An Ottoman Occidentalist in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gulnar, 1889

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Truly it is a strange coincidence that two minds can be so compatible.¹

The strong shift of the last two decades from materialist to culturalist analyses of imperialism has foregrounded the processes by which Europeans sought to achieve cognitive mastery of the world and then bring external "reality" into line with those representations. Europeans constructed a new image of themselves, defined in opposition to images of an external Other, often identified with the "Orient," starting with the end of the "Orient" they knew best: the Middle East and North Africa. Predominantly, what was at stake was not just Europeans' cognitive control of the Orient or the colonial world generally but rather European elite males' cognitive control of all their Others, domestic and foreign, as defined by gender, class, religion, ethnicity, or any combination of traits.²

The means to establish cognitive control was a system of alterist discourse (discourse about Others), which suffused all forms of cultural production—writing and publication, the visual and performing arts, collection and exposition, and the ambiguously named "disciplines" that still structure universities. Now much

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¹ Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevolan (İstanbul, 1307/1889-90), 779b. The book was originally serialized in his newspaper, Tercüman-ı Hakika, and is printed in double columns the width of newspaper columns, designated in page references in this article by "a" (right) and "b" (left). Note: the dates of Ottoman publications cited in this article, unless otherwise indicated, refer to the lunar Islamic religious calendar, the hîji calendar. Some Ottoman sources give dates in the solar Ottoman financial calendar (numî calendar). Both kinds of dates are followed by equivalents in the common international calendar. See n. 51 for more information on these calendars.

criticized, European alteritist thought of the era of imperialism was not altogether blameworthy. Orientalism, for example, produced still-valued contributions to scholarship, literature, and the arts. Yet the “representational violence” of some alteritist visions and their utility for asserting dominance and dependence are clear.

The frequency of contradictions and exceptions among alteritist statements does not disprove, but rather reflects, the systematic operation of the “discursive formation” that produced those statements and their dispersion of meaning. The Other’s attributes were mutable and contradictory, but all consistently differentiated her or him from the Self. Moreover, the implicit equation among all Others produced an interchange of attributes, the results of which included a feminization and eroticization of the Orient. What held alteritism together was a dualistic epistemology, founded on ineluctable polarities—Self and Other, male and female, Europe and Orient—whose interaction engendered an exponential proliferation of disparate ideas and images. The evolutionism of nineteenth-century European thought made spatial and temporal remoteness two more interchangeable categories: Europe’s Other was also its past.

While alteritist discourse has existed throughout history, nineteenth-century alteritism has especially fascinated recent scholars. The simultaneous acceleration of both technological advance and imperial expansion produced a rapid growth of techniques for ordering information and tangibly representing alteritist visions in ways that viewers expected to find borne out when they traveled to the places depicted. Not only museums and zoos but also congresses of scholars or diplomats and—most distinctive of the period—world’s fairs and exhibitions all asserted such visions and helped to establish their credibility. Inventions such as telegraphy and photography enhanced the effect of immediacy, while the railroad and steamship hastened travel between the “represented” and the “real.” The impact of the exhibitions began to wane after 1900; yet, for a time, the world came to be “experienced as though it were an exhibition.”

Visitors from the “Orient” joined the throngs at the exhibitions. Their minds were surely more attuned to the European alteritism of their time, even though its assumptions of European superiority were degrading to them, than to such recent trends as anti-Orientalist criticism or the wider culturalist reanalysis of imperialism.

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3 For example, Said, _Culture and Imperialism_, 111–62 (Verdi’s _Aida_, Kipling’s _Kim_), 195: “This is not to denigrate the accomplishments of many Western scholars, historians, artists . . . whose . . . efforts in making known the world beyond Europe are a stunning achievement.” Bernard Lewis, _Islam and the West_ (New York, 1993), 99–118, esp. 101 defining scholarly orientalism; Partha Chatterjee, _The Nation and Its Fragments_ (Princeton, N.J., 1993), 98, influence of Indological scholarship on development of Indian historiography and nationalism.

4 Schick, _Erotic Margin_, 98.

5 Michel Foucault, _Archéologie du savoir_ (Paris, 1969), 31–54, 74, 94–101 (the discursive formation, with dispersion and difference—rather than synthesis and unity—as characteristic); Schick, _Erotic Margin_, 54–56, 59 (“the copulation of clichés” [Nabokov]), 95–97, 161; Homi Bhabha, _The Location of Culture_ (London, 1994), 67, 82; Zeynep Çelik and Leila Kinney, “Ethnography and Exhibitionism at the Expositions Universelles,” _Assemblage_ 13 (1990): 55–56. As Schick points out, while some critics take the proliferation of conflicting statements to argue that the binaries are reductionistic, an alteritist discourse inherently has a dualistic foundation.

6 Schick, _Erotic Margin_, 66–73.

However, imperialist alterity provoked manifold resistances at the time. With individual responses differentiated by the variables that shape identity, visiting “Orientals” did not “simplistically appropriate” European models but rather “filtered” and reshaped them “according to self-visions and aspirations,” maintaining “critical distance.” These “resistant voices” must have gained strength—so this essay argues—from the contradictions of European alterity. Not only that, but the congresses and exhibits provided settings where the visitors interacted, with consequences that the organizers could not foresee or control. All these considerations point toward the development of an Occidental counter-discourse, which became an important component of anticolonial nationalism.

One thoughtful observer who traveled from the Middle East to late nineteenth-century Europe was the Ottoman author Ahmed Midhat. His Avrupa’da bir Cevalan (A Tour in Europe, 1889) recounts his journey to a scholarly congress of orientalists in Stockholm and his subsequent travels, including a visit to the World Exhibition in Paris. Now largely forgotten but pivotal to his career, the book shows how two examples of “the world-as-exhibition” looked to a self-described Occidentalist. By contextualizing him in terms of recent scholarship on culture and imperialism, a study of his narrative may help to raise awareness of the importance of the late Ottoman Empire for the study of Occidentalism and of its larger context in anticolonial nationalism.

XIAOMEI CHEN argues that although modern Chinese self-understanding had been “historically ‘contaminated’ and even constructed by cultural and cross-cultural appropriations,” Chinese thought was no “outpost of mindlessly replicated Western thought.” In China (and elsewhere), Orientalism was “accompanied by . . . Occidentalism, a discursive practice that, by constructing its Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self-appropriation.” Significantly, Chinese Occidentalism assumed two distinct forms that served “strikingly different political ends.” One form empowered its

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9 Çelik, Displaying the Orient, 11, 41–42, identifying these qualities with Osman Hamdi (1842–1910), the Paris-trained painter and director of the Antiquities Museum in Istanbul. He was one of Ahmed Midhat’s mentors, and the two traveled together from Istanbul to France: Avrupa’da bir Cevalan, 13a–14a, 23a–24b, 26b, 29a, 46a, 51a, 53b, 56b, 72a.

10 Xiaomei Chen, Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China (New York, 1995). See also James G. Carrier, ed., Occidentalism: Images of the West (Oxford, 1995); Nasrin Rahimieh, Oriental Responses to the West: Comparative Essays in Select Writers from the Muslim World (New York, 1990). I shall capitalize “Occidentalism” and “Orientalism” as names for two discursive formations; to mark the distinction, I shall not capitalize “orientalism” as the name of a scholarly discipline except where context or usage requires it.

proponents to dominate their own society. The other called for “political liberation against indigenous forms of ideological oppression.”

Nineteenth-century Orientalism and Occidentalism both developed in “the world system of nation-states,” which sanctioned the nation-state as “the only legitimate expression of sovereignty,” while operating to deny realization of that form to all but a few societies outside Europe. The struggles of colonial or semi-colonial societies to overcome this condition have inspired the most stimulating recent work on nationalism. Prasenjit Duara has shown how the linear, teleological, Enlightenment model of history served to create “the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time.” Interacting with the evolutionist thought of which Social Darwinism was only part, this model of history left behind its own retrospective dispersion of suppressed narratives, including critiques of the utopian vision of modernity, often expressed in terms of a defense of indigenous spirituality against occidental materialism.

Partha Chatterjee, too, emphasizes that “anticolonial nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty” within the colonial (or semi-colonial) society, well before it begins its overt struggle against imperialism. It does this by creating two domains—an outer, material domain and an inner, spiritual domain, in which it refuses intervention by outside powers. In the spiritual domain, “nationalism launches its most powerful, creative . . . project: to fashion a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless not Western.” Much as European Orientalism was part of a larger, European elite males’ alterity discourse, so, too, this cultural nationalism of colonial or semi-colonial societies formed part of the indigenous elite males’ discourse of alterity. Stimulating innovation in fields ranging from language to gender relations, anticolonial alterity also aimed at cognitive control of all Others—both the dominant foreign and the subaltern domestic Others. Alongside a new patriarchy as the image of the indigenous elite male Self, for example, there emerged a concept of the “new woman,” whose education and attainment of a “superior national culture” entitled her to an expanded but still bounded domain of autonomy. With spiritual-material, male-female, and elite-subaltern dichotomies, Chatterjee argues, anticolonial nationalism remains trapped in “false essentialisms.” However, contemporaries found these binarisms meaningful, and they could interact to produce analytical frameworks that transcended mere binarism and had emancipatory potentials.

Recent scholarship on anticolonial nationalism, however, has not yet addressed the heterogeneity of colonial and semi-colonial societies. A case still unexamined

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13 Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago, 1995), 8–9, 22, 69.
15 Duara, *Rescuing History*, 205 and following. The concept of discursive dispersion thus applies to Ahmed Midhat in two senses: first, his Occidentalism produced a dispersion of sometimes contradictory statements, rather than unity or consistency; second, his thought in general was eventually left behind by the linear historical narrative constructed for the nation-state, becoming part of its dispersion of rejected narratives.
in the light of the theoretical works just discussed, the late Ottoman Empire vividly illustrates this heterogeneity. It was doubly imperial—not unique in that, but unique in its version of the problem. On the one hand, it remained a formally independent, multinational empire. On the other hand, it lost territory to separatist nationalisms and to great-power imperialism, and it slipped into economic and political dependence. Under the circumstances, Ottoman society produced a “segmented bourgeois class formation,” including an Ottoman-Muslim bureaucratic intelligentsia with vital interests in preserving and modernizing the empire, and an ethnically divided, non-Muslim commercial bourgeoisie that became identified with separatist nationalisms and dependent integration into the world economy. The Ottoman-Muslim intelligentsia propagated an oxymoronic Ottoman nationalism to try to hold the empire’s peoples together. This deferred the development of Turkish political nationalism, which might have corresponded better to the empire’s semi-colonial status but would have meant sacrificing the official elite’s imperial dream and its self-concept. The elite defined itself not by ethnicity but by state service and assimilation of the Ottoman-Islamic imperial culture. Over time, the Ottoman elites differed over redefinition of their collective identity and over choices between the Ottoman-Islamic and the Western. In general, they clung to Ottomanism as long as there was an empire to cling to and—as rulers of a partly European empire—became increasingly European-oriented.

By the time the empire’s terminal crisis (1908–1923) had ended, the Turkish republic and Turkish nationalism had emerged, and the construction of a linear historical narrative of a unitary, “selfsame, national subject” had begun. Honoring two groups of political progressives, the Young Ottomans (1860s–1870s) and the Young Turks (1889–1918, in power only after 1908), this narrative created its own retrospective dispensation as it grew, leaving other figures in its wake as conservative or reactionary. Ahmed Midhat was exceptionally interested in fashioning a modern Ottoman culture that was “nevertheless not Western.” Yet he carved out most of his career between the suppression of the Young Ottomans and the triumph of the Young Turks, and he was at odds with both groups. The fact that his intricate and insightful Occidentalist vision ended among the abandoned invites attention to him anew.

18 For example, Austria-Hungary and Russia were doubly imperial in the sense of being multinational empires that were honorary great powers but perhaps more nearly semi-peripheral in Wallersteinian terms. China was doubly imperial in being semi-colonized while also being a multinational empire, but with a very large Han Chinese majority and a non-Han, Manchu dynasty. Also semi-colonial, the multinational Ottoman Empire lacked China’s massive ethnic majority and was ruled not by Turks but by a cosmopolitan ruling class historically identified by service to the sultan and assimilation of the Ottoman-Islamic imperial culture, including the Ottoman-Turkish language, an originally artificial medium made up of Turkish, Arabic, and Persian.


A man of humble origins who rose by his talents, Ahmed Midhat (1844–1912) became a successful writer and publisher—a literary jack-of-all-trades. One Ottoman intellectual who was not actually an official, he personified an emerging Ottoman print capitalism. For years, he edited and largely wrote the newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* (Interpreter of Truth). An unabashed popularizer and encyclopedist who often cribbed from European sources, he authored some 150 books of several genres, serializing most in his newspaper. Translations of European novels had appeared before, but he became the first Ottoman novelist. Because widespread illiteracy still limited readership for works in Ottoman Turkish, he also wrote plays in order to reach a wider audience.

His works fed a keen hunger in a society where modern print media had developed only lately and where contacts with the outside world were fast intensifying. He was not always a careful stylist, yet his best writing still appeals, and some of his novels are avant-garde in technique. Once dubbed a “forty-horsepower writing machine,” he enjoyed a popularity comparable to Charles Dickens’s or Mark Twain’s. Ahmed Midhat’s popularity partly derived from his exuberant nature and communitarian view of society. It was hard to leave


25 Incl Enümayun, Ahmed Midhat Efendi'nin Tiyatroları [A.M.'s Plays] (Istanbul, 1990), 2–3; Ahmed Midhat, *Menfi* [Exile] (Istanbul, 1293/1876), 66–67: referring to the Ottoman Empire in Social Darwinists terms as a place that had “not yet approached the highest level in civilization,” he estimated the number of Ottomans who could read with comprehension at one in ten and those who could “write something and explain what they had written” at one in three thousand, adding that a popular book might sell 1,500, or at most 2,500, copies over five years.

26 Only 436 books were printed in Ottoman Turkish prior to 1876; Strauss, “Les livres et l’imprimerie,” 6. The first Ottoman newspaper, the official gazette, first appeared in 1831; the first privately owned Ottoman newspaper in 1840; Carter Vaughan Findley, “Knowledge and Education,” in *Modernization in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire and Its Afro-Asian Successors*, Cyril E. Black and L. Carl Brown, eds. (Princeton, N.J., 1992), 141.

27 Okay, Ahmed Midhat, *xi*, 12; Finn, *Early Turkish Novel*, 14, 21; Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel*, 82; Morán, *Türk Romantıca Eşgîrle bir Bakış*, 53–65; Parla, Babalar, 73; noting that Ahmed Midhat’s *Miğabedet* [Observations] (Istanbul, 1308/1889–91), an essay in literary naturalism, is both a meta-novel and a critical novel: he makes both the writing and the reading of the novel a part of the work, into which he introduces himself as a character.


29 In keeping with Ottoman supranationalism, this vision took in both the household or neighborhood level and that of relations among the diverse communities of the multinational empire. Ahmed Midhat fraternalized with Ottoman Greeks, Armenians, and Jews among his traveling companions: *Avrupa'da bir Çevelat*, 14a–b, 31a, 38a–b, 62b, 1043a.

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Istanbul, he said, because he was a father figure to sixty or seventy families with over three hundred members. 

Collaborator and publicist of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), Ahmed Midhat is easily branded a conservative, yet he had progressive traits. In contrast to the progressive ideologues who took constitutionalism as their “symbol of western modernity,” he—while sharing some of their positivistic and Social Darwinist ideas—believed social, economic, and cultural change should come first. Not a religious conservative at all, on balance he favored westernization. Like many other Ottoman writers, he criticized excessive, superficial westernization, a danger personified in his works by playboys whose rootlessness brought them to bad ends. 

Much more than other writers, however, he examined both Ottoman and European cultures minutely to distinguish good and bad points in each. As a result, he advocated change in many domains, from table manners to social roles. While championing the “patriarchal life” of the Ottoman household, he became a pioneer author of books for and about children and a precursor of change in gender relations.

29 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 11b. Later in Switzerland (886b), he responded to the idea of going up to the mountains by making a similar point with a word play on his name: he was not a coward, but he was no longer his own Midhat because he was the father of a large family and the servile and servant of a people who needed the service (hizmet) of his pen.


32 Okay, Ahmed Midhat, 7–9, 29, 408.


34 It was still early to expect a fully developed feminism among Ottoman writers, although the women’s press dates as far back as 1868: Sergil Çakır, Osmanlı Kadin Hareketi [The Ottoman Women’s Movement] (Istanbul, 1994), 22–42, see also Beth Baron, The Women’s Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press (New Haven, Conn., 1994), for similar but slightly later developments in Egypt. While Ahmed Midhat’s position on women had ambiguities, he was not the kind of westernizer whose “feminism" mimicked European attacks on Islam, see Leila Ahmed, Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate (New Haven, 1992), 152–64, critique of Egypt’s Qašim Amin. Ahmed Midhat defended veiling and Islamic criteria of chaste behavior but advocated enlarged possibilities for women; see Okay, Ahmed Midhat, 139–234; Haka Tağlık Us, ed., Ahmet Midhat Efendi ile Şair Fitnat Hanımı (Istanbul, 1948), his correspondence with the woman poet Fitnat. Ahmed Midhat, Fatma Aliye Hanım, yahut bu Mühür-i Osmanlı’nın Nego’u (Istanbul, 1311/1893–94), republished in modern Turkish as Fatma Aliye: Bir Osmanlı Kadin Yeşil Ağız, Bedri Erim, ed. (Istanbul, 1994), his biography of the first important Ottoman woman novelist, his protégée, Carter Vaughn Findley, “La soumise, la subversive: Fatma Aliye, romancière et féministe,” Turcica 27 (1995): 153–76. Ahmed Midhat was polygamous, but his second marriage was of a kind that led some progressive Ottomans to defend polygyny. Having written a novel, Hıntız Onyadi Yaşında [Still Only Seventeen] (Istanbul, 1298/1881), about prostitution, he contracted his second marriage in 1884 with a Greek prostitute, thus rehabilitating her (Okay, Ahmed Midhat, 203, 345). He alludes to his dual harem only once (Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 816b), yet it helps explain his attitude toward fallen women in Europe.
To publish in Istanbul during this period, authors had to know how to get past the censors. They had to praise the sultan as the patron of learning, as Ahmed Midhat often did. They also had to avoid many topics. Most politics was off limits, but left open were many social issues, which Ahmed Midhat found highly congenial. Given the parallelism between patrimonial sultanate and patriarchal family, a discussion of familial and gender relations was becoming a proxy for political debate in this period, a fact whose implications the censors seemingly failed to realize. Ahmed Midhat’s book reads in part as an early contribution to this debate by proxy.

The reign of Abdulhamid combined censorship and repression with rapid growth in publishing and diffusion of new ideas—a paradox that no one embodied better than Ahmed Midhat.

Ahmed Midhat found that one fruit of the sultan’s favor was his selection to represent the Ottoman Empire at the Eighth Congress of Orientalists in Stockholm. He spent seventy-one days in Europe, visited the Exposition Universelle in Paris and other sites, and then wrote a book that opened a new phase in his career.

He had published books since 1870, a major goal always being to make Europe known to the Ottomans. His earlier books had been “mental journeys” based on reading, however, while this thousand-page travel narrative recounted a “real journey.” Not a journey to an unknown country by one who had no idea what to do there, his European tour was a “transition from the imaginary to the real.” Although it is ironic that the route from his imagined Europe to the “real” one led to such alteritist representations as the orientalist congress and world exhibition, Ahmed Midhat in effect parried the irony by approaching Europe with the same expectations Europeans had of finding their prior representations borne out when they traveled to the “real Orient.”

Behind Ahmed Midhat stood a centuries-long tradition of Ottoman travel writing, but we would not know it from this book. Few such works had been published by 1889, and he does not cite them. To the contrary, to increase his own importance, he has a learned Ottoman agree that this will be the first travel book to “make Europe known to the Ottomans.” The works with which Ahmed Midhat

37 Okay, Ahmed Midhat, 409–13, his bibliography.
38 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’da bir Cevelan, 2b–3b: seyahat-i fikiye and seyahat-i hakikiyete, respectively.
40 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’da bir Cevelan, 1004a. This may have been feigned ignorance to ward off the censors or to avoid publicizing other writers’ books. See also Bernard Lewis, The Muslim Discovery of Europe (New York, 1982); Sinan Kuneralp, “Les Ottomans à la découverte de l’Europe: Récits de
compared his travel account were not other writers’ travel books but his own earlier works, the purpose being to prove his authority.\textsuperscript{41} Ahmed Midhat stated that he would speak only from observation and not swell his book with things from guidebooks. In fact, compilation, a method used by earlier Ottoman travel writers, was essential for his fast-paced encyclopedism.\textsuperscript{42} After recounting each day’s outings, he added write-ups about major tourist sites, cribbed from guidebooks or similar sources. Arrival at a new city always called for a potted history.\textsuperscript{43} Still, he presented his trip as a research project, in which he sought to proceed as disinterestedly as if he had come to earth from another planet.\textsuperscript{44} His positivist faith in impartiality expresses the confidence of the era that believed a photograph captured reality or that an exhibition displayed the world.

If Ahmed Midhat’s “Tour in Europe” resulted in part from pedestrian information-gathering and writing strategies, this did not preclude his pursuing ambitious literary ends. His artistry becomes clear from the way he combined translation and compilation with descriptive and novelistic passages including moments of rhetorical eloquence, dialogue, stage setting, and character development. Beyond that, two traits of the travel book stand out.

Near the end of the book, Ahmed Midhat recounts a discussion in which the noted statesman and intellectual Sadullah Paşa, Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, proposed evaluating Europe’s progress in terms of “material” and “moral.” Attribution to Sadullah gives this idea distinguished provenance.\textsuperscript{45} Yet Ahmed Midhat had already made it his leitmotif, developing it in much earlier discussions. One reason for this may have been that the moral-material duality paralleled Sultan Abdulhamid’s view that Western civilization consisted of “technique” and “idea,” the former helpful to the Ottomans, the latter dangerous for ill-educated peoples who still needed paternal guidance.\textsuperscript{46} But Ahmed Midhat’s use of this dichotomy gave his work more than a kind of political correctness. Explicitly applying the moral-material dichotomy to the Other suggests applying it to the Self, implying an analytical framework that transcends simplistic binarism. This turns the trip to the


Ahmed Midhat, 

Ahrupa da bir Cevanalı, 71a–b, relating how an instructor at the École des Langues Orientales Vivantes in Paris had reportedly referred to the author of Paris ile bir Türk [A Turk in Paris] (Istanbul, 1293/1876), which he had written before ever going there, as a Türk who knew Paris well; 1986, setting out for Geneva, he reminded his readers that he had already taken them there imaginatively in his novel Deniz Böy (Istanbul, 1305/1888); 927b, discovering that he was staying in Konstanz at a place where Jan Hus had been imprisoned, he pointed out that he had written about Hus in his Mufassal Taarihi Kuran-ı Ceddil (Detailed History of the Middle Ages), 3 vols. (Istanbul, 1303–05/1886–88).

Ahmed Midhat, 


Ahmed Midhat, 

Avrupa da bir Cevanalı, 251a, 376a, 924b, 968a.

Ahmed Midhat, 

Ahrupa da bir Cevanalı, 656a–b.

Ahmed Midhat, 


realm of material progress into a reflection as well on the spiritual realm in which a modern Ottoman culture might be created.

Ahmed Midhat's encounters at Stockholm with other congress participants, particularly Madame Gülnar, whom we will meet below, and several other Russians with whom he also subsequently traveled, added another element to this exploration of "culture as the space of difference." Their shared reflections raised above the travel narrative a descent in which members of two societies—old enemies but akin in their marginality to the West—jointly critiqued what they saw. This remains Ahmed Midhat's narrative: the Russian voices are mediated through him. Still, he attempts to transcend common limits of elite, male alteritism and produce a multiple-voiced, dual-gendered critique.

Ahmed Midhat's itinerary took him by ship from Istanbul to Marseille, by train to Copenhagen, and on by steamer and train to Stockholm. Given the political configuration of Sweden-Norway, the orientalist congress convened in both Stockholm and Christiania, as Oslo was then known. Thereafter, he traveled with one or more of his Russian friends to Berlin (three days' stay), Paris (twelve days), across Switzerland to Vienna (five days), and back by train to Trieste and steamer to Istanbul.

If Ottoman novelists, as recent critics have argued, used the novel as a literary "technology" with which to regulate cultural change, Ahmed Midhat used the travel narrative analogously as a means of Occidentalist empowerment. Much as Europeans demonstrated their command of practicalities in their travel books—a literary form dependent in turn on many other technologies of travel—he sought to convey his mastery of the requirements for a successful journey across Europe. Ever methodical, he saw his trip as one big tour made up of smaller ones, using the same term, cevelan, for all. Using guidebook, map, and compass to plan and follow his routes, he organized his book as a day-by-day account, inserting descriptions of sites and events. As he planned his outings, he perfected a method of studying his map and listing the streets he wanted to follow. He liked to start the day early with a walking tour planned the night before, returning to the hotel to meet his travel companions. They would then devote the rest of the day to major sites. At night, they would go to the theater, spend the evening over dinner, or retire early to sleep or write. Occasional references to writing articles for his newspaper or keeping a journal imply regular attention to these pursuits. It is hard to see how he could have written his book so quickly otherwise. The "little museum" of brochures and catalogues that he collected also helped.

In addition to guidebooks and maps, the Ottoman traveler confronted endless

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47 Duara, Rescuing History, 233.
48 Pana, Babelan, 57-58; Schick, Exotic Margin, 8. "Foucault has introduced the term 'technology' to denote the discursive tools with which knowledge of social realities is constructed," citing Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, eds., Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault (Amherst, Mass., 1988), 18.
49 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupada bir Cevelan, 5b, 71b, 248a, 376a, 590a, 529b-530a; Woolacott, "All This Is the Empire," 1005, 1007-10.
50 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupada bir Cevelan, 131a, 473b, 484b, 508a, 598a, 889a.
Ahmed Michat Efendi, 1897. From Tercümanı-ı Hakikat ve Muşarver Serveti-i Fünun Gazeteleri tarafından müsterek testib olunf... Cevat Muhtacının laneten Nâşı-i Yegane-i Fıvavalde (Numéro spécial et unique des journaux Tercümanı-ı Hakikat et Serveti-i Fünun, publié aux profits des nécessiteux musulmans de Crète) (İstanbul, 1313/1897), in the Millî Kitaphanesi (National Library), Ankara, Turkey.
complexities of a world culturally polarized between alafrağı and alaturka and had to negotiate transitions from one to the other in matters ranging from clocks and calendars to the intricacies of dress and deportment, sources of fascination to Ahmed Midhat. To deal with such matters, he advocated "researching the country," adding that he had done so for fifteen years to learn about Europe before going there. Prior study of guidebooks enabled one to make the most of one's time and to know things even the locals did not. Occidentalist empowerment thus included power over Europeans, at the price of mastering European ways. Travelers dependent on human guides were prisoners in their hands. Baeckeker was right about this: travelers owed their freedom to him. Local guides spouted misinformation, led travelers to brothels, and took those who wanted to shop to stores that gave the guides kickbacks. An explorer in red fez rather than pith helmet, Ahmed Midhat showed such people that he was in control. He did not fault natives for staring as he studied fine Parisian buildings with binoculars in one hand and guidebook in the other; he persisted because he had to try to memorize everything he saw.

The smart Ottoman traveler, moreover, knew the advantages of travel by train or ship, preferring the latter to avoid the smoke, coal dust, and uncomfortable motion. Ahmed Midhat planned unavoidable train trips in short stages, preferably at night, so as not to lose days. He knew to telegraph ahead for hotel reservations. Aware of the dangers of European cities, he knew that the police would respond to travelers' complaints, especially in Germany and Switzerland. He understood the importance of maintaining his health and acted accordingly. Ahmed Midhat did not have to tell his readers that no Ottoman traveler could manage without knowing at least one European language, preferably French. Implying his own mastery, he related an impassioned speech that he allegedly made at the congress, extemporaneously in French, on Muslim women. He recounted the speech in Ottoman as a polished

51 The Turkish names for the two poles derive from the Italian alla franca, "Frankish" or European style, and alla urca, Turkish style. In alaturka time, the day began at the apparent setting of the sun, and the hours were counted in two cycles of twelve, ending with sunset at twelve o'clock the next day. Seasonal shifts in the length of the days meant that the start of the alaturka day had no fixed alafrağı time. Guidebooks for Europeans traveling in the Ottoman Empire used to include tables showing how to convert alaturka to alafrağı time the year around. As for calendars, the Ottomans commonly used both the lunar Islamic religious and a solar financial calendar. In the latter, the date of the month followed the Julian reckoning, still used by Orthodox Christians (many of whom lived under Ottoman rule), but the year was based on the Islamic religious calendar. By the 1880s, the difference in length between lunar and solar years had introduced a gap of about two years between dates in the hijri lunar religious calendar (spelled hicri in Turkish) and the solar calendar, which was referred to as either mab (financial) or rumi (Greek). Ahmed Midhat cited his dates rumi until he got to Stockholm, where, following the congress program, he began to cite them European style (alafrağı); he cited the time alaturka until he arrived in Paris, nearly halfway through his trip, Arvapada bir Cevelan, 35a, 51a, 61b, 134a, 473b. The Turks officially adopted the international clock and calendar in 1923.

52 Ahmed Midhat, Arvapada bir Cevelan, 66b, 126a–128a, 772b.


54 Ahmed Midhat, Arvapada bir Cevelan, 9a, 59b, 72b, 343a, 364b–365a, 374a, 375b–376a, 859b–860a, 899b–990a. Considering how conscious Turks are of the dangers of U.S. cities today, it is interesting to find a similar attitude toward European cities of a century ago.
composition, enough so to make one wonder if he could have delivered it with the same panache in French.\textsuperscript{55} How much confidence his readers gained from this picture of prowess is uncertain.

Ahmed Midhat also did not need to tell his readers that the unaccompanied Ottoman Muslim traveler had to be male, but some of his references to gender issues reflected that fact. His warnings about European prostitutes conflated alterity, femininity, and sexual danger in a way that turned the tables on European Orientalist alterity and attitudes toward “oriental” women. This conforms to a larger pattern in Ottoman Occidentalism: figuring the West as feminine and its greatest danger to the East as its libidinoseness.\textsuperscript{56} However, in Ahmed Midhat's Occidentalist alterity, this is only one message about gender, as we shall see below.

The point on which he gave fellow Ottomans the least help was finance. He never broached the issue directly, but his indirect references show that he traveled in style. He had been sent to the congress as an official delegate by a sultan who conferred honors and stipends on people to obligate them to himself. For his mission, Ahmed Midhat had been awarded the second highest civil official rank, which entitled him to be addressed as \textit{Votre Excellence} in French and required him on state occasions to wear a gold-embroidered dress uniform with decorations and a ceremonial sword.\textsuperscript{57} Whether he owed it more to the sultan's largesse or his own success in publishing, Ahmed Midhat was able to buy the best tickets at the opera, dine wherever he pleased, and, if tired, let waiters choose what to bring. When he got his feet wet touring the gardens at Versailles in the rain, he bought new shoes and discarded the wet ones before returning to Paris.\textsuperscript{58} Perhaps proper to the place, the gesture was not one that many of his readers could have afforded to emulate.

A traveler as gregarious as Ahmed Michhat could not be expected to travel alone. He never did for long, even though he presents himself as the lone delegate from Istanbul at Stockholm.\textsuperscript{59} Then as now, exhibitions and congresses not only projected visions of the world but also created settings for unexpected meetings among people of diverse backgrounds. So it was for Ahmed Midhat, especially at the congress.

\textsuperscript{55} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelen}, 164a–167b; Muhammad Amin Fikri, \textit{Irshād al-\textit{Athbā' ilā Mahāsin\ 'Urūbah}} [Guidance for the Intelligent to the Good Things of Europe] (Cairo, 1592), 658, mentioning Ahmed Midhat's summarization of his father, Fikri Pasja's, Arabic presentation. In a later private letter, Ahmed Midhat admitted that he understood French better than he wrote it; it would be surprising if the same were not true of his speaking; Atatürk Library, Istanbul, Fatma Aliye Mss. 14/ \ldots\ (unnumbered), Ahmed Midhat to Fatma Aliye, December 27, 1309 (nuni)/January 8, 1894.

\textsuperscript{56} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelen}, 67a–b, 583a, 811b, 975a, 989b, 1017b; Parla, \textit{Babalar}, 17–21, 79–116; Woolfscott, “All This Is the Empire,” 1021–25; Schick, \textit{Erotic Margin}, 122–24: the common Turkish use of the term \textit{freni} to mean either “syphilis” or “European” also mirrors European alterity assumptions about the disease risks associated with women in other societies.

\textsuperscript{57} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelen}, 147a: his rank was the \textit{rube-i bala}.

\textsuperscript{58} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelen}, 562a, 646b, 743b.

\textsuperscript{59} K[arl] U[no] Nylander, \textit{Orientalistikongressen i Stockholm-Kristiania några Skildringar från Utlandet} (Uppsala, 1890), vii n. 1; and Paul Haupt, “Report on International Congress of Orientalists,” \textit{Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution to the End of June 1890} (Washington, D.C., 1891), 85: lists indicating five (Haupt) or six (Nylander) participants present from “Turkey,” in addition to at least four from Egypt, and eighteen from Russia; Ahmed Midhat mentions four Egyptians and four Russians but no other Ottoman.
Carter Vaughn Findley

There he befriended numerous delegates, including Egyptians and Russians.60 Perhaps, then, his most important travel skills were his social ones.

One of the Gala Events in Stockholm was a reception at the Grand Hotel, an occasion featuring waiters clad in Egyptian costumes and entertainment provided by the opera orchestra and ballet. For Ahmed Midhat, this spectacle was quickly eclipsed by an astonishing introduction to a “polyglot” Russian noblewoman, who immediately began talking to him in Ottoman and gave her name as “Gülnar” (Rose). When he expressed admiration but pointed out that this beautiful name was not proper to her nationality, she handed him her card, with the name engraved on it in Arabic calligraphy. The name he needed to know, she said, was “Gülnar.”61

Ahmed Midhat thus began his acquaintance and friendship with one of three Russian travelers. His interest in Madame Gülnar and later her compatriots may seem surprising, given the history of Ottoman-Russian enmity. Yet, since he was an author approved at the highest level, Ahmed Midhat’s attitude of fascination toward these travelers cannot be considered accidental; it matches other signs of circumspection in Ottoman policy toward Russia at the time. He justified his view with interesting blurrrings of alteritist distinctions: the Russians’ customs are like the Ottomans’; the French say that if you scratch a Russian, a Tatar emerges, and the same is true of an Ottoman. The Russians had started accepting European civilization before the Ottomans and had gone further, but they had not lost their Asian manners and customs, and so on. When the Russian physician Dr. Boris Yanpuolkii, whom he met through Madame Gülnar, treated both of them for colds, Ahmed Midhat compared the Russians’ humaneness to the Ottomans’ generosity. He added the Social Darwinist note that such qualities were greater among peoples who, like them, were still on the lower rungs of civilization. He also valued his colloquies with the Russians as a way to learn about Russia’s Tatars; he did not protest that Russia ruled the Tatars.62

Through Madame Gülnar, Ahmed Midhat met not only Dr. Boris, as he called him, but also an old man, whom he called Professor Goldwald (the real name, Gottwald, might have had off-color associations in Turkish), and his daughter.63

60 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’dı bir Cevelan, 118b, 119b, 149b, 161a–161b, 220a, 227a–227b, 304a. The Egyptians were ‘Abdullah Fikri Pasha (1834–1890), his son Muhammad Amin Fikri Bey (1856–1900), and Shaykh Hamza and ‘Umar; they also visited the Paris exposition, among other places, but at different dates; Fikri, İshâd, Anouar Louça, Voyageurs et écrivains égyptiens en France au XIXème siècle (Paris, 1978), 197–208, Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, 1–2.

61 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’dı bir Cevelan, 173a–174b. From the Persian word gül (pronounced gul in Turkish), meaning “rose” or “flower,” gülnar means either the wild pomegranate or a deep red double rose. It is one of many women’s personal names derived from the word gül, which has important symbolic associations in traditional poetic imagery.


63 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’dı bir Cevelan, 157b, 194a; Gottwald inscribed two of his books in Arabic for Ahmed Midhat, who thus surely knew the old man’s real name. The first syllable of Gottwald would, however, have been hard to distinguish in Arabic script from the Turkish word gôt (“backsides” and related meanings). Fikri, İshâd, 609–10, gave the name as Gotwal (Kütüel) and expressed very similar opinions about him and Madame Gülnar (Külnar). [Nikola] [Pavlovich] Zagoskin, Biograficheskii slovar’ professorov i prepodavatelei Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta (1804–1904) (Kazan, 1904),
Madame Gulnar, wearing the Ottoman decoration "Order of Compassion" (Nisan-i Sehat), an order exclusively for women, which she received during her visit to Istanbul in the winter of 1890-1891. From Servat-i Fünun, no. 15 (1891): 171 (in the Harvard University Library).
They traveled together to Berlin, from which the professor and his daughter returned to Russia. Ahmed Midhat and Madame Gulnar went on to Paris and visited it together. Parting from her there, Ahmed Midhat went to Switzerland, joining Dr. Boris and traveling with him as far as Vienna.64

The varying importance that Dr. Boris, the old professor, and Madame Gulnar assume in Ahmed Midhat's book raises a question: Which had more to do with his presentation of the Russians, positivist objectivity or didactic Occidentalism? Probably the latter, and not only in Madame Gulnar's case, though she was the most important of the three.65 For example, Dr. Yanpolskii provided Ahmed Midhat the occasion to praise members of subject nationalities who were loyal to the sovereign they served; for, as he assumed was "clear from his name," this prominent St. Petersburg physician was a Pole. He may have been, but the evidence is not as clear as Ahmed Midhat's interpretation of it, inspired by his Ottomanist ideology.66

The old professor, "Goldwald," provides another case of literary ventriloquism. At a congress where some people did embody the ignorance or bias that critics of Orientalism decry, he was exceptional. Ahmed Midhat describes him as an eighty-year-old who knew Russian, German, French, Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, all very well, and had retired from teaching to become a librarian in Kazan. The professor had published on Islam and maintained good relations with learned Tatars. At the congress, there were many who loved Islam but none as much as he.67 Pointing out how few congress participants had deep knowledge, the professor said that even the best had much to gain from a learned Easterner like Ahmed Midhat. Standing next to Ahmed Midhat's chair as he spoke, the old man then kissed his head, but would not let our startled author kiss his hand in return, as Ottoman custom required in order to show respect. Ahmed Midhat was still young, the old man continued, and must work hard to show the wisdom of Islam to Europe.

226–28, "Josef Feodorovich Gotval'd," (1813–1897); my thanks to Jared Ingersoll-Casey for translating the Russian text.

64 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 441a, 786a. To justify traveling alone with Gulnar from Berlin to Paris, he says only that he had trouble in Germany because he knew no German and that her status as a woman made it impossible for her to deal with train stations and customs inspections. This does not account for their twelve days in Paris, where they were, however, soon joined by her mother and son.

65 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 173a–786a: Madame Gulnar figures throughout approximately 60 percent of the narrative. She remained a subject of discussion between Ahmed Midhat and Dr. Boris until they parted (1024a).

66 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 771a, 819b. Ahmed Midhat had spent part of his early life in the Ottoman Balkans, knew enough Bulgarian that he could understand some of the Russians' conversation, and may have interpreted the name Yanpolskii as deriving from "polski" (Polish). He presented Dr. Boris as highly critical of Poles who pretended to be loyal to the Russian Empire but, unlike him, were not. The name Boris, however, was highly unlikely for a Catholic. Dr. Boris might have been a descendant of a Polish noble family that owned land in Russian territory, possibly in the Ukraine, that had converted to Orthodoxy at some point, and had fallen into poverty. Dr. Boris also told (854b) how he had been born to a poor family, had with much difficulty completed his education in his native region (unspecified), then had studied medicine in Paris and Vienna, before rising to become the third obstetrician in St. Petersburg. In Russia, the initial poverty of anyone who rose that far was probably only relative. Ahmed Midhat liked this story, being a self-made man himself, as well as an advocate of the Ottomanist synthesis of nationalities. He praised Dr. Boris as a "perfect person" (için-i kâmil), a phrase he also used to describe Madame Gulnar: 463a, 838b. His applying to non-Muslims, one of them female, a term that suffs originally used for a spiritual paragon again shows that Ahmed Midhat was no religious conservative.

Europe had made progress in industry and science but not in wisdom. The most learned professors still busied themselves with philology; after taking this key in hand, they would advance to higher levels of learning. As for the Tatars, the old man painted a sad picture of intellectual stagnation, adding that they had not advanced since passing under Russian rule, although contact with Ottoman prisoners during the Russo-Turkish War had provided some stimulus.

Out of date by 1889, this view of the Tatars is hard to evaluate. The professor's age might explain it, or it might represent Ahmed Midhat's underestimation of the Tatars or his wish not to antagonize the Russians. As for Professor Gottwald's critique of European scholarship, he himself was a minor orientalist, whose publications had hardly advanced beyond the philological. However, the reassuring words and the patriarchal kiss on the head memorably bridged alteritist polarizations.

The person at the congress who most intrigued Ahmed Midhat was Madame Gülzar. It did not take long to learn her real name and that she was a countess, but she asked him not to use her real name in his book. He promised, referring to her first as Madame Gülzar, eventually just as Gülzar—appellations that concede a Turkish identity while maintaining her liminality. Was he as interested in manipulating her image as she was? Olga Sergeyevna Lebedeva (1854–?) by her right name, she impressed him first by the quality of her Turkish. She explained that she was from the Kazan region, where her family employed Tatar workers and had relations with notable Tatar families, that she had long known Tatar, and had begun to learn Ottoman when she went to Petersburg. She also knew numerous European languages and enough Arabic and Persian for use in Ottoman; in addition, she

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68 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevalan, 195a–196a; this wording harmonizes the professor's thinking with Ahmed Midhat's material-moral dichotomy and Sultan Abdulhamid's technique-idea polarity; Okay, Ahmed Midhat, 266–68.


70 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevalan, 198–199b: he assured her that he had accepted "Gülzar" as her name in all things Ottoman—a major qualification. Since Turkish custom is almost always, except in very intimate circumstances, to use titles of address (which follow the given name), it is significant that he persisted in calling her "Madame Gülzar," instead of the Turkish equivalent, Gülzar Hanım ("Miss Rose," hanım meaning "lady," "Mrs.," or "Miss"). His usage reflects the Turkish sense of a we-they relationship between Islam and Christendom, such that Gülzar—unless she converted—could not be Gülzar Hanım, any more than Ahmed Midhat Efendi could be Monsieur Ahmed Midhat. Gülzar could be her name in things Ottoman, but she could not have a full Ottoman-Islamic identity, as far as he was concerned. Equally noteworthy are the situations where he referred to her simply as Gülzar, or as his "companion" (arkadaş; Avrupa'da bir Cevalan, 444a, 477a, 506a, 575a, 661a). The best explanation of these un-Turkish forms of reference may be one observed in the case of European women travelers in the Middle East, who were sometimes treated as "honorary men"; Helen Wheatley, "From Traveler to Notable: Lady Duff Gordon in Upper Egypt, 1862–1869," Journal of World History 3 (1992): 93; Woolacott, "All This Is the Empire," 160. However, in other settings, she was sometimes referred to as Gülzar Hanım: as author, she was sometimes so named on title pages, perhaps by her own doing. See also Gülzar Hanım, Nam-i Düğün Madam Olga de Lebedef (G. Hanım, Also Known as Madame O. de L.), Servet-i Fıman [Riches of Science] (a leading review of the period) 15 (1891): 170–73.
played the piano and painted. An admirer of Ottoman customs, she wore Turkish clothing at home and put fezes on her children. Madame Gulnar showed Ahmed Midhat a manuscript of a book that she had translated from Russian into Ottoman, and he noted with surprise that the translation hardly needed correction. When he asked for a copy to publish in Istanbul, she simply gave him the manuscript. In another appraisal of her written Ottoman, Ahmed Midhat wrote that it was not inferior to that of the newspaper Tercüman published by the noted Crimean Tatar intellectual Ismail Gasprininski (1851–1914).

Later, as traveling companion, Madame Gulnar displayed behavioral traits not unknown in other accomplished, upper-class, nineteenth-century ladies. In contrast to Ahmed Midhat’s energy and early starts, she needed more sleep, often felt ill, and spent some days without leaving the hotel. While she showed surprising stamina for things she wanted to do, like visiting the Louvre, on balance her sightseeing was limited. While Ahmed Midhat often felt homesick, if she felt similar feelings, he did not report them, not until she got a letter in Paris, informing her that her mother would shortly arrive with Madame Gulnar’s nine-year-old son Sasha, who had a chest ailment and needed to travel. After the old countess and the boy arrived, Ahmed Midhat was startled at Madame Gulnar’s childlike submission to the will of her mother and her absent husband. For example, when Ahmed Midhat invited Madame Gulnar to visit the Père Lachaise cemetery, her mother forbade it, saying “the weak nerves of women are affected by such sights.” After a century, it is hard to know which of Madame Gulnar’s idiosyncrasies were hers alone and which resulted from then-prevailing factors of gender, class, or ethnicity. In 1889, the nature of women’s dress might explain her inability to keep up with Ahmed Midhat or her wish not to go out some days.

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72 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’dan bir Cevelan, 1960–1994; B. M. Dansig, Blizkhi Vostok [The Near East] (Moscow, 1976), 301; Kononov, Biobibliograficheskii slovar', 144: Gulnar had gone to Istanbul in 1888 to publish works of Alexander Pushkin in Ottoman translation, but the censors forbade publication, suspecting that she was a Russian propagandist; after she met Ahmed Midhat in Stockholm, he edited her work and arranged for publication in Turkey. The works of Pushkin that she translated and published were Snowstorm (Metel’) and Queen of Spadas (Pilkovey Dama). These were published as Kar Fırınçasi (Istanbul, 1307/1889–90) and Kağı Oynusuna (Istanbul, 1309/1891–92); Bektiroglu, “Untulmuş bir Mûstefîk,” 9.


74 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’dan bir Cevelan, 443a, 545a, 546a, 687a, 726a–727a, 776a.

What mattered to Ahmed Midhat was that he found in Madame Gülünar a Turkophile, companion, and intellectual counterpart. He stressed how much more he learned from outings when she went along. At art museums, her knowledge was so valuable that he was all ears from head to toe, he wrote, clinging to her words as if they were his very life. All finery and diamonds at the reception where they met, she had not cared about such things or about how the other women were turned out; she had talked to him about intellectual matters. "Truly, it is a strange coincidence that two minds could be so compatible." On their last night in Paris, Madame Gülünar presented to him her plan to translate literary works from Ottoman into Russian and from Russian into Ottoman, seeking his help. Despite fear that his own work would keep him from following through, he could not refuse; Ottomans and Russians were neighbors, he wrote, who—while both borrowing from Europe—had remained strangers. Moreover, women who attracted attention by their genuine, fine qualities achieved the honor (şerefe) of belonging to "the most beautiful, refined, and sacred part of humanity."77

Madame Gülünar thus not only introduced into the narrative a third subject position between Self and Other, a role that the two Russian men helped play, she also became a prototype for the "new woman."78 Signs that Ahmed Midhat later grew disillusioned with her suggest that her usefulness as an embodiment of this image proved short-lived.79 However, the idea of the "new woman" was destined for great and lasting importance. Muslim Ottomans were still unaccustomed to women whose honor could be an honor (şerefe) won by achievement as well as one dependent on chaste behavior (ıffet, ismet). In Ahmed Midhat’s narrative, Madame Gülünar becomes, in fact, a surprisingly early evocation of the desexualized, high-achiever image that entered mainstream nationalist discourse decades later to justify the movement of women into public life under the Turkish republic.80

76 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 353a, 392a, 574b, 578a. Even without a Freudian interpretation of the image "all ears from head to toe," we note the implications of gender-role shift in his depiction of himself as dependent on Madame Gülünar. In contrast, Orientalist discourse tended to picture travel as a male monoploy. Woolflocott, "'All This Is the Empire,'" 1022, 1025.

77 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 775a–7839. Madame Gülünar did translate works of Alexander Pushkin, M. V. Lermontov, and Leo Tolstoy into Ottoman; she wrote several works in Ottoman, including some about Russian writers; and she translated at least one Islamic work into Russian. See also Gülünar Hanım, "İslam Kadınlarında Hürriyet" [Freedom among Islamic Women], serialized in Kadın [Woman], nos. 12–15 (1824/1909); and compare Bekiroğlu, "Unutulmuş bir Müstehşir," 9; Kononov, Biobibliograficheskii slovar', 144–45; "Gülünar Hanım," Serâvet-i Füman 15 (1891), 170–73 (recounting her activities during a stay in Istanbul, 1890–1891).

78 Chatterjee, Nation and Its Fragments, 127.

79 Atatürk Library, Istanbul, Fatma Aleye Ms. 14/1, Ahmed Midhat to Fatma Aleye, December 11, 1309/December 23, 1893 (he speaks as if it were he who had wanted to make of Madame Gülünar a means for publication among Europeans, and she had agreed but not brought it off); December 27, 1309/January 8, 1894 (criticizing Madame Gülünar for flightiness; she had given her translation of Fatma Aleye's book, Nisan-i İslam [Islamic Women] to an unqualified person to correct); [December?]; 27, 1309/January 8, 1894 (mentioning visits of ten and fifteen days in preceding years, during which Madame Gülünar had been sick at his house, indicating that she had come to Istanbul because she could not get along with her husband); Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Catalogue général, vol. 49, column 1038: entry for Nisan-i İslam (les femmes musulmanes), trans. by Mme. Olga de Lábeedeff, pseud. Gülünar Hanım (Paris, 1896). She continued to visit and correspond with Ottoman intellectuals for some years more; Bekiroğlu, "Unutulmuş bir Müstehşir," 10; "Gülünar Hanım "Madan Olga dâ Lâbeedeff, ' Kadin 1, no. 16 (January 26, 1324/February 8, 1909): 7–8.

80 Ayfer Karakaya Stump, "The Emergence of a Feminist Nationalist Discourse: A Case Study of Kadın Magazine (1908–1909)" (MA thesis, Ohio State University, 1996); Çakır, Osmanlı Kadın
Undaunted by the Europe of congresses and exhibitions, then, Ahmed Midhat found in Dr. Boris a model subject of a multinational empire, in the old professor a paragon of learned impartiality, and in Madame Gülnar an ideal of woman as achiever. At once European and non-European, they became in his narrative virtual alter egos on a voyage of cross-cultural discovery and engagement.

Given that Ahmed Midhat's chief destinations in the "real" Europe were sites intended to represent the Orient in the one case and the world in the other, the orientalist congress and the universal exposition mark the logical starting point for an examination of his reactions to his journey.

The Stockholm Orientalist Congress had a recognizable pattern of panels and papers, but it lasted longer (September 1-12, 1889) and had more of a public, official, and ceremonial quality than is now normal. The congress convened first in Stockholm, then less grandly in Christiania (Oslo). King Oscar II (r. 1872-1907) chaired the opening and closing sessions in the House of the Nobility. Any of four different levels of dress might be required for a given event, and delegates often had to rush back to the hotel to change. The social program included an evening hosted by the king at the Drottningholm summer palace, with the city illuminated in honor of the orientalists on their return, and an outing to Old Uppsala. There, at the legendary burial mounds of the Norse gods Thor, Odin, and Freya—in a uniquely Scandinavian confounding of the spatially and temporally remote—the scholars were given horns of mead to toast the future of oriental studies. There

Hureik; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Slave Girls, Temptresses, and Comrades: Images of Women in the Turkish Novel," Feminist Issues 8 (1988): 55-59; Sibel Erol, "Formation of a Kemalist Female Identity in Turkish Fiction: A Comparative Analysis" (unpublished paper). The emancipation of Turkish women did not begin with the founding of the republic in 1923, as standard nationalist historiography has maintained. In Ahmed Midhat's thinking, the next step in developing the "serious" female image seems to have been transferring it from the exotic figure of Madame Gülnar to the indigenous one of Fatma Aliye (c. 34 above), whose biography he published in 1893. Great households had historically produced learned and accomplished women; in that sense, there is a long—but thin—history of female figures a little like Gülnar. The development of the print media was just starting to give such women an important public voice. 81 This was the fifth in a series of scholarly congresses that began at Paris in 1873, changed its name at Paris in 1973 to the International Congress of Asian and African Studies, and met for the thirty-fifth congress at Budapest in 1997; Bernard Lewis, Islam and the West (New York, 1993), 103-04; Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 117a-301a; Ignaz Goldziher, "Vom Stockholmer Orientalisten-Kongress," Pester Lloyd (Budapest), no. 249, September 10, 1889 (106 papers in six sections, from ancient Semitic to Malay-Polynesian and Central Asian, but no section for Chinese or Japanese studies; Goldziher [1850-1921] was an eminent Arabist from Budapest); Nylander, Orientalistkongressen, accounts by different participants; Haupt, "Report on International Congress," 86; R. N. Cust, "The International Congresses of Orientalists," Hellas: Organe de la Société Philhellénique d'Amsterdam 6 (1897): 342-71; Anouar Louca, "En marge du huitième Congrès des Orientalistes," Cahiers d'histoire égyptienne 9 (1957): 68-80; Baki Aslılı, "Ahmet Midhat Efendi Musteşirlikte Kongreşinde" [A.M. at the Orientalist Congress], Türk Dili, no. 521 (May 1995): 570-76. 82 The Riddarhusset, especially decorated for the occasion with flags, hieroglyphics, and sphinxes flanking the entrance. Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 134a-141b, 219b; Nylander, Orientalist-kongressen, 6: Ny Illustrerad Tidning (September 14, 1889): 307. 83 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 113a: he retained a private servant at the Grand Hotel to help hiscope with things like transferring his decorations from his dress uniform to his frock coat in a hurry. 84 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 177b-180b; Ignaz Goldziher, "Vom Stockholmer Orientalisten-Kongress," Pester Lloyd, no. 249, September 10, 1889.

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was also the reception where the waiters were dressed in Egyptian costume, and a command performance of Giuseppe Verdi’s Aida, the appropriateness of which, an Egyptian delegate delightedly noted, was “no secret.”

The social threatened to overwhelm the scholarly. Count Carlo Landberg, the organizer, was a gentleman Arabist who had married money, held the post of consul-general in Alexandria, and was a personal friend of King Oscar, a patron of scholars. Countess Landberg played the gracious hostess to Ahmed Midhat and the other official delegates. Ahmed Midhat makes it sound as if the attention she and Madame Gülnar lavished on him sparked a polite rivalry between the two countesses, something that others noticed, too. By the time the congress ended, Count Landberg for his part had offended some delegates, criticisms had appeared in the press, and he was apparently at the end of his tether. He showed up drunk—so Ahmed Midhat relates—at the final banquet and made remarks that further offended. To the public, meanwhile, the congress provided almost as much of a display as a world exhibition. The delegates were given rosettes to wear on their lapels. So made recognizable everywhere, they were entitled to assistance from the police and officials, as well as to free local travel. Huge crowds turned out to watch them pass, especially when delegates in exotic dress went by.

The evaluation of the congress attributed to Professor Gottwald confirms other evidence that the scholarly side of the congress was not all of a uniformly high standard. Even though leading scholars of the day participated, Ahmed Midhat

83 Nylander, Orientalistikongressen, 26, 51–52, 93–94; H. O., “Der achte internationale Orientalisten-Kongress,” Deutsche Rundschau 61 (1889), 300; Haupt, “Report on International Congress,” 91: “The scientific character of the meeting... was somewhat impaired by the almost excessive hospitality of the Scandinavian hosts, and especially by the number of tourists [gawkers?] who attracted by the program attended [sic].”
84 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’da bir Cevelan, 146a; K. V. Zettersten, Carlo Landberg som Orientalist (Uppsala, 1942), 27–30; Sven Dedering, “Landberg, Carl (Carlo),” in Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon, Goran Niizén, ed. (Stockholm, 1985–87), 22: 231–33: Landberg (1848–1924) had gotten his doctorate at Leipzig (1883), acquired an Italian title (when “Carlo,” August 1884), and married a rich, previously divorced German lady (November 1884). The Landbergs gave the reception at the Grand Hotel where Ahmed Midhat met Madame Gülnar, Fikri, İrshad, 666, and Ignaz Goldziher, “Vom Stockholmer Orientalisten-Kongress,” Peter Lloyd, no. 250, September 11, 1889, both described the lavish decor and the authentic waiters’ costumes, which Goldziher, who had studied at al-Azhar in Cairo, termed “faultless.”
85 The special attention paid to the official delegates may have helped provoke criticisms of the congress, especially those stated in racist terms. Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’da bir Cevelan, 261b (the countesses’ “rivalry”), 209b–213a (at the command performance of Aida), Iranian delegate Muhsein Khan sat in the royal box with King Oscar. Ahmed Midhat was in the next box with Countess Landberg, and the heads of the Egyptian and French delegations were in the next box to that), 220a–222a (he, Fikri Pasha of Egypt, Charles Schéfer [1820–1899] of France, and some other European scholars were invited to the palace for an audience with the king, where they were given decorations, in his case the Gustav Vasa order, first class). 331 (final banquet): Haupt, “Report on International Congress,” 88 (twenty governments sent official delegates, including Egypt, India, Iran, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire); Fikri, Irshad, 703 (the opera). In 1891, Landberg wrote that his health was still “shaken” from these “memorable days,” and he referred to the attacks to which he had been exposed: Actes du huitième Congrès international des orientalistes, tenu en 1889 à Stockholm et à Christiania, Part 2 (Leiden, 1893), iii–iv.
86 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’da bir Cevelan, 121b–122a, 134b, 158b, 176b.
The Landbergs' reception at the Grand Hotel, Stockholm, in honor of the delegates to the Eighth Congress of Orientalists, September 3, 1889. A scene including one of the Egyptian religious scholars (ulema) speaking to a lady (left), two Algerians talking to King Oscar II, with Count Landberg partly visible to the right, Countess Landberg on the arm of Iranian delegate Mushin Khan (foreground), and an Armenian delegate talking to Crown Prince Gustaf (right). Cover illustration from *My Illustrerad Tidning*, September 14, 1889 (in the Royal Library, Stockholm). Does this picture document the hosts' efforts to include "oriental" delegates in the conference or the artist's interest in exploiting the Orientalist pictorial possibilities of the delegates in exotic dress?
and his Egyptian counterparts were amazed at the points on which some of the Europeans were ignorant. Ahmed Midhat spent much time correcting misimpressions about Islam. With five European languages accepted as official, and papers presented in "oriental" languages as well, the congress was also a "tower of Babel." When he chaired a session, Ahmed Midhat took pains to translate to and from Arabic for the Egyptian delegates, who had complained that presentations on Arabic studies were not accessible to them. The audience was reportedly pleased with the results.

Reacting to the congress without the militancy of present-day anti-Orientalist criticism, Ahmed Midhat took pleasure in many of his experiences. He responded good-naturedly to problems, and just as well. While some participants approved Landberg's effort through the congress to stimulate not only European oriental studies but also the intellectual development of the Orient, and to bring Eastern scholars to the congress not just to admire European learning but to join in this project, others failed to share this vision, alleging—sometimes in racist terms—that the "oriental" delegates lacked scholarly qualifications. The Ottoman educational system had as yet produced few scholars suited to represent it at an international congress, and Ahmed Midhat was not a scholar.

If the Stockholm Congress was a culturally multivalent event, where the official program could not control every visitor's experience, the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris was more so. No one observer could take it all in; some facets could not even be mentioned in a work that had to pass Ottoman censorship. At one and the same time, this Exposition tricoloree celebrated the centennial of the French Revolution (Ahmed Midhat certainly could not mention that), it asserted France's reconsolidation under the Third Republic, it dramatized the European powers' dominance over their colonies, it displayed the latest advances in art and technology, it fostered internationalism by bringing together visitors and exhibitors from many countries, and it served as an amusement fair for 32 million visitors. The

91 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 223b–225a: he recounted how an antiquarian professed to have a coin dating from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, even though the earliest Islamic coins were known to be later, and how other delegates had debated whether the Amhilla, an anonymous work containing Arabic verbal paradigms and long used in the curriculum of the lower medreses (Islamic schools of religious studies), was written in Arabic or Turkish. (Ahmed Midhat had studied at a medrese at Ruschuk, Bulgaria: 206a.) While Arabic was more widely known than Persian, most European orientalists could only pick their way through texts by word by word. Theology (kalâm) and mysticism were the subjects of greatest interest to European Islamicists, Ahmed Midhat reported, but they remained foreign to the spirit of those fields and needed the collaboration of Muslim scholars, who would also benefit from working with Europeans.

92 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 144a, 160b–164a; Fikri, Ishâd, 655–58; his father, Fikri Pasha, spoke in Arabic on the poetry of Hassan ibn Thâbit (d. 674); Ahmed Midhat summarized in French an exchange between the noted Dutch Arabist Michael Jan de Goeje (1836–1909) and Fikri Pasha followed. Goldziher, "Vom Stockholmer Orientalisten-Kongress," Pester Lloyd, no. 249, September 10, 1889, reported seven papers in Arabic.

93 Ignaz Goldziher, "Vom Stockholmer Orientalisten-Kongress," Pester Lloyd, no. 204, September 6, 1889, no. 249, September 10, 1889; no. 254, September 15, 1889 (praising Landberg as the originator of "powerful ideas" about the profession and about the complementarity between Oriental and Occidental scholarship); Nylander, Orientalistik Kongressen, 34–36; Haupt, "Report on International Congress," 88, 91.

94 H. O., "Orientalistenkongress," 300; Nylander, Orientalistik Kongressen, 70–74 (comments of A. Weber, Berlin, adding that there was "little sign of intelligence to find" out "those Islamic faces"), 116 (R. Rosti); Mitchell, Colonising Egypt, 2.

95 Pascal Ory, L'Expo universelle (Brussels, 1989); Smithsonian Institution Libraries, The Books of the Fairs: Materials about World's Fairs, 1834–1916, in the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (Chicago,
exhibition occupied a huge site, with a long tract running from the Trocadéro to the far end of the Champ de Mars, a shorter tract consisting of the Esplanade des Invalides, and a narrow strip connecting these two along the Quai d'Orsay. The exhibition thus occupied some of the most important open spaces of Paris with buildings and exhibits, mostly intended as temporary. The exhibition's structural highlights were the Eiffel Tower and the Palace of Machines, a futuristic structure of iron and glass. The grand plan, materializing binarist alteritism, assigned the largest, finest spaces to display Europe's progress and the remaining spaces to show the rest of the world as bizarre and picturesque.

A purposeful observer, Ahmed Midhat still could not absorb everything. One would never know from him that Buffalo Bill's Wild West show was in town or that some exhibits of Asian cultures might move creative artists, such as Paul Gauguin or Claude Debussy, "to push their own... culture to one side to embrace another." Ahmed Midhat took no interest in the re-creations of colonial villages. Showing no solidarity with colonial peoples, he was nearly as ready to laugh at them as were the Europeans. For him, this was not so much a world exhibition as a Social Darwinist yardstick for measuring Europe's progress and the Ottomans' standing compared to it.

As in Stockholm, he liked some things but not others. He found what he liked least on the Rue du Caire, Cairo Street (see cover illustration). In contrast to Timothy Mitchell's influential recent critique of this scene, Ahmed Midhat's objection was not to the street overall but to a particular facet of it. Created by a French entrepreneur, Cairo Street was a 25-by-160-meter streetscape of façades and a few small buildings, with authentic structural elements worked into ensembles contrived to look old and dusty. Egyptians practicing their occupations enlivened...
Site plan of the Exposition Universelle, 1889, with close-up showing Cairo Street. The long tract, running from the Trocadéro to the Champ de Mars, and the shorter tract consisting of the Esplanade des Invalides were connected by a narrow exhibit space along the Quai d’Orsay. Adapted from maps in Musée d’Orsay, 1889: La Tour Eiffel et l’Exposition Universelle (Paris, 1989), 254, 260–61.

the scene, as did the donkeys for the visitors to ride. Ahmed Midhat neither assailed this Orientalist confusion of the old and exotic nor even remarked that the mosque façade fronted a coffeehouse inside which belly dancers entertained. He zeroed in on the dancers. They could not be Muslims; they must be Jews or Copts. “Not the kind of thing we approve of,” their dance could be seen, even in Egypt or

“dust-colored” implies pains taken to give a realistic impression of an old city with desert on two sides, “to such a point that he made the whitewash dust-colored.”

103 Mitchell (Colonising Egypt, 3; “World as Exhibition,” 217) says the craftsmen on the street were “Frenchmen dressed as Orientals.” His source, Fikri, Ishaq, 128–33, makes clear that the craftsmen, donkey drivers, and donkeys were Egyptian. Ahmed Midhat, Armada’da bir Cevelan, 526a, 527a (street authentic, but the masters of ceremonies where the belly dancers performed were Frenchmen dressed as Arabs); Çelik, Displaying the Orient, 70, 75–78 (quoting Mitchell); Musée d’Orsay, 1889, 105 (160 Egyptians worked on the street), 261 (map).

104 Ahmed Midhat, Armada’da bir Cevelan, 504b–505a and 1023a. His own Occidental alterity made the same conflation of old and authentic into a “rule” about European cities: for the traveler, what is worth seeing is the old city.
Tunisia, only in out-of-the-way places of dissipation. Whether it was more provocative than ballet was a matter of judgment; what astonished was how Europeans, men and women, went crazy over it and would watch the same dance for hours. The most noted dancer, “the beautiful Fatma,” was a Tunisian Jew who had won a beauty contest and wore her gold medal around her neck. “She was swathed in taffeta and crepe, but her bosom, neck, and arms were exposed!” No such costume would be seen among any class of Eastern women. For Ahmed Midhat, Cairo Street was a site of representational violence, but the violence focused on gender issues, whose misrepresentation offered the Occidentalist critic a weapon. One of the Egyptians Ahmed Midhat met in Stockholm, Muḥammad Amin Fikrī, whose Arabic travel narrative served as the source for Mitchell’s critique, actually liked Cairo Street and the dancers better than Ahmed Midhat did but still voiced some criticisms.

What impressed Ahmed Midhat most positively was the Palace of Machines. In what would be called “the last great engineering experiment to appear at an

103 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’də bir Cevelan, 526a–527b. The implication that Egyptians and Tunisians ranked lower on his Social Darwinist evolutionary scale than Ottoman Turks (and presumably Russians) merits notice and may help to explain why he says comparatively little about the Egyptians he met at Stockholm. Sudanese ranked even lower, to judge from his reaction to the dancers mentioned in an earlier note.


107 Çelik and Kinney, “Ethnography and Exhibitionism,” 43, including a picture of la belle Fathma; Çelik, Displaying the Orient, 23, 25, 26, 76, 77, other scenes of the Rue du Caire; Çelik also illustrates the Cairo Street at the Chicago Exhibition of 1893.

108 According to Mitchell (Colonising Egypt, 1) “the Egyptian visitors were disgusted” by Cairo Street and “stayed away,” their “final embarrassment” being that the mosque façade had a coffeehouse inside it, where (quoting Fikrī, Ishād, 136) “Egyptian girls performed dances with young males, and dervishes whirled.” Yet Fikrī’s account of the street is detailed and positive, and his criticisms are quite focused. See 128–29, the street had “the utmost in charm,” and a tent set up as a coffeehouse “in the eastern style” was “among the most splendid ever seen”; 129–32, praise for the enterprising Egyptian merchant whose well-stocked business on Cairo Street (the “Egyptian Bazaar” on the site plan?) served Egyptians in Paris as a rendezvous and place to receive letters; 136, relating—without protest—that the mosque was a mosque on the outside, “no more than that,” that the inside was a “coffeehouse put in place for Egyptian women dancers, and that ‘slaves’ (ābdā, Sudanese?) danced and dervishes whirled; he does not say that males and females danced together; 232–33, at the tent mentioned above, the audience was amazed by the dancers’ movements and costumes “in the old Egyptian style,” and a Muevād dervish whirled after them; 346–47, noting that “the beautiful Fatma” was a Tunisian Jew, he considered her to be dressed in Eastern style, noted without disapproving that the tulle that covered her bosom “did not hide what was behind it,” and concluded by praising God for creating such a beauty. For his criticisms, see 233: leaving the tent, he criticized the Europeans for over-reacting to the dancers, himself and his fellow Egyptians for going there, and the dervish for doing what was called “dancing” in such a place, something not appropriate for his order; the spectators had the excuse of novelty; the Egyptian travelers had the excuse that whereas only the dissolute frequented such places in Egypt, here respectable people did; the dervish had no excuse; 374–76: inside the Palais des Industries Divespres, the huge hall that the Rue du Caire ran alongside, he criticized how the Egyptian exhibit there compared to the Iranian and Moroccan ones, asked why the Egyptian government and people had not exerted themselves to show the products of their land adequately, and said he preferred to return to the bourse of the Rue du Caire outside. In Stockholm, the same author displayed similar approval, as noted; Nazik Saba Yared, Arab Travellers and Western Civilization, Sumaya Damluji: Shahbandar, trans., Tony P. Naufal and Jana Gough, eds. (London, 1996), 73, 82, 97–98, 108–109, 110, 114, 121; Louca, Voyageurs et écrivains égyptiens, 199–203.
Cairo Street, Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889. A French entrepreneur created this evocation of Old Cairo, made up of façades embellished with authentic structural elements from Egypt. Egyptian craftsmen practicing their trades, donkeys to ride, and a coffeehouse where belly dancers entertained. A woman is being pushed along in one of the wheeled chairs available to facilitate movement about the exposition. From William Walton, *Chefs-d’œuvre de l’Exposition Universelle de Paris, 1889* (Philadelphia and Paris, 1889), xx.
exhibition, this structure had its roof supported by arches, each made of two curved iron girders, pivoted where they touched the floor and where they met each other, forming a record-breaking span of 110 meters. With a length of 420 meters, the building enclosed a vast space for the display of machines of all sizes, even locomotives. Electric generators provided power for the machines. Spectators could observe from “rolling bridges” mounted on overhead rails and powered by rotating shafts, which also distributed power from the generators to the machines by means of belts. Equipped with elevators and lit with both electricity and gas, the Palace of Machines epitomized advanced technology. The whole exhibition, in fact, was illuminated in both electricity and gas, including such novelties as electric lights built into the fountains to color the jets of water, or the nocturnal spectacle of the Eiffel Tower lit from top to bottom while tricolored spotlights played over the city from its top.

At the Palace of Machines, what fascinated Ahmed Midhat was not the structure, although the rolling bridges were impressive, but the “miraculous” machines, especially small ones usable in Ottoman manufacturing. He focused on machines for working with silk and other fibers, for knitting, embroidering, sewing, shoe-making, printing, and performing household tasks. Characteristically expressing his economic outlook, he noted how a thousand-franc tape machine could support a family. If only Istanbul craftsmen had been sent to Paris, what machines they could have bought to revitalize Ottoman industry.

While the congress and exposition were the most densely charged sites for his evaluative project, Ahmed Midhat’s assessment of Europe’s moral and material progress dominated his narrative. Evaluating the European Other in terms of moral versus material implied reflecting on the Ottoman-Islamic Self in the same terms, most likely with different values assigned to corresponding categories in what thus becomes not a binary but a four-part analytical grid. The introduction, with the Russians, of a third subject position between Self and Other—and Madame Gülnar’s importance in foregrounding gender issues—adds other dimensions to the assessment. As Ahmed Midhat’s evaluative framework expands beyond alterityist binarism, several questions emerge. If discursive dispersion characterized European Orientalism, would his Occidentalist not also produce contradictions important for its understanding? In an Occidentalist narrative, could the idea of “moral

109 Greenhaim, Ephemeral Vistas, 155.
110 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevdet, 496b, 649b-650b; Musée d'Orsay, 1889, 164–95; Durant, Palais des Machines, illustrating the pont roulant électrique on p. 40.
112 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevdet, 649b–654b, 677a–683a; the assumption that the state would have had to send the craftsmen to Paris is characteristically Ottoman but at odds with his advocacy of individual enterprise. His comments on the machines show that he was in touch with developments in Ottoman manufacturing: Halîl İnalcık with Donald Quataert, eds., An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914 (Cambridge, 1994), 888–933.
Interior of the Palace of Machines, Exposition Universelle, Paris, 1889, showing the curved girders that spanned the vast display floor, the partly glass roof, the side galleries that provided additional display space, some of the large machines, the belts and shafts used to distribute power, the platform from which spectators stepped onto one of the rolling bridges, and the elevated rails on which it ran. From the Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-102668.

progress," in particular, prove meaningful? Ahmed Midhat’s treatment of several themes helps to answer these questions.

Ahmed Midhat explained Europe’s material progress in many fields, from the drains that kept streets free of mud to electric lights. Often, as in discussing railroads and printing presses, he evaluated how up to date the Ottomans were. Yet his focus remained on Europe. His assessment seemed to gel in Paris, when he returned from the Palace of Machines to tell Madame Gülünar that Europe’s progress went beyond what he had realized and that the machines at the palace were its greatest proof. Knowing his propensity to identify Europe with material

Ahmed Midhat’s inconsistent usage on this point inspired this study. *Avrupa'da bir Cesaret*, 225b, progress (terakkiyat) in science and industry but moral decline (tedenniyat); 411b, some things about European literature and theater were enough to make the wise and honorable “weep blood”; 657a, references to both moral and material progress (terakkiyat); 771a, references to “moral and material progress” but also to “material progress” (terakkiyat) and “moral decline” (tedenniyat); 1004b, Sadullah Paşa’s suggestion to divide Europe’s progress into two, the moral and material: *Avrupa’nın terakkiyatını maddi ve manevi olmak üzere ikiye taksim.*
progress and moral decay, she reminded him that he had earlier approved of the big buildings, boulevards, parks, and the extraordinary orderliness. He admitted admiring Europe’s general prosperity, but only the machines merited true envy.\textsuperscript{114}

On other occasions, he praised Europeans’ observance of the law. Repeatedly, he praised the cleanliness and efficiency of European waiters and waitresses; in contrast, Istanbul had few eating places that would not disgust a person of taste.\textsuperscript{115} On the steamers plying the Bosphorus, he added satirically, passengers seemed to think that the signs saying “Il est défendu de parler au capitaine” meant it was forbidden for the captain to talk, but anyone else might talk to him.\textsuperscript{116} Touring the Ringstrasse in Vienna, Ahmed Midhat felt stupefied, not just by the colossal buildings between the university and the art museum but by the whole conception of structure and space, all put in place within a few decades. But his biggest amazement came in Paris when, asking where he could buy the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale, he learned that a commission had been working on it for thirty-five years but was still not through, and that it would eventually be published in many volumes.\textsuperscript{117}

To identify all such elements as “material” progress was to stretch that category. So Ahmed Midhat did in talking with ambassador Sadullah Paşa in Vienna. Europe’s material progress was not just its tall buildings, clean streets, and civilized way of life. It was also the “physical embodiment” that every nation gave its culture by organizing and displaying its products in libraries, museums, and public monuments—aspects of progress that the Ottomans still lacked.\textsuperscript{118} Ahmed Midhat thus accepted the “world-as-exhibition” but interpreted it as a way for a society to stimulate its own cultural development rather than to control the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{119} He could not sense as fully as Madame Gülzar the factors of process, mentality, and culture that underlay these physical embodiments of progress; perhaps she did not fully sense his need to maintain “culture as the space of difference.” He cautioned that the Ottomans must not emulate Europe’s “moral

\textsuperscript{114} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelan}, 656b–657b.

\textsuperscript{115} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelan}, 468a, 748a, 935b–936a, 939a. As in some other cases, Ottoman conditions compared favorably to Russian ones, according to Dr. Boris, who spoke of loutish waiters who could not answer a simple question without scratching in places that it would not be polite to mention.

\textsuperscript{116} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelan}, 936b–937a; underneath the French, the same signs bore the unequivocal Ottoman legend: “Kapudan hic musahabet memnudur” (Conversation with the Captain Is Forbidden). The politeness, efficiency, and multilingualism of a young woman whom he encountered serving on a steamer on the Bodensee between Konstanze and Lindau prompted this comparative reflection on the steamers in Istanbul’s waters.

\textsuperscript{117} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelan}, 637a, 1001a.

\textsuperscript{118} Ahmed Midhat, \textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelan}, 1004b–1005b.

\textsuperscript{119} It helps to note his experiences with museums before he reached Berlin, Paris, and Vienna. As protégé of Osman Hamdi, director of the Istanbul Antiquities Museum, Ahmed Midhat was aware of the major collection of antiquities from Ottoman lands; he had exaggerated in implying that the Ottomans had no museum at all. Among the first European museums he took in were the Nordic Museum in Stockholm and the museum of period buildings at Bygdø outside Oslo-Christiansia (\textit{Avrupa'da bir Cevelan}, 235a–237b, 272a–277b; Nylander, \textit{Orientalistikongressen}, 64–65). All these were museums where a society represents its own past rather than its dominance over others. The Nordic Museum excited his spirit of enterprise, and he proposed an Ottoman ethnographic museum, which would be second to none in richness of exhibits and would draw visitors to Istanbul as the Nordic Museum did to Stockholm.
progress.” A further look at elements he placed under that label will amplify what he meant.

Having to negotiate nineteenth-century European expectations about dress and deportment, Ahmed Midhat confronted the intricacy of comparing Ottoman and European lifestyles in matters great and small, far more than would be the case today. He had to master the niceties of introductions and calling cards, the gradations in dress required for the congress, and the mores that not only allowed men and women to mingle freely but also required that he know how to play the cavalier. What could be stranger than for a white-bearded professor to kiss the hand of a young woman, rather than the other way round? In Stockholm, where some “oriental” delegates wore Western dress and others did not, Ahmed Midhat discovered that while those in Eastern dress were not expected to know how to behave, Easterners in Western dress would not be forgiven the least mistake. Madame Gülner’s coaching helped him, while reinforcing the point. When he went out in public with the Western-garbed Egyptians, they attracted little notice. But when they went out with the Islamic religious scholars (ulema), the sight of the latters’ Islamic dress drew thousands of gawkers. At the congress, the European scholars “took fright” of the ulema but showed no reluctance to talk to Egyptians in Western dress.

Europeans also allowed things that Ahmed Midhat found outrageous. The police would intervene if they saw a man in the streets with his trousers unbuttoned but would allow prostitutes to throng the music halls, using foul language and throwing “paper bullets” at men to get their attention. Truly, decorum was one field in which Ottomans most needed a guidebook to Europe. Ahmed Midhat would soon devote a tome to this extensive study. Not all the advantages were on Europe’s side, yet if European etiquette was a fit subject for a book, then was all Europe’s “moral progress” really decline?

Questions of dress and deportment bring us back to the individual. The most complex issue in East-West comparisons was women’s status, another question complicated by the intricacy of nineteenth-century norms. At the reception where Ahmed Midhat first met Madame Gülner, for example, she told him straight off that she admired everything about Ottoman culture except veiling. Later that evening, the ballet reopened this question, and they both disapproved of the dancers’ exposure. In an era when European women were normally almost as covered up as Muslim ones, what justified décolletage or skimpy ballet costumes?

Ahmed Midhat had many moments of puzzlement. Upon arrival at Stockholm’s Grand Hotel, his request for a bath and a haircut in his room was fulfilled by a woman hairdresser and a woman bath attendant, much to his discomfiture, although he found no fault in the masseuse’s respect for the privacy that a Muslim man had

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120 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’da bir Cevalan, 233a-b.
121 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’da bir Cevalan, 217a, 226b-228a; Nylander, Orientaliskkongressen, 6.
to maintain. He commented that women’s employment was widespread in Sweden, yet, because both men and women knew how to behave, no impropriety resulted. Thereafter, he encountered many women honorably employed and always commented positively. Did such revelations cause moments of cognitive dissonance for Ottoman readers? If so, they had the larger surprise of Madame Gülınar, the “new woman” who added the honor of accomplishment to that of virtuous behavior.

The greater shock was that of women who did not behave virtuously. While hardly the kind of anti-Europeanist who depicted all European women as depraved, Ahmed Midhat was shocked by European nightlife, much to Madame Gülınar’s amazement. He was horrified by the behavior of prostitutes. No Victorian hypocrisy or prudery, his reaction expresses the “communitarian puritanism” of the Muslim Ottoman reformer whose novels obsessively moralized about the evils of “super-westernization.”

Most troubling were representations in which Europeans projected an overcharged eroticism onto Islamic societies. In Stockholm, commenting extemporaneously on a paper about Islamic women, Ahmed Midhat critiqued the voluptuous odalisque image of the harem woman, attributing it to European writers and poets rather than scholars. He began with a perfect word-painting of the scantily clad, recumbent woman, being fanned by the black servant with the peacock-feather fan, and smoking a water pipe, its hose in serpentine coils. Without missing a beat, he concluded in the patriarchal mode by attacking the idea that such had been the mothers of the great men of Islam. For him, the belly dancers in Paris invoked the same imagery.

Among the many female images presented in his book, it is easy to see where the dancing girls and prostitutes fit into his evaluative scheme of material progress and moral decay. Where, however, did the positive images fit? Contradicting Ottoman norms and contrasting radically with the fallen women, the positively portrayed European women—above all, Madame Gülınar—stand out more than any other human figures in the narrative.

Ahmed Midhat’s ideas about family and society provide a larger context for his view of women. While he met many Europeans who impressed him positively, including entrepreneurs who gave him guided tours of their businesses, he identified European society largely with the pathologies accompanying industrialization. Here, the data correspond best to the picture of material progress and

124 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’dan bir Cevelan, 113b, 116a–117a, 616b, 748a–b, 887a–888a, 926a.
126 Mardin, “Super Westernization in Urban Life,” 415–16; Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’dan bir Cevelan, 67a–b, 579a–581a, 811b–812a, 975a, 989b, 1017b. Another point where the Ottoman situation compared favorably to the Russian: his discussions with Madame Gülınar and Dr. Boris convinced him that the influx of undesirables into their countries did more harm to Russia because of the elites’ willingness to mix socially with European gamblers and entertainers (444b, 471b–472b, 1017b).
127 Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa’dan bir Cevelan, 164b–165a, extemporizing because he was unable to understand the obscure style of the speaker, Hamza Fathallah, who later published his views as Bākānāt al-Kalām ‘alā Huqūq al-Nisā’ fi l-Islām [On the Rights of Women in Islam] (Cairo, 1891); Louca, Voyageurs et écrivains égyptiens, 203–06. Azhar-trained, Ignaz Goldziher found this the most interesting presentation at this session: “Vom Stockholmer Orientalisten-Kongress,” Pester Lloyd, no. 249, September 10, 1889.
128 Midhat, Avrupa’dan bir Cevelan, 55a, 523a–525b, 827b–829a.
moral decay. He had a sociologist’s eye for the atomized family and lonely individual in the modern metropolis. For him, real happiness meant living with one’s family in one’s own home. He and Madame Gülner had been amazed to conclude that most dwellers in the fine Parisian buildings did not own their own housing. They agreed—wrongly in her case regarding Russia—that 90 percent of families in Istanbul, Moscow, or Petersburg were homeowners. That compensated for the humble aspect of those dwellings and proved that their owners enjoyed “moral prosperity,” while Parisians had only “outward prosperity.”

As for life inside Parisian dwellings, newspaper statistics showed that a third of births were illegitimate. Most families farmed out their children to wet nurses. Family relations, as depicted in “realist” novels, were terrible. Those born illegitimate were denied even the meager comforts of French family life. They grew up without religion. Even nationalism was undermined by partisan political division. Consider the man with no legitimate kin, no property, no faith, adhering politically not to his nation but to one of many political parties, and regarding the others with enmity. Such was the plight of one-third of the 2.5 million Parisians. In contrast, Ahmed Midhat preferred the vie patriarchale that his own household embodied.

Madame Gülner reportedly found these arguments so convincing that while she had once thought Russia not a fit place to live, she began to appreciate its way of life, thanks to Ahmed Midhat. In drawing up his balance sheet of material progress and moral decay, what had consoled him most, he wrote, was that “still-backward peoples like us easterners” preserved a happiness that Europeans had lost. Ottomans must not emulate Europe’s moral “progress”; that would deprive them of

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128 Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa'da bir Cevelan*, 658b; Madame Gülner recalled statistics indicating that the 2.5 million Parisians were housed under 30,000 roofs; from this, she deduced that fewer than 1 in 800 Parisians could own the buildings they lived in. In Paris, the growth associated with industrialization, redevelopment under the Second Empire, and continued upscaling of the central districts had led to rising rents, speculative building dominated by building societies, and extremely crowded conditions for workers in the outer arrondissements; Ann Louise Shapiro, *Housing the Poor of Paris, 1850-1902* (Madison, Wis., 1985), chaps. 2-4; Adeline Daumard, *Les bourgeois et la bourgeoisie en France depuis 1815* (Paris, 1987), 106-97; Daumard, *Maisons de Paris et propriétaires parisiens au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1965); Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878-1978* (New Haven, Conn., 1979), 199-218. Greater publicity may have made Ahmed Midhat more conscious of housing problems in Paris than in Istanbul.

129 Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa'da bir Cevelan*, 659b-660a, 662a. He cited Istanbul house prices and should have known conditions there; yet his statement may have less to do with the housing market than with the fact that the house symbolized patriarchal authority and family integrity in his novels, while rented housing symbolized loss of those values: Paria, *Babələr*, 105-01. For Istanbul as a pre-industrial city, ownership, mostly of rudimentary wooden houses, may still have been common, but frequent fires and in-migration had created a housing shortage, and quality of housing would have been low by international standards; Duben and Behar, *Istanbul Households*, 32-35, 49. In St. Petersburg or Moscow, ownership of housing probably prevailed in the social milieu Madame Gülner frequented, but housing for the majority was far worse than in Paris; Joseph Bradley, *Mudik and Muscovite: Urbanization in Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, Calif., 1985), 53-55, 194-215; James H. Bater, *St Petersburg: Industrialization and Change* (London, 1976), 73-81.

130 Ahmed Midhat, *Avrupa’dı bir Cevelan*, 767a; Rachel Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris: Strategies for Survival in the Nineteenth Century* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1992), 4, 36; over 30 percent in the first half of the century, the Parisian illegitimacy rate for the whole century was at least 25 percent.

131 George D. Sussman, *Selling Mothers’ Milk: The Wet-Nursing Business in France, 1715-1914* (Urbana, Ill., 1982), associating wet-nursing mostly with the mothers’ need to work.
the spiritual values of their “ancient civilization and Islamic religiosity.” The pendant to the Europe of material progress and moral decay was an Ottoman world that was materially poor and backward but morally rich and uncorrupted—an Ottoman world that might, however, be enriched not just by modern machinery but also by some of the ideas and human qualities to be found among Europeans at their best.

Although Ahmed Midhat’s journey led him to such scenes of European alteritist legerdemain as the orientalist congress and world exhibition, it was for him a trip from the Europe of his prior imaginings to the “real” Europe. While there, by looking for good in both European Other and Ottoman-Islamic Self, by extending his analysis beyond the topics privileged by Ottoman political thinkers, and by imaginatively introducing exogenous voices—including a female voice—into his narrative, he not only explored the “material” domain assigned to the Other, he also reflected on the “moral” or “spiritual” domain claimed for the Self, a realm essential for the creation of a modern Ottoman culture.

His references to the “material” and “spiritual” are not statements to judge by their logical consistency. Rather, they are alternate names for Self and Other in a discursive system characterized by enunciative dispersion. Just as European Orientalist alteritism produced contradictory assertions about the Other that nonetheless cohered in differentiating the Other from the Self, so Ahmed Midhat’s Occidentalist produced contradictory statements about the “material” and the “spiritual” that cohered in differentiating the “material” Other from the “spiritual” Self. The essentialist terminology of “material” and “spiritual” proved but symbolic reference points for an analysis that ultimately reached beyond alteritist polarisation, singling out some non-material forms of progress—entrepreneurial spirit, the “extraordinary order,” the idea of the “new woman”—as worthy for appropriation from the realm of the supposedly “material” Other to that of the “Spiritual” Self.

If Chinese Occidentalism served domestically for oppression at some times, for liberation at others, Ahmed Midhat’s Occidentalism combined political conformism under an oppressive regime with social, economic, and cultural self-strengthening for Ottoman society. That sufficed to make him a conservative dissident from the political progressives’ utopian visions of modernity. Those, however, were visions that could not even be published in Istanbul between about 1880 and the Young Turk revolution of 1908, a period during which publication and the circulation of new ideas nonetheless expanded rapidly. Ahmed Midhat’s ideas would later be left behind in the backwash of the emergent, linear, national narrative, yet they are essential for understanding his period, and they have lasting value. The only major Ottoman thinker of the pre-1908 period who sought to achieve a balanced blend of

\[123\] Ahmed Midhat, Avrupa'da bir Cevelan, 765b, 771b, 1005b.

\[124\] Compare Chatterjee, Nation and Its Fragments, 132–34, discussing how, in India, the issue of female emancipation was re-sited over time from the “material” realm (open to discussion with the colonizer) to the “spiritual” realm (not open to discussion with the colonizer).
East and West,135 "matter" and "spirit," he as Occidentalist clearly showed how an Ottoman thinker could creatively engage with Europe and yet resist its cultural power, a power that—if omnipresent—was not omnipotent.136

135 Okay, Ahmed Midhat, 408, noting that the same concern appears after the 1908 revolution in two thinkers, the Islamist poet Mehmet Akif (1873–1936) and the social thinker and nationalist ideologue Ziya Gökşalp (1875–1924).

136 Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations (New York, 1991), 55: "Misinterpretations of Foucault turn on a conflation between power as omnipresent and omnipotent," a statement applicable to much anti-Orientalist criticism; Schick, Erotic Margin, 94.

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