸³ In the beginning, Anjel has the intention of having a break in her profession to have rest and only works as a governess in the house of Dehri Efendi. However, when she settles in the house and sees the men of different ages, she immediately changes her mind.²⁸⁴ She begins affairs with Dehri Efendi's brother, son and son in law, none of them aware of her other relations.

Furthermore, in *Metres*, Parnas is also a very crafty woman manipulating men easily. For instance, if Müştak does not visit her for a long time, because of lack of money, she writes a reproachful but insincere letter to induce him to come. After this letter, Müştak tries to find enough money to meet her again despairingly.²⁸⁵ In *Tebessüm-i Elem*, Vuslat also uses similar methods to manipulate men. She feigns reluctance and behaves coquettishly to Kenan, who married to Ragıbe, in order to make him love her desperately.

²⁷⁹ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 27.

²⁸⁰ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 29-36.

²⁸¹ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 43.

²⁸² Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Mürebbiye* (İstanbul: Papersense, 2015), 41-42.

²⁸³ Gürpınar, *Mürebbiye*, 42-43.

²⁸⁴ Gürpınar, *Mürebbiye*, 78.

²⁸⁵ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 124-126.

She gets crossed with Kenan easily and does not forgive him; otherwise he would buy expensive gifts.²⁸⁶

In *Toraman*, there are two prostitutes, Servinaz and Binnaz who are mother and daughter. Servinaz meet Şuayb Bey, a broker, in his office when she goes for a business. She immediately realizes that he is well off and tries to seduce him. No matter how hard she tries, she is not able to seduce him, since he does not like old women.²⁸⁷ But it cannot discourage her, so she assigns her daughter, Binnaz who is a twenty-year-old beautiful girl, to this duty.²⁸⁸ She starts to come to his office in place of her mother on the pretext of her sickness, and Şuayb Bey is fascinated by her beauty at first glance. She pretends to be an innocent young girl.²⁸⁹ Şuayb Bey wants to marry her; soon afterward, he persuades Servinaz who shows pretended hesitation because of his old age, to allow his marriage with Binnaz.²⁹⁰

The most cunning and relentless of these prostitutes is probably Hacer, in *Hayattan Sahifeler*. Hacer is an old prostitute who still tries to earn her living through prostitution. She usually sits in a coffeehouse and tries to catch a client while drinking coffee and smoking. When she finds one, she invites him to the isolated parts of the graveyard close to the coffeehouse.²⁹¹ Her other way of earning a livelihood is taking part in funeral processions with her pitcher filled with water and a baton. She pretends to be an old pious woman who cries and prays for a deceased person, enabling her to receive money from a dead's family.²⁹² Also, she forces her very old husband to be a beggar. When he resists, she does not give any food to him for several days, thus he accepts to beg.²⁹³

Hacer's daughter Hürmüz is not really different from her mother, also meeting many men in the graveyard. One of these men is Mustafa, her lover, from whom she eventually conceives a child.

²⁸⁶ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 172.

²⁸⁷ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Toraman* (Istanbul: Papersense, 2015), 52-55.

²⁸⁸ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 56.

²⁸⁹ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 57-58.

²⁹⁰ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 128.

²⁹¹ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Hayattan Sahifeler* (Istanbul: Papersense, 2015), 19-20.

²⁹² Gürpınar, *Hayattan Sahifeler*, 21.

²⁹³ Gürpınar, *Hayattan Sahifeler*, 29-30.

When her mother finds out about this she becomes very angry and wants to get rid of this baby immediately, but she does not want Hürmüz to undergo an abortion because of the danger it poses. In addition, Hürmüz has also a relationship with Veli, an old greengrocer, based on a self-interest. Veli gives her fruits in return for kissing her. Hacer is planning to marry her daughter with the greengrocer, thus her daughter will become the heir of his inheritance and get rid of her young, penniless lovers.²⁹⁴ Her first plan is to deliver Hürmüz's child in secret before her marriage with Veli. After few months, Hürmüz gives birth to her child with the help of her mother. Then, Hacer smothers the newborn baby and buries him with the help of her son, Hidayet.²⁹⁵

Some of the prostitutes pretend that they have a great secret which affects their whole life and causes them to get into this profession, influencing men and drawing their attention. For example, Parnas, in *Metres*, deceives Müştak with this lie and says that she cannot confide in anyone about her secret. This secret makes her mysterious and excused in the eyes of Müştak, every time.²⁹⁶ Especially, in *Tesadüf*, Şöhret uses her 'great' secret against Mail very efficiently. When Mail sees Şöhret sitting lonely and sadly in the salon of the brothel for the first time, he thinks that she happens to come here by accident and finds her too beautiful and innocent-looking to be here. Then Müştak asks about her lover, having heard about him while his friends were talking, and adds that why he does not save Şöhret from this life. In reply, she says: "Will you make me express all the mystery of life?"²⁹⁷ then leaves the room.

Only the expression of "will you make me express all the mystery of life?" is enough to influence him deeply. After this question, he cannot stop thinking about her and wants to learn her whole life story. Therefore, he meets her again. He goes to the brothel again and spends the night with her, learning some details about her life.²⁹⁸ Şöhret comes from very poor family but, thanks to her beauty, many rich families want to arrange a marriage with her, for their sons. Her family decided on one of these offers, and one day, when Şöhret was alone at home, her fiancé came to her house. He has intercourse

²⁹⁴ Gürpınar, *Hayattan Sahifeler*, 82-83.

²⁹⁵ Gürpınar, *Hayattan Sahifeler*, 100-101.

²⁹⁶ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 137.

²⁹⁷ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Tesadüf* (Istanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1945), 118-119.

²⁹⁸ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 122.

with her, but after that, he and his family never make contact with neither Şöhret nor her family. Two or three months later, her family realizes that she is pregnant, and immediately marries her with a roughneck young man. This man treats her very badly, and as day passed she found him more and more unbearable so she ran away from him to a brothel in Macuncu. She expresses these in a very dramatic tone and impresses Müştak deeply.²⁹⁹

In contrast, Binnaz, in *Toraman*, chooses to recount her ‘dramatic’ life story when Şuayb Bey decides to rape her with the thought “like mother like daughter”. When she comes to the office, he locks the door and attacks her. However, she is able to stop him and makes an emotional speech about her life to him. Though Şuayb Bey does not ask about her life story, in order to make him have mercy upon her and establish an influence over him, she tells him this story. As a daughter of a prostitute, Binnaz has faced such situations a great number of times. She tells him that she is accustomed to these attacks but asks him to dismiss this idea from his mind for the sake of her virginity. Instead, Binnaz proposes to talk about her difficult life since she thinks that Şuayb Bey is a good man inside.³⁰⁰ Binnaz grew up in a brothel, and she began to entertain men at very young age with belly dancing and serving them drinks. Sometimes, these men beat and insult her mother, and all of this makes her disgusted with this life and deepens her respect of chastity and an honorable life.³⁰¹ Servinaz does not allow men to have intercourse with her because she wants her to marry a wealthy man in return of high bridewealth. This story and her honesty influences him deeply and enhances his love for her.³⁰²

Some prostitutes warn their clients about themselves and their profession and express their thoughts about prostitution; in this way, men begin to see them as honest women who are victims of fate and this strengthens their feelings for them. For instance, Anjel, in *Mürebbiye*, expresses her opinion about her own profession when she tries to persuade a French writer, who has an affair with her, that the baby she bears belongs to him. She states that prostitutes are ignorant, and they think this profession is indispensable for them to make their living but the main reason behind women’s involvement in this profession is men. Anjel further states that the worst thing that can happen to them is

²⁹⁹ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 123-126.

³⁰⁰ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 68.

³⁰¹ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 72-73.

³⁰² Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 74-75.

falling in love with a man. It is a complete disaster for them. Therefore, their motto should be ‘beloved but not love back, cheat on but not be cheated.’ For them, love is foolishness and mercy for others is a big fault because they violate the moral rules of prostitution which are different from other people’s moral sentiment. Prostitutes’ main qualities are seduction and cunningness.³⁰³

In *Tesadüf*, Mail wants to have a conversation with Şöhret on their first encounter in the brothel. When he builds up his courage, he asks her: “Why are you sitting here all lonely and sad?”³⁰⁴ Şöhret responds that he looks like a nice man who cannot belong to this kind of life. She states that if men first ask her opinion, she immediately tries hard to persuade them not to continue there. Şöhret further expresses that prostitutes resemble rental animals, and even though they are sad or mournful, they have to do their jobs. They work for the landlady, they also earn some amount of money, but they cannot benefit from this money somehow. They are always in debt and misery.³⁰⁵

Vuslat, in *Tebessüm-i Elem*, states that the women like her cannot be loyal to one or two men as one can understand from the name of the house in which they perform their job, *umumhane* means a house of everyone, therefore anyone who has money can hire them for a night.³⁰⁶ Moreover, she indicates that she is not a victim as she has chosen this profession with her own will and she does not think that her job is miserable. According to her, women who are under the pressure of their husband are more miserable than her because she is able to entertain herself every day and live her life freely. For instance, the wife of Kenan, Ragıbe, is a European style, well-educated, and beautiful woman but Kenan leaves her at home and comes to this brothel. If Vuslat was married to him, he would do the same things to her.³⁰⁷ Thus, Kenan had better not love her and tries to entertain himself when he hires her.³⁰⁸

Moreover, when Kenan does not come to see Vuslat for one week because of his wife, she becomes very angry and reproaches him very harshly. She says that nobody cares for the feelings of women like Vuslat. When men become bored, they leave them

³⁰³ Gürpınar, *Mürebbiye*, 38-39.

³⁰⁴ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 117.

³⁰⁵ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 118-119.

³⁰⁶ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 179.

³⁰⁷ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 180.

³⁰⁸ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 181.

easily by simply living some money and think that money is enough to atone for their sins. No one stands up for them and everyone finds them the only guilty ones in this sin. But they feel in the same way with men's 'honorable' wives.³⁰⁹ In addition, when she meets Ragıbe in their house in Kadıköy, she defends herself by saying that she is not the only guilty one in this relationship, the real culprit is Kenan because he loses his loyalty to his wife. If Vuslat did not accept him, he definitely would have found another woman. Prostitutes cannot distinguish their clients as married and single, it is about men's characteristics and loyalty.³¹⁰

Keeping these prostitutes as mistresses in a private house is also common, men thinking that this is the only way for prostitutes to remain faithful. That is not the case, prostitutes keep meeting other clients in secret, and all their expenses are met by their lovers. Hence, it is more profitable themselves to live as a mistress rather than living in a brothel. In *Metres*, Parnas lives in an apartment in Beyoğlu, and this apartment's financial issues are managed by her lover, Müştak, though she is a very rich woman. Her wealth comes from an old Ottoman Greek tradesman who met her in Paris and they began a relationship. When he comes back to Istanbul, he takes her with him. After his death, his fortune passes to Parnas, enabling her to live a splendid life.³¹¹ However, she does not spend this fortune; instead, she finds wealthy men for providing her extravagant needs.³¹² For example, she is fond of antiques. Whenever she comes across one in the shops of Istanbul, she immediately buys it without considering the price. When she realizes that the antique is just a replica, she does not show any hesitation to shatter it.³¹³ While Müştak, her slightly poor lover, is away from Parnas because of lack of money, she continues to buy expensive things like wine and antiques, and she does not pay for any of them, they are all charged to Müştak. When Müştak manages to find money and comes back to her, he is obliged to pay all these debts.³¹⁴ Soon afterward, he runs out of money again because of her spending. In such circumstances, Parnas gives him a small amount of money to show her 'generosity' and 'real love' for him. With this, she is able to enchain

³⁰⁹ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 216.

³¹⁰ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 277.

³¹¹ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 93-94.

³¹² Gürpınar, *Metres*, 94.

³¹³ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 108-109.

³¹⁴ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 145,164.

Müştak to herself completely.³¹⁵ After Müştak, she finds a much wealthier man, Hami, and he begins to finance her needs in place of Müştak. Parnas cheats on both these men, taking many other men to her apartment.

The second example is Şöhret. One day, Mail goes to the brothel in Macuncu but he cannot find her there, and learns that she was abducted by another client, Şeyda Bey. Şöhret finds a way to invite Mail to her house where she is kept, so they would make a plan with him about running away from this house. When Şöhret managed to escape from the house of Şeyda, Mail placed her in a house in Samatya. They begin to meet in this place³¹⁶ After a while, they marry and Şöhret becomes his second wife. After the marriage, Mail cannot stay in Şöhret's house for a long time because of Saibe's illness. This situation makes her very angry and so she decides to take revenge on Mail. In the absence of Mail, she starts to get closer to Hayati who is Mail's very close friend. They see no harm in moving their relationship forward as long as Mail does not know.³¹⁷

In *Tebessüm-i Elem*, Kenan also wants to move her beloved, Vuslat, from Aksaray to Kadıköy, an uncrowded and tranquil part of Istanbul. She accepts his offer³¹⁸ but she has a plan in her mind that Vuslat and her colleagues, Benli Faika and Top Salata, can turn this house into a brothel in secret, and she even gives a hidden room to her lover, Didar Bey who earns his livelihood from gambling and his female lovers.

Hüseyin Rahmi demonstrates that marriage with a prostitute results in complete disaster for men, in *Tesadüf* and *Toraman*, because these women cannot give up their old lifestyle. They find it boring to sit all day at home and wait for their men. Şöhret, in *Tesadüf*, tries to convince Mail to marry her with her long speeches since he is not willing to marry. As time passes by, Şöhret increases her pressure on Mail to marry her and divorces his wife. However, Mail shows hesitation to this offer; therefore, Şöhret reproaches him and reveals her thoughts about her own situation and Mail's wife, Saibe. She states that if he really loved her, he would marry her in order to restore her honour,

³¹⁵ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 153.

³¹⁶ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 228.

³¹⁷ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 268-269.

³¹⁸ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 184.

because everyone calls her a ‘wicked woman’. If he will not marry, she wants to continue her old profession because she cannot stand anymore to sit at home all day.³¹⁹

Şöhret further states that she wants Mail to divorce his wife because she will never get respect from others like his first wife if he would not leave his first wife. Everyone will blame her for seducing Mail and breaking up his family.³²⁰ Moreover, she says that when Mail gets bored, he will leave Şöhret without thinking whether she still loves him or not, though she is his second wife. Then she will have to return her old profession to sustain her life. That is why Mail has to make his choice between his wife and Şöhret now.³²¹ Despite Şöhret’s efforts to convince him, Mail persuades Şöhret about marriage without divorcing his wife with the pretext of her illness.³²²

Despite all her efforts to convince him to marry she does not become a loyal wife and has an affair with her husband’s best friend Hayati. After a year, Mail sees the betrayal of Hayati and Şöhret and leaves her. Meanwhile, Saibe is not alive, having died because of her illness. Then, Şöhret marries Hayati, but lasting only six months. After that, she gets back to Şeyda Bey, her old lover and marries him but she also cannot maintain this marriage. Even after these adventures, she turns back to Mail and marries him again but she never settles down and keeps cheating on Mail with other men. In time, they get bored with each other, so they break up and do not see each other for a long time. After a decade or so, Mail, who becomes very poor, now comes across with Şöhret who became old and loses her beauty again. She sells caps and pouches on the street but she looks as though she still has the intention to sell her beauty if she finds a willing man.³²³

In *Toraman*, Şuayb Bey introduces his son, Aziz, to his wife, Binnaz after a couple of months from their marriage, but they have already known each other. They met in a brothel two years ago but her mother did not allow them to have intercourse as he was not rich enough.³²⁴ Binnaz says to Aziz that he was always on her mind, never loving any other man.³²⁵ On their first day, she cheats on Şuayb Bey in his own office.³²⁶ Then, they

³¹⁹ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 228-229.

³²⁰ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 242-243.

³²¹ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 244.

³²² Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 246.

³²³ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 283-285.

³²⁴ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 138.

³²⁵ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 139.

³²⁶ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 139-141.

keep their relationship going, while Şuayb Bey supposes that they have very friendly relations and this relation makes his wife happy, so he wants Aziz to come to their house often. Moreover, Binnaz does not abstain to reproach her husband about Aziz when he does not come to their visit. Therefore, Şuayb Bey is obliged to invite his wife's lover without knowing anything, and this situation never discomforts Binnaz.³²⁷ When he comes, Binnaz welcomes him with cheers and "tweaks his cheeks chummily like a child". Şuayb Bey cannot decide how to react to this.³²⁸ She behaves very loosely, even stating that she espouses Aziz with the 'bitchiest' girl in Istanbul. Moreover, she always insults her husband in front of other people. For example, she says that the severest punishment for a prostitute is espousing her with the old man as his second wife, to her husband's face, this humiliates him in front of his son and mother-in-law but does not phase him since he is already accustomed to such insults.³²⁹

In time, Şuayb gets suspicious about his wife and supposes that she has another lover. On the suspicion of his wife's betrayal, Şuayb Bey tells his wife that he will not come home this night, so she will be able to invite her lover to the house but Şuayb Bey comes back his house's garden in secret to catch them. Here, he comes across Aziz who cannot control himself about seeing Binnaz and comes to the house at night, talks to him about his suspicions but Aziz does not want to believe him. When they enter the house, Şuayb Bey finds her in their bedroom on her own but this makes Binnaz mad at him. She starts to insult her husband and states that Şuayb Bey and all the other men who claim that they are honourable to do every bad thing that they condemn in secret, and when women do something 'wrong', these men always talk about chastity and honour.³³⁰ But outside the room, Aziz encounters her lover who was hidden by Binnaz and he becomes very angry and disappointed with her. Then, he left her husband in the room and comes to Aziz and her other lover, soothing Aziz with her kisses and gentle hugs. When Şuayb Bey comes out and sees them together, he immediately faints and then dies.

There are also old prostitutes as secondary characters who are proud of their old life and like sharing their experiences and advice with youngers in *İffet* and *Tebessüm-i Elem*. In *İffet*, Fettan Raziye, despite her advanced age, puts on heavy make-up and has

³²⁷ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 172.

³²⁸ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 178.

³²⁹ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 182.

³³⁰ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 210.

seductive manners and laugh. That is why İffet thinks that one can understand easily that she is an old prostitute.³³¹ Raziye still misses the good old days, and says that her soul does not get older, it is still young.³³² Raziye comes to İffet's house many times to persuade her to meet Nermi Bey who is a very rich young man. She even set prices for İffet's eyebrows, eyes, and body. According to her, pride and chastity are useless things, they cannot help people to live properly, so İffet should get rid of these unhelpful ideas immediately. Raziye likens her beauty to a well-preserved diamond, for her own benefit she should demonstrate her beauty and present it in return for its price.³³³ On the other hand, Raziye is the only prostitute, in these novels, who gives up her profession and lives an honorable life. In Raziye's last visit, İffet is on the death bed and she makes a speech to Fettan Raziye about her love for Latif and the penitence from her sins. This speech influences Fettan Raziye deeply and she repents heartfully, putting on the "clean clothes" of İffet's mother before they take ablution, perform salah and following this İffet says a long and sincere prayer for Raziye.³³⁴ She decides to go on pilgrimage, then Fettan Raziye becomes Hacı Raziye.³³⁵

In *Tebessüm-i Elem*, Benli Faika is an old prostitute and sees herself as the most qualified of them. She contends that new generation does not know the secrets of the profession. For this reason, despite her age, she is still able to continue her profession and cannot become a penitent.³³⁶ Furthermore, she gives advice to Vuslat that she should be neither gently nor harsh to man, she should maintain the balance between them which is one of the most difficult parts of this job, especially when she deals with married men. These men tend to see their wife as an angel while they see their mistress as evil. According to her, there is no great difference between prostitutes and 'honourable wives' since prostitutes sell their love while wives exchange it for their own pleasure, for free. Consequently, they do the same thing in different ways, so the wife of Kenan is the worst enemy of Vuslat.³³⁷

³³¹ Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 164.

³³² Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 166.

³³³ Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 166.

³³⁴ Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 190-195.

³³⁵ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 196.

³³⁶ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 208-209.

³³⁷ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 210-212.

The only prostitute Hüseyin Rahmi approaches with compassion is Huriye, in *Hakka Sığındık*. She stands in a very different position than others with her life story. Huriye is an eleven-year-old girl who is obliged to practice prostitution in order to earn a livelihood for herself and her two younger siblings. Once they had a family and a good life but when their father passed away, their economic conditions become worse. Then their house burns down, and the sick mother of the children dies after a while. Therefore, the kids become homeless and begin to beg on the streets, but they cannot earn enough money with begging.³³⁸

In the nights, Huriye and other homeless kids make a fire for heat but when the fire dies down, the boys and girls sleep together and hug each other in order not to feel cold. Due to this situation, they learn and practice sexuality at a very young age. Huriye also lost her virginity in one of those nights in return for a very small amount of money. Then she continues to have intercourse with boys in return for money to buy her younger brother medicine and food.³³⁹ One day, her sister comes across with their old family friend, Nüzhet Ulvi. The man also wants to see Huriye, so they start to search for her in the back streets of Fatih. When they find her, she is suffering from sexual assault from a very young boy. At first, Nüzhet Ulvi is shocked because of what he sees, then immediately rescues her from the boy. He does not leave them to their fate, so he takes them to his house and treats them like his own daughters.³⁴⁰

3.2. The Attitudes of Other People towards Prostitutes

In the novels, the men who have a relationship with a prostitute become very unprincipled, naïve and credulous regardless of their old life and characteristics since these men are controlled solely by their desires. The first example of this man is Şatırzade Şöhret, in *Şık*, who admires western culture exaggeratively. He is unprincipled enough to even steal his mother's earrings to have enough money to spend time with his love Potiş. "He was proud to walk arm in arm with her who spoke in her mother tongue, French, flirtatiously."³⁴¹ Şöhret does not see her as a prostitute, to the contrary regarding her as a

³³⁸ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 123-129.

³³⁹ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Hakka Sığındık* (Istanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1950), 120-121.

³⁴⁰ Gürpınar, *Hakka Sığındık*, 116-119.

³⁴¹ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 27-28.

noblewoman, so he cannot stand to people calling her a ‘whore.’³⁴² In *Toraman*, Şuayb Bey even dares to rape Binnaz because she is a daughter of a prostitute and there is not a severe punishment for this crime, the law only imposing a fine on rapists.³⁴³ When he cannot be successful in this attempt, Binnaz makes a speech about the difficulties of her life and her desire to protect her honour. Therefore, Şuayb Bey thinks that she is a very honourable girl and there is no way other than marriage to reach his aim.³⁴⁴

In *Metres*, different approaches to Parnas are seen from her lovers, contrary to other novels. Müştak loves Parnas despairingly and supposes that she is the most loyal and honourable mistress.³⁴⁵ However, his friend, Reyhan, is a very realistic and pragmatist man, when Müştak comes to him he asks to borrow money to continue his relationship with Parnas, Reyhan makes him an interesting offer. He will give the money to Müştak on the condition that Müştak will introduce him to Parnas, thus both will be happy. This offer makes Müştak very angry and curses him but Reyhan is determined to persuade him. He further states that it is the most stupid thing to imagine a real love with this kind woman and that men should only be interested in having a good time with them. Otherwise, this love will be a disaster for them.³⁴⁶ Moreover, prostitutes always have more than one lover and they try to handle them without being noticed, so there is no sense in being angry about this offer.³⁴⁷

After a couple of days, Müştak receives a reproachful letter from Parnas because his absence makes her angry.³⁴⁸ With this letter, he desires to see her again despairingly but without the money, it is impossible. Therefore, he is obliged to accept Reyhan’s proposal, but he thinks that Parnas never cheats on him and Reyhan will come out a loser.³⁴⁹ Both of them continue to see her but Müştak supposes that Parnas does not have any interest for him naively. They sell their all property holding, then borrow loans to

³⁴² Gürpınar, *Şık*, 72.

³⁴³ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 65-66, 82.

³⁴⁴ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 78.

³⁴⁵ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 162.

³⁴⁶ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 115.

³⁴⁷ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 115-116.

³⁴⁸ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 124.

³⁴⁹ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 134-136.

continue their relationship with Parnas. When Müştak and Reyhan run out of money, they must stop going to Beyoğlu.³⁵⁰

During their absence, Parnas find a new wealthy young man, Hami. When Müştak and Reyhan hear this, Reyhan plans to seduce Hami's mother in order to take revenge and take money from this old woman. With this money, Reyhan is able to meet Parnas again and continue their relationship. One day, Müştak finds the letters written by Parnas to Reyhan. Though Müştak is aware now that Parnas cheats on him with many men, he still loves her and if he finds a chance to meet her again, he is ready to forget all of these infidelities.³⁵¹ He writes a letter to Hami in which he mentions Parnas' adultery and further states that he should cripple her, so she never cheats him anymore. Müştak thinks that if Parnas will not be mine, then nobody will be able to have an affair with her³⁵²

In this respect, Kenan, in *Tebessüm-i Elem*, goes too far to maintain his relationship with Vuslat when compared with others. Kenan is not a rich man, his wealth comes from his wife Ragıbe and the control of money is in his hand, so he can spend it as he wishes. He sees no harm in spending his wife's money on prostitutes whereas he does not pay his debt to shopkeepers of Heybeliada where he and his family live.³⁵³

Kenan's wife finds out about Vuslat when they are raided by police, and she asks him to leave her but when she understands that he will not give up her, she wants to divorce. Kenan insists on continuing their marriage and states that both men and women can commit adultery which is very normal. If Ragıbe likes some other man, she could have a relationship with this man. The main reason behind the Kenan's 'open-minded' ideas is money because he cannot live with Vuslat without the money of his wife and he is also certain about his wife's chastity.³⁵⁴ Thereupon, Ragıbe writes a letter which shows her respect and understanding to Vuslat and says that she knows prostitutes are the victims of society and they have emotions like other women. She simply asks her to convince Kenan to divorce and let her come to their house in Kadıköy³⁵⁵ Here, Kenan treats his wife mercilessly, saying that his true love is Vuslat and his relationship with Ragıbe exists

³⁵⁰ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 168-169.

³⁵¹ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 288-290.

³⁵² Gürpınar, *Metres*, 358.

³⁵³ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 186.

³⁵⁴ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 250.

³⁵⁵ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 261.

only on paper and has no real feelings for her.³⁵⁶ Despite these harsh words, he still insists that he will not divorce his wife until Ragıbe threatens him with her revolver.³⁵⁷

After the divorce, Kenan tries to find ways to sustain his life with Vuslat, so he plans to take his sister's money on her bank account underhand.³⁵⁸ One night, Kenan hears snoring of a man in their bedroom, then he finds a drunken man, Didar Bey, hidden by Vuslat under the bed after a little search. He gets mad and wakes him up with kicks. When Didar wakes up, he brutally beats Kenan and then throws him out.³⁵⁹ Even after this humiliation, he cannot control himself and comes back to Vuslat but Didar continues to come to their house and do whatever he wants, and they have no courage to stop him.³⁶⁰

After a while, he runs out of money again and the treatment towards him starts to change. Vuslat states that if he has not got enough money to live with him, she cannot be with him anymore and so she should easily find easily another man. Furthermore, she meets other clients and does not need to hide this from him.³⁶¹ Despite all of this, he does not want to leave Vuslat. But, one day, Vuslat asks Didar to fire Kenan from the house while she is not at home, thus Kenan does not have anywhere to go and stays in cheap hotels for days.³⁶²

Some men think that their love for the prostitutes is temporary, so they can leave them easily when they get bored but at the end of the novels, we see that this is not case. For instance, in *Tesadüf*, Mail thinks that he is doing something bad for both himself and his family by loving a prostitute, Şöhret. He confesses this to his wife in tears, then states that he holds his wife in high esteem and knows that he cannot compare her with that whore, since his desires for her will last too long. Once he satisfies himself with her love, he will immediately come back to his wife, but he cannot stop himself to see her.³⁶³ In this respect, Mail is different from other men because at the beginning, he is a good and merciful man who respects his wife and family, so he only worries about Şöhret because of his mercy. His friend Hayati, warns him about Şöhret, saying that men should not have

³⁵⁶ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 285.

³⁵⁷ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 294-296.

³⁵⁸ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 298.

³⁵⁹ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 310-313.

³⁶⁰ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 362, 375.

³⁶¹ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 396.

³⁶² Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 398.

³⁶³ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 100-101.

mercy for these women since they always dramatize their life story, and at the end, the man always becomes the wretched one.³⁶⁴ Within this context, Nüzhet Ulvi, in *Hakka Sığındık*, contends that even the most well-behaved man becomes putty in a prostitute's hands, if she promises that she will be loyal to him.³⁶⁵ Only this mistake is enough to devastate his life.

Kenan, like Mail in *Tesadüf*, believes that his love for Vuslat is a temporary whim which will disappear when he satisfies his desire for her, as women lose their attractiveness in the eyes of a man in time. Then he will immediately get rid of her and start to search for new women due to his nature.³⁶⁶

Hüseyin Rahmi shows other women's approaches to prostitutes, especially that they generally hate them and fear becoming like these women. For instance, when İffet comes across with Raziye for the first time, she immediately understands that she is an old prostitute and finds her disgusting.³⁶⁷ Even the existence of this kind woman in their house is a sufficient reason to disturb İffet, so she fired her, then Raziye responds to her with a laughter incidental to prostitutes and continues that İffet will deal with her soon.³⁶⁸ Thereupon, İffet talks back to her very harshly and "insults her as a "whore" then she leaves the house with coquettish manners."³⁶⁹

In *Metres*, Hami hangs the painting of Parnas on his wall. When his wife Saffet sees this painting, she becomes very surprised because the women on the painting are half-naked, then thinks that she is a real whore who feels free to pose half naked.³⁷⁰ This is the final straw for her, so she goes to her father's house but she has to return after a while because of her stepmother.³⁷¹ One day, Saffet insults Parnas in front of Hami, and this makes him get very angry and in response to this he insults Saffet and states that she does not look like a woman.³⁷² Moreover, Saffet goes to a letter writer to write a letter for Müştak, where she encounters some prostitutes. She has never encountered them before

³⁶⁴ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 120.

³⁶⁵ Gürpınar, *Hakka Sığındık*, 87.

³⁶⁶ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 171-172.

³⁶⁷ Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 164-165.

³⁶⁸ Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 167.

³⁶⁹ Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka*, 169.

³⁷⁰ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 202.

³⁷¹ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 203.

³⁷² Gürpınar, *Metres*, 234.

and thinks that they are really ‘wicked women’ who have no sense of shame and honour. Coming here makes Saffet a ‘wicked woman’ in the eyes of these prostitutes. They think that she is still inexperienced in this profession and make fun of her. Saffet immediately becomes regretful about coming here since it is very frightening to her to be regarded as a prostitute.³⁷³

Old women in society give advice to the woman whose husband loves a prostitute to be patient because they think women do not have anything to do with this situation other than waiting for their husbands to come back to them. For example, When Saffet goes to her family’s house, her stepmother says that women cannot meddle in men’s lives and desires. If he wants, he can keep ten mistresses or marry another woman again. An honourable woman should not think about divorce, so Saffet should return to her husband’s house.³⁷⁴ In another example, Saibe confides in her neighbour Nimeti Hanım about her troubles. She advises patience to Saibe because men always return their wife when they get bored with prostitutes. Almost every married woman faces this situation and they have nothing to do other than waiting for him.³⁷⁵

Hüseyin Rahmi also illustrates the reaction of neighborhood residents who live close to a brothel, to prostitution and their raid here vividly in *Tebessüm-i Elem*. Yağlıkçı Hasan Efendi, a resident of Çiçekbostanı district, in Aksaray, is annoyed that the brothel is disguised as a religious family’s house which is managed in the opposite of his house as customers of the house create trouble and make a noise. In addition, he thinks that this home affects the youth of neighbourhood very adversely.³⁷⁶ That is why he considers organizing an attack on this house with neighbours but if the owner of this brothel is subject to Western state, this will cause him a very big trouble.³⁷⁷

On the other hand, Yağlıkçı Hasan Efendi states that brothels should not spread around Istanbul because their place is Beyoğlu which has many brothels under the control of the municipality.³⁷⁸ Furthermore, he says that they are not civilized enough to let

³⁷³ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 273-274.

³⁷⁴ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 203.

³⁷⁵ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 193.

³⁷⁶ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 26-27.

³⁷⁷ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 36.

³⁷⁸ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 30.

people fornicate or eat pork in their neighbourhood.³⁷⁹ When he becomes able to convince his neighbours, they organize a raid with the youth of the district. Some of these young men are drunken, so they do not follow the instructions of neither police nor elder residents. They enter the house and start to enjoy drink and foods that were left by the guests of the house while others search for prostitutes and their clients.³⁸⁰ Then the crowd finds prostitutes and their clients who disguise as women with *çarşaf* (veil) in a room and they are arrested by police.³⁸¹ Being arrested by police, one of these prostitutes says that the men who raid their house today will be their next clients, and they denounce what they envy.³⁸²

3.3 The Settings of the Novels

The novels are chosen for this study cover a thirty-year period from 1889 to 1919 that witnessed important events in the Late Ottoman history, such as the end of the Hamidian period, the Second Constitution, and the First World War. With the First World, the prostitution in the empire became wide spread and many of them perform their profession under the bad condition. In the Hüseyin Rahmi novels, written in 1919, this situation could be observed especially through Hacer in *Hayattan Sahifeler* and Huriye in *Hakka Sığındık*. Also, his language became freer while he described lives of prostitutes in the novels. Furthermore, he gave valuable information about the effects of these developments on social life and many times criticises both periods, but these effects will not be evaluated since they are beyond the boundaries of this study.

In these novels, Hüseyin Rahmi uses different parts of Istanbul, he shows that prostitution was not available only in Beyoğlu; contrary to common belief, it also took place in the widely Muslim populated areas.

In his early novels written in the Hamidian period, the prostitutes generally live in Beyoğlu while their lovers live in old Istanbul. For instance, in *Şık* and *Metres*, the prostitutes live in Beyoğlu and their lovers come from old Istanbul to meet them. He did

³⁷⁹ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 126.

³⁸⁰ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 106.

³⁸¹ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 126-132.

³⁸² Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 133.

not give information about Şatırzade Şöhret and Hami's place of residence, but he indicates that Müştak and Reyhan live in Aksaray and Süleymaniye respectively. In addition, the old Prostitute Fettan Raziye also lives in Beyoğlu while İffet and her family live in Edinekapı.

In *Mürebbiye*, the story takes place in Dehri Efendi's mansion, but the district is not specified. In contrast to these early novels, in *Tesadüf*, which is written in the same era, the brothel in which Şöhret works is in Macuncu, Fatih, then Mail rents a house in Samatya for Şöhret and here they introduce themselves as a married couple.

In the novels written in 1919, prostitution is performed in Muslim-populated districts of Istanbul. For instance, in *Hayattan Sahifeler*, Hacer and Hürmüz live in their own house and they do not work in a brothel, but rather in a very poor neighbourhood in Edirnekapı. In *Tebessüm-i Elem*, the brothel is in Çiçekbostanı, Aksaray. As aforementioned the neighbourhood residents are against it; when Kenan is raided here with Vuslat, they decide to move Kadıköy because it is uncrowded and more comfortable for them. In *Toraman*, Hüseyin Rahmi gives no information about the place where Binnaz and Servinaz live but after the marriage, Binnaz and Şuayb Bey move to Erenköy.

In *Hakka Sığındık*, Huriye and her siblings do not have a house, they live with other homeless children near the Fatih Mosque. She is involved in prostitution in this neighbourhood.

3.4. Hüseyin Rahmi's Approach to Prostitutes

Hüseyin Rahmi gives his own opinion between the lines about prostitutes and their lovers. Despite his defending the equality between men and women and open-minded ideas, he does not show any understanding for these women. He illustrates them as complete evil and parasites of the society. He believes that prostitutes are not able to earn a living in any other profession, so when their lovers neglect them, they begin to reproach them.³⁸³ On the other hand, he accepts that some prostitutes start this profession because of necessity, poverty, or maltreatment by their husbands. Society is also responsible for this since these women cannot find any other way to maintain their life. He thinks that

³⁸³ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 27-28.

many prostitutes would become a very famous actress or singer thanks to their beauty and beautiful voice if they lived in Europe. In the Ottoman land, women only can partly show these talents in the brothels.³⁸⁴ However, once they are accustomed to prostitution, they do not want to quit their profession. Only if she found a much better and splendid life, she would not think of returning to her old life, but it is a very rare case to happen.³⁸⁵ Moreover, men who know these old prostitutes always disturb the husbands of these women and society talks behind their back.

According to Hüseyin Rahmi, in these love affairs, the one who comes out better off is always the prostitute, and, in the case of *Metres*, this is Parnas. She never leaves a man without spending all his wealth. But who is the guilty one? Is it one who spends the money or the who lets him spend? In addition, Hüseyin Rahmi states that men are always ready to sacrifice all their money on these women, but no one forces them to do that.³⁸⁶ When they break up, men collapse totally and are ready to do even the most immoral thing in order to get back together, while prostitutes have already found another man. For instance, when Reyhan shoots Hami in a duel, Parnas is on the ship and going somewhere else. She tries to decide on her new victim between two young French men and though she knows Reyhan and Hami fought a duel for her, she does not care about them.³⁸⁷

Along the same lines, Hüseyin Rahmi expressed his own thoughts about the affairs with prostitutes through Vuslat in the hallucination of Kenan at the end of *Tebessüm-i Elem*. She states that Kenan always ignores that she is a prostitute and expects loyalty and frank feelings from her. It is also interesting that his wife has all these characteristics but he persists to cheat on her and makes her upset. Now, suffering from whatever he did, he kept a mistress with his wife's money and stole his own family's money. Therefore, he is the only guilty one who gives up his wife, mother, sister and family bliss just for his sexual desires. Furthermore, she states that if men do not demand a prostitute, there cannot be a profession of prostitution. Moreover, men find keeping a mistress as dishonourable as them quite an achievement to be proud of while a mistress feels ashamed.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 97.

³⁸⁵ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 126-128.

³⁸⁶ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 295.

³⁸⁷ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 445.

³⁸⁸ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 457-460.

Hüseyin Rahmi also criticises the men who use the pretext of helping these women because they are not the only people who need help. He contends that if a man wants to do a favour for others, this person should be his friend. If he is married, he must do it for his wife and children, instead of trying to help a prostitute who is the main obstacle to his family bliss. Furthermore, rescue of a ‘wicked woman’ by a man from a brothel is, of course, praiseworthy. However, it causes unhappiness in his family, especially if he is married. He further states that the reason behind men’s wish to rescue these women is not a very humanistic one; in contrast, they want to rescue them because of the beauty of these women and what they believe to be their love for these women, albeit an impure or manufactured love.³⁸⁹

To conclude, Hüseyin Rahmi criticises the inequality between men and women and supports freedom and education of women. His ideas are even ahead of his own time, especially his thoughts about marriage. In contrast, his approach for prostitutes is very intolerant and offensive because he finds it immoral to sell one’s body in return for money. He degrades these women in his novels and thinks that they have a genetic disposition to prostitution.³⁹⁰ In *Mürebbiye*, *Toraman* and *Hayattan Sahifeler*, the examples of this idea could be seen through Anjel, whose mother is a prostitute in Paris, Servinaz, and Binnaz, and Hacer, Hürmüz respectively. He also criticises harshly the men, especially who ruin their marriages because of a prostitute and at the end these characters are punished by him. Moreover, Hüseyin Rahmi gives invaluable information about the daily life of prostitution whereas we cannot find any clue about the state’s intervention and regulation of brothels. Only in *Tebessüm-i Elem*, the police take the place in the raid against brothel and here Yağlıkçı Hüseyin Efendi talks about brothels in Beyoğlu which are registered to the municipality and have their own doctors but does not give any further detail.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Gürpınar, *Tesadüf*, 122.

³⁹⁰ Gürpınar, *Metres*, 23.

³⁹¹ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 30.

CHAPTER 4

A COMPARISON BETWEEN AHMED MİDHAT EFENDİ AND HÜSEYİN RAHMİ'S ATTITUDES TOWARD PROSTITUTES

With the Tanzimat period, most of the Ottoman intellectuals, from different backgrounds, began to preoccupy with how the Ottoman Empire would be preserved and modernized³⁹² since they had the ‘sense of backwardness.’³⁹³ In this regard, they had a love-hate relationship with the West. They appreciated the West’s development in science and technology but considered their Islamic morality to be superior. Therefore, the Ottoman intelligentsia, each in their own way, tried to form a modern Ottoman culture which also contained nationalist elements. Jale Parla clarifies their aim as follows: “it is a strong inclination toward the West however limited by extremely certain and restrictive boundaries under the umbrella of hegemonic Islamic culture.”³⁹⁴ For disseminating their ideas, which aimed to educate the folk and rehabilitate the culture,³⁹⁵ they used western literary forms such as drama and especially novel.³⁹⁶ In these new forms, the issues of women and marriage had wide coverage.

The place of women in the society, of course, was not only discussed by the Ottoman intelligentsia. It had already started to be discussed in Europe especially with

³⁹² Carter V. Findley, “An Ottoman Occidental in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gulnar, 1889,” *The American Historical Review* 103, No:1 (February 1998): 19, accessed in August 7, 2018., doi:10.2307/2650772

³⁹³ Carter V. Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 179.

³⁹⁴ Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2017), 12.

³⁹⁵ Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar*, 13.

³⁹⁶ Findley, *Turkey*, 124.

the rise of nationalism in the age of the French Revolution. Within this context, chaste women are described as a representative of nationalism's high moral aims. On the other hand, immoral women are regarded as a threat to the established system.³⁹⁷ Descriptions of manhood and womanhood were determined by the nationalist agenda of the state.³⁹⁸ According to Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, in general, there are five ways for women to take part in ethnic and national processes and in relation to state practices:

- (a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;(b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;(c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;(d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences- as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories;(e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.³⁹⁹

Many novelists from the Tanzimat period to the Republican era expressed their thoughts about ideal marriage and the roles of wives and husbands. They considered family as the core of society and a crucial issue in regard to modernization. This is why marriage as a first step to form a family was viewed to be vital in this process. In this regard, they, especially Tanzimat novelists, touched on the education of women which was necessary to “fulfil their household roles in new and better ways.”⁴⁰⁰

Ahmed Midhat Efendi was against the traditionally arranged marriages, as mentioned in chapter 2, and contended that young men and women could choose their partners with their own free will according to Islam.⁴⁰¹ He demonstrated how pre-arranged marriages ruin young people lives, in *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek* (An Angel on Earth) (1879), through the story of Şefik and Raziye. In this regard, Hüseyin Rahmi thought in the same way as Ahmed Midhat. In his *Bir Muadele-i Sevda* (An Equation of Love), the protagonist, Bedia, is a well-educated girl who is married off by her father without her approval. Then, she takes revenge on her husband and father by cheating on

³⁹⁷ George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 90.

³⁹⁸ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 15.

³⁹⁹ Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, *Woman-Nation-State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 7.

⁴⁰⁰ Findley, *Turkey*, 183-184.

⁴⁰¹ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, “Çengi” in *Çengi, Kafkas, Süleyman Musli*, ed. Erol Ülgen and Fatih Andı (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2000), 71.

her husband, she ruins both her own and her family's life.⁴⁰² Prearranged marriage was a common topic during this time. On this topic, Şemseddin Sami wrote the *Taaşşuk-i Talat ve Fitnat* (The Romance of Talat and Fitnat) in 1872, which was incidentally the first novel written by an Ottoman Muslim. Also, İbrahim Şinasi and Namık Kemal wrote plays called *Şair Evlenmesi* (The Poet's Marriage) (1860) and *Zavallı Çocuk* (Poor Child) (1873) respectively.

In this modernization process, the education for women and the issue of a family were tackled in the same ideological framework since both states and the intellectuals believed that education for women is indispensable to establishing an appropriate family, which constitutes the nucleus of modern society. In other words, they did not support women's education for women's own sake but for the nation. They tried to form an ideal society where young boys received a good education before even beginning school. Ahmed Midhat Efendi also believed that education is necessary for young women and stated that well-educated new generation men want to marry educated girls, who know a foreign language and play musical instruments. He found their demand as understandable since these well-educated young men could not be happy with traditional "ignorant" girls.⁴⁰³ In *Jön Türk* (Young Turk), he describes the most suitable type of girl for marriage through the character of Nurullah. He imagined a literate girl, who is not a traditional type and understands from music to some extent, but at the same time should not imitate the Western women.⁴⁰⁴

Along the same line, Namık Kemal indicated that the progress of the empire is contingent on women's education, views which he expressed in his article "A Memorandum on the Education of Women" in 1867.⁴⁰⁵ Similarly, Şemseddin Sami emphasizes the importance of female education in his works such as *Taaşşuk-i Talat ve Fitnat*, *Kadınlar* (Women), *Kamus al-Alam* (Universal Dictionary). In *Taaşşuk-i Talat ve Fitnat*, he specifies three conditions to form a successful marriage: "freedom of choice in selecting a partner," "mutual love and respect," and "regular communication." He

⁴⁰² Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Bir Muadele-i Sevda* (İstanbul, Hilmi Kitabevi, 1946), 127.

⁴⁰³ Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, (İstanbul: Dergâh, 2017), 254.

⁴⁰⁴ Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 254.

⁴⁰⁵ George W. Gawrych, "Şemseddin Sami, Women, and Social Conscience in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, No:1 (January 2010): 99, accessed in October 15, 2018., doi: 10.1080/00263200903432282

criticised male domination over women and saw them as victims. He gave place to women characters' grievances⁴⁰⁶ about male chauvinism.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, in *Kadınlar*, George Gawrych indicates what is probably the most radical statement Şemseddin Sami ever stated that "We stated at the beginning of this treatise and we repeat it again: women will not remain behind men in intelligence (*akıl*), intuition (*feraset*), and sharpness of mind (*zekavat*); perhaps their intuition and sharpness of mind are even sharper and quicker."⁴⁰⁸ "Men must regard women 'from an objective (*hakiki*) perspective, that is to say from the perspective of a female human being (*dişi bir insan*).'"⁴⁰⁹ Although he thinks that a women's education is beneficial in raising children and being a good wife like his contemporaries, he comprehended that all women cannot find happiness in raising child, "some will need intellectual and mental work outside their homes to stimulate their mind."⁴¹⁰

A similar attitude can also be seen in the prominent novelists from the next generation. In her early novels⁴¹¹, Halide Edib indicates that a successful marriage requires "equal partnership," "life-long companionship," and "a strong love."⁴¹² But this strong love does not have to include passion. She considers passion and lust as insecure and risky for a healthy relationship. Moreover, she attached importance to motherhood in terms of family as mothers have a crucial role to raise future generations.⁴¹³ Halide Edib tried to maintain a balance between traditional values and modernity. She "sought to expand women's autonomy through a divorce without jeopardizing the institution of

⁴⁰⁶ Talat's grandmother states: 'Ah, we poor women. [Men] never consider us people. Our fathers give us away as gifts to whatever men they want . . . We keep quiet, but what do our hearts say? . . . Ah you men are so cruel.' Şemseddin Sami, *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* (Istanbul: al-Ceva'ib Matbaası, 1289 H/1875), 26. quoted in Garwych, "Şemseddin Sami," 100; Fitnat's mother states: 'Oh, we poor women. When we marry, we think that we are gaining a husband, a refik (companion or friend). But men do not look at us the same way. The importance of the women they marry is less than the importance of [their] packhorses or carriages.' Şemseddin Sami, *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* (Istanbul: al-Ceva'ib Matbaası, 1289 H/1875), 143. quoted in Garwych, "Şemseddin Sami," 100.

⁴⁰⁷ Gawrych, "Şemseddin Sami," 100.

⁴⁰⁸ Şemseddin Sami, *Kadınlar* (Istanbul: Mıhran Matbaası, 1296 H./1879), 23, in Gawrych, "Şemseddin Sami," 101.

⁴⁰⁹ Şemseddin Sami, *Kadınlar*, 4-5. in Gawrych, "Şemseddin Sami," 102.

⁴¹⁰ Şemseddin Sami, *Kadınlar*, 20-33. in in Gawrych, "Şemseddin Sami," 102.

⁴¹¹ These novels are *Seviyye Talip* (1910), *Yeni Turan* (1912), *Raik'in Annesi* (1909), *Handan* (1912).

⁴¹² Pelin Başçı, "Love, Marriage and Motherhood: Changing Expectations of Women in the Late Ottoman Istanbul," *Turkish Studies* 4, No:3 (Autumn 2003): 172.

⁴¹³ Başçı, "Love, Marriage and Motherhood," 172.

marriage altogether: hence, the unease that upper-class, educated women felt when they talked about passionate love.”⁴¹⁴

The government involvement in the education of girls also accelerated the discussions on the issue of girls’ education. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, as a part of the state’s modernization attempts, the government began to create educational opportunities for girls. In 1858, the first *rüşdiye* (secondary school) for girls was established.⁴¹⁵ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, the state’s official newspaper, announced this school establishment as follows:

The creation of the facilities for women to read and write, as well as for men, will make it possible to relieve men of household affairs so that they can look after important matters.⁴¹⁶

Institutions such as the *Darülmüallimat* (Women’s Teachers Training School) in 1870 as well as the *Kız Sanayi Mektebi* (Girl’s Arts and Craft School) in 1877 were established by the state.⁴¹⁷ In the Young Turk era, the government took a step further, since during this time the idea of Turkish Nationalism gained strength. And only educated Turkish women could properly raise the future generation and this opinion also being widespread among the women who wrote for *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women’s World).⁴¹⁸ Therefore, they set up a high school for women in 1911⁴¹⁹, and, in 1913, education for girls became compulsory. In 1915, the *Inas Darülfununu* (Women’s University) was opened.⁴²⁰

Polygamy was not widely practised in the Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul, less than three per cent of men had more than one wife according to the censuses of 1885 and 1907.⁴²¹ But this issue was widely discussed by the contemporary intelligentsia since

⁴¹⁴ Başçı, “Love, Marriage and Motherhood,” 173.

⁴¹⁵ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 56-57.

⁴¹⁶ Osman Ergin, *Türkiye’de Maarif Tarihi II Maarif*, (Istanbul, 1940), 557, in Fanny Davis, *Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1789 to 1918* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1986), 50.

⁴¹⁷ Davis, *Ottoman Lady*, 51-52,

⁴¹⁸ Nihal Altınbaş, “Marriage and Divorce in the Late Ottoman Empire: Social Upheaval, Women’s Rights, and the Need for New Family Law,” *Journal of Family History* 39, No:2 (2014): 117, accessed in November 1, 2018. doi: 10.1177/0363199013519126

⁴¹⁹ Davis, *Ottoman Lady*, 55.

⁴²⁰ Findley, *Turkey*, 235.

some of them contended that it might be beneficial to prevent prostitution. A proponent of this position, Ahmed Midhat Efendi defended polygamy in his novels. For example, in *Paris'te Bir Türk* (A Turk in Paris) he states:

Unlike the Christian law, Islamic law does not presume humans as angels and not form its rules accordingly. It deems necessary to tolerate every need of people. If Islamic law did not allow polygamy for men, who cannot be satisfied with one wife, it would not regard prostitution as ignominy.⁴²²

He even demonstrated this idea through his French woman character, Madame de Rose Bouton, in the *Mesail-i Muğlaka* (The Abstruse Issues). She regards the Ottoman men as perfect and praises them too highly while describing Ahmed Midhat's ideal world. This madame states that the men of Paris start to visit brothels at the age of twelve or thirteen and usually catch venereal diseases there. On the contrary, in the East, prostitution, drunkenness and gambling, which damage the bodies and mental health of men, hardly existed. Therefore, she contends that it is normal for Muslim men, who do not damage their mental and physical health with these, not to be satisfied with one wife.⁴²³

On the other hand, Şemseddin Sami defended monogamy against polygamy since he thought that a man can truly love only one woman. He believed that polygamy cannot be applied to human nature and causes many problems in the family. Also, the Qur'an indicates that men had better to have one wife.⁴²⁴ On the other hand, he added that a man can take a second wife, with the permission of his first wife, in extraordinary circumstances such as if his first wife has an illness to prevent her to have a child.⁴²⁵ Moreover, in this respect, there is a debate between Fatma Aliye and Mahmud Es'ad, a legal scholar, in the issue of polygamy. First, Mahmud Es'ad wrote a series of articles, under the name of *Ta'addüd-i Zevcat Talak ve Hukuk-i Nisvan* (Polygamy, Divorce and Women's Law), in 1898. He defends polygamy since it is legitimate according to Islam and human nature has a tendency toward it.⁴²⁶ To criticize these ideas, Fatma Aliye wrote

⁴²¹ Alan Duben and Cem Behar, *Istanbul Households: Marriage, Family, and Fertility 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 148-149.

⁴²² Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 249.

⁴²³ Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 250.

⁴²⁴ Gawrych, "Şemseddin Sami," 103.

⁴²⁵ Gawrych, "Şemseddin Sami," 103.

⁴²⁶ Scott Rank, "Polygamy and Religious Polemics in the Late Ottoman Empire: Fatma Aliye and Mahmud Es'ad's *Ta'addüd-i Zevcât'a Zeyl*," *Cihannüma* 1 No:2 (December 2015): 69.

the *Ta'addüd-i Zevcata Zeyl* where she contends that polygamy is not common in the early Islamic history and it is not suitable to modern worlds. However, she prefers polygamy rather than Europe's widespread practice of fornication.⁴²⁷ Although they had a debate on polygamy and defended a different point of views, it is seen that they were on the same front on the issue of the superiority of Islam over the West.⁴²⁸

In regard to the abovementioned discussions, Hüseyin Rahmi stood in a rather different position compared to the previously discussed Ottoman writers. He did not display a strong patriarchal horizon in his novels. As was mentioned in chapter 3, marriage was not an important criterion for morality. In *Şık* (Chic), Adel and Maşuk live together without marriage and they are very happy since they can live their love freely without any marriage bonds. This relationship was regarded as totally moral by him.⁴²⁹ Independent of the issue of morality, Gürpınar in his works promoted the notion that the main aim of marriage for a man should be to be a good husband and father to his family and fulfil his responsibilities properly since one can have intercourse without marriage.⁴³⁰ He criticised the lack of education among women and their state of seclusion at home. He defended the idea that gender inequality is the main reason behind the existing social problems. On the other hand, those girls who receive education also face many problems since they are not allowed to live as they wish.⁴³¹

Other than the “chaste mothers of the society”, there were also women on the margins of the society, namely prostitutes who were seen as a major threat to the social order. As mentioned above, the socio-political developments, modernization and rise of nationalism, had an influence on the novelists of the time. They concentrated on common issues but also had their own unique approaches in accordance with their concept of morality and worldview. To demonstrate these discussions, I analysed the situation of the prostitutes and Ahmed Midhat and Hüseyin Rahmi's attitudes toward them in the previous chapters. Despite the fact that Hüseyin Rahmi was influenced in his early career

⁴²⁷ Rank, “Polygamy,” 66-69.

⁴²⁹ Gürpınar, *Şık*, 185.

⁴³⁰ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem* (İstanbul: Papersense, 2015), 166.

⁴³¹ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *İffet- Mutallaka* (İstanbul: Papersense, 2015), 137-138; Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Bir Muadele-i Sevdâ* (İstanbul, Hilmi Kitabevi, 1946), 127.

by Ahmed Midhat Efendi⁴³² and both wrote for educating people to influence the society in line with their moralistic views, it appears that they have different notions of ethics and varying attitudes toward prostitutes. Therefore, looking for reliable facts in the novels does not seem possible although they give invaluable details about their own times. Authors can mould the facts intentionally or build their stories under the influence of their preconceptions,⁴³³ and one can see such examples also in Ahmed Midhat and Hüseyin Rahmi' works. It is valuable to look for the reasons behind the differences between the authors' thoughts, the way how they shape the facts and their preconceptions, since this approach can show how contemporary people, in this case, the Ottoman intellectuals, perceived the events and issues and reacted toward them in their own lifetimes.

Ahmed Midhat Efendi divided the prostitutes into two as ones who deserve empathy and compassion and ones who are happy with their profession and thus denounced by him. On the other hand, in Hüseyin Rahmi's novels, there are only cunning and evil types of prostitutes, except for the 11-year-old prostitute Huriye, who is depicted in *Hakka Sığındık* (Take Refuge in God); all of Hüseyin Rahmi's prostitutes share some common characteristics with Ahmed Midhat's "evil" prostitutes. This situation seems to be interesting, since Hüseyin Rahmi, who defended the women rights and equality of genders, shows no empathy and pity on these women, while Ahmed Midhat Efendi who displayed a more conservative tendency, has an empathetic attitude toward them. Even Hüseyin Rahmi accepts that most of the time women ended up as prostitutes because of poverty or maltreatment by their husbands or due to the lack of other job opportunities to sustain their livelihood⁴³⁴. But he believed that once a woman starts this profession, there is no chance for her to be a moral woman again. Moreover, he believed that those men who try to help prostitutes do not have truly humanistic or altruistic motivations. They do this as they feel the affection of an egoistic nature for these women. If these men were really altruistic persons, they would recognise the many needy people in society and thus would help them instead of the prostitutes.⁴³⁵

⁴³² Berna Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış 1* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2018), 113-114.

⁴³³ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Morals of History*, trans. Alyson Waters (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 88-91.

⁴³⁴ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Toraman* (Istanbul: Papersense, 2015), 97.

⁴³⁵ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Tesadüf* (Istanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1945), 122.

This overgeneralization, obviously, is unlikely to be true in real life, but he aimed to prove that these women had devastating effects on society. On the other hand, in *İffet* (Chastity), İffet, she is one of the rare characters whom Hüseyin Rahmi reveals that he takes sides with, is a poor but well-educated girl. She and her family suffer from hunger for days and during these days receive an offer from a rich young man who wants to keep her as a mistress. For a moment, she thinks to accept his offer but even this hesitation makes her feel guilty as she finds this situation disgusting. Because of this sense of guilt, she falls ill and after a while dies.⁴³⁶ With this story, he probably wants to show that an honourable girl prefers death rather than sell her body in return for money.

But Ahmed Midhat Efendi approaches prostitutes who did not lose their inner morality with fatherly compassion, as he thinks that because of their misfortune they found themselves in this way of life. Rescuing these girls from the brothel is the duty of honourable Ottoman gentlemen like those in *Henüz Onyediy Yaşında* (Only 17 Years Old) and *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek* (An Angel on Earth). In this way, he reveals his nationalist sentiments and his belief in the superiority of Turkish Islamic morals. This appears openly in *Henüz Onyediy Yaşında* through the words of Kalyopi, a Greek prostitute. She indicates that she always prefers the Turkish men to others:

“*Aman, aman!* May God save the Turks. Turks are the ones who treat us well. Others, at first, start bargaining for three *mecidiyes*, though the fee for a night is one and a half lira. They sometimes just leave since they do not find the bargain reasonable. They neither drink a glass of *rakı* nor give any tips or gifts! Nothing. They do not leave the bed until the morning.”⁴³⁷

Her first client was also a nice Turkish man. When she fainted because of her anxiety, he approaches her with mercy and even tried to solace her and then gave more than the price they had decided earlier.⁴³⁸ In addition, in *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, Jozefino, a French piano tutor, states: “Turkish hospitality cannot be found in Europe.”⁴³⁹ As mentioned above, he also conveyed his thoughts about polygamy via a French woman. He probably chose this to improve his thoughts’ credibility in the eyes of the readers.

⁴³⁶ Gürpınar, *İffet*, 190-195.

⁴³⁷ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, ed.Nuri Sağlam (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2017), 132.

⁴³⁸ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 208-209.

⁴³⁹ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, ed.Ahmet Aydemir (İstanbul: Dergah, 2018), 125.

In this context, Ahmed Midhat Efendi also claims that brothels were introduced into the Ottoman Empire by the Europeans. He supposed that the oldest record about them is Fazıl-ı Enderuni's *Zenanname* (Book of Women) (1793), a work produced during a time when the West had already started to influence the Ottoman lands. According to him in the cultures of Islam and the Turks, brothels do not exist. He further maintains that in Anatolia where western influence still did not exist, one cannot encounter a brothel.⁴⁴⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, of course, could not be this naïve. As mentioned in chapter 1, there are historical sources which prove the existence of prostitution and brothels in the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century onwards. Here, he tried to prove the superiority of Turkish-Islamic culture over the Western culture and emphasized its ill effects on the Ottoman lands. İbnülhakkı Mehmed Tahir, the author of *Sefalethaneler* (Dens of Iniquity), had the exact same idea. He also believed that brothels appeared in the empire with the Western influence.⁴⁴¹

Unlike Ahmed Midhat Efendi, Hüseyin Rahmi did not attempt to defend the superiority of Islam and Turkish culture over the West but he was not an admirer of the western culture either. While he imagines a society based on science and virtue, there is no place for old-fashioned ideas and superstitious beliefs. He gave his messages by using negative examples in a humorous way. He states in *Şekavet-i Edebiye*: "I have tried to introduce a high philosophy (or morals) to my reader through entertaining anecdotes."⁴⁴² In his early novels, which are included in the present study and written before the Second Constitutional Era, he generally criticised dandies who just imitate the extravagant parts of the Western culture and have no idea about its science and moral values. They always made the wrong choices. One of the worst examples of these choices is having a relationship with a prostitute, especially with a French one, who ruins their lives forever. It is worth mentioning that, in this period, when one thinks about the West, the first country which comes to one's mind is France. There are also French prostitutes in the Ahmed Midhat's *Felatun Bey ve Rakım Efendi* (Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi) and İbnülhakkı Mehmed Tahir's *Sefalethaneler* (Dens of Iniquity). With *Tesadüf* (Coincidence) (1900), Hüseyin Rahmi started to use Turkish prostitute characters in his

⁴⁴⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*. 154-155.

⁴⁴¹ İbnülhakkı Mehmed Tahir, *Mütehhil ve Gayr-ı Mütehhillere: Sefalethaneler* (Istanbul: İtimad Kütüphanesi, R.1328/1912), 5.

⁴⁴² Moran, *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış I*, 114.

novels. Despite his portrayal of prostitutes as hopelessly evil characters, the ones who come out better in these stories are always prostitutes while their lovers had a tragic ending. In *Tebessüm-i Elem* (The Smile of Sorrow), he emphasized that if men do not demand a prostitute⁴⁴³, there cannot be a profession of prostitution, and that is probably why he punished men who have relationships with prostitutes instead of prostitutes themselves. In this regard, he considered this issue from a different angle compared to the traditional point of view which blame the prostitutes in these cases. The examples of traditional view can be seen in Mustafa Galib's *Fahişeler Hayatı ve Redâ'et-i Ahlâkiye* (The Life of Prostitutes and Immorality) and İbnülhakkı Mehmed Tahir's *Sefalethaneler* (Dens of Inequity). They depict young men as innocent victims of prostitutes. Therefore, how he portrayed prostitutes as an evil and social parasite, the main guilty party were the men who have a relationship with them.⁴⁴⁴

Along the same line, Ahmed Midhat Efendi also saw men as primarily responsible for the plight of the prostitutes, as depicted in *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek* (An Angel on Earth), but there are some differences between his and Hüseyin Rahmi's approaches. He criticised the men who caused chaste women to end up as prostitutes by seducing them. Then, they left these women in the lurch. In the example of Arife, he showed how a chaste woman turns into an evil who ruins both her own and other people's lives. Moreover, his characters which were prostitutes of ill repute do not always have one-sided characteristic, unlike Hüseyin Rahmi's characters. For instance, Sünbül, in *Çengi*, is a very immoral woman but she tries to provide a moral life for her son and prevents him to be a *mirasyedi* (spendthrift).⁴⁴⁵

Unlike Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, Ahmed Midhat Efendi describes ideal male characters who seem to be the representatives of himself in his novels. They are well-trained, hardworking Ottomans who come from the lower middle class. With these characters, he illustrates the ideal Ottoman man and society. Ahmed Midhat Efendi emphasized the superiority of Islamic morals and contended that the only condition to be a well-respected Ottoman was an acknowledgement of Islamic culture's superiority over the western

⁴⁴³ Gürpınar, *Tebessüm-i Elem*, 457-460.

⁴⁴⁴ Mustafa Galib, *Fahişeler Hayatı ve Redâ'et-i Ahlâkiye* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1922), 5; Mehmed Tahir, *Sefalethaneler*, 20.

⁴⁴⁵ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Çengi*, 148-149.

culture.⁴⁴⁶ But it seems that his notion of morality is not always compatible with Islam. He rather gives importance to respectability in the view of the public eye. Novel characters like Şefik, in *Yeryüzünde Bir Melek*, and Resmi, in *Karnaval (Carnival)*, have a secret relationship with married woman. Ahmed Midhat legitimizes this situation by demonstrating that their love is innocent, and they live their relationship in secret. Resmi, even in this situation, can criticise Zekayi who comes to the carnival with his prostitute girlfriend, since they do not need to hide their relationship unlike Resmi and his married lover. Ahmed Midhat Efendi himself was aware of his contradictions and make comments about this in *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* through his relationships with his female English students and Jozefino.⁴⁴⁷ One day Rakım goes to the house of Jozefino to visit her and here, they have intercourse. After that, Jozefino states that she goes this far with him as she knows that he is a virtuous man. She asks him to keep this as a secret because she does not want to damage her prestige in the eyes of families who hire her as a tutor for their children. Ahmed Midhat Efendi tries to explain Rakım's situation as seen in an imaginary conversation with his readers as follows:

-If so, our Rakım Efendi keeps his cards close to his chest as Felatun Bey states. [the reaction of imagined readers]

Yes! We said that we do not portray the characteristics of an angel. We portray real characteristics of, a contemporary young man who is honourable, decent, and real *alafranga*. If there was a man who was in the position of Rakım that evening [when he has intercourse with Jozefino] and acts more abstinently, we would include him in this story. While keeping his cards close to his chest is the characteristic of a rational young man like Rakım, you can find the opposite characteristics in Felatun Bey.

-But when we evaluate the situation in terms of morality... [the reaction of imagined readers]

Fine! Here are two different examples of morality from our youth! You are free to approve the example you find reasonable as you are also free to choose neither of them!⁴⁴⁸

One can encounter similar examples in Ahmed Midhat's own life. For example, in *Avrupa'da Bir Cevlan (A Tour in Europe)*, he recounted that when he stayed at the Grand Hotel in Stockholm, his services of a bath and a haircut were done by a Swedish woman.

⁴⁴⁶ Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar*, 33.

⁴⁴⁷ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, 55.

⁴⁴⁸ Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, 68.

And he did not see any harm in this since he thought that people of Sweden were well-mannered who know how to behave.⁴⁴⁹

This point of view is not unique to Ahmed Midhat Efendi. It can be also encountered in Ahmed Rasim's *Fuhş-i Atik* (Old Prostitution in Former Days). He contends that old prostitution was more moral than the new since the brothels were concentrated at certain places and upright families did not witness ignominy. He also emphasized the importance of raids instigated by neighbourhood people, which was prohibited with the right of immunity of residence in 1908 by the constitution (*Kanun-i Esasi*). According to Rasim, these raids served to prevent the spread of prostitution through neighbourhoods. This constitutional check disturbed him greatly because, now, people would begin losing their respect for religion, family and neighbourhood. For him, the notion of emancipation, imported from the West, would damage Islamic ethics. Moreover, he gives some examples of people's perception of respectability and morality.⁴⁵⁰ For instance, when Ahmed Rasim's mother became suspicious that he is drinking alcohol, she sent him to their religious old relative for advice on the harm of alcohol. However, this "religious" relative said that he has been drinking alcohol for fifty years every night, but he emphasizes that he drinks secretly and before drinking he should pray to God: "Oh Lord! Please, do not put me to shame!"⁴⁵¹ In another example, as mentioned in chapter 1, Rasim mentions neighbourhoods' good attitudes toward *Kapama* (mistresses) who act like a 'chaste' married women and establish good relationships with the residents of the neighbourhood.⁴⁵²

In the novels of Hüseyin Rahmi, written after the First World War⁴⁵³, one can observe the devastating effects of war on society and the increasing proliferation of prostitution. During this time, it became a serious problem and the state took action to prevent the proliferation of prostitution and tried to create job opportunities for them.⁴⁵⁴ As

⁴⁴⁹ Findley, "An Ottoman Occidental in Europe", 46.

⁴⁵⁰ Ahmed Rasim, *Dükkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık: "Fuhş-i Atik"* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1992), 240-247.

⁴⁵¹ Ahmed Rasim, *Dükkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 76.

⁴⁵² Ahmed Rasim, *Dükkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık*, 281-282.

⁴⁵³ Especially in *Hakka Sığındık* (1919) and *Hayattan Sahifeler* (1919).

mentioned in chapter 3, the prostitutes in these novels exercise their profession under very bad conditions and in the remote parts of neighbourhoods and graveyards, unlike the prostitutes who are in the much better conditions in the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi's earlier works. Also, it seems that, during this time, the women's visibility in social life increased. For instance, in *Toraman* (Sturdy), Servinaz does business with men and regularly meets them in their offices.⁴⁵⁵ In *Hayattan Sahifeler* (Pages from Life), Hacer sits in a coffeehouse, which is generally a socialising place mainly for men, while drinking coffee and smoking for hours. And she has a conversation with men there, especially with the owner.⁴⁵⁶

To conclude, from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, the Ottoman intellectuals began to give wide coverage to the issue of women in their works, where they described ideal marriage and motherhood. In contrast to these ideal women, there were prostitutes who were seen as a threat to the society. Through the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi, it is possible to see two different approaches to the issue of prostitution which spread through the empire widely and even turned into an international issue.⁴⁵⁷ Over the issue of prostitution, their worldview and perception of morality can be evaluated. Consequently, it is seen that Ahmed Midhat Efendi believed the superiority of Islam, but he was not strict in Islamic rules. For him, the most important thing is respectability, hence he approached prostitutes in this manner. On the other hand, Hüseyin Rahmi had a more secular frame of mind and he had an uncompromising notion of morality. That is why, unlike Ahmed Midhat Efendi, he showed no understanding towards them.

⁴⁵⁵ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 52.

⁴⁵⁶ Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, *Hayattan Sahifeler* (Istanbul: Papersense, 2015), 19-20.

⁴⁵⁷ Rifat Bali, *The Jews and Prostitution in Constantinople 1854-1922* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008), 30.

CONCLUSION

Brothel-based prostitution became more common through Istanbul from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, and the city became one of the important centres for the international “white slave trafficking.”⁴⁵⁸ In parallel with this, the Ottoman government attempted to regulate prostitution especially in order to prevent the spread of venereal diseases. This study aims to demonstrate how these developments were reflected in the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi through prostitute characters. Novels give invaluable information on their authors’ mentality and also the structure of society and socio-political contexts of their time. Since Ahmed Midhat ve Hüseyin Rahmi wrote their novels to educate people, these pieces of information can be seen in their novels more clearly. The main objective of this thesis is to identify the characteristics of prostitutes in the novels, then to illustrate the approaches of Ahmed Midhat and Hüseyin Rahmi towards prostitutes and how these approaches were affected by current intellectual debates like modernization of the Ottoman society and the place of women in this modernized society, and also their own notion of morality. Additionally, their approaches toward prostitutes have been compared.

First, the general framework of prostitution in late Ottoman Istanbul and the state’s intervention in this issue were discussed relying on secondary literature and some archival documents. Then, to illustrate the issue of prostitution in a holistic way, three different treatises about prostitution based on contemporary observations, Ahmed Rasim’s *Fuhş-i Atik* (Prostitution in Former Days), İbnülhakkı Mehmed Tahir’s *Müteehhil ve Gayr-ı Müteehhillere: Sefalethaneleler* (For the Married and the Unmarried: Dens of Iniquity), and Mustafa Galib’s *Fahişeler Hayatı ve Redâ’et-i Ahlâkiye* (The Life

⁴⁵⁸ Wyers, “Wicked” Istanbul, 61.

of Prostitutes and Immorality), were evaluated. Consequently, it was seen that they, especially Mehmed Tahir and Mustafa Galib, had a rather gender-biased approaches to prostitution; like the Ottoman government, they regarded prostitutes as the main responsible factor for the spread of venereal disease without considering that their clients could also transmit venereal diseases to the prostitutes, and also for undermining the morale of young Ottoman men.

In the second chapter, the characteristics of prostitutes in the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi have been identified. As a result it is seen that Ahmed Midhat divided prostitutes into two as the ones who are moral at heart and deserve good treatment, and the ones who are happy with their profession. The latter ones are generally punished at the end of the novels. He approached the prostitutes who ended up a brothel due to their misfortune, with fatherly compassion and at the end of the novels, his idealized young Ottoman men characters generally rescue these girls from brothels.

In the third chapter, also the characteristics of prostitutes in the novels of Hüseyin Rahmi have been demonstrated. What we see is that all the prostitutes have the same characteristics, i.e. they are all cunning, seductive, disloyal with the notable exception of the eleven-year-old Huriye in *Hakka Sığındık* (Take Refuge in God). In stark contrast to Ahmed Midhat Efendi, he shows no tolerance to prostitutes and portrays them as an unmitigated evil. However, Hüseyin Rahmi did not have a gender-biased approach. He also portrayed the clients of the prostitutes as weak-minded and at the end of novels, these men are punished by Hüseyin Rahmi.

Finally, Ahmed Midhat's and Hüseyin Rahmi's approaches towards prostitutes have been compared within the context of the late Ottoman intellectual debates like the modernization of the Ottoman society, rising Turkish nationalism, the place of women in the society, marriage, and family. These debates went hand in hand with the issue of family and the role of women. Accordingly, a modernized society is an important element for a developed nation. The constituting element of a modernized society is the family in which women play an important role in child raising, in other words, for the shaping of the future of the nation. That is why the place of women in society and their education gained importance.

Both Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi were against prearranged marriages. They believed that when young people are married off to someone whom they

do not love, they more tend to commit fornication. In his novels, Hüseyin Rahmi generally depicts married men who have a relationship with prostitutes. These men neglect their wives and children and as a consequence their families become ruined by these relationships. Consequently, Hüseyin Rahmi regarded prostitutes as social parasites who threaten family life. On the other hand, Ahmed Midhat Efendi defended polygamy as an important tool in the prevention of prostitution and fornication. While defending polygamy, he also tried to demonstrate the superiority of Islam over Christianity, since the latter does not allow polygamy.⁴⁵⁹

Moreover, Ahmed Midhat's idea of the superiority of the Islamic and Turkish culture was also seen in his idealized Turkish male protagonists' attitudes towards prostitutes. These men rescue "unfortunate" girls from brothels who ended up as prostitutes because of their misfortune. They do this "favour" in a frank manner, they do not engage in love with them. In the example of Kalyopi, he showed that the prostitutes always prefer Turkish men because they have high morals and treat them well.⁴⁶⁰ In this regard, he also claimed that brothels did not exist in the Ottoman land before the starting of European influence in the country. As shown in chapter 1, this claim cannot be true; in fact there exist records of brothels within the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century onwards. He, obviously made this claim to praise the Turkish-Islamic culture and emphasise its "higher morals". On the other hand, Hüseyin Rahmi did not believe in the superiority of Islamic culture and did not have nationalist sentiments. He displayed a more secular frame of mind. However, in his early novels, he chose the prostitute characters among French nationals. In this way, he tried to demonstrate the threats of unconscious imitation of the west as Ahmed Midhat did in *Felâhî Bey ile Rakım Efendi*. On the other hand, they did not have a one-sided perception in this regard, since they also illustrated 'moral' French women in their novels. Therefore, they enabled their readers to see which parts of the western culture should be taken as examples.

Both Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi criticised the society in terms of women rights in their own way. Ahmed Midhat Efendi criticised the society's attitude toward women which according to him is not compatible with Islam. He claims that the rights Islam acknowledges women is far better than the western women's rights. The

⁴⁵⁹ Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, 249.

⁴⁶⁰ Ahmed Midhat Efendi, *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, 132.

oppression of society on women, which does not comply with the Islamic law, made women incognizant about the outer world, hence they might be easily deceived by malevolent men. These deceived women generally end up as prostitutes. On the other hand, Hüseyin Rahmi defended equality of women and men in a more modern sense; for him this inequality was one of the most important reasons behind the social problems. Although he had a very negative approach toward prostitutes, he thinks that the society itself is responsible for their ending up as prostitutes. There are no any other job opportunities for them. He thought that many of them could have become famous actresses or singers thanks to their beauty and beautiful voice.⁴⁶¹

This thesis is a modest attempt to address the existing scarcity in research literature on Ottoman prostitution, by evaluating prostitutes in the late Ottoman Istanbul through the novels of Ahmed Midhat Efendi and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar in a comparative way while also dealing with the reasons for the spread of prostitution in this period and the current intellectual debates on modernization, women and marriage which were crucial in shaping their approaches. It is seen that non-fiction materials, like archival records, provide a general framework of events and issues through the perspective of the state, in this case, prostitution, while literary works enable historians to evaluate societies' and intellectuals' perceptions and reactions on events and issues in their time. Therefore, using both archival and literary materials provided a more holistic view on studies of history.

This study might be enhanced by evaluating some other contemporary novelists' work. For instance, by considering the novels of Namık Kemal, Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem, Mizancı Murat, Mehmet Celal the issue of prostitution could be understood more holistically. It might be also fruitful to compare the novels of Ahmed Midhat and Fatma Aliye who had prostitute characters in her novel *Udi* (The Oud Player). It would be a good opportunity to evaluate the differences between these male and female writers' approaches towards prostitutes, both of whom believed in the superiority of Islam over the Western culture. Moreover, the time frame might be extended from the late Ottoman period to the early republican period to analyse the continuities or changes. For this purpose, the whole novels of Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, or another novelist who included

⁴⁶¹ Gürpınar, *Toraman*, 97.

many prostitutes in his novels like Selahaddin Enis Atabeyoğlu, who was productive as a writer from 1912 to 1944, could be evaluated.



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