

**Research Article**

**European Female Characters In The Works Of Ahmet Mithat Efendi And İsmail Gaspıralı**

*Ahmet Mithat Efendi ve İsmail Gaspıralı'nın Eserlerinde Avrupalı Kadınlar*

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Makale Gönderme Tarihi	Revizyon Tarihi	Kabul Tarihi
06.12.2019	15.12.2019	16.12.2019

***Abstract***

*This paper aims to explore European women characters in selected works of Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844-1912) and İsmail Gaspıralı (1851-1914). This particular focus facilitates the reader to revise some major claims and generalisations that were made on the post-Tanzimat literature. It also underlines the plurality of views and approaches existing during that period.*

*In this paper, European female characters are focused and analysed in the novel of Ahmet Mithat Efendi *Acâyib-i Âlem* (1881-82) and; in the narratives of İsmail Gaspıralı "*Frengistan Mektupları*" (1887) and "*Sudan Mektupları*" (1889).*

*The paper is concluded by pointed out that in these novel and narratives the European women guided the Ottoman men by using their knowledge. The European culture and especially the positive sciences were also introduced the to the "Eastern" men through the European women. In essence these novels the European women are portrayed as the dominant part in their relationship with the "Eastern men". It is because of these women a reversal in the traditional hierarchy between genders occurred.*

**Keywords:** *European Women, Muslim Men, Traditional Hierarchy*

***Öz***

*Bu çalışmada Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844-1912) ve İsmail Gaspıralı'nın (1851-1914) bazı eserlerindeki Avrupalı kadın karakterler üzerinde odaklanarak, Tanzimat sonrası edebiyatı söz konusu olduğunda birkaç eserden yola çıkılarak geliştirilen ve bütün dönemi kapsamayı amaçlayan genellemelerin, eseri anlamak ve açıklamak noktasında yetersiz kaldığı; Tanzimat sonrası dönemde fikir alanında olduğu gibi edebiyat alanında da bir çoğulluğun olduğu ve dönem hakkında tek ve bütünlüklü bir yargıya ulaşmanın olanaklı olmadığı ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır.*

**Önerilen Atıf/Suggested Citation**

Çamkara Erginer, A. 2019, European Female Characters In The Works Of Ahmet Mithat Efendi And İsmail Gaspıralı, *Üçüncü Sektör Sosyal Ekonomi Dergisi*, 54(4), 2010-2024

*Çalışmada Ahmet Mithat Efendi'nin Acâyib-i Âlem (1881-82) romanı ile İsmail Gaspıralı'nın "Frengistan Mektupları" (1887) ve "Sudan Mektupları" (1889) başlıklı anlatılarından Avrupalı kadın karakterler üzerinde durulmuştur.*

*Çalışmada bu romanlardaki Avrupalı kadınların, Doğulu erkek için Avrupa'ya ve pozitif bilimlere açılan birer kapı durumunda oldukları, bilgi sahibi olmaları bakımından Doğulu Müslüman erkeğe rehberlik edip onu bilgilendiren ve bu yolla onun üzerinde denetim kuran etken karakterler olarak kurgulandıkları ve cinsler arası geleneksel hiyerarşiyi tersine çevirdikleri gösterilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Avrupalı kadınlar, Müslüman erkekler, geleneksel hiyerarşi

## I. Introduction

This paper<sup>1</sup> discussed two significant 19th century authors and the European female characters which appear in some of their works. The first author is Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844-1912) who is a very well-known author, especially for his strong connections with the post-Tanzimat Literature. The second author İsmail Gaspıralı (1851-1914) is a rather neglected figure in terms of authorship. Although he did not live in Istanbul, in my opinion, he should be analyzed in Turkish Literature and post-Tanzimat Literature because of his close relationship with the literary elite in Istanbul. My aim in this paper is to present a new perspective on the discussions regarding the image of European women by focusing on the relationship between Eastern Muslim men and European women characters in the works of the aforementioned authors. Consequently, this study can be considered as an attempt to make a contribution to the discussions on post-Tanzimat Literature and women.

First of all, it should be emphasized that to open a discussion regarding these two authors and to analyze them together is not unintentional. In fact, the similarities and interactions of Ottoman Turks and Russia and Russian Turks at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century is a very interesting topic and has not been addressed sufficiently. A careful investigation reveals many common analogies between these two authors. They lived in the same period and stood out with their enlightening characters. They spent their whole careers in journalism. Ahmet Mithat founded the newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* in 1878, which was a very important newspaper at the time, and Gaspıralı founded the newspaper *Tercüman* in 1883, which was the first Turkish newspaper of the Crimean Turks. Both authors used the journalism as a tool to educate their societies and to express and circulate their ideas.

Nevertheless, this paper considers is their attitude towards Westernization and modernization as the most important similarity between these two authors. In research into post-Tanzimat Literature, it is stated that Ahmet Mithat's thoughts on Westernization and modernization are different from his contemporaries' (Ülken, 1966: p.160; Okay, 2008: p.8). Unlike his contemporaries who tied Westernization and modernization with reference to political regimes, Ahmet Mithat approached this topic in terms of *terakki*, which is about the improvements in knowledge and civilization. Similar to Ahmet Mithat, İsmail Gaspıralı approached Westernization and modernization with similarly parallel views. He claimed that Europe should be taken as an example not in terms of its political environment and regimes, but in terms of its knowledge and material advancement (Gaspıralı, 2004: p. 26; Lazerini: 2004, p. 93). The authors shared a similar point of view regarding the face of Westernization.

The similarity of the representation of European women in some of their work will constitute the main subject of this study. Indeed, it is possible to find European women characters in many novels in post-Tanzimat literature. Fazıl Gökçek states in his article "Tanzimat Dönemi Roman ve Hikâyelerinde Kadın Erkek İlişkilerinin Düzenlenişi ile İlgili Bazı Tespitler" (Certain Findings Related to Male-Female Relationships in Novels and Stories of the Tanzimat Period) that while writers of the Tanzimat were writing about male-female relations, in order to ensure meeting of

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<sup>1</sup> This article was derived from my M.A. thesis, "Bilgiye Açılan Kapılar: Ahmet Mithat Efendi ve İsmail Gaspıralı'nın Eserlerinde Avrupalı Kadınlar" (2008).

the lovers they had to provide some form of mechanism because of the obligations that came from the restrictions imposed on such relations by their society at the time and therefore Tanzimat writers chose foreign women, non-Muslim (*gayrimüslim*) women or female concubines (*cariye*) as their female characters (Gökçek, 2000, p. 126-132). If we examine the studies of the post-Tanzimat Literature female characters that have been carried out so far, we can see that research<sup>2</sup> has been done on concubines and non-Muslim female characters. However, there is no research focusing on European female characters. Yet, considering the European female characters, there is a tendency to make a generalization of the Tanzimat Period despite the various movements in the era. In her study *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (Fathers and Sons: Epistemological Foundations of Tanzimat Novels) on the subject of how Europeanization was received in the post-Tanzimat period, Jale Parla made a generalization of the Tanzimat literature based on Şinasi and Namık Kemal's words:

As Şinasi refers to the aim of the Tanzimat as “the marriage of Asia's old intelligence (“*akl-ı pirâne*”) with the Europe's untouched ideas (“*bikr-i fikr*”), East's absolutist system of thought is dominant in the marriage metaphor of Asian men and European women. Let's have a look on the expression of the Namık Kemal emphasizing with metaphor to the Eastern absolutist system: “We imitate a number of their arts and try to engage the perfectness of the ideas (“*fikr-i kemal*”) and untouched dreams (“*bikr-i hayal*”) of the East and West”. Hereby, we know as well that the “perfectness of the ideas” in all men women oppositions represents men and “untouched dreams” represents women. It means that, the authors of Tanzimat considered male-dominant marriage merger as a passive element, doesn't matter how much they contain westernization or how much copying from West or emulating West. (Parla, 1990, p. 15)

According to the assessment of Parla, the first Tanzimat period authors adopted the metaphor of a marriage that personalized Ottoman's strong and dominant male and Europe's passive young virgin who are ready to be conquered. In her study, *Kör Ayna Kayıp Şark* (Blind Mirror Lost East), Nurdan Gürbilek also agreed with Parla's assessment and describes the Asia in Asia-Europe marriage as masculine and interprets this as a kind of resistance to European culture.

Indeed, there is a masculine voice that has not turned down despite the sense of defeat when confronted with Europe and sense of being orphan felt in the novels of Tanzimat. A kind of conquest dream during the defeat: In the same century, while many European writers referred the East as a woman, being proud with their history Ottoman authors do not hesitate to refer Europe as a women waiting to be conquered. Despite being author of a power losing empire, aspire the Europe marriage to unfavorable conditions, author still could associates the masculinity to himself/herself, to Asia, could see the penetration of a foreign culture as penetration of a woman desire. (2004, p. 77-78)

According to this view, Tanzimat writers, especially through their novels, were trying to show that the Ottoman Empire had not lost its power even though it was defeated by European civilization in terms of politics and economics. In addition to the assessments of Parla, Gürbilek refers to another characteristic of Europe which is represented in Tanzimat novels by women: “Europe is a woman, and wakes the ambitions of the son, but, in order to prevent this ambition from causing the disaster of the son, the one who wakes the ambitions should be tamed, and should be adapted to the East just like Ahmet Mithat mentions in his warnings about translation” (Gürbilek, 2004, p. 83). Once more, it can be seen in the assessment of Gürbilek that the European women characters representing Europe are generalized as passive characters to be tamed by active Eastern Ottoman men. However, it is difficult to say that such a generalization is valid for all Tanzimat writers. Hence, the intellectuals of the period, both in their philosophical writings and their literary works showed different attitudes in the face of Westernization. İlber Ortaylı's

<sup>2</sup> For example İsmail Parlatır *Tanzimat Edebiyatında Kölelik* (1987), Fazıl Gökçek *Osmanlı Kapısında Büyümek* (2006), Seda Uyanık “19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı-Türk Romanında Gayrimüslim İmgeleri” (2007).

evaluation of New Ottomans in his book *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (The Longest Century of the Empire) can be seen as an example of this situation: “Finally, the ideas of the New Ottomans create a colorful spectrum that contains various views, from constitutional liberalism to modernist Islamism, or even to a matured Turkism and socialism” (Ortaylı, 2005, p. 265). Thus, in this context, the assessment of the European women in the works of Ahmet Mithat Efendi and İsmail Gaspıralı will reveal a different picture of the Tanzimat period.

European women characters were similarly positioned against the Eastern Muslim men in Ahmet Mithat’s novel *Acâyib-i Âlem* (1881-82) and the narrations by İsmail Gaspıralı “Frengistan Mektupları” (1887) and “Sudan Mektupları” (1889). European women characters from the writings of both Ahmet Mithat and Gaspıralı, in contrast to the generalizations of post-Tanzimat literature, have not been “conquered” or “domesticated”. In terms of their knowledge, those women have developed beyond the Eastern Muslim men, and have the ability to inform and guide those men on several subjects. Furthermore, these women feel sympathy for the Eastern culture, however they are very conservative about protecting their own European identities. By this way these portentous European women have a kind of power to control the Eastern Muslim men, and direct and manage their behavior under several circumstances. Moreover, they play an active role in their relationships with inexperienced Eastern Muslim men. As a result, these works challenge and reverse the traditional hierarchy in which man is deemed superior to woman.

## 2. Traveler and Patron

It is obvious that travel has a big effect on the formation of the aforementioned image of European women. It is possible to observe this situation clearly both from the novel *Acâyib-i Âlem* by Ahmet Mithat and from the narration “Frengistan Mektupları” by Gaspıralı. In both writings, Eastern Muslim men meet European women during a journey and they become entangled by the education and knowledge levels of those women who guide them during their trip. Parallel to the increasing interest and admiration of Eastern Muslim men through those European women, women’s supervision and control are reinforced. In the relationship between the Eastern Muslim men and European women, knowledge appears as a tool of power, and travel has an important role to come out of this knowledge.

*Acâyib-i Âlem* deals with the journey of two Ottoman men, Suphi and Hicabi, from İstanbul to Russia through the Black Sea. During this journey, they meet with the English traveler Miss Haft and they decide to travel together. In the beginning of the novel, Suphi is introduced as someone having knowledge on natural sciences. Similarly, Hicabi is introduced as someone having knowledge on religious studies. When they meet Miss Haft, these two men recognize that she is a well-educated person with superior knowledge. To benefit from her knowledge and experiences, they wish to carry on their journey with her: “We can benefit a lot from this woman” (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 99). When they start the journey, it is seen that Miss Haft has much more knowledge than these two Ottoman travelers. As the journey carries on, these two Ottoman travelers marvel at the level of her knowledge. She is able to give detailed information about the places that they have visited. For instance, she is able to talk about the history of these places and their past and present situation, daily life and different cultures and traditions:

During becoming are visited the graves, knowledge by beginning to give historical information about the most ancient nations who lived in southern of Russia, Miss Haft gave this information so nice that Suphi, now admired to Miss Haft’s extensive knowledge, as Hicabi had admired to Suphi’s extensive, once. (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 97)

With all the information that she gives, she guides and instructs these two Ottoman men. She often answers their questions and sometimes corrects them (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 147). In the novel, they have long discussions about science, education and arts every night after they return to their hotel (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 153). Although Suphi is said to be knowledgeable, it is clear that the knowledge is mostly conveyed from Miss Haft to these two Ottoman men. At this point, it must be highlighted that while the position of women in the Ottoman society is under discussion in 19th century, this novel positions the European woman as being more

knowledgeable than the two Ottoman men. The superior position of woman in relation to men in this text is striking and important.

In the novel, Suphi and Hicabi often express their admiration and respect for Miss Haft due to her level of knowledge. In addition, the guidance of Miss Haft is not restricted to science; she also gives instructions about etiquette and social conduct. For instance, she is the one who informs Suphi about what he should wear in the presence of Russian Princess: “I suggest you to be encrusted as coming into elegant places. [...] Is it enough financial power that we smarten up such as Petersburg’s smartly dressed people? But one cannot come into the presence of the princess, especially eminent persons near her, with greatcoats?” (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 168).

*Avrupa’da Bir Cevelan*, which is a travelogue written by Ahmet Mithat, and which was written eight years after *Acâyib-i Âlem* should be mentioned. In this book, Ahmet Mithat writes in detail about his travel to Europe when he went to Stockholm to attend the 8th Orientalists Congress. For this paper, in *Cevelan*, it should be highlighted that the relationship is between Ahmet Mithat Efendi and Madam Gülnar, who is a Russian and whose real name is Olga de Lebedeva. According to Carter V. Findley (1999, p. 24), the most striking individual in the Congress for Ahmet Mithat is Madam Gülnar, and she was mentioned in almost 60% of the book. In *Cevelan* it is said that similar to Miss Haft, Madam Gülnar is a well-educated woman; as she is so intelligent, Ahmet Mithat respects and admires her. Ahmet Mithat even describes Madam Gülnar as a “complete human being” in a part of *Cevelan* (Ahmet Mithat, 1890: 462b-463a). While Ahmet Mithat and Madam Gülnar tour the city together, Madam Gülnar guides him and provides him with information about various subjects. For example, in one part of the travelogue, they go to an art exhibition together and there, Madam Gülnar exhibits her impressive knowledge about art, art history and art in different countries that makes Ahmet Mithat forget about his hunger (Ahmet Mithat, 1890, 391b-392a). In many parts of the travelogue, Ahmet Mithat admits that he is learning a great deal from Madam Gülnar and that she is like a teacher for him. It could thus be said that in *Cevelan* Ahmet Mithat shares the same position with Suphi, who is the character of the previously mentioned novel.

Bearing this information in mind, when we continue to analyze the novel *Acâyib-i Âlem*, as the journey continues, the influence of Miss Haft on these two Ottoman men increases. Even though in this situation there is the influence of a nascent love which is about to begin between Suphi and Miss Haft, Hicabi is also affected by this agency. Miss Haft is the only one who decides where to go, where to stay and even what to eat (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 115, p. 133, p. 247). Suphi and Hicabi are completely dependent on the will of Miss Haft. They do not have any idea about the places to visit even they are on the way; all the arrangements are done by Miss Haft (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 211, p. 217). Although like Suphi and Hicabi, Miss Haft has never been to Russia before, she guides and informs these two Ottoman travellers about Russia as if she has been there before. Suphi and Hicabi continuously consult with Miss Haft and they obey her instructions; they willingly alter their course of travels and they change it according to Miss Haft’s preferences. They confess that they willingly wish to do whatever Miss Haft wants and desires: “We only, have accepted as a rule to act in accordance with your desire. If you demand any behavior, attitude, it is abhorrent or suitable for us the thing that is suitable or abhorrent for you even if it is suitable or abhorrent for the decency of the Ottoman or European” (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 206).

Throughout the journey Miss Haft is aware of her authority over the two Ottoman travelers and she seems very pleased about this. In one of her letters to her aunt, for instance, she states that Suphi and Hicabi are in her service like “slaves” (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 230). The usage of the word “slave” is very influential: Miss Haft’s authority over the Ottoman men is well-maintained and she views herself as a patron in a relationship with her employees. This notion emphasizes the fact that in *Acâyib-i Âlem*, dynamics of traditional hierarchy in Ottoman society during post-Tanzimat novels is now refashioned or altered.

It is also emphasized that the two Ottoman travelers are able to avoid many obstacles by obeying the orders of Miss Haft because Miss Haft informs them about the forthcoming destination in their journey. For example, she even knows about the weather conditions in there (Ahmet Mithat,

2000, p. 239). She instructs them how to be prepared for the journey. Suphi and Hicabi make the required preparations, taking the warnings of Miss Haft into account and thus they have a comfortable journey without any problems. In the novel the preparation process for the trip and how Miss Haft helps to two Ottoman men are described in detail. Miss Haft is referred as a *mürşit* (guide) (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 239) and this is a very striking characterization for this paper.

In terms of her relation with knowledge during the trip, Miss Haft is clearly differentiated from two Ottoman travelers. During the whole trip, Miss Haft always uses her maps and guidebooks as the source to inform Suphi and Hicabi on the places to visit and organizes the things for the trips (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 235, p. 242). Suphi and Hicabi, on the other hand, lack such a tool so they depend on the guidance of Miss Haft. In a part of the novel, it is stated that Suphi uses the maps and travel books to imagine the different venues (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 33). This helps us build an active-passive dichotomy between the Eastern man and the European woman. Accordingly, we can define Suphi who use the map for his imagination, as passive; and Miss Haft who uses the map for concrete reasons such as having more knowledge and organizing her trip, as active. Here, it is worth remembering the novel of *Hayal ve Hakikat* (1891) that Ahmet Mithat wrote with Fatma Aliye. In this novel, the part of “*hayal*” (imagination) was written by Fatma Aliye who is an Ottoman woman and the part of “*hakikat*” (reality) was written by Ahmet Mithat Efendi. In the *Hayal ve Hakikat*, the opposition of imagination–reality, organized according to gender discrimination, was reversed in *Acâyib-i Âlem*. In this case the difference of European woman can be more clearly understood.

The last point to be discussed about *Acâyib-i Âlem* is the love relationship between Miss Haft and Suphi. In this relationship, Miss Haft is the active agent who makes all decisions. She decides when to begin, direct and how to terminate their relationship. Suphi, being very unfamiliar and inexperienced in male-female relationships, is even afraid of expressing his feelings (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 266, p. 282). Miss Haft is aware of this situation and she helps and directs him to express his feelings. In this context, it is said that Miss Haft directs Suphi “in the best way” (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, p. 126). Suphi is not brave enough to ask for her hand in marriage, and so, Miss Haft is the one who proposes to him. This allows us to re-construct the active-passive dichotomy between Miss Haft and Suphi. In the beginning of the novel Miss Haft expresses her wish not to marry as she views marriage as a kind of slavery; but as she comes to recognize her authority over Suphi, she decides to marry him. She sees her authority as the guarantee of her rights and freedom.

### **3.The Gates to the Europe**

In this part of the study, the narratives of “*Frengistan Mektupları*” (1887) and “*Sudan Mektupları*” (1889), which are serialized by İsmail Gaspıralı in *Tercüman* newspaper and which narrate the travel adventures of Molla Abbas, will be examined. In these narratives, Molla Abbas establishes relationships with two European women, Josephine and Margarita. He experiences similar things to Ahmet Mithat's characters in his relationship with these European women. Although male characters of Ahmet Mithat significantly know Europe and European culture, Molla Abbas does not have any contacts neither with Europe nor European culture. In these narratives, European women are, both literally and figuratively, a gateway to Europe for Molla Abbas. At the end of his journey, Molla Abbas will be referred to as “*Fransevi*” (European).

In the beginning of “*Frengistan Mektupları*” Molla Abbas meets Josephine in Odessa. Josephine is a European woman who has taught French for a period of time in Istanbul. She invites Molla Abbas to the hotel where she is staying and their relationship starts. During their one-week friendship in Odessa, Josephine gives information about Europe to Molla Abbas and this changes the route of his trip:

A week has passed. I spent the whole days with the French girl. According to the information she gave me about the French and France, I was in no doubt that the French nation was worthy of consideration. Even, after meeting Josephine, I am quite enthusiastic to learn about foreign countries before visiting Islamic countries. (Gaspıralı, 2003, p. 88)

After this decision, Josephine offers to travel together to Paris and Molla Abbas gladly accepts this offer:

Ms. Josephine wishes to be my fellow traveler to Paris, a city that is the source of French scholarship, science and ingenuity. Josephine knows Turkish, and I am not familiar with the French language, so her companionship is very pleasant. “Throughout our journey to Paris and after our arrival I will teach you French. The French language is the language of scholars and it is a polite language. It is possible to travel around the world with the French language”. Saying it is known and desirable in every country Frank girl won my favour. (Gaspıralı, 2003, p. 88-89)

The thing to emphasize here is that Molla Abbas learns French, which can be regarded as the beginning of Westernization and Europeanization. This gives Josephine two different values. Firstly, for Molla Abbas Josephine is a gateway to Europe and European culture. The other is that Josephine has knowledge which makes her superior to Molla Abbas. Here, women having knowledge reverse the hierarchical order between the sexes; therefore, it is observed that knowledge has been used as a means of power. Indeed, as the narrative progresses, similar to Miss Haft, Josephine’s superiority and guidance in terms of information become more apparent and in parallel, the admiration of Molla Abbas for this European woman increases step by step: “Throughout the journey, Josephine was giving information about their current situation and history of the countries. Strange! A woman has something at her fingertips! Suppose that she had lived for five hundred and forty years” (Gaspıralı, 2003, p. 111-12).

European women in Gaspıralı’s narratives are similar to Miss Haft in their relationship to knowledge. Josephine and Margarita too establish rational relations with knowledge. For example when Josephine and Molla Abbas meet for the first time, Josephine takes care to note down what she learned from Molla Abbas: “Bringing sweet drinks and fruits and other things, the French girl transfers quiet news about conditions in Istanbul, and asks many things about Turkistan and sometimes writes them down in order to remember them” (Gaspıralı, 2003, p.88). Here Josephine as a traveler notes the things she learns, it seems important in terms of showing the relationship of her with the knowledge. It can be said that, the European woman Josephine –as the Miss Haft of the *Acâyib-i Âlem-* develops a rational relationship with knowledge. Moreover, Margaret continues the similar attitude. In “Sudan Mektupları” Margarita looks at a recipe book in order to cook Turkistan pilaf. Molla Abbas explains the situation as “Everything the Frenk (Europeans) do is based on books. They learn everything from schools and books” (Gaspıralı, 2003, p.279). It can be said that this situation presents the basic difference between European women and Eastern men. In the beginning of the story Molla Abbas travels in order to improve his information, however, it is obvious that he lacks of a method for obtaining information and using it. The different attitudes of Josephine and Margarita towards information attract his attention and provide a Western model for him.

Josephine not only gives information about the places they have visited and teaches French but also guides Molla Abbas in many issues related to the practice of everyday life. For example, she makes suggestions about how to dress in Paris (Gaspıralı, 2003, p. 89-90). Molla Abbas, whose admiration for this European woman increases gradually, finally proposes marriage to Josephine. But their marriage doesn’t last long. After arriving in Paris and Molla Abbas learned some French, Josephine’s function in the narrative comes to an end and Josephine and Molla Abbas separate.

The other European woman to be seen in a relationship with Molla Abbas is Margarita. In the second part of “Frenkistan Mektupları”, although Molla Abbas is Margarita’s Turkish and Persian teacher, it can be said that sometimes the student-teacher roles are reversed. In fact, she maintains Josephine’s function. Molla Abbas, who begins to learn French thanks to Josephine, improves his French thanks to Margarita (Gaspıralı, 2003, p. 122). In addition, Margarita regularly informs Molla Abbas about France, European culture and recent scientific developments etc. He starts thinking about his own knowledge and capacity with that of Margarita:

There are the things that I never know and understood. I had regarded as mullah and all-knowing and also, skilled in everything. What a blindness, brothers! But I hadn't known and understood the world and the status and lives of people in the world up to ten- year- old French student. (Gaspıralı, 2003, p. 127-128)

Here Molla Abbas sees himself as a ten-year-old child facing Margarita's knowledge. Molla Abbas compares himself with a child, and this is especially a significant indicator that shows how their relation is. It can be said that Molla Abbas cannot preserve his adult male identity when compared with Margarita. Margarita, a very knowledgeable woman, is far superior to Molla Abbas.

Similar to Miss Haft, Margarita takes an active role in the relationship with Molla Abbas, she guides and directs him by deciding when to become intimate, and what will be the end of their relationship. She holds the authority to end or maintain the relationship. Unlike Miss Haft, Margarita decides to leave Molla Abbas. In the face of Margarita's abandonment, the words of Molla Abbas seem to be important: "I have abandoned learning science" (Gaspıralı, 2003, p. 164). At the end of "Frengistan Mektupları" Molla Abbas, who changed his travel route and came to Paris because of a woman, again decides to leave Paris because of a woman. The ending of his relationship with Margarita leads to the end of his relationship with knowledge too.

In the narrative "Sudan Mektupları" Margarita and Molla Abbas reunite again. This time Margarita's authority is articulated more clearly. In this narrative, Margarita is a merchant and Molla Abbas is struck by seeing her as a successful businesswoman. He views Margarita as superior not only to himself but also to the most knowledgeable executives in the East (Gaspıralı, 2003, p. 282). Margarita also sees Molla Abbas as a soldier at her service and she sends him to Sudan to help the people fight against the English. Molla Abbas never questions her authority and does whatever she orders. Even if these orders put his life in danger.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this study, some works of Ahmet Mithat Efendi who is one of the most prominent figure of post-Tanzimat literature and İsmail Gaspıralı who is a neglected author are examined. By focusing on European female characters in these works, it was shown that these women are constructed as active characters that can inform and direct the Eastern Muslim men and control them. The singular examples examined in this study revealed the contrary of Jale Parla and Nurdan Gürbilek's thesis that "Tanzimat writers adopted a marriage metaphor in that Ottoman/East were personified as a powerful and influential man, and Europe personified as a passive young virgin waiting to be conquered or tamed". The post-Tanzimat genres and literary works are far from being homogeneous; they consist of complex thoughts, views and ideas. This notion would make any form of generalizations about the literary works of this period debased and over-simplified.

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Araştırma Makalesi

**European Female Characters In The Works Of Ahmet Mithat Efendi And İsmail Gaspıralı**

*Ahmet Mithat Efendi ve İsmail Gaspıralı'nın Eserlerinde Avrupalı Kadınlar*

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**Genişletilmiş Özet**

Bu çalışmada, Tanzimat sonrası edebiyatının üzerinde en çok konuşulan isimlerinden biri olan Ahmet Mithat Efendi'nin (1844-1912) *Acâyib-i Âlem* (1881-82) romanı ile edebi eserleri söz konusu olduğunda "ihmal edilmiş bir yazar" olan İsmail Gaspıralı'nın (1851-1914) bazı kesintilerle birlikte, 1887 ile 1908 yılları arasında *Tercüman* gazetesinde tefrika edilen ve Molla Abbas adlı karakter etrafında şekillenerek bir roman bütünlüğüne ulaşan anlatıları arasından "Frengistan Mektupları" ve "Sudan Mektupları" adlı anlatıları ele alınmıştır. Her iki yazarın eserlerinde yer alan Avrupalı kadınların, Müslüman erkek karakterler karşısındaki öğretici ve rehber kimlikleri üzerinde durulmuş ve bu ilişkinin sonucunda, erkeğin kadından üstün sayıldığı cinsler arası geleneksel hiyerarşinin tersine çevrildiği gösterilmiştir.

Böyle bir çalışmaya başlanmasında, özellikle Tanzimat sonrası edebiyatı söz konusu olduğunda, dönemin çoğul düşünce yapısının çoğu kez göz ardı edilerek bu dönemin edebiyatı hakkında tek ve bütünlüklü bir yargıya varma eğilimleri etkili olmuştur. Örneğin Tanzimat sonrası dönemde Avrupalılaştırmanın nasıl alımlandığı konusunda Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* başlıklı çalışmasında, yalnızca Şinasi ve Namık Kemal'in sözlerinden yola çıkarak bütün Tanzimat edebiyatını kapsayan bir genelleme yapmaktadır:

Tanzimat'ın amacı, Şinasi'nin deyişiyle "Asya'nın akl-ı pirânesi ile Avrupa'nın bıkır-i fikrini izdivaç ettirmek" olduğuna göre; Asya'nın erkek, Avrupa'nın kadın olarak şahıslandırıldığı bu evlilik eğretilmesinde egemen olan, Doğu'nun mutlakçı düşünce sistemidir. Gene Doğu'nun bu mutlakçı sistemini çok benzer bir eğretilmeyle vurgulayan Namık Kemal'in şu deyişine bakalım: "Onların bir takım âsar-ı nefisesini taklit eder ve Şark ve Garbın fikr-i kemal ve bıkır-i hayalini izdivaç ettirmeye çalışırız". Burada da, "fıkr-i kemal"ın, bütün erkek kadın karşıtlığında erkeği, "bıkır-i hayâl"ın kadını temsil ettiğini biliyoruz. Demek ki Tanzimat yazarları Batılılaşmayı, Batı'dan ne denli örnek alma ya da Batı'ya öykünme içerirse içersin, erkek egemen bir evlilik birleşmesinin edilgin ögesi olarak görüyorlardı. (Parla, 1990, s. 15)

Parla'nın bu değerlendirmesine göre, Batılılaşma konusunda ilk dönem Tanzimat yazarları, Osmanlı'nın güçlü ve etken bir erkek, Avrupa'nın ise fethedilmeyi bekleyen edilgin genç bakire olarak kişileştirildiği bir evlilik metaforunu benimsemektedirler. *Kör Ayna Kayıp Şark* adlı çalışmasında Nurdan Gürbilek de Parla'nın bu değerlendirmesine katılır ve Asya ile Avrupa'nın evliliğinde Asya'nın eril olarak nitelendirilmesini, Avrupa kültürüne karşı bir tür direnç olarak yorumlar:

Gerçekten de Avrupa'yla karşılaşmanın getirdiği bütün yeniklik duygusuna, Tanzimat romanında kendini hissettiren bütün yetimlik duygusuna rağmen, kısılmamış eril bir ses vardır burada. Bir tür, bozgunda fetih rüyası: Aynı yüzyılda birçok Avrupalı yazar Doğu'yu kadın olarak temsil ederken, mazisiyle mağrur Osmanlı yazarı da Avrupa'yı fatihini bekleyen kadın olarak temsil etmekte tereddüt etmez. Kudretini kaybeden bir imparatorluğun yazarı olmasına, Avrupa'yla evliliğe elverişsiz koşullarda talip olmasına rağmen erilliği hâlâ kendine, Asya'ya yakıştırabilmekte, yabancı kültüre nüfuz etme arzusunun kadına nüfuz etme arzusu olarak görebilmektedir yazar. (Gürbilek, 2004, s. 77-78)

Buna göre Tanzimat yazarları, özellikle romanları aracılığıyla, siyasi ve ekonomik anlamda Avrupa medeniyeti karşısında yenik duruma düşen Osmanlı Devleti'nin gücünü hâlâ yitirmediğini göstermeyi amaçlamaktadırlar. Parla'nın değerlendirmelerine ek olarak Gürbilek, Tanzimat romanında kadın olarak kişileştirilen Avrupa'nın bir başka özelliğine değinmektedir: “Avrupa kadındır, oğulda arzu uyandırır, ama bu arzunun oğlun felaketine yol açmaması için arzu uyandıranın ehlileştirilmesi, tıpkı Ahmet Mithat'ın çevirileriyle ilgili uyarılarında söylediği gibi Şark'a uyarlanması gerekir” (Gürbilek, 2004, s. 83). Yine Gürbilek'in bu değerlendirmesinde de Tanzimat sonrası romanında metaforik olarak Avrupa'yı temsil eden “Batılı” kadınların, etken Doğulu Osmanlı erkekleri karşısında ehlileştirilmeyi bekleyen edilgin karakterler olarak genelleştirildiği görülmektedir. Oysa böyle bir genellemenin bütün Tanzimat yazarları için geçerli olduğunu söylemek zordur. Nitekim bu çalışmada gösterildiği üzere tekil örnekler, Parla ve Gürbilek'in sözünü ettikleri metaforun bütün Tanzimat sonrası dönemi içermediğini ortaya koyar. Nitekim dönemin aydınları, gerek ilk özel gazete olan *Tercüman-ı Ahval*'in 1860 yılında yayın hayatına başlamasıyla birlikte gelişen tartışma ortamına katıldıkları fikri yazılarında gerekse edebî eserlerinde Batılılaşma faaliyetleri karşısında farklı tutumlar sergilemişlerdir.

Bu bağlamda Ahmet Mithat Efendi ve İsmail Gaspıralı'nın eserlerindeki Avrupalı kadınların incelenmesi, Tanzimat dönemi ile ilgili farklı bir tablo ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışmada ele alınan eserlerdeki Avrupalı kadınlar, Jale Parla ve Nurdan Gürbilek'in yaptığı genellemelerin dışına çıkacak şekilde, Doğulu erkekler tarafından fethedilmezler ya da ehlileştirilmezler; bilgi sahibi olmaları bakımından Doğulu erkekler üzerinde bir hakimiyet kuran, kendi Batılı kimliklerini koruma noktasında son derece hassas “etken” karakterler olarak kurgulanmışlardır.

Ahmet Mithat'ın *Acâyib-i Âlem* romanı, “hem terakkiyat-ı medeniyeyi hem de acâyib-i tabiiyeyi görmek” (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, s. 30) için Karadeniz yoluyla Rusya'ya doğru yola çıkan iki Osmanlı erkeği Suphi ve Hicabi'nin yolculuk sırasında tanıştıkları ve birlikte seyahat etmeye karar verdikleri İngiliz seyyah Miss Haft'la birlikte gezdikleri yerleri ve bu seyahat sırasında yaşadıkları olayları konu edinmektedir.

Yolculuk sırasında Miss Haft gezilen yerlerin geçmiş ve şimdiki durumları hakkında iki Osmanlı erkeğini bilgilendirir ve bu yerleri “daha önceden gezmiş gibi” onlara rehberlik eder. Kimi zaman bu iki seyyahın sorularına cevap verir, kimi zaman da onların yanlış bildiklerini düzeltir. Seyahat sırasında nasıl bir güzergâh izleyeceklerini belirleyen seyahat boyunca nerelere gidileceğine, nerede kalınacağına hatta yemekte ne yeneceğine karar veren kişinin Miss Haft olduğu görülür. Suphi ve Hicâbi her konuda Miss Haft'a danışır ve onun isteklerine uygun olarak hareket ederler. Hatta kendi seyahat yürüngelerini de Miss Haft'ın isteklerine göre değiştirirler. Gidecekleri yerlerde nelere ihtiyaç duyacakları konusunda bir çeşit yol göstericilik görevini üstlenen Miss Haft, gereken hazırlıkların önceden yapılması konusunda Suphi ve Hicâbi'yi yönlendirir ve böylece yolculuklarının sorunsuz olarak devam etmesini sağlar. Roman boyunca Miss Haft, verdiği bilgiler aracılığıyla iki Osmanlı seyyahını kendisine hayran bırakır. Bu bağlamda Suphi ve Hicâbi'nin, Miss Haft'ı “mürşit” olarak nitelemeleri ve onun “delaleti” olmasına çok büyük zorluklarla karşılaşacaklarını itiraf etmeleri oldukça önemlidir. Burada Osmanlı kadınlarının toplumsal alandaki görünümünün tartışıldığı bir dönemde, Batılı kadının bilgi sahibi olması bakımından erkek ile eşit ve hatta erkekten üstün olarak konumlandırılması dikkat çekicidir.

Miss Haft da bu iki seyyah üzerindeki otoritesinin farkındadır ve bundan memnuniyet duymaktadır. Halasına yazdığı mektupta yer alan şu sözlerde Miss Haft'ın kendine duyduğu güven açığa çıkmaktadır: “Benden maddi manevi hiçbir istifadesi yoktur. Bilâkis ikisi dahi bana köle gibi hizmet ederler” (Ahmet Mithat, 2000, s. 230). Burada Miss Haft'ın Suphi ve Hicâbi'yi nitelemek için “köle” sözcüğünü seçmiş olması oldukça önemlidir. Miss Haft, bu iki Osmanlı seyyahı karşısında kendisini “efendi” olarak konumlandırmaktadır.

İsmail Gaspıralı'nın “Frengistan Mektupları” başlıklı anlatısında, *Acâyib-i Âlem*'dekine benzer bir ilişki söz konusudur. Anlatının başında, çok merak etmesine rağmen dil bilmemesi nedeniyle Avrupa'ya gitmeye “cesaret edemeyen” Molla Abbas'ın, Fransız mürebbiye Jozefin ile tanıştıktan sonra, seyahat rotasını değiştirerek Jozefin ile birlikte Paris'e gitmeye karar verdiği görülür. Paris'e yolculukları sırasında Jozefin, Molla Abbas'a Fransızca öğretmeye başlar; ayrıca geçtikleri yerlerin geçmiş ve şimdiki durumları hakkında onu bilgilendirerek ona rehberlik eder. Ahmet Mithat'ın erkek karakterlerinin Avrupa kültürüyle daha önceden tanışmış ve belirli ölçüde Batılılaşmış olmalarına karşın İsmail Gaspıralı'nın Molla Abbas karakteri, Avrupalı kadın(lar) aracılığıyla Avrupa kültürünü tanımaya başlar. Nitekim güzel bir kadın olmasından ziyade, “ehl-i irfan” yani bilgili bir kadın oluşundan etkilenen Molla Abbas, evlenme teklif eder. Romanda Jozefin ve Molla Abbas'ın karı-koca olarak ilişkilerinden neredeyse hiç söz edilmez ve bu ilişki daha çok Jozefin'den Molla Abbas'a doğru bir bilgi aktarımı şeklinde ilerler. Paris'e gidinceye kadar Molla Abbas'ın küçük de olsa bir eğitimden geçtiği, “öğretmeni” Jozefin sayesinde bilgi düzeyini arttırdığı görülmektedir. Nitekim Paris'e geldikten ve Molla Abbas bir miktar Fransızca öğrendikten sonra Jozefin'in romandaki işlevi sona erer ve Jozefin ile Molla Abbas ayrılır. Daha sonra yine çok bilgili bir kadın olarak ön plana çıkarılan Margarita ile tanışan Molla Abbas, Fransızcasını Margarita sayesinde geliştirir ve Avrupa'ya dair pek çok şeyi Margarita'dan öğrenir. Öyle ki Molla Abbas, Margarita'nın bilgisi karşısında kendisini on yaşındaki bir öğrenciden daha aşağı seviyede konumlandırır (Gaspıralı, 2003, s. 128-128). Denilebilir ki Margarita anlatıda Jozefin'in işlevini sürdürür ve bilgili olması bakımından Molla Abbas üzerinde bir denetim kurar. Molla Abbas, Margarita'nın iradesine tâbi durumdadır ve onun isteklerini hiç sorgulamadan yerine getirir. Nitekim “Sudan Mektupları” başlıklı anlatıda Margarita'nın “ricası” üzerine, üç Fransız ile birlikte, İngilizlere karşı mücadele eden yerel kuvvetlere yardım etmek için Sudan'a doğru yola çıkacaktır. Böylece Molla Abbas'ın seyahat rotasını bir kez daha, yine Batılı bir kadın nedeniyle değiştirdiği ve daha önceden hiç düşünmediği halde, üstelik kendi hayatını da tehlikeye atarak Margarita'nın isteklerini yerine getirdiği görülür.

Gerek Ahmet Mithat'ın eserinde gerekse İsmail Gaspıralı'nın anlatılarında Avrupalı kadınların bilgi ile kurdukları ilişki bakımından Doğulu erkeklerden ayrıldıkları görülür. Gerek Miss Haft gerekse Jozefin ve Margarita bilgiye ulaşmak için kitaplara başvururlar, oysa Doğulu erkekler böyle bir donanımdan yoksundur. *Acâyib-i Âlem*'de yolculuk boyunca gidilecek yerler hakkında bilgi veren ve yolculukla ilgili düzenlemeler yapan Miss Haft'ın sürekli olarak harita ve seyahat rehberlerinden yararlanır. Suphi ve Hicâbi'nin bu tür kaynaklardan yoksun oldukları ve bu anlamda Miss Haft'ın rehberliğine ihtiyaç duydukları görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda, romanın başında Suphi'nin haritayı ve seyahatnameleri yalnızca farklı mekânları “hayal etmek” için kullandığına değinilmelidir: “Bir vakit Afrika seyahatnamelerini okurken gerek Afrika'nın ve gerek Amerika'nın vahşileri içinde bulunmak hevesine düşerdim” (Ahmet Mithat, 2000: s. 33). Suphi'nin bu durumuna karşılık Miss Haft'ın seyahat sırasında harita ve rehberlerden somut olarak yararlanması, Batılı kadın ile Doğulu erkek arasında etken- edilgen karşıtlığının yeniden kurulmasına olanak sağlamaktadır. Buna göre haritayı bilmediği yerleri “hayal” etmek için kullanan Suphi edilgen, haritayı bilmediği yerleri hayal etmek için değil “görmek” daha açık bir ifadeyle somut bir eylemi gerçekleştirmek için kullanan Miss Haft etken konumdadır. Benzer bir yaklaşım Jozefin ve Margarita'da da görülür. Molla Abbas'ın Gül Baba türbesini ziyaret etmek istemesi üzerine Jozefin, kitaplara başvurur. Araştırmaları sonuç vermeyince üniversitede kütüphanelerine hatta akademisyenlere ulaşır. Yine Margarita'nın Türkistan pilavının tarifini öğrenmek için kitaplara başvurduğu ve bu duruma çok şaşırın Molla Abbas'ın şöyle bir genelleme yaptığı görülür: “Frenklerin her işi kitabîdir (kitaplara göredir). Her işi mekteplerinde (okullarında) ya kitaplardan öğrenirler” (Gaspıralı, 2003, s. 279).

Sonuç olarak bu çalışmada İsmail Gaspıralı ve Ahmet Mithat Efendi'nin eserlerinde, Doğulu Müslüman erkek karakterler karşısında rehber/öğretici ve etken konumlarıyla yer alan Avrupalı kadın karakterler incelenmiştir. Bu bağlamda Jale Parla ve Nurdan Gürbilek'in "Tanzimat yazarlarının Osmanlı'nın güçlü ve etken bir erkek, Avrupa'nın ise fethedilmeyi ya da ehlileştirilmeyi bekleyen edilgin genç bakire olarak kişileştirildiği bir evlilik metaforunu benimsedikleri" şeklindeki tezleri gözden geçirilmiş ve tekil örneklerin sözü edilen bu genel metaforun aksini gösterdiği ortaya konulmuştur.