Agents of Translation

Edited by

John Milton
University of São Paulo

Paul Bandia
Concordia University, Montréal

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Translating Europe
The case of Ahmed Midhat as an Ottoman agent of translation

Cemal Demircioğlu
Okan University, Istanbul, Turkey

This paper examines the concept of agency by focusing retrospectively on the diverse translation practice of Ahmed Midhat (1844–1913), who was an important Ottoman novelist, translator, publisher, journalist and the owner of the newspaper Tercüman-ı Hakikat [Interpreter of Truth]. Ahmed Midhat's writings provide an exemplary framework for rethinking agency in terms of multiple translation-related practices in a period of Ottoman contact with European culture in the late 19th century. Through the examination of his translation activity and discourse on translation, this paper will emphasize that Ahmed Midhat was a good example of provocative agency, (i) which generated significant dynamism in Ottoman writing, publishing and journalism, (ii) and which functioned as a "mediator" in conveying Western culture to Ottoman society by performing different forms of translation practices. He was also the major provocative figure in the so-called "classics debate" of 1897 which was on translating neo-European classical works into Ottoman Turkish. Thus, in his dialogue with Europe, Ahmed Midhat appears as an agent of translation in the private sphere who made a great contribution to the shaping and modernization of Ottoman culture and literature in the late 19th century.

Key words: Ottoman translation; Ahmed Midhat; Tercüman-ı Hakikat (Interpreter of Truth); Classics debate; Tanzimat

1. Introduction

The present paper attempts, on the one hand, to sketch a picture of Ahmed Midhat's translation practices with a special focus on the title pages and prefaces of certain of his translated works. On the other hand, considering Ahmed Midhat an exemplary case of private agent of translation, this paper intends to highlight
different forms of Ottoman transfer from European culture and literature in a period of transition from the East to the West continuing in the late nineteenth century. My main argument is that the cultural and literary items from a model culture may be transferred by means of free agents of translation to the receiving culture in a variety of culture-specific ways, especially to a culture which is in the process of shifting civilization.

Seen as a significant “cultural entrepreneur” in the late Ottoman literary tradition,1 Ahmed Midhat deserves particularly close attention among the writers and translators of the Tanzimat [re-organization] period. In the discourse of a number of modern literary historians, critics and translation scholars, he has been described in various ways. For Mustafa Nihat Özön, eminent literary historian, lexicographer and secondary school teacher in the early republican period, Ahmed Midhat was “a famous person who wrote European-like novels” in Turkish literature in the late 19th century (Özön 1942:82), and for Şevket Rado, literary historian, he was a “writing machine of 40 horse power who met the cultural needs of the Turkish generations of his time and wrote 150 works including novels, short stories and plays as well as works in history, philosophy, psychology and education”; he was a “novelist, short story writer, philosopher, scholar, historian, educator, researcher, bibliophile, printer and businessman” (Rado 1955:9, 1986:3). According to Ahmed Hamdi Tanpınar, famous novelist, critic, literary historian and professor of modern Turkish literature, he was “a huge apparatus for consumption”, “a giant who ate with no concern for digestion” but also a writer who “opened the gates to the short story and the novel through invention or adaptation” (Tanpınar 1988:462–463). Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, scholar of modern Turkish literature, describes him as the one who “wrote the first indigenous examples of the story and novel” and “drew much attention to this genre with his translations and borrowings from French literature” (Tansel 1955:109). In the words of İşin Bengi, who carried out the first doctoral research on Ahmed Midhat’s translations, he was “a gigantic figure” and “the eloquent mediator” who struggled in a revolutionary fashion “to introduce and establish what was missing in the home literary polysystem” (Bengi 1988:288). According to Salih Paker, who ascribed for the first time a particular status to Ahmed Midhat’s literary translations in her systemic analysis of translated literature in the Tanzimat period, he was “the leading advocate for an extreme form of ‘acceptability’”, and “in a sense, institutionalized it” (Paker 1991:23).

Not only these views but also my research carried out as part of my doctoral study on a selected corpus of the translational works of Ahmed Midhat (Demircioğlu 2005) indicate that his text production displays considerable diversity and provides us with a scope for studying the various “options” of Ottoman
agents of translation in translating from European literatures and in enlarging the literary repertoires of his time by means of these options (for "option" see Even-Zohar 2002a: 167). His translated works, as well as his discourse on translation, help show the culture-specific aspects of translation in the late Ottoman literary tradition. Adopting a provocative attitude in his translations, he produced a range of texts in his dialogue with Europe via cultural transfer by way of producing not only original works but also others in the form of conveying, borrowing, emulation, imitation, conversion, summary and conversation. It is interesting that some of his works which he based on a foreign source and which were perceived as unusual translations also provoked critical debate among his contemporaries.

2. Considering agents of translation to be “Option makers”

In examining the concept of agency in translation, taking into account certain cases in which agents are responsible for the cultural transference through translation, John Milton points out that agents of translation may often combine various functions and appear as “translators, teachers, literary critics, publishers, journalists, politicians, patrons, literary salon organizers, even organizations such as NGOs”. According to Milton, agents are “individuals who devote great amount of energy, and even their own lives, to the cause of foreign literature, author or literary school, translating, writing articles, teaching and diffusing” (Milton 2006, and see Milton and Bandia’s Introduction to this volume, p. 1). In this framework, Milton's definition allows us to infer at least two fundamental characteristics of agents of translation: first, agents may take on various identities or professions in the social life of a given culture, and, second, they may carry out intermediary roles in translation-related practices, emerging as individuals with multi-functions.

Agents appear as “option makers” from the perspective of Itamar Even-Zohar’s theory of “culture repertoire”, which is a productive theory suggesting a set of hypotheses for handling the procedures and products of transfer without excluding the notion of agency. In this framework, agents indicate known or unknown members of a given society who contribute to the organization of social life in varying degrees. They are “human elements” or “societies” who are obviously engaged in “the making of culture repertoire”, “material or semiotic import” and “transfer”. From the perspective of this theory, it is obvious that any reference to agents of translation also means referring to their proposals of different choices, alternatives or “options” which serve for the organization of social life (Even-Zohar 2002a: 166). Hence, one can think of “options” as ways that help a given society transform its somehow chaotic or disordered position into an organized
one, as was observed during the process of shifting civilization in Ottoman culture which started during the eighteenth century and continued up to the decline of the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the twentieth century.

As a significant concept of Even-Zohar’s theory of “culture repertoire”, it seems clear that “option” points to agents who are involved in active decision-making. At this juncture, it appears as a notion closely related to the notion of planning or intervention of agents who are engaged in the making of “culture repertoire” via translation. Even-Zohar defines “culture planning” as a “deliberate act of intervention, either by power holders or by ‘free agents’ into an extant or a crystallizing repertoire”. Thus, his conception of “culture planning” helps us explain certain attempts not only by institutions, but also by people whom he identifies as “free agents” (Even-Zohar 2002b: 45, 1994: 8), all of whom were engaged in planning by means of translation. In other words, it draws our attention to change that may appear in the target culture through planning initiatives (see also Toury 2002: 151). Such initiatives can be seen in the creation of options for a variety of writing practices on the part of various Tanzimat writers and translators who were engaged in translating from European languages and literatures in order to meet the needs of the Ottoman target culture. In the context of Ottoman modernizing literature, it can be said that Ahmed Midhat’s options derived from his translational practices are good examples of a contribution to the making of Ottoman literary repertoires.

In relation to “deliberate culture planning and the creation of new socio-political entities”, Even-Zohar also speaks of certain individuals, “mostly intellectuals or cultural entrepreneurs, or even makers of life images through poetry and fiction” as “idea-makers”. He refers to these individuals or a group of individuals in terms of “producing ideas – or at least images – that can be converted to alternative or new options for the repertoire of culture by which the life of societies is shaped and organized” (Even-Zohar 2004: 248–249). This is the point where Even-Zohar describes “idea-makers” as “option-devisers”, drawing our attention to the fact that they have been not only engaged in creating ideas as new options but also, most importantly, active in converting these ideas to socio-cultural reality by implanting them into the repertoire of culture. He states that option-devisers who become active in implementation also take on the role of entrepreneurs and thus, for him, it is adequate to call “idea-makers” “cultural entrepreneurs” (Even-Zohar 2004: 248–249). It seems obvious that this framework helps us reconsider agents – whether they are free or bound to an institution – not only to be actors who are involved in active decision-making and planning but also to be entrepreneurs who are active in creating ideas convertible to options for the organization of social life. Thus, the framework enables us to make special connections between agency and cultural entrepreneurship, as in the case of Ahmed Midhat.
Ahmed Midhat appears as an “idea-maker” in certain cases since he played no small part in developing new tastes and interests among Ottoman public readers, still completely unacquainted with Western cultural and literary forms and aspirations. He aimed not only to entertain but also to instruct a reader of unsophisticated and unliterary tastes. Hence he functioned as a mediating channel in introducing Western material and intellectual developments to Ottomans with his novels and short stories which were regarded in modern scholarly discourse as popular and simple in both style and sentiment. Ahmed Hamdi Tanpinar states that Ahmed Midhat’s writings on European science and philosophy, positivism, religion, the notion of social class, and private enterprise, all of which were published in Dağarçık [Memory] i.e. one of the magazines edited by Ahmed Midhat in 1870, reflect a comprehensive programme he proposed for Ottoman readers (Tanpinar 1998: 449). Thus, the concept of considering him an “idea-maker” is related to his activity of authoring enlightening pieces on many diverse topics which appealed to him. These works are outstanding in terms of his plain and intelligible language as well as of his aims to establish a direct dialogue with the reader and, most importantly, to introduce European material developments to Ottomans as options. This is why he was honoured by his readers with the title “hâce-i evvel” which means “the first teacher”.

His decision to print his own books on a foot-operated printing press that he had established on the ground floor of his house in 1871 also shows him as a “cultural entrepreneur” in the private sphere. In the 1870s he had to shoulder the responsibility of earning a living for his family (Lewis 1960: 289), and this was one way he might increase the family income. Using his printing press to produce various literary periodicals, he would become quite an experienced printer in a few years. From 1878 onwards, he started publishing and editing Tercüman-i Hakikat, in which he serialized not only his own novels and short stories but also his translations. Contributing to the intellectual history of this period, this periodical was eventually to become the longest lasting newspaper in the history of the Turkish press. He opened his pages, especially those in the literary supplements of Tercüman-i Hakikat, to important discussions on cultural, literary and translational issues. By conducting a debate on the transfer of European neo-classics to Ottoman culture, Ahmed Midhat opened up discussion on the ways in which Europe could be the cultural and literary model for the Ottoman society. Furthermore, as Paker underlines, Ahmed Midhat was the first Turk who imported an incubator for chickens (kuluçka makinesi) – and also a modern beehive (fenni arıkovanı) – into Ottoman social life, using both on his farm in Beykoz, near Istanbul (Paker 2004: 4). What he was doing in Even-Zohar’s sense of entrepreneurship is actually to achieve a sort of “material or semiotic import” (Even-Zohar 2002a) by implanting an invention, i.e. the incubator or beehive, into modernizing social life of the
Ottomans by capturing Western material developments. All these reflections of his textual production and business life show a planned programme he, as a deliberate agent of translation, was engaged in by producing new options and ideas to extend the cultural repertoire via transfer.

Similar to Itamar Even-Zohar, Gideon Toury also takes agents as institutions or individuals that are active in planning. Toury considers planning to be associated with “making decisions for others to follow, whether the impetus for intervening originates within the group itself or outside of it” (Toury 2002:151). He also points out that agents may occasionally prefer “to generate texts by translation – and then present them as non-translated entities (or sometimes the other way around)” (Toury 2002:159). Toury’s statement draws our attention to certain manipulations which one can find both in the production and presentation of texts produced by agents via translation. In the case of Ahmed Midhat, it is evident that some scholars are faced with certain problems in identifying whether certain of his texts are indigenous or translations although they were apparently generated based on a foreign source in another culture but presented by Ahmed Midhat as “non-translated entities”. Additionally, the options he offered for translating European classics into Ottoman Turkish in the so-called “classics debate” of 1897 can also be regarded as an unofficial site of literature planning.

The conceptual frameworks outlined above help us to broadly understand the dynamics of change that may appear in Ottoman target culture through *agents and agency of translation*. I think that the notion of agency in connection with the notion of “multi-function”, “culture repertoire”, “option”, “planning”, “import”, “transfer” and “idea-makers” opens up a wider vision to understand textual productions of various Tanzimat writers and translators who were engaged as cultural “mediators” in translating from European languages and literatures (cf. “eloquent mediator” in Bengi 1988:388). From these perspectives, Ottoman agents may appear on the one hand to have adopted innovative, as seen in the case of Ahmed Midhat, or conservative attitudes towards translating from a ‘foreign’ culture and literature. On the other hand, the notion of planning allows us to consider Ottoman writer-translators to be agents generating a new literature with certain policies into which translation would introduce new options for renewing Ottoman repertoires. Especially from the perspective of planning, discourses on cultural and literary imports from Europe, for instance Ahmed Midhat’s views in the “classics debate”, reflect overt and/or covert planning acts. In the Ottoman cultural and literary context of the late 19th century, Ahmed Midhat’s textual productions, say his “options”, thus appear as good examples of a contribution to the making of Ottoman literary repertoires.
3. Cultural and literary implications of translation in the Tanzimat period

Ahmed Midhat produced most of his works for the education of readers from the Ottoman public and managed to gain an enormous number of readers when we compare him to his contemporaries such as Namik Kemal, Recaiuzade Mahmud Ekrem, Şemseddin Sami, Nabizade Nazım etc. In fact, he has been called the writer of the Tanzimat period (Okay 2002: 130). In Turkish history, the period which extended from the proclamation of the Noble Rescript of Gülhane in 1839 to the establishment of a parliamentary regime in 1876 is known as the Tanzimat, i.e. re-organization period. Since Ottoman society was subjected to a number of important administrative, legal and educational reforms, the Tanzimat is regarded as representing the intensive beginnings of the Europeanization movement, together with counter-forces opposing the reforms in the context of their resistance to a shift in civilization (Lewis 1968: 74–128; Tanpınar 1988: 52–73). According to Saliha Paker, the Tanzimat marks indeed a historical turning point in terms of a change in the Ottoman system of culture and literature. Paker states that “not only in the literary polysystem but also in the broader socio-cultural polysystem ‘established models’ were considered outdated and rejected by the young writers who looked to the West, especially to France, for innovations of all kinds” (Paker 1986: 78).

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and particularly during and after the Tanzimat period, the spread of Western ideas and a familiarization with Western social and political materials were strongly motivated by the rise of a new literature which started to differ both in form and content from Ottoman traditional literature (Evin 1983: 9–21; Tanpınar 1988: 249–300; Paker 1991: 18–25; Bengi 1990: 70–84; Berk 1999: 11–18). In this period, French literature gradually began to replace “the classics of Iran as the source of inspiration and the model for imitation” in the formation of a new literature (Lewis 1968: 136). There was a lack of non-canonized written literature for the urban population, hence a need for new literary models in a new language. It was the translations which appeared in newspapers and magazines that served to fill such deficiency and need, and translations played pivotal roles not only by providing Ottomans with reading materials but also by making Western culture known to Ottoman readers. Surveying the late nineteenth century translation activity from the perspective of Westernization, Özlem Berk states that “[literary] translations from the Western languages played an important role and function in the Turkish modernisation process, as manifested in the form of Westernisation starting in the mid-nineteenth century” (Berk 2006: 1).
Not only the emergence of new literary models and genres adopted in time by Ottoman writers and translators but also interest in various fields such as Western thinking discovered by Ottoman readers was the result of the first translations from the West, mainly from French literature. The emergence of translations was naturally a part of major cultural, literary, and institutional transformations and reforms in Ottoman society, and the year 1859 was an important moment since the first three translations from French were published and circulated in that year: *Terceme-i Manzume* [Translations of Verse] by İbrahim Şinasi, *Muhave-rat-i Hikemiyye* [Philosophical Dialogues] by Münif Paşa, and *Terceme-i Telemak* [The Translation of Telemak] by Yusuf Kamil Paşa. These translations introduced Western poetry, philosophy as well as the novel to Ottoman readers, each of which actually represented a new literary genre (Tanpınar 1988: 150; Paker 1991: 19; Evin 1983: 41–46). This is why they are regarded in modern scholarly discourse on Ottoman translation history as indicating the beginning of the literary *Tanzimat* in Ottoman culture.

From the beginning of the literary *Tanzimat* on, there was another medium which fulfilled an essential role in shaping public opinion in relation to political, cultural and literary progress: the press (Özön 1934: 141–143; Sevük 1944: 562–566; Lewis 1968: 146–150; Tanpınar 1988: 249–252; Evin 1983: 46–48). Newspapers, literary journals and magazines functioned as important means of communication and also started to give considerable space to translations, particularly from French literature. They often serialized translations of novels and short stories, some of which also circulated on the market after being printed in book form. Especially after the first parliamentary regime was established in 1876, with Sultan Abdülhamid II on the throne, there was a considerable increase in the number of newspapers, journals and literary magazines (Öksüz 1995; Kolçu 1999). But the reign of Abdülhamit II (1876–1908) was also the period of increasing repression and censorship (see Kudret 1997: 631–676; İskit 2000: 68–90). Ahmet Ö. Evin, who examines the origins and development of the Turkish novel, indicates that with the advent of the reign of Abdülhamit II, the intellectual milieu as well as the political and cultural context of Turkish literature started to change, and hence the era of the *Tanzimat* was over. According to Evin, Turkish literature began to be concerned with the social rather than the political aspects of Turkish life (Evin 1983: 79). In the changed political climate of the post-*Tanzimat* period, Evin portrays Ahmed Midhat as “the person responsible for setting a strong trend of didacticism”, emphasizing that he never developed “a novelistic art or even a sense of style” and adopted the style of the storyteller (meddah) who lengthens his narrative (Evin 1983: 82). Such statements reflect, of course, critical evaluations of his approach to literary writing. Ahmed Midhat was also subjected to critical evaluations in terms of his translation strategies. In the following section, I will
review his appearance as a translator in the discourse of two literary historians in the republican period.

4. Ahmed Midhat’s image as translator in the discourse of literary historians

In his *Avrupa Edebiyatı ve Biz: Garpten Tercümler II* [European Literature and Us: Translations from the West], Ismail Habib Sevük, a well-known literary historian and secondary school teacher, regards Ahmed Midhat as an advocate of “sense-for-sense translation” (*mealen*) as opposed to Şemseddin Sami, famous Tanzimat novelist, translator and lexicographer who supported translation as the same (*aynen*) (Sevük 1941:608). Sevük was critical of Ahmed Midhat because of his “domesticating” strategy (Venuti 1995:242) that he performed on ‘foreign’ texts. Sevük had in mind a polarized dichotomy between free (*mealen*) and faithful (*sadık*) translation in evaluating Ottoman translators and their practices. This is why he seems to have excluded “unfaithful translations” (e.g. *mealen*) from his notion of “good translating”, and tended to identify these not as translations. On the other hand, he supported translating a foreign text faithfully at the expense of breaking target language conventions or of resulting in some kind of foreignness in Turkish.

Sevük’s criticism of Ahmed Midhat’s *Sid’in Hülâsası*, a famous summary translation of Pierre Corneille’s *Le Cid*, (see section 6.6.1) which was subjected to a discussion in the “classics debate” of 1897, clearly demonstrates his conception of fidelity to content and form. According to Sevük, the summary translation was one of the outdated Ottoman practices of *terceme*. Actually, Sevük was much more critical of Ahmed Midhat within the context of “our [Turkish] understanding of translating” from the West in the late nineteenth century. He criticized Ahmed Midhat for not producing a ‘proper translation’, in other words, for not following a policy of accuracy in translation. Claiming that Ahmed Midhat did not produce even a summary (*hülása*), he identified *Sid’in Hülâsası* as an explicatory version (*tavzihi*) of its original. According to Sevük, Ahmed Midhat expanded the material belonging to the *mise en scène* in the original. He also declared that the summary was much more detailed and lengthy than the original and contrasted to what the title of the text was indicating (Sevük 1941:36–38). For Sevük, Ahmed Midhat performed literal renderings of certain short passages, generating a strange (*naklı*) ‘conveying’ of the original.

In a similar vein, in *19uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* [A History of Nineteenth Century Turkish Literature], Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar criticized Ahmed Midhat’s approach to translation. According to Tanpınar, Ahmed Midhat did not
restrict himself to making changes in his translations of European novelists which were necessary for the mental progress of his readers (Tanpınar 1988: 456 and see also footnote 17 in this work; Bengi 1988, 1999). This assessment appears as a significant point of departure in Tanpınar’s review of Ahmed Midhat’s literary translations. Tanpınar pointed to an apparent correlation between Ahmed Midhat’s tutorship and his purpose in doing translation, and looked critically at Ahmed Midhat as a writer who attempted to immediately translate the materials which he encountered in Western novels or articles in newspapers in a free and expanded way. According to Tanpınar, Ahmed Midhat reads absolutely anything he finds or, to use an analogy, he eats with no concern for digestion, like a giant. That is why Tanpınar rates Ahmed Midhat’s literary translations as “superficial exchange” (Tanpınar 1988: 462). Similarly, Tanpınar speaks of Ahmed Midhat’s conception of exchange when reviewing his adventure novels (Tanpınar 1988: 471).

Tanpınar also criticized Ahmed Midhat for his random selection of translations, which he perceived as unconscious and lacking reason (Bengi 1988, 1999). Tanpınar mentioned that, for Ahmed Midhat, Cervantes would be the same as Octave Feuillet, and similarly Victor Hugo the same as Xavier de Montepin and Eugène Sue, and even Émile Zola could easily be sacrificed for Paul de Kock (Tanpınar 1988: 471). Even though Tanpınar was critical of Ahmed Midhat’s competence in writing fiction, as well as of his selections and policy in translation, he acknowledged that Ahmed Midhat opened several basic doors in improving the novel and story by way of “invention” as well as “adaptation” (Tanpınar 1988: 463). Furthermore, his assessments of Ahmed Midhat’s approach to translation draw attention to his diverse practice of text production and his ways of translation, whereby some works are identified by Tanpınar as “adaptations” or written in the manner of Western works.

5. The “Classics debate” of 1897: A call for Ottoman literary progress

During the late nineteenth century, translation was indeed a distinct subject in the Ottoman system of culture and literature. One of the most noticeable ideas on translation was the need to translate from the West, and translation played a formative role in Ottoman cultural and literary life (Demircioğlu 2005: 153, 171). In this context, Ottoman literary as well as non-literary agents who expressed their views on translation focused essentially on the significance of translating European literary works into Turkish. They held both explicitly and implicitly that translation was an instrument for Ottoman cultural and literary development (terakki) from the Tanzimat period onwards.
The "classics debate" was sparked off by an article entitled "Müşabaka-i Kalemîye İkram-i Aklâm" [Writing Competition, Writers' Gifts], by Ahmed Midhat in 1897, and continued for approximately six months on the pages of various newspapers and magazines. The debate discussed whether Ottomans needed to translate or imitate European works of literature, especially European neo-classics, in order to achieve their own cultural and literary progress. Ahmed Midhat drew attention to the translation of classical works from the West as a means of acquiring European literary development. He called on his contemporaries to translate European classics, referring to Racine, Corneille, Shakespeare and Goethe, and a number of Ottoman writers participated in the debate, thus responding to his invitation: Ahmed Cevdet, writer and chief editor of the newspaper Íkdam, Cenab Şahabeddin, poet of the New Literature movement and translator, Necib Asım, writer, translator, philologist, teacher and parliamentarian, Ísmail Avni, writer, Hüseyin Danış, poet, writer and translator of Omar Hayyam's Rubaiyyat, Ahmed Rasim, writer, novelist and translator, Hüseyin Sabri, writer and translator, and Kemal Pașazade Said, eminent translator, teacher and member of the Supreme Council (Kaplan 1998: 8–12).

As the title of Ahmed Mithat's initial article indicates, he called on the 'talented pens' of his time to make European classical works known to Ottoman readers. At this juncture his discourse emerges as a good example to illuminate how translation was related to the notion of progress in literature. Actually, his attempt to arouse interest in translating European classics goes back to the idea he had launched in his preface to his famous summary translation of Corneille's Le Cid. With this work, Ahmed Midhat placed a strong emphasis on the need to translate European classical works for Ottoman readers, offering his summary (hulâsa) as a product comparable with translation (terceme) approximately seven years before the "classics debate" of 1897. In the preface, he says "People who are not aware of these classical works cannot reach the great progress of Europe" (Ahmed Midhat 1890–1891: 6). His focus was on transferring European classics and accepting them as models (meşk) to produce Ottoman texts comparable to those of Europe. This notion is of course significant in terms of his understanding of the translational contact with Western literatures. He tended to reiterate the view that European texts could also be appropriated. His notion of model (meşk) indicates that he had a particular approach to translating from European literatures by means of a number of strategies (See Appendix II). But what is important is his perception of Europe as a source for importing new literary products into the "Ottoman interculture" (Paker 2002: 120), which includes an overlap of Turkish, Persian, Arabic and French cultures in the late 19th century. He even suggested that the great works of Europe needed to be accepted and loved as literary models for Ottoman progress in literature (Ahmed Midhat 1890–1891: 4–5).
A few years later, in the course of the “classics debate”, he again called attention to the same issue and claimed that translations of such classical works – by European neo-classical, but not Greek classical writers – would serve the progress (terakki) of Ottoman readers. But what is interesting in his discourse is that, though he accepted translating from neo-classical and romantic writers (i.e. Corneille, Goethe, Racine and Shakespeare), he rejected translating the works of realist French writers such as Zola, Richepin and Bourget. The reason behind this was his perception of realist writers as harmful to Ottoman moral values at that time. Another important point seems to be his conception of imitation (taklid) which he discussed in relation to translating European classical works. Ahmed Midhat approved of the imitation of French literary works if they would serve as literary models (Kaplan 1998: 47; Paker 2006: 334–336; Demircioğlu 2005: 153–158). But at the same time, he emphasized the significance of translation which, according to him, would very much serve Ottoman literary progress.

Statements in the debate on the connections between translation and imitation reveal that participants generally agreed that European classics could or should be translated but not imitated. This idea, of course, points to a principal difference which seems to have started in identifying translation by considering it separate from the practice of imitation in the late nineteenth century (see also Paker 2006: 344). However, it is apparent that imitation was overtly discussed in relation to conveying (nakl) and translating European classical works. Thus, imitation comes up in connection with translation in the discourse of the “classics debate” as well as the debate on “Decadents”. In other words, it appears as part of Ottoman practice of text production via translation. As an individual agent of translation, Ahmed Midhat seems to have adopted, as Salih Paker proposes, a “permissive” attitude towards translating from a ‘foreign’ culture and literature. At this juncture, Paker interprets Ahmed Midhat’s permissiveness as “reflecting an ‘imperialist’ attitude in which otherness is denied and transformed”, using the term “imperialist” to describe “assimilating strategies” performed not only by Midhat but also by other Ottoman literary figures (Paker 2006: 331). I think that Ahmed Midhat’s assimilating strategy can be clearly observed in the works, especially those he produced based on a foreign text via translation by referring to himself as the writer. In this manner, his translational terms and concepts provided in ‘Appendix I’ may also be taken as the actual indications of his “imperialist” attitude in translating texts from the West to the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century.
6. Examining Ahmed Midhat’s translation discourse through paratexts

In this section, I will focus on the paratextual data of certain translational works by Ahmed Midhat, offering a descriptive analysis to explore various aspects of his translation practice as well as his discourse on translation.

In order to re-evaluate the concept of translation equivalence in the literary translations of Ahmed Midhat and to reconstruct his translational norms, İşin Bengi makes use of, for the first time, paratextual data such as title pages, prefaces and epilogues in her doctoral thesis (Bengi 1990). Bengi thinks of paratextual data as reflecting the cultural and literary constraints which are necessary for the understanding of the target literary system at the time. Similarly, in examining the uses of paratexts in translation research, Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçeşmel also emphasizes that “a critical description of paratextual elements surrounding translations can be instrumental in bringing to light the divergent concepts and definitions of translation in a specific period within a culture”. Borrowing from Gérard Genette the concept of “paratext”, Tahir-Gürçeşmel critically examines two cases from the Turkish system of translated literature in the 1940s, and refers to paratexts as “presentational materials accompanying translated texts and the text-specific meta-discourses formed directly around them” (Tahir-Gürçeşmel 2002: 44). She draws attention to paratexts as “a third type of material, largely liminal in nature, which goes unmentioned” (Tahir-Gürçeşmel 2002: 44). Thus, in my examination of the paratextual data, I will deal with how texts are identified, described or named by Ahmed Midhat and concentrate not only on the title pages and prefaces, but also on the terms and concepts related to translation. This will help us to recognize at the macro level the variety of ways in which translation was practiced.

6.1 Translation as Iktibas: Borrowing from Emile Augier’s L’Aventurière

Nedamet mi? Heyhat! [Remorse? Alas!] was a novel acquired by Ahmed Midhat from the French dramatist Emile Augier’s L’Aventurière, which was first serialized in Tercüman-ı Hakikat and then published in book form in Istanbul in 1888–1889. On the title page, Ahmed Midhat refers to himself as the writer of the text, although the name of the original writer was apparently mentioned. In his long preface, “A Friendly Talk in an Introduction”, he starts first by giving background information about the history of the novel in France. Reviewing the novel as a new developing genre in Ottoman literature, Ahmed Midhat’s assessments illuminate how Ottoman writers had developed intertextual relations mostly with French sources.
In his preface, Ahmed Midhat compares Emile Augier’s literary writing with that of Racine and Corneille, raising him to the level of a respected writer and also describing *L’Aventurière* as a valuable verse play in terms of its moral principles. Ahmed Midhat’s explanations on the structure and literary aspects of the source text demonstrate that he performed certain modifications on the French original at various levels. Not only did he convert (*talhvil*) a verse play into an Ottoman Turkish prose narrative, referring to particular difficulties in translating such a great work into verse, but he also changed the title of the original from *L’Aventurière* to *Nedamet mi? Heyhat!* since he found the name of the original undeserving to convey such an elegant, philosophical and fine work to Turkish for the sake of Ottoman readership. The adjustments he performed at the structural and linguistic levels may be the essential reason for his reference to himself not as the translator but as the writer (see also Bengi 1990: 130–132). Ahmed Midhat also acquaints his readers with his translation strategy, indicating that he is not in favour of word-for-word translation (*terceme-i aynıyye*). He says

We are not in favour of translation as the same. We read a sentence, a statement, or even a page written in French and rewrite it independently in Ottoman. That is why our translations appear as if they were originally written in Ottoman. Let us translate Emile Augier’s *Serresi* [*L’Aventurière*] in that way. But this work was not written with such an ordinary prose... We actually considered a great deal how we could translate such a work written so meticulously. Then suddenly we remembered the novel *Amiral Bing*, which we had written previously by way of translation. (Ahmed Midhat 1888–1889: 9)

Generally speaking, the preface gives us significant clues to understand culture-specific ways of Ottoman textual production via translation. It highlights the fact that there were a group of people who either ‘translated’ from or ‘imitated’ European novels in Ottoman culture in the late nineteenth century. Not only this work but also his other borrowings which he published in his series of *Letaif-i Rivayat* [Finest Stories] a collection of his short stories published as 25 series between 1870 and 1895, indicate that Ahmed Midhat appropriates many novels by translation (*terceme*) as well as in other ways related to translation. In his borrowing i.e. *Iki Hüdakar* [Two Cheats] published in a series of *Letaif-i Rivayat*, whose story was based on an anecdote in a French newspaper, he clearly explains his assimilating attitude:

For many years, my readers have been familiar with my approach, by which I perform many adjustments on the novels I appropriate from Europe by translation, and then recommend for the sake of Ottoman morals... I make the idea
of changing more advanced, especially with respect to the issue of borrowing. I have never been like a prisoner within the borders of the works I have borrowed. Taking only the idea [of the original], I rewrite a new work based on that idea.


Among his borrowings, Nedamet mi? Heyhat! appears as a significant work in which he transformed an original play into a novel by means of translation. Thus Ahmed Midhat’s conception of borrowing shows us that he always tends to perform certain adjustments on his borrowings, especially at the structural level, even on the texts he identifies as translation (terceme). With regard to his idea of making adjustments in such borrowings, his translation strategy appears to take the idea from the source text and “rewrite” (yeniden kaleme almak) it on the basis of that idea, and hence spreading it in Turkish. This may be the reason why he refers to himself as the writer of such works and thus describes some of his borrowings as texts “stolen” (müşterak) from foreign sources, especially from French, for instance his Diplomali Kız [Girl with a Diploma], a short story also published in his series of Letaif-i Rivayat in 1889–1890.

6.2 Translation as Nazire: Emulation of Alexandre Dumas Père’s

Le Comte du Monte Cristo

Hasan Mellâh yahut Sir İçinde Esrar [Sailor Hasan or Secrets in the Secret] was published by Kirk Ambar in 1874–75 as a novel which attempted to emulate Alexandre Dumas Père’s Le Comte du Monte Cristo. In the preface, “Introduction” (Mukaddime), Ahmed Midhat refers to himself as the writer, expressing his intention to contribute to the progress of Ottoman literary writing with this work.

Informing his readers to acknowledge this work not as a translation or imitation, he presents his text as an indigenous work coming out by emulation of a foreign novel (Ahmed Midhat 1874–1875:1). In the light of Gideon Toury’s translation postulates, i.e. “source-text”, “transfer” and “relationship” (Toury 1995:33), one can safely consider that the transfer relationship between a target text and its “assumed” source may involve a cross-textual relationship. In other words, on the basis of the transfer postulate, it may be inferred that one can make use of structural and/or narrative elements of the original in the translational relationship with its source. Ahmed Midhat’s comments on the plot of both Hasan Mellah… and his other novel Haydut Montari [Bandit Montari] (1887–1888), both of which were identified by Midhat as emulation, reveal that he tended to forge cross-textual relationships with his French originals. Especially in his preface to Haydut Montari, he makes clear the issue of emulating French novels, which he evidently
performed as a functional strategy of assimilation in the production of his prose narratives in Turkish. He says:

The plot of Hasan Mellah was not as extensive as the plot of Le Comte de Monte Cristo. Neither is the plot of this novel, Haydut Montari, as extensive as the plot of the novel Simon et Marie which we have emulated... We have followed many great European writers, for instance, Alexandre Dumas and his son, Octave Feuillet, Gaboriaux and even Paul de Kock. We have not only translated but also emulated their works, and won the appreciation of our respected readers with our industriousness in the art of the novel. (Ahmed Midhat 1887–1888: 3–4)

These statements indicate that nažire signifies cross-textual transfer in which the emulator could make use of the story, theme or plot of the original and modify it to fit in the target cultural and literary environment. From the perspective of Paker’s interpretation of Ahmed Midhat’s translation discourse as reflecting an “imperialist” attitude (Paker 2006: 331), I consider that nažire may indicate one of the ways to assimilate foreign texts into the Ottoman system of culture and literature that was in formation.

6.3 Translation as Terçeme: Translating Paul de Kock’s
La Fille aux trois jupons

Üç Yüzü Bir Karî [A Woman with Three Faces] was a novel translated by both Ahmed Midhat and Ebüzziya Tevfik from the French novelist Paul de Kock’s La Fille aux trois jupons in 1877. In the preface, “To Readers” [“Kârıîne”], the translators who refer to themselves as “mütercîmler” [translators], designate their text as a story that deserves to be read by the Ottomans. Drawing attention not only to the style but also to the original writer since both are unknown to the target readership, they introduce Paul de Kock as an important French prose-writer, well-known in France as well as in other European countries, who writes tragic works (facia) in particular.

Discussing their translation strategy, Midhat and Tevfik mention that they did not perform a word-for-word translation (harfiyyen terçeme) because they considered that it was nearly impossible to perform a literal translation. They emphasize that it would have been difficult to convey (nakl) each property in the SL to the TL through literal rendering. But they state too that they did not perform a free translation since they believed that those who have not lived in Paris could not understand the beauty (letafet), the signs (rumuz) and the wit (nikat) inherent in Paul de Kock’s novel. At this point, the translators explain their choice of translation strategy as follows:
Therefore, we rewrote the sense of the original story in Turkish... Our success is
due to never distorting the style and story-line of the original, and to demonstrat-
ing both the structure of the story and the various manifestations of humankind
in the same way Paul de Kock did.

(Ahmed Midhat and Ebüzziya Tevfik 1877: 2)

The statements of the translators draw our attention to the close relationship be-
tween “translation” and “rewriting” (Lefevere 1992: 1–9, 47) in their dialogue with
European literature. At the discourse level, it is evident that Ahmed Midhat and
Ebüzziya Tevfik followed a strategy they defined as “rewriting the sense of the
original” in the target language. Perhaps more important than that, they would
follow, announcing to their readers, the same strategy in translating other sto-
ries written in this new style, as well as those by Paul de Kock. Their statements
about the structural modification of the original are interesting as they declare
that they never distorted the structure and the action line or plot of the source text
in the process of rewriting even though they describe their rewriting strategy as
“translation and writing” (terceme ve tahrir) as well as “examining and purchas-
ing” (miutalaa ve istira). Thus in this context, one can safely consider that rewr-
iting appears as translation, which indicates a culture-specific practice of terceme in
Ottoman culture at that time.

6.4 Translation as Muhavere: Conversation with John William Draper’s
History of the Conflict between Religion and Science

This work was published in the form of a book in 1895–1896 with the permis-
sion of The Sublime Ministry of Education after being serialized in Tercüman-1
Hakikat. Interestingly on its title page, two titles and two writers are given.
One is Nizâ-1 İlm ü Din [Conflict between Religion and Science], and the title
J. W. Draper who was introduced as a professor at the New York School of Sci-
ence is designated the writer (muharrir) of this work. The other title given below
is İslâm ve Ulâm [Islam and Science] and Ahmed Midhat refers to himself as the
writer (muharrir) of this second work. The paratextual information on the title
page implies that there are two works packaged together in one volume, and this
explains why there are also several prefaces entitled “Warning” (İhtar), “Our In-
roduction” (Bizim Mukaddimemiz) and “Draper’s Introduction and Our Exami-
 nations” (Draper’in Mukaddimesi ve Mütalatımız).

In the preface titled “Warning”, Ahmed Midhat is conscious of such a presenta-
tion. Offering two titles and therefore presenting two works in one volume, he
mentions that the first title is the literal translation of Draper’s book Les Conflits
de la science et la religion. A reference to a French title and source shows that it was translated from French i.e. the mediating language. Midhat states that the second title represents his own work, which consists of his response to Draper's text, including his commentary and critique.

What is interesting about this work is its overall arrangement. Ahmed Midhat draws attention to the fact that it is an intermixed (mütedahil) work, and this is why he arranged it in a fragmentary fashion. First presenting certain parts from Draper's work in translation printed in small fonts, he then offers his responses printed in relatively large fonts. He suggests that if one wishes to obtain the translation of Draper's work, or his own full response, one should bring together the parts printed with either small or large fonts. In the second preface, titled “Our Introduction”, Ahmed Midhat gives information about the source writer and the content of this work. He explains the reasons why he is responding to Draper's main claim, which is based on the notion that there is a conflict between religion and science. He introduces Draper to Ottoman readers as an important writer who won fame particularly with his book on the history of European philosophical progress that had also been translated into French, German, Italian, Russian and Serbian (Ahmed Midhat 1895-1896: 5-6). The essential reason for his choosing to translate Les Conflits de la science et la religion is related to the content. Ahmed Midhat believes that Draper's work was written deliberately against the institution of religion. Hence taking a defensive attitude in responding to this work, he tries to prove that there is no such conflict but rather harmony between religion and science in the case of Islam which is lacking in the case of Christianity.

In harmony with his purpose of translating Les Conflits de la science et la religion, Ahmed Midhat arranges the Turkish text in the form of a conversation (muhavere). In this sense, he states that he does not offer a full translation of Draper's work, mentioning that he translates necessary words or sentences or parts uttered by Draper. Importantly, in the cases when Draper repeats himself, Ahmed Midhat omits such repetitive and useless parts, and follows the strategy of abridgement (tarık-i ihtisar). But he underscores that he still does not move away from Draper's main idea. What is of utmost significance here is that he calls attention to the essential task of an interpreter which he defines as faithfully interpreting the original utterance of a person. This reminds us that Ahmed Midhat tends to regard himself as an interpreter (terceman) in his conversation with Draper. Identified as an intermixed work in the form of conversation, his text includes not only some translated parts from a foreign work but also his response (cevab) to that work which constitutes indigenous writing. Without performing a full translation, he carries out, in some cases, certain abridgements to the source text
material. Although he does not carry out a full translation, he identifies his act of
translation and hence his product as translation (terceme).

6.5 Translation as Nakl: Conveying Adolf Mützelburg’s
Der Held von Garika

Konak yâhut Şeyh Şamil’in Kafkasya Muhârebâtında Bir Hikâye-i Garîbe [Mansion or a Strange Story about Şeyh Şamil’s War in the Caucasus] was published in Istanbul in 1878–1879 as a historical novel coming out in translation as part of the New Library publications [Yeni Kütüphane] which were promoted by Tercüman-ı Hakikat. A note on the title page indicates that this work was transferred (nakl) from German into Ottoman Turkish by Ahmed Midhat and a German translator Vizental [in Turkish transcription], both of them refer to themselves as the nakil [one who transfers] on the title page.

In the preface, “Introduction” (Mukaddime), the nakils express the fact that they serialize by translating a historical novel by Adolf Mützelburg, who is introduced to Ottoman readers as a famous German writer, and who is reported as having written a story about Şeyh Şamil’s war in the Caucasus under the title Konak [Mansion]. The translation was presented as a beautiful novel which provides the reader with striking and judicious information on Caucasian history and geography. They admire the original writer because of his success in depicting Şeyh Şamil, his commanders and their glories, while remaining faithful to real historical events.

Aiming to collaborate in translating this work, they draw attention to the benefits and significance of collaboration in translating foreign works into Ottoman Turkish. They call for Ottoman writers to follow collaboration in translation, especially for those who wish to fulfill the need for indigenous works in the target language.

6.6 Translation as Hulâsa

6.6.1 From the West: The Summary of Pierre Corneille’s Le Cid

Ahmed Midhat was an important literary figure who used ‘summary’ as a translation strategy in the late nineteenth century. He published Sid’in Hulâsasî [Summary of Le Cid] in 1890–1891 with a preface and an annotated critique he added to the end. Though the original text was about 75 pages, his summary translation added up to a total of 222 pages, including the summary itself (about 131 pages),
and two important paratextual sections, entitled “Statement” (Ifade) (about 14 pages) and “Critique of Le Cid” (Sid ‘in Intikâdi) (about 76 pages). Interestingly, Midhat identifies his version paradoxically as a summary comparable with a translation (terceme).

In his preface, Ahmed Midhat opens a dialogue with an imaginary reader. What is interesting in this dialogue is that the respected reader questions the reasons for Ahmed Midhat’s selection of Le Cid and his translation strategy. The imaginary person in the dialogue functions as an implied reader who expresses a demand for the translation of European classics. Addressing the Ottoman writers of his time, Ahmed Midhat tries to give his reasons for pursuing the summary strategy. According to Ahmed Midhat, it was important to make such European works known to Ottoman readers. Thus he practiced summary translation as a strategy which, he thought, would best serve his informative and pragmatic purposes.

A few years after he wrote his preface to Sid’în Hulâsası, Ahmed Midhat reiterated the importance of the summary strategy in the “classics debate”. In his article titled “Yine İkram-ı Aklâm”, he explained this strategy and suggested that it needed to be taken as a solution for the difficulties of literal translation. He even referred to commentary (serh) and annotation (tahşîye) as other methods of translation practiced in French literature in translating Ancient Greek works. His explanations reveal that he was aware of certain methods and/or strategies practiced in French literature, which he seems to have adopted as models. In Ahmed Midhat’s approach to translation, strategies such as literal (harfiyyen), free (serbest, mealen) or summary (hulâsa) appear to be closely connected to the notion of intelligibility. In this context, it makes sense that Ahmed Midhat referred to the importance of the summary strategy for producing comprehensible versions. As a writer and publisher of Tercüman-ı Hakikat, his rationale for the summary strategy may have been connected to his identity and activity as a journalist who valued communicative language and immediate intelligibility.

Sid’în Hulâsası was published in a series of “Summaries of the Great Works”, which was initiated by Ahmed Midhat. Thus this paratextual information is an important clue to the then current need for publishing summaries of works of great literary merit, in other words, it shows a deliberate initiative for planning literature, offering ‘summaries’ as new options in introducing Western cultural materials to the Ottomans. In the preface, he first focuses on the question of translating European classics by following various lines of argument about (i) the need for translation to make great European classical works known to Ottoman readers, (ii) the method of translation, and (iii) the function and purpose of generating summaries. It is obvious that Ahmed Midhat thought of European civilization as
having reached its highest stage of progress through “extensive experimentation with everything for several centuries”. The core of his argument centers on accepting European great works as models (meşk) which genuinely deserve to be appreciated by Ottomans. He argues that if the aim is to know the great European works, Sid’in Hulâsası could be used as an adequate version of Le Cid. If not, it would be a great loss for the Ottomans to be unaware of the European classics (Ahmed Midhat 1890–1891: 14).

Ahmed Midhat claims that in summarizing Le Cid he has not produced a version which could be identified as the literal rendering of Le Cid because the original was a tragedy in verse. He expected to find two essential features in classical works i.e. rhetorical eloquence (belâgat) and imaginative content (hayal), emphasizing that it is almost impossible to convey the rhetorical eloquence of verse by literal translation. According to Ahmed Midhat, there remains the imaginative content to be transferred, which he considered possible to translate. He also claims that he prefers not to render Le Cid as a free translation (serbest terceme) and underlines that free translation would result in a version of inordinate length and would not provide the serious benefits expected from rendering such European classical works into Turkish. He offers his summary as an adequate version of Le Cid which would avoid the problems of rendering verse as verse. He pleads:

Please, be gracious! Could you expect any serious advantage from translating those works in great length as by way of free translation since there exists only their subject matter [to be conveyed]? If the purpose is for us to know the great European works as much as is necessary, then shouldn't my summary of Le Cid be considered adequate? (Ahmed Midhat 1890–1891: 9)

Since he was a novelist not a poet, it seems reasonable that it would be a difficult task for him to render Le Cid literally as verse. This seems to be the essential reason why he followed various strategies in translating verse into Turkish. His translation discourse in this preface reveals that he foregrounded three points related to the strategy he followed in conveying Le Cid into Turkish: he neither translated nor gave either a free or literal rendering of the verse but rather summarized it. He also pointed out the function and purpose of his summary. In terms of his transference strategy, he mentioned that his prose version would serve to make Corneille’s Le Cid clear and intelligible to the target readers who had not seen the play. Thus the imaginary reader would gain an understanding of the textual composition as well as the cultural background of the original. Presuming that Le Cid is culturally unfamiliar to the target reader, Ahmed Midhat offers not only to summarize the original but also to explain it. He states:
On the one hand, it should be summarized as necessary without changing the original, on the other hand, it should be written as a commentary and explanation to make it intelligible. Such benefits for the people can never be denied.

(Ahmed Midhat 1890–1891: 13–14) (my italics)

The above quotation shows that Ahmed Midhat intended to remain close to the original play in his summary. At the same time, he declares another strategy: writing in the form of commentary and explanation (şerh and tavzih). His rationale in explaining his purpose and the functions of his text seems to have been based on the assumption that French culture was distant from Ottoman culture. That is why he starts off by pointing out the lack of a literary genre, such as tragedy in verse, which was foreign to the receiving system.

6.6.2 From the East: The intralingual summary of Ali Çelebi’s Version of Kalilah wa Dimnah

This work, Hulâsa-i Humayunname [Summary of Humayunname], was published in Istanbul in 1886–1887 by Matbaa-i Amire with the supreme permission of His Majesty, the Caliph Abdülhamid II. On the title page Ahmed Midhat refers to himself as the person who summarizes (mülahhis) but not the writer (muharrir) in comparison with his appearance in the summary of Le Cid. In a long preface of 11 pages titled “Special Statement” (İfade-i Mahsusa), Ahmed Midhat states that he offers an intralingual summary translation of Ali Çelebi’s Humayunname, which was a sixteenth century Turkish version of the famous book of fable Kalilah wa Dimnah (See Toska 2004: 293–294).

According to Ahmed Midhat, Ali Çelebi’s translation was an old version in Ottoman Turkish, and the Sanskrit original had managed to survive for many years through translations into several languages. Based on explanations in the preface Ali Çelebi wrote for his own Humayunname, Ahmed Midhat gives important information on the history of translations of Kalilah wa Dimnah into Persian (also into Pahlavi, i.e. old Persian), Arabic and Turkish. The original text was written by Bidpay (in Turkish transcription), a Brahman who presented his text to the king Debşelim (in Turkish transcription). Then it was translated by Buzurcumühr from Sanskrit into Pahlavi and presented to the ruler, Nuşırrevan. It was also translated from Pahlavi into Arabic by Abdullah bin Mukaffa who was commissioned to propose a comprehensible version in Arabic by Ebu Cafer Mansur, the second Abbasid caliphate. Ahmed Midhat mentions that, after the invasion of Iran by Muslim Sasanians, the Pahlavi version of Kalilah wa Dimnah was translated into Persian at the request of Ebu’l-Hüsün Emir bin Nasir bin Ahmed, a Sasanian ruler, since it was no longer comprehensible due to the linguistic gap between Pahlavi
and Persian. For this reason, it was conveyed from prose to verse by a Persian poet Rudegi. Because Rudegi's translation was considered to be distant from its source as the prose source had been conveyed into verse, Ebu'l-Muzaffer Behramşah, a Gaznevi ruler, commissioned Nasrullah bin Mehmmed bin Abdülhamid to produce another translation based on Abdullah bin Mukaffa's version in Arabic. But Ahmed Midhat points out that this translation was also regarded as unclear and incomprehensible. He also mentions that Emir Süheylî, a commander surveying under Sultan Hüseyin Baykara then commissioned Mevlana Hüseyin bin Ali El-Vaiz to write another comprehensible version in Persian.

Ahmed Midhat goes on to inform the reader that Mevlana Hüseyin bin Ali El-Vaiz (also known as Kâşifî) titled his fifteenth century version of Kalilah wa Dimnah in Persian Envâr-ı Süheylî [Lights from Süheylî]. Midhat mentions that it was Envâr-ı Süheylî which was taken as the source text for translation by Ali Çelebi, who named his translation Humayunname, stating that Humayunname was presented to Süleyman the Magnificent. Of special importance is the fact that Midhat thinks of Humayunname as being incomprehensible for late nineteenth century readers because of its long ornate sentences. That is why he emphasizes that its ornate style and unclear language led to it being neglected by Ottoman reading circles over a period of approximately 300 years (Ahmed Midhat 1886–1887:8). This explains why he was commissioned by Sultan Abdülhamid II to produce a simplified and explicative summary (telhis), which would help renew Kalilah wa Dimnah and make its benefits available in Ottoman culture in the late nineteenth century. It is also important that Ahmed Midhat was equipped with a norm to write (yazmak) in clear and understandable Turkish. Furthermore, he was also given license, where necessary, to comment (şerhi) and explain (izah) certain points in the source story. This implies that “to comment” and “to explain” were regarded as acceptable acts during the process of summarizing a source text in Ottoman culture at that time.

7. Concluding remarks

My analysis of the paratextual data of certain works which were produced by Ahmed Midhat based on a foreign text in another culture shows us that he performed various translation strategies in his dialogue with the West. Extending from literal to free in different forms, he identifies certain of his texts as “translation” (terceme), “conveying” (nakîl), “borrowing” (iktibâs), “stolen text” (müsterıâk), “dialogue and the translator's response as part of dialogue” (muhavere), “summary” (hulâsa), “conversion” (tahvil) and “emulation/imitation” (tanzir/taklid).
This displays a wide range of textual options he generated via translation, contributing to the making of Ottoman literary repertoire in the late 19th century.

Related to this point, Ahmed Midhat's reference to himself also shows diversity in self-designation of authorship. He refers to himself as the translator (mütercim), the conveyor (nâkil), the one who summarizes (mülahhis) and in some others as the writer (muharrir) – even in such works he refers generally to a foreign author or work. In one way or another, his reference words indicate a certain translational relationship with his source texts. Remembering Theo Hermans's emphasis on "the otherness of other cultures" (Hermans 1995: 221–222) in terms of culture's conception/s and practice/s of translation, all of these identifications point to the culture-and-time-bound manifestations of an Ottoman agent of translation. The diversity that we see in Ahmed Midhat's reference to himself also seems to violate our modern and clear-cut definitions between the writer and the translator. In the case of Ahmed Midhat, it is also evident that we need to speak of the existence of blurred borderlines in the production of texts via translation in Ottoman culture in a moment of encounter or confrontation with Europe.

In the light of the frameworks outlined by John Milton, Itamar Even-Zohar and and Gideon Toury, we may conclude that Ahmed Midhat was an important Ottoman agent of translation who devoted a great amount of energy and his own life to the progress of Ottoman society as well as its culture and literature, producing indigenous works and articles, translating texts from foreign literature and provoking important debates related to translation. As a novelist, translator, teacher, literary critic, publisher, journalist and entrepreneur, it is evident that he took on various identities and hence combined various functions in the Ottoman system of culture and literature in the late 19th century. He served as an option maker in the production of a cultural repertoire based on Western models since he proposed different choices and alternatives to introduce Western culture and literature to the Ottomans via translation. As a free agent of translation active in the private sphere, he may also be regarded as a planner since he called on his contemporaries to follow his strategies in the generation of texts either by translation or by other ways related to translation, and since he produced many works in the process of Westernization for the development of his readers who were mostly illiterate. Ahmed Midhat's practice of translation indicates that European cultural and literary items were imported to Ottoman society by free agents of translation in various ways which may include culture-specific aspects of transfer.
Dashed lines point to the particular connections Ahmed Midhat Efendi makes in his discourse. Bold dashed lines point to the connections Ahmed Midhat Efendi uses in contrastive relationship.
Appendix II: A map of Ahmed Midhat’s strategies of translation

![Diagram showing strategies of translation]

Notes

1. Referring to both Itamar Even-Zohar’s concepts of “idea makers”, “culture entrepreneurs”, “makers of life images” and “the prospects of success” and Gideon Toury’s conception of translation as a means of planning, Saliha Paker discusses whether we may consider Ahmet Midhat to be an active planner of culture in her striking paper presented at a special conference on Ahmed Midhat in 2004. Looking at Ahmed Midhat’s life through these concepts, Paker examines his practice of textual production with special reference to his business life and claims that Ahmed Midhat appears not only as a dynamic writer and translator but also as a dynamic entrepreneur and businessman. Based on Ahmed Midhat’s biography (see Okay 2002), Paker draws attention to Ahmed Midhat’s entrepreneurship which, she argues, could be well observed not only in his authorship as a writer, translator and journalist but also in his business life as a printer. According to Paker, Ahmed Midhat was deliberately engaged in the creation of new options and produced evidently new ideas for Ottoman’s cultural repertoires in the late 19th century. This is why Paker suggests calling him the planner of culture as well as cultural entrepreneur (Paker 2004:6). I would like to thank Saliha Paker for letting me read her unpublished paper.

2. At this point, one needs to remember that there was also a rich tradition of translations from Arabic and Persian into Turkish, which went back to the pre-Ottoman period in Asia Minor in the thirteenth century and continued in the Ottoman period up to the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. For translations in the pre-Ottoman period, see Levend 1988; Ülken 1997; Kut 1998; Paker and Toska 1997.

3. Yusuf Kamil Paşa’s Terceme-i Telemaik is conventionally regarded as the first novel translated into Turkish. But Kavruck (1998) indicates that Fênelon’s novel Les Aventures de Télémaque (1699) was first translated in 1792 by Seyyid Ali Efendi, a diplomat who was sent to France and translated it in order to improve his French (Kavruck 1998:9).
4. For a critical discussion of the “classics debate” see Paker 2006. Paker uses the debate as a focus for examining change in Ottoman conceptions of translation and its practice. Establishing the literary and cultural context of the late 19th century, she deals with the concepts of imitation and translation as they come up in the debate, and discusses certain implications with reference to our understanding of Ottoman translation practices. Paker’s article is important since her analysis rethinks Turkish concepts as well as conceptions of translation, addressing certain links between the tradition and the modern.

5. The year 1897 was important since it witnessed two literary debates, first "the Decadents" and then "the Classics Debate". Known as “the Decadents” in the Turkish literary history, the debate was on the current position of Ottoman classical literature with its European counterparts. A group of Ottoman poets and novelists belonging to the New Literature front (edebiyat-ı cedide), for instance Tevfik Fikret, Cenab Şahabeddin, Halid Ziya, Mehm德 Rauf, were accused of imitating French literature via translation and leading to the production of a literature full of foreign content and forms. Also participating in the debate with his provocative article “Decadents” (Dekadanlar), Ahmed Midhat denounced the work of the New Literature group as a failure and criticized them in terms of using an unusual style which derived from breaking the conventional rules of the current language in its connection with Arabic and Persian (Emil 1959; Paker 2006:332; Demircioğlu 2005:178).

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