

# Imaginary travel(s) as a discursive strategy

## The case of Ahmet Mithat and Ottoman constructions of Europe

*Olcay Akyıldız*, Istanbul

The Ottoman-Turkish author Ahmet Mithat (1844–1912) wrote a great deal of travel novels in which the protagonists travel through the whole world, and many novels and stories that are set in Europe, even before he ever went there himself. While writing these novels he concentrates on different kinds of travel and discusses them either in the prefaces, declaring his arguments as the author Ahmet Mithat, or lets the characters in those novels discuss the issue among themselves. What I mean by ‘different kinds of travel’ is those mental travels done while thinking or reading as well as the real, physical ones done by the author himself. These discussions about different kinds of travel could be perceived within a new perspective after one reads Ahmet Mithat’s *Avrupa’da Bir Cevelan* (‘A Stroll through Europe’ Mithat 1889/90), the travelogue he wrote after his own trip to Europe. It is possible to analyze how Ahmet Mithat, while referring to his previous fictional travels in *Avrupa’da Bir Cevelan*, uses them as a discursive strategy to present himself as *the expert* on Europe and travel.

What I try to analyze in this article is how Ahmet Mithat constructs an authoritative discourse on Europe by mentioning the textual information gathered through reading, his imaginary world, which prepared him for his real-life trip, and the experiences and observations he made during this voyage. The main goal of the article is first to classify and define these different kinds of travel, namely mental travel, which includes imaginary and literary voyages, and the real journey. Having established this classification, by using the author’s own definitions from his books, I aim to show the formation of the above-mentioned authoritative discourse, with which I argue that Ahmet Mithat’s overconfident discourse on Europe is a product of the dialogue between these three kinds of travel. The author, I argue, intentionally uses this constant dialogue to construct a textual support for his imagined privileged position. Textuality is the key concept of this article in analyzing the mutual relationship of the aforementioned travels. They are textual in a double sense. First of all, the only access the reader has to those travels is through the texts that Ahmet Mithat wrote, and often those travels – be they mental or real – are linked to other texts rather than some sort of concrete and experienced reality.

In this sense, the article is not interested in the travels themselves but the representations of them and the universe which is constructed by the author through his novels, the prologues to his novels and his travelogue, each of which

take up different kinds of travel experience. In order to explore Ahmet Mithat's mental and real travels to Europe I use two main texts: the first one is Ahmet Mithat's novel *Paris'te Bir Türk* ('A Turk in Paris', Mithat 1876), which he wrote before he ever went to Europe, and the second is *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*<sup>1</sup> (Mithat 1889/90), in which he describes his first 'real' travel to Europe in 1889. These two texts are in dialogue with each other, or more precisely *Cevelan*, the later work, often engages in a dialogue with *A Turk in Paris*. I read these two texts as examples of the above-mentioned dialogue, which allows the author to be an authority on Europe, but I also show how sometimes this system does not work and the travels, imaginary and real, do not overlap.

### *Terms, definitions and travel types*

Using Ahmet Mithat's term 'mental travel', which covers both what I call imaginary travel and literary travel, allows us to make a distinction between what happens in the mind and what happens in the physical world. Ahmet Mithat uses two different terms denoting the same kind of travel: Travels that happen in the mind are called *seyahat-i fikriyye* and *seyahat-i zihniyye*. I have translated both as 'mental travel' because he also uses them interchangeably. In *Cevelan*, he prefers the term *seyahat-i fikriyye*, which stresses the conceptual feature of mental travel, but in the preface to his novel *Rikalda* he also uses the term *seyahat-i zihniyye*,<sup>2</sup> which highlights the location of the travel – the mind:

"That I took my readers everywhere in the old world but did not take them for a voyage to America – the new world – is shameful for a devoted servant like me, who is a guide of *mental* travels."<sup>3</sup>

He uses the terms again on more than one occasion in the same preface: "Since I started writing novels I have taken my dear readers with me on so many *mental* travels!"; "Our *mental* travels were not restricted by the borders of the capital city"; "... a *mental* travel guide like myself..."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I will refer to this work as *Cevelan* through the rest of the article.

<sup>2</sup> *Zihin*: mind, *fikir*: thought.

<sup>3</sup> "Böyle karilerime cihan-ı atıkin her tarafını gezdirdiğim halde cihân-ı cedîde olan Amerika kıtasına doğru henüz läylâkîca bir sefer açmamış bulunmaklığım benim gibi *seyahat-i zihniyye* delili bir hizmetkâr-ı sadık için nakîsa addedilmez mi?" (Mithat 2003a: 6). All the quotations from the novel are from the transcribed print of the Türk Dil Kurumu (Mithat 2003a). The emphasis in this and all other quotations as well as their English translations was added by me unless otherwise mentioned.

<sup>4</sup> "Roman yazmaya ibtidâ-ı sülükündan beri sevgili karilerimi ne kadar *seyahat-i fikriyyede* refakatime aldım! (...)" "*Seyahat-i fikriyyemiz* payitahta da münhasır kalmadı." "(...) benim gibi *seyahat-i zihniyye* delili bir hizmetkâr-ı sadık için(...)", Mithat (2003a: 621 [5]). The transliteration of *Rikalda* is printed together with three other books of Ahmet Mithat in Mithat 2003a: *Haydut Montari*, *Diplomali Kız*, and *Gürcü kızı yahut intikam*. The book has a system with two kinds of page numbers, one for the whole volume and one for the individual books themselves. The page numbers after the quotes are given accordingly.

The categorization that I use for Ahmet Mithat's travels can be broken down as follows:

- I. *Mental travels*: Fictitious travels that happen in the mind through thoughts. The concept of mental travel covers the following two sub-types of travels:
  - a. *Imaginary travels*: travels done through dreaming or imagining.
  - b. *Literary travels*: travels done through the reading of literary texts.
- II. *Real travel(s)*: actual trips made by the author in person. I use the term 'real' to refer to the travel itself as opposed to its written representation. At the moment this real travel is written down it also becomes fiction like the above ones. When the reader reads the accounts of those travels, he is taken on another mental journey.

This distinction is represented in the following table (figure 1) in Ahmet Mithat's own words and the equivalent of those terms and phrases in my own terms of categorization. In the paragraphs following figure 1, I discuss the travel types and their relationships with one another.

| My classification used in this article | mental travel             | imaginary travel          | literary travel       | real travel           |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Ahmet Mithat's terms</i>            | <i>seyahat-i fikriyye</i> | <i>seyahat-i zibniyye</i> | <i>hayalî seyahat</i> | <i>bakîki seyahat</i> |

Figure 1: Terms & definitions: Ahmet Mithat's use and my classification

### *Mental travels*

With the travel type 'mental travel' I mean those travels that are fictitious, i.e. not physically realized but made in the mind. I further divide mental travels into two sub-categories: trips taken through dreams (imaginary travels) and trips taken through texts (literary travels). Mental travelling done through texts include Ahmet Mithat's thoughts and fantasies during his 'reading adventure' (i.e. when he reads other texts) and his thoughts and imagining during his 'writing adventure' (i.e. when he produces texts himself).

#### *Mental travelling done through dreams: imaginary travels*

This sub-category is constituted of Ahmet Mithat's dreams. These are travels Ahmet Mithat embarks on at night, as he thematizes it himself (as will be shown below), or maybe during the day, and which most of the time are nourished by texts. In *Paris'te Bir Türk* (Mithat 2000a) the Ottoman protagonist Nasuh, who quite resembles Ahmet Mithat himself, also talks about his dreams of Europe. While telling his life story to a travel companion, Nasuh says: "Consequently, in my heart a European wind had begun to blow. All through the day I read books

giving information about the famous cities of Europe. And all through the night I travelled to Europe in my *fantasies* and *dreams*.<sup>5</sup> So Nasuh not only imagines Europe but also dreams of it in his sleep. These dreams and fantasies are motivated by all the books that he reads.

This causal relationship between reading and dreaming indicates that the border between what I call imaginary travel and literary travel is not rigid but often transitional: As readers, we never have direct access to this imaginary realm that is the dreams and fantasies of Ahmet Mithat. The only way to be informed about the content of those dreams and fantasies is the books that he writes, and the moment we are dealing with texts we are at the doors of the literary realm, i.e. of literary travel. Nonetheless however, a distinction has to be made between the two: It is Ahmet Mithat himself who describes to the reader a kind of travel that he calls *hayâli* ('imaginary'). Both in his novels and in his travelogue *Cevelan* he describes how he fantasized about Europe at night for many years. Although he does not share with the reader the content of those dreams and fantasies he defines this kind of travelling as fictitious. The fact that he considered himself a long-time Parisian – enough to even refer to himself as a child of Paris – without ever having visited this city before 1889, may be chalked up to those imaginary days and nights in Paris.<sup>6</sup> The reader's access to this implicit context can only be through the novels

<sup>5</sup> "Binaenaleyh gönlümde Avrupa havaları esmeye başladı. Bütün gün Avrupa bilâd-ı meşhûresi ahvalini mübeyyin kitaplar okurdum. Bütün gece dahi *hülyamda*, *rüyamda* Avrupa'yı seyahat ederdim" (Mithat 2000a: 109). All the quotations from the novel are from the transcribed print of the Türk Dil Kurumu (Mithat 2000a).

<sup>6</sup> In *Cevelan*, after he arrives in Paris for the second time by train during his journey, the following dialogue occurs between him and a middleman: "The guy laughed and said: –You know your Paris well. [I responded:] –Although I am a foreigner I lived long enough in Paris to be counted as a child of Paris." ("Herif kahkahalarla güldü. Dedi ki: –Parisinizi iyi taniyorsunuz galiba. –Ecnebi isem de hemen Paris evladı addolunabilecek kadar Paris'de yaşamışım.") Then, after making more explanations for the reader, he continues: "In order to know such details of the French language one should also be informed about the conditions of them. When the middleman told us that the name of the hotel that he was taking us to was *Chevalier*, I asked him if that *chevalier* was a *chevalier de l'industrie*. And this shows that I know the situation of Paris adequately. Besides, when they want to show how good they or others know Paris they will say: 'I know my Paris' or 'You know your Paris.' Consequently if a guy does not use this style and instead says 'I know the city of Paris,' everybody will decide he has no clue about Paris as he did not use the idiom 'I know my Paris.' And also among them when the term 'a child of Paris' is used it does not mean the person should have been born and raised there but it means that this person lived there long enough to know every secret of the city. And these couple of words that we exchanged with the middleman showed him that I was not inexperienced in Paris." ("Komisyonere bizi götüreceği otelin şövalye hoteli namını haiz olmasından bilintikal o şövalyenin bir şövalye del endüstri olup olmadığını sormaklığından dahi Paris ahvalını layık vechile bildiğimi gösterir. Bir de bunların kendilerinin veyahud başkalarının Paris'i iyi tanıdıklarını anlatmak istedikleri zaman 'Ben Parisimi tanırım' veyahud 'Parisinizi tanıyorsunuz' derler. Binaenaleyh bunlara bir adam şu şivinen gayri bir şive ile mesela 'Ben Paris şehrinin tanırım' diyecek olsa bu sözü 'Parisimi tanırım' suretinde söylemediği için hiç de Paris'i tanımadığına hükmü verilir. Bir de bunlar meyanında 'Paris çocuğu' denildiği zaman mutlaka Pariste doğup büyümüş olma-

the author wrote before he went to Europe because one of the main inspirations for these novels is his fantasy. Thus the reader never has complete access to the dreams of the author, as there is always the process of narration standing between them. As long as the author just dreams for himself, he is totally free; he can dream whatever he wants within the borders of his imagination. But when it is time to write down those fantasies as texts to be consumed by others,<sup>7</sup> he constructs the text depending on the profile of the readership or the image that he wishes to convey. These fantasies are influenced, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, by the author's reading adventure, but they have their own existence outside the reading adventure even if they are a result of it. Not to forget the possibility of dreams without any reading: One might just hear the name of a place and dream about it without having any information on it.

Nasuh, the protagonist of *Paris'te Bir Türk*,<sup>8</sup> not only talks about his dreams of Europe but makes a clear distinction between physical and imaginary journeys. The following dialogue is between Nasuh and a lady he has met on the ship while travelling to Europe for the first time:

“Catherine: Is this journey your first, Nasuh Efendi? Have you travelled elsewhere?

Nasuh: Physically, I've had no other travel worth mentioning, Mademoiselle.

Catherine: Strange! Is there such a thing as physical or spiritual travel?

Nasuh: And why shouldn't there be, Mademoiselle? If the term 'spiritual' is inappropriate, wouldn't it be appropriate at least to say 'imaginary'? I have been just as satisfied with my *imaginary* travels as this physical journey of mine.”<sup>9</sup>

Here Ahmet Mithat prefers the term 'imaginary' (*hayalî*), which is why I decided to include it as a category in the classification. There is further evidence in other places of Ahmet Mithat's works, where he talks about mental travels (*fikrî* / *zihniî*) but also mentions imaginary travels. In the literary world that he fictionalizes, the author through his protagonists describes the type of travel I refer to as imaginary. Suphi Bey, the protagonist of another Ahmet Mithat novel, *Acayib-i Âlem*<sup>10</sup> (Mithat 2000b), also embarks on a similar imaginary journey:

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sı anlaşılmayıp belki orada çok zaman yaşayıp her haline her sırrına vakıf olmuş manasına gelir. İşte komisyoner ile teati eylediğimiz çend kelime Paris'in acemisi olmadığımızı derhal kendisine anlatmış idi.” (Mithat 1889/90: 474b).

<sup>7</sup> Here, the others are the readers of Ahmet Mithat for whom he feels responsible and to whom he has a lot to teach.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed analysis of *Paris'te Bir Türk*, see: Akyıldız (2003); Akyıldız (2006).

<sup>9</sup> “Catherine: Bu seyahat ilk seyahatiniz midir Nasuh Efendi? Başka seyahatleriniz var mıdır? Nasuh: Maddî olarak zikre şayan başka bir seyahatim yokdur Mademoiselle.

Catherine: 'Acayib! Seyahatin maddisi manevî olur mu?

Nasuh: Niçin olmasın efendim? Manevi ta'biri yakışık almaz ise 'hayalî' ta'biri yakışık alır ya? *Hayalî* seyahatlerimden tipki şu maddî seyahatim kadar mütelezziz olmuşumdur” (Mithat 2000a: 47f).

<sup>10</sup> For more information about the novel *Acayib-i Âlem* and the travels of Suphi and Hicabi see Çamkara (2008) and Kefeli (2006).

"After everybody went to bed, Suphi Bey took a map of Europe and said he would at least go on an *imaginary* trip: 'Look! I have the map in my hand. I will go wherever I want to go.'"<sup>11</sup>

In both of the above-mentioned examples we do not have any evidence that those imaginary travels are directly related to texts. Suphi for instance has only a map in his hand and plans to dream of other places. Ahmet Mithat explains elsewhere (see the prefaces of *Rikalda* and *Cevelan*) the relationship between reading and going on a mental journey, but what he underlines in the quotes above is the role of imagination, and it is obvious that he, as an author, finds those kinds of imaginary travels very interesting. That is why, despite the fact that the difference between literary travels and imaginary travels is sometimes not clear, I decided to use it as a sub-category.

#### *Mental travels done through texts: literary travels*

What Ahmet Mithat read on Europe are mostly literary texts, but he also read some non-fiction like history or geography books or travel guides. That is why I hesitated between using the more general term 'textual' or the term 'literary'. I decided to use the term 'literary' because it is more convenient for the kind of travel I am mentioning here for two reasons. First of all, Ahmet Mithat often tells his reader how much he learned about Europe through novels and stresses the informative function of novels constantly. Second, the texts he himself has written on Europe are also literary. I am analyzing his novels and his travelogue, which is also a literary genre. What is still to be stressed is the fact that for the readers, access to Mithat's travels (be they imaginary or real) can only ever be textual. Although a real travel is actually made, we as the readers can only access its representation through texts (travel guide, travelogue, a novel based on the real journey etc.).

By 'literary travel' I mean the travels that are done through texts, where the literary realm includes the texts that are read and written by Ahmet Mithat. The former are the literature which nurtures his imagination and imaginary travels. The latter are his own literary output, inspired by the author's imaginary travels and in turn instigating the reader's imagination. In other words: Mithat's literary travels include both the sources and the products of his imaginary travels.

Mithat himself does not use the terms 'textual' or 'literary' directly, but he keeps informing the reader of his reading process. As discussed above he uses

<sup>11</sup> "Yatakla girildikten sonra Suphi Bey eline bir Avrupa haritası alarak ben şimdî hiç olmazsa *hayal* olsun seyahate çıkacağım dedi. İşte harita elimde değil mi? İstediğim yerlere gidip gezeceğim." Mithat 2000b: 237 [21]. The transliteration of *Acâyib-i Âlem* is printed together with two other books of Ahmet Mithat in Mithat (2000b: *Henüz 17 Yaşında*, and *Dürdane Hanım*). The book has a system with two kinds of page numbers, one for the whole volume and one for the individual books themselves. The page numbers after the quotes are given accordingly.

another term, *seyahat-i fikriyye* ('mental journey'), which in a way includes both literary and imaginary travels:

"My modest guidance in helping my readers to embark on *mental* voyages in my novels like *Hasan Mellah*, *Hüseyin Fellah*, *Paris'te Bir Türk* and *Acâyib-i Âlem* was itself likewise a *mental travel* based on my studies on detailed and extended geography books, travel guides and travelogues."<sup>12</sup>

Here, he explains what he means by the term and refers to the connection between his own mental journeys and those of his readership. The latter depends on the former, which makes the reader's journey 'twice mental'. Even though in the quote above the emphasis is on non-fiction texts, in *Cevelan*, when Ahmet Mithat is recounting what he knows of the unhappy family life in Paris to his travel companion Madame Gülnar and her mother, the Countess, he says: "I can't claim to have seen the Paris domestic life in any place save for the works of realist novelists who depict domestic life." The Countess responds: "Well, anyway, no examination of Parisian domestic life can be more perfect than those we see in these novels. Even Parisians themselves can't perceive their domestic life as well as the novelists"<sup>13</sup> – or at least this is the response Ahmet Mithat finds appropriate. This conversation also attributes a quality of authenticity to the picture created in our author's mind through the novels he reads. In *Cevelan*, the account of Ahmet Mithat's actual journey to Europe, the author often makes reference to his own novels, thereby creating an association between his observations from his real travel and his literary world.

One further example of what Ahmet Mithat writes on reading and travelling through reading can be found in *Acâyib-i Âlem*. The extract below, a discussion between the novel's protagonists, Hicabi and Suphi, shows how texts can be a source for an imaginary travel but also emphasizes the authenticity of a real trip.

"Hicabi said: –You were longing to travel just a moment ago with your words 'Oh travel!'. Isn't it preferable to go around the whole world in your room instead of choosing the difficulties of travelling? For in our time publication is so developed that they can collect the whole universe in books. They can portray it with various pictures. For example, if a person has Dr. Schwei[n]furth's<sup>14</sup> Africa travelogue in his hand could he then say that he never went to Africa?"

<sup>12</sup> "Bahusus ki *Hasan Mellah*, *Hüseyin Fellah*, *Paris'de bir Türk*, *Acâyib-i Âlem* gibi bir çok romanlarda karilerime *seyahat-i fikriyye* icrası konusunda vuku' bulan delalet-i acizanem kezalik bir *seyahat-i fikriyye* demek olarak coğrafya-yı mutavvel kitablarla delail-i seyyahiye ve seyahat-nameleinin tetebbu'undan husula gelmiş bir şey olduğu halde (...)" (Mithat 1889/90: 2b).

<sup>13</sup> "Realist namıyla ahval-i hakikiye-yi beytiyeyi tasvir eyleyen romanların asarından başka Paris ahval-i beytiyesini bir yerde görmüş olduğumu iddia edemem." "Zaten Paris ahval-i beytiyesini bu romanlarda görmek kadar mükemmelen tetebbu' hiçbir suretde mümkün olamaz. Parisliler bile kendi ahval-i beytiyelerini romançilar kadar bilemezler" (Mithat 1889/90: 767).

<sup>14</sup> Georg August Schweinfurth (December 29, 1836 – September 19, 1925) was a Baltic German botanist, ethnologist and traveller in East Central Africa. In the transliterated

[Suphi responds:] –You are right. If a person knows one of the European languages, then he could see all of the studies of the masters of observation in books. However, do you know what this is like? That I take a kiss from the most beautiful cheek or the most lovely lip and leave you to be delighted with the smacking [sound] of it. That's what it is like! I wonder if the readers of his book would be as pleased as Dr. Schweinfurth himself, who within the daily lives of the African savages observes and studies the fauna and the plants that he sees for the first time. I have to be delighted in the way that I want. I have to hug my charming, beloved nature in my embrace. And this is possible only through travelling. Oh travel! I would repeat it a thousand times, and I do repeat it a thousand times and will repeat it another thousand times and say: oh travel!“<sup>15</sup>

### *The real travel(s)*

What I refer to here are those factual travels Mithat physically realized and, in the scope of this article, specifically the three-month journey through Europe Ahmet Mithat embarked on in 1889. This time the author departs from book pages, from the colourful world of his mind – at least theoretically – and travels physically. Yet obviously this is not a true separation; he has taken with him his dreams, his reading experience and his knowledge. However, according to the author, this is a privilege, because as the result of years of dreaming, thinking, reading and writing on Europe, travelling through and around places like Lyon, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Cologne, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Stockholm, he tells us that he has almost never needed guidance and has had no guide other than a city plan and compass in his hand for seeing the locations that already existed in his mind. He assures his readers of this. He brags about not needing a travel guide or book. After all, he has studied and learned about Europe for years. Europe is a place that can be learned through books according to Mithat, or more precisely *he* has succeeded in doing so. To give proof of this, however, is only possible in

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version of *Acıyıl-i Âlem* that I quote, the name Schweinfurth is written in different versions. I have added the correct letters each time in square brackets.

<sup>15</sup> “Hicabi dedi ki: –Demincek ‘Ah seyahat’ diye bir tahassürde bulunuyordunuz. Külfet-i seyahati ihtiyardan ise odanız içinde bütün âlemi gezmiş olsanız müreccah değil midir? Zira bugünkü günde matbuat ol kadar ileriye gitmiştir ki bütün âlem-i tabiatı ciltler içinde cem edebiliyor. Türlü türlü resimler ile tasvir dahi ediyorlar. Meselâ Dr. Schw[ei]nfurt[hi]’un Afrika seyahatnamesi elde dururken insan artık Afrika’ya gitmedim, görmedim diyebilir mi? –Doğru söylüyorsunuz. Bugün insan bir Avrupa lisânına vâkif olursa vakia bütün erbâb-ı tedkikin tedâkikat-ı vâkiasını kitaplarda görebilir. Lâkin bu neye benzer bilir misiniz? En güzel bir yanaktan yahut en lâtîf bir dudaktan buseyi ben alırım da siz dahi yalnız şapırtısı ile mütelezziz olmayı teklif ederim. İşte ona benzer! Acaba Dr. Schwei[n]furth’ın Afrika’da vahşilerin maîset-i tabiyyeleri içinde o zamana kadar emsalini görmediği nebat ve hayvanâti tettik eylediği sırada aldığı lezzeti onun kitabını okuyanlar alabilirler mi? Binaen-aleyh o lezzeti ben dahi istedigim gibi almalıyım. Maşukam bulunan dilber-i tabiatı istedigim gibi derâğus ederek sarmalıyım. Bu ise ancak seyahat ile olur. Ah seyahat! Bin defa tekrar ederim, bin defa tekrar ediyorum, bin defa daha tekrar edeceğim, diyeceğim ki ah seyahat!” (Mithat 2000b: 229f. [13f.]).

his universe created by the interplay between the realms of imaginary, literary and real travel.

As readers, our relationship with the concrete reality that Ahmet Mithat experienced, as stated before, can only be through the texts (reading). The reality mentioned here is the reality Mithat created and the reader only reads about the journey to the extent that the writer shares it with the reader.

After this explanation of the different kinds of travel in Ahmet Mithat's works, the following three figures (see pp. 212–214), which will be explained below, are an attempt to visualize and systematize these travels.

### *The attempt to systematize and visualize the travels of Ahmet Mithat*

Figure 2 is a chronological list of Ahmet Mithat's books on distant geographies. The ones that he wrote before he travelled, the ones that he wrote after he travelled, and his actual trip are labelled on this time line. In figure 3, I drew another time line and tried to locate the different roles performed by Ahmet Mithat at different time periods and analyzed the kinds of travels that he pursues. The different travel categories have already been listed and defined in the introduction of this article. At this point I compare the different periods, travels and texts, and in figure 4, all of these are systematically brought together.

In figure 3, I located the different personas of Ahmet Mithat and their relationship to each other. It is sometimes not that easy to differentiate between different phases, and some periods might overlap with each other, but still I find it useful to make such a chart to see the different "Ahmet Mithats" in dialogue with each other. It starts with Ahmet Mithat the dreamer or the Ahmet Mithat who imagines. Then comes Ahmet Mithat the reader, who reads French novels, travelogues etc. The dreamer is also at work during the reading process. Then comes Ahmet Mithat the dreamer again, but this time he has read things and his dreams (imagination) are fed by this reading process so Ahmet Mithat the dreamer is affected by Ahmet Mithat the reader. If he had been just a reader, we would just stop there, but he also writes, and there we have Ahmet Mithat the writer, who writes novels, some of which are about Europe or other countries. Ahmet Mithat the writer is of course affected by Ahmet Mithat the dreamer and Ahmet Mithat the reader. The readership's only access to those processes is through the texts that the author writes.

Before he went to Europe, Ahmet Mithat had already written some novels set there, and his sources of information were texts as well as his imagination as a writer. This obviously is valid for all authors, but Ahmet Mithat continues to explain those processes in the prefaces of his novels and his travelogue. It is he who tells us that he dreamt of Europe at night. And then, after having written his novels on trips to and in Europe, there comes a day when he really travels to

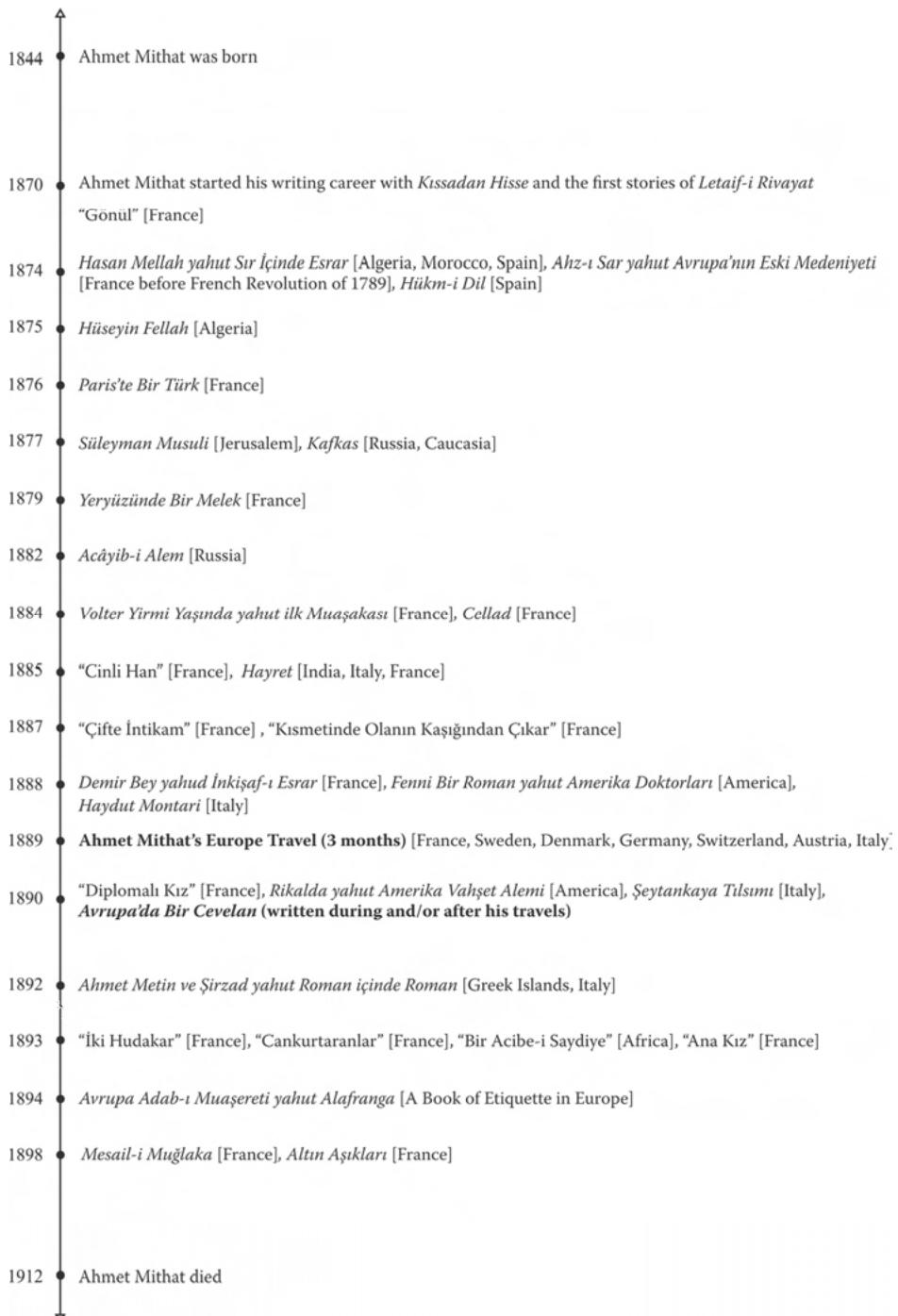
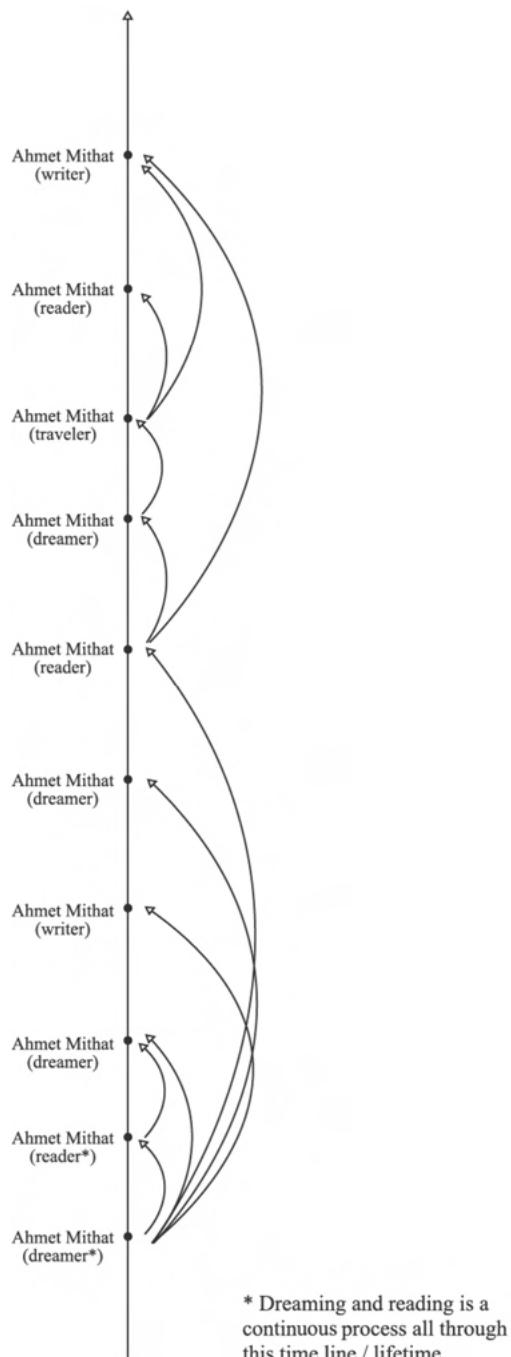


Figure 2: Time Line: Books (the chronological order of Ahmet Mithat's novels and stories that are set in foreign countries)



*Figure 3: Time Line: Personas (the mutual impact of different personas and stages in Ahmet Mithat's textual universe)*

|                              |  |                      |  |  |                                |  |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Texts<br>(read by AM)        | Geography books, travel guides, travelogues, French novels |                      |  | Geography books, travel guides, travelogues, French novels |                                | He insists he did not need to read anything during his journey.  |
| AM<br>(his various personas) | Dreamer  | Dreamer              | Writer                                     | Reader   | Dreamer                        | Traveller  |
| Texts<br>(written by AM)     |  |                      |  |  |                                | <i>Avrupa'da Bir Cevellen</i> (1890)   |
|                              |  |                      |  |  |                                | Ahmet Mithîn ve Şirzat (1891)<br>Mesail-i Mûdü'lâka (1898)   |
|                              |  |                      |  |  |                                | Some stories from <i>Letâfi-i Rîvâyât</i> that were written after his Europe trip:<br>"îki Hûdakâr" (1893)<br>"Ana Kız" (1893)<br><i>Avrupa Adab-</i><br><i>Müsâserî yoluñt</i> (1894) |
| AM's Travels                 | Imaginary  | Literary & Imaginary | Imaginary<br>(fed by literary & imaginary) | Literary<br>(fed by literary)                              | Imaginary<br>(fed by literary) | Literary<br>(fed by the previous literary and imaginary travels but there is a new kind of source that nurtures the writings: the real)  |
| The Reader's Travels         |  |                      |  |  |                                | Literary and imaginary but this time the writer's travels are real.  |

Figure 4: The relationship of the writer, the reader, the text and the travels, and their impact on each other

Europe. Ahmet Mithat writes his travelogue during his journey and this makes him a traveller and a writer at the same time, but still, he first travels and then writes. Even if it is one hour after a particular experience abroad it still is ‘afterwards,’ but at the same time the writer Ahmet Mithat during the travels is Ahmet Mithat the traveller, who also writes. The dreamer (imaginer) Ahmet Mithat is decisive in all of the phases, so even if I make this chronological chart, it is clear that different personas sometimes overlap with each other. However, it is important to differentiate them in order to see how Ahmet Mithat uses them to his advantage. Ahmet Mithat the writer emphasizes that Ahmet Mithat the traveller never needed to read guides when he was in Europe, especially when he was going around the capital cities of Europe. He presents himself as a traveller (not a reader) in Europe, who can rely on what he has read before.

### *Textual attitude and Ahmet Mithat's critique of 'Orientalism'*

The relationship between Ahmet Mithat's actual trip and his mental ones can be considered in relation to the concept Edward Said has coined “textual attitude,” in which people assume the ambiguous, problem-ridden turmoil they experience can be understood through what is written in books.<sup>16</sup> When the individual encounters something new he or she refers to what he or she has read on the subject, which when verified causes the individual to grow more confident of the text's authority. A similar mechanism is at work in Ahmet Mithat's travelogue of his actual trip to Europe: He travels to a Europe he already knew through textual sources and had written about before. Now he sees it with his own eyes, verifying his textual sources and writing about the experience as an eyewitness. Consequently both the authenticity (accuracy) of his novels is fortified and the authority of the travel text is guaranteed.

Said states that it is difficult to disregard texts that are deemed to reflect expertise and contain accurate information on something real, and that these created realities can become a tradition or discourse in time. This process combined with “textual attitude” allows him to argue that the Westerners who travel to the ‘East’ could never lift the veil created by the texts they have read, which constitute an Orientalist tradition. If a traveller is disappointed with the East, this results from the fact that his or her ‘East’ is different from the texts he or she has read about it. In *A Turk in Paris*, Cartrisse, a French lady who is astounded by the “*asar-ı terakki*” (signs of progress) she sees in Istanbul, is a good example of this. She explains her astonishment: “I had thought I'd still see men with turbans like grind-

<sup>16</sup> “[...] to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books –texts– say [...]”; “It seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounter with the human” (Said 1995: 93).

stones, with swords and pistols around their waists.”<sup>17</sup> Another traveller named Gardiyanski immediately asks how she got her first impressions of Istanbul and the conversation continues along these lines:

“Cartrisse: –Yes, the information I got is from an illustrated Istanbul travel book. There was even an illustration of a place called ‘Parmakkapı’ with about twenty men hanging from the trees and shop eaves.

Gardiyanski (with a slight smile): –And you immediately believed this, is that it?

Cartrisse: –How can one not believe a book presented to the entire public?”<sup>18</sup>

Cartrisse’s last statement is indicative of the absolute ‘obedience’ and belief in the authority of texts. Nasuh, the protagonist of Ahmet Mithat’s *Paris’te Bir Türk*, whom we met earlier, does not miss this opportunity to criticize the travel writing that, in order to create peculiarity and eccentricity, simply fabricates an exotic fantasy for the reader. The author has included among the ship’s passengers an Englishman who paints pictures of Istanbul which bear no resemblance whatsoever to ‘reality’ and a Frenchman who is writing an equally misleading travelogue, so that the reader can see for herself how such peculiar and unsubstantiated travel texts evolve. Nasuh supports his argument by reading out pages from the Frenchman’s book and showing examples of the Englishman’s pictures that are actually painted on the ship though the artist claims to have painted them in Istanbul. According to Nasuh if such exoticism-invoking works are being produced before their very eyes, the discrepancies in older texts should come as no surprise. His critique is directed at Cartrisse and other listeners present, and actually addresses the Ottoman reader. The fact that European readers will never read his book is probably obvious to Ahmet Mithat. He is actually addressing and reassuring the Ottoman readership. And yet, how is it possible that Ahmet Mithat, who discusses the question of ‘created/fabricated reality’ in depth and also makes a severe critique of ‘Orientalism’ elsewhere,<sup>19</sup> has such an unshakable trust in the texts he himself reads and writes? How does he justify the special status of his own literary travels?

<sup>17</sup> “Ben zannederdim ki İstanbul’da hâlâ değerlirmen taşı kadar sarıklı ve belleri yatağanlı ve piştoylu adamlar göreceğim” (Mithat 2000a: 25).

<sup>18</sup> “Cartrisse – Evet aldığım malumat musavver (resimli) bir İstanbul seyahatnamesinden alınmıştır. Hatta ‘Parmakkapı’ diye bir yerin resmini yapıp orada ağaçlara ve dükkan saçakları na yirmi kadar da adam asmıştır.

Gardiyanski – (Hafif bir tebessümle) Siz de buna hemen inandınız öyle mi?

Cartrisse – Enzâr-ı umuma arz olunan bir esere nasıl inanılmaz?” (Mithat 2000a: 26).

<sup>19</sup> Carter Findley while analysing in detail Ahmet Mithat’s criticism of Europe’s erotic orientalist images of the East argues that Ahmet Mithat finds the European writers and artists responsible for these misinterpreted images, not the European academics (Findley 1999: 50–52).

### *Ahmet Mithat's mechanism(s) of legitimization*

The passage below, taken from the preface of *Cevelan*, summarizes how Ahmet Mithat figures the relationship between the three kinds of travel:

“Because the *mental* travels I have taken my exalted readers on in my novels are also the products of travels I’ve realized in my *mind*, they were each a journey built upon *imagination* on both sides. As for this *Cevelan*: because my side of the wandering is not *imaginary* but *real*, it will free this side – the crucial side – from *imagination*, and this situation will salvage the reader’s *mental* journey from being purely *imaginative* and elevate it to a level that can be called a mirror of reality.”<sup>20</sup>

What Ahmet Mithat means by “the travels I’ve realized in my mind” is both his readings and the life they took on in his imagination. As the author in his earlier novels, he used to mentally conceive of a journey, then write this down and take his readers on a similar mental journey. This time – that is, when his readers take up *Cevelan* – they will again embark on some sort of mental journey, but because the author’s situation has changed, the readers’ mental journey will more closely resemble reality. So, according to Mithat, the shift in the author’s position will bring the reader a step closer to ‘reality’. Furthermore, if the author’s novels, which rest solely on the imagination, are such a close reflection of reality – a claim he repeats on numerous occasions – then just imagine what an important source the actual travelogue could be.

Mithat, who frequently validates his novels in *Cevelan*, repeats the incident below in three different books:

“When our novel *A Turk in Paris* was assigned in the School of Eastern Languages, the instructor said: ‘The Ottoman who wrote this knows Paris well.’

The owner of the famous newspapers *Diyojen* and *Hayal*, Teodor Kasab Efendi, who was present at the lecture, declared that the author had never been out of Ottoman territories, but he could convince neither the instructor nor the students, and the matter went as far as the Ottoman embassy in Paris and the French embassy in Istanbul.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> “Romanlarında şimdije kadar karilerim efendilerim hazerâtına icra ettirmiş olduğum *seyahat-fıkriyye* kendimin de *fikren* vuku‘ bulan seyahatlerimin semere-i hasılı olduğu için iki ciheti de *hayal* üzerine mübteni birer seyahat dımek idiler. İşbu *Cevelan*’a gelince: Onun bana aid olan ciheti *hayâlı* olmayıp *hakiki* olması işin bir cihetini hem de cihet-i esâsiyesini hayalden kurtarmış olacağından bu hal karının *seyahat-i fıkriyyelerini* de *hayal-ı mahz* olmakdan kurtarıb şıbh-i hakiki denebilecek bir mertebeye isâl eyler” (Mithat 1889/90: 2b-3a).

<sup>21</sup> “*Paris’te Bir Türk* romanımız [...] Elsine-i Şarkiyye Mektebinde tediş olunduğu zaman müallim:

–Bunu yazan Osmanlı, Paris’i iyi görmüş, tanmış, demişti de o derste hazır bulunan meşhur *Diyojen* ve *Hayal* gazeteleri sahibi Teodor Kasab Efendi muharririn Memalik-i Osmaniye’den harice çıkmamış olduğunu dermeyan ettiği (bildirdiği) zaman ne muallimi ne şakirdleri inandırılamayıp iş Paris’de Osmanlı ve İstanbul’da Fransa sefaretlerine kadar intikal eylemişti” (Mithat 1995: 174f.). The story was first told by the author in *Cevelan* (Mithat 1889/90, 71a-71b).

These contexts, discourses, and voyages which are in constant dialogue with one another, which feed and sometimes reproduce one another, are of course all textual. The readers have access to these travels only through the texts and often these travels are linked to texts rather than some sort of 'concrete reality'.

In *Cevelan*, the author recounts in depth his travels through Europe between 15 August and 25 October 1889. Ahmet Mithat, who was close to Sultan Abdülhamit II, was elected as the Ottoman representative to the 8<sup>th</sup> Orientalists' Congress in 1889. In the scope of this trip, not only does Mithat participate in the Orientalists' Congress, make a presentation, and chair a session, he also gets the opportunity to stay in Europe for 71 days. The travelogue's prologue includes Ahmet Mithat's views on travel, or more precisely on *his* particular journey. The point he insists upon is the transformation of imagination to reality and the significance of his writing. What renders his writing so significant is once again the inter-contextual relationship I alluded to earlier. His writing is not ordinary because he has mentally prepared himself for this journey for many years through texts:

"What renders my modest travels something beyond an ordinary journey is not the issue that it is such a long journey, of six or seven thousand kilometres. Even since I wrote *Hasan Mellah* and *Kirk Anbar*, that is for the last fifteen years, I've never stopped researching and investigating the capitals and major cities of Europe. Therefore, my travelling to these places can in no way be compared to those people who suddenly find themselves in a country they know nothing about and who don't know where to consult, what to see. [...] Rather than being a trip where I have seen places I've never known about or seen before, I can say with strong conviction that for me this journey has been realized in a manner to verify which of the information, opinions and feelings regarding these places I've already seen and studied, are accurate and which are wrong."<sup>22</sup>

It is interesting that he never questions his perception and accepts himself as immune to the failures and mistakes he sees in the European travellers' depictions of the Orient. For him writing is about confirming not reviewing. This is his discursive strategy.

Carter Findley also draws attention to these statements, suggesting that:

"[a]lthough 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

<sup>22</sup> "Zira seyahat-i ácizáneme seyahat-i ádiyeden daha başka bir ehemmiyet verdiren şey yalnız böyle altı yedi bin kilometrelik seyahat-i medide olması kaziyyesi de değildir. Belki daha *Hasan Mellah'*ı ve *Kirk Anbar'*ı yazdığım zamandan yani on beş seneden beri Avrupa pây-i tahtlarıyla büyük şehirlerini tedkik ve tetebbu'dan hemen hiç bir zaman hali kalmamış olduğundan bu defa o mahallere gidişim kendisini hiç bilmediği bir memlekette birdenbire buluveren ve nereye başvuracağını ve neleri temasâ edeceğini bilemeyeen adamların seyahatlerine katıyan makîs olamaz" (Mithat 1889/90: 3b).

"Kemal-i derece-i kalb[i] kuvvetle derim ki bu seyahatim hiç bilmediğim görmediğim yerleri ilk defa olarak görmekde bulunmuş olmadan ziyade zaten görmüş ve bellemiş olduğum yerler hakkındaki malumât ve hissiyatımın hakâik-i maddiyeye bittatbik hangi cihetle ri doğru ve hangileri hata olduğunu tedkik ve tashih suretiyle vuku' bulmuştur" (Mithat 1889/90: 4a).

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'.<sup>23</sup>

Classifying and defining *Cevelan* is a complex matter, as is the case with many travel texts. On the other hand, the work, which also encompasses Mithat's entire intellectual accumulation, his dreams, disappointments, his view of the world, and even insinuates his flirtations, also bears autobiographical qualities. The author, in conveying concrete information on each city he visits based on travel guides (something he claimed he would never do), thus also creates a travel guide for Ottomans who will travel to Europe, including 'tips' on social life such as how to behave where and how to dress for different occasions. In addition to this, because he also shares with the reader the interesting events of the journey with a silver tongue, especially the section depicting the part of the journey during which Madam Gülnar accompanies him reads like an enjoyable memoir. And precisely because of these qualities, *Cevelan* is a very fruitful text in terms of exploring the quandaries of a confused Ottoman intellectual in the face of the West, his judgments and attitudes. Again these exact qualities, with the help of the author's masterful rhetoric, turn into, in Carter Findley's terms, a literary "technology"<sup>24</sup> that render him an apt Occidentalist.

The central purpose of the travel was to take part in an Orientalist Congress. The author had a chance to meet the European Orientalists and observe how they perceive the Orient. Mithat criticizes the prejudices of Orientalists and Europeans at great length, but to the extent that he refrains from questioning himself, he fortifies his authority over the reader. And yet in the preface of his novel *Mesâil-i Müğlaka*, having said that it is not forbidden for an author to choose his subject matter from outside his own country, he proceeds to state that the only condition for this is that the author be sufficiently informed on the physical and spiritual conditions of the place he depicts. It is in this context that he criticizes certain Western authors, giving examples of things they write about Eastern countries which they have not seen. The answer to why he does not question his own knowledge during his travels to Europe is provided in this prologue:

"This humble author [Ahmet Mithat] has set and narrated many of his novels such as *Hasan Mellah*, *Paris'te Bir Türk*, *Demir Bey* and *Acâyib-i Âlem* in European countries. I don't even feel the need to assure the reader that in all of them the settings are depicted

<sup>23</sup> Findley (1998: 22). Findley's book from 1999, which was mentioned in footnote 19, is an extended Turkish version/translation of this article.

<sup>24</sup> Findley uses the term 'technology' with reference to Irvin C. Schick's use of Foucault's term 'technology': "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" (Findley 1998: 24).

completely in line with reality. Because even though my works have been criticized on many other aspects, no one has been able to say that they are not truthful. It is very difficult, almost impossible, to claim this, that is why.”<sup>25</sup>

As illustrated, while Mithat criticizes orientalist depictions of the East that the local population will hardly recognize, it does not occur to him to ask whether for instance a Parisian would be surprised or criticize his work set in France.<sup>26</sup> The author now has the chance to validate what he has written. Mithat, who constantly makes reference to himself, tries to ground his authority on both ends: first of all, he is travelling to places he has pondered over, read and even written about, and for this reason his is an exceptional journey; that is, the texts he has written and read before his travels award him a certain privilege of authority, and furthermore gives his previous work further credibility. This is a mechanism that works both ways, which is why neither he questions his own perceptions nor allows anybody else to question them. But still there are some parts of the text where it is impossible not to see the author’s disappointments, specifically the parts that disturb the harmonious textual universe that he creates for himself and his readers. I will analyze one of those instances as a case of reality check.

### *Reality check*

I have continuously mentioned the similarities between Ahmet Mithat and his protagonist Nasuh, especially with regard to their thoughts on travel. But Ahmet Mithat himself and Nasuh also have different experiences of travel. The fictitious travels of Nasuh are constructed by Ahmet Mithat within the rules of his ideal Europe built up by his readings and his imaginations. But he himself has to cope with a real world which does not always fit his expectations. Although Ahmet Mithat constantly assures his reader that his mental picture of Europe is accurate, his experiences sometimes do not overlap with his fictitious ideal world. Mithat sometimes manages to soften such experiences, but with regard to the

<sup>25</sup> “Muharrir-i áciz [Ahmet Mithat] şimdiye kadar ‘Hasan Mellah’ gibi ‘Paris’té Bir Türk’ gibi ‘Demir Bey’ gibi ‘Acáyib-i Álem’ gibi bir hayli romanlarını Avrupa memâlik-i muhtelifesinde isnat ve talik eylemiştir. Bunların kâffesinde ait oldukları mahallerin hâlleri hakikate tamamıyla muvafik olarak tasvir edildiği temine hacet görülemez. Zira aklâm-ı intikad bîcümle asar[in]ı temyiz etmiş olduğu ve her mintikada bunların bir çok cihetlerine birçok diyecek şeyler bulduğu hâlde hakikate muvafakatları aleyhine kimse bir sey diyememiştir. Pek müşkûl âdetâ muhal derecesinde müşküldür de onun için!” (Mithat 2003b: 303 [5]). (The quotes from *Mesâil-i Muğlaka* are given here in the same way as explained above in footnotes 4 and 11 for *Rikalda* and *Acáyib-i Álem*.)

<sup>26</sup> Ahmet Mithat claims to have read quite a lot of European literature and maybe that is why he does not question his knowledge on Europe. From his point of view his information on Europe is accredited by these Western sources whereas those Westerners who wrote about the East did not read anything from the Eastern literatures and that is why their texts are not that much reliable.

issue of clothing, we see how the harmony of his mental universe collapses and he is forced to confess his disappointment with European civilization.

The literary traveller Nasuh in *Paris'te Bir Türk* wears modern Western clothes, but instead of a hat, he always wears a fez as a national symbol of the Ottoman Empire. Nasuh does not care for the hat. This symbol – the fez – is important to Ahmet Mithat: While in Cologne, someone asks him if he is French, and he responds by underlining the ever-present symbol of Ottomanness: “No! Here, I have my national headpiece on my head, I am an Ottoman.”<sup>27</sup> The issue of clothing is complicated and Ahmet Mithat is occupied with this issue both in his novels and his travelogue. A person obviously does not change by wearing new or different clothes. Ahmet Mithat knows this, and makes Nasuh say it:

“Nasuh – Now, I have only this left to say: Speaking of the advancements in Istanbul, you have mentioned that there are many people dressed in European attire. Is this the only example you see of Istanbul’s progress, Madam?

Cartrisse – Is this progress trivial? Is there anything more difficult than getting a nation to abandon its old form of attire?

Nasuh – If you ask me, nothing could be easier. There can be a man like Peter the Great and he can order a change of attire overnight. Or it is possible for even an ignorant whim to lead an entire people this way. But let me ask you this, if now we clothe the Parisian population in wadmals, jodhpurs, jupes or what not and place a large fez or turban on each one’s head, will Parisians become barbarians?

Cartrisse – No!

Nasuh – Then admit that in progress, backwardness, civilization, nomadism, clothing and attire has no place. If you have any other proof of Istanbul’s progress, let’s see that.”<sup>28</sup>

Ahmet Mithat writes on the issue of attire also in his factual travelogue, which often echoes the themes of his earlier novels. That clothing is so important in forming people’s preconceptions and prejudices astonishes him. He believes that the Europeans think they are the most tolerant and open-minded people, but sees that when it is about clothing they are quite conservative.

27 “Hayır! İşte milli serpuşum başımda, Osmanlıyım” (Mithat 1889/90: 82a).

28 “Nasuh – Şimdi söyleyecek şu sözüm kaldı: Siz İstanbul’un âsâr-ı terakkisinden olmak üzere Avrupakâri giyinmiş birçok adamlar bulunduğuunu beyan eylediniz. İstanbul’un terakkiyatına dair gördüğünüz misal yalnız bundan ibaret midir Madame?

Cartrisse – Bu terakki az terakki midir? Bir millete eski kıyafetini terk ettirmekten güç şey mi olur?

Nasuh – Bendenize kalır ise ondan daha kolay hiçbir şey olamaz. Büyük Petro gibi bir adam olur da bir günde tebdil-i kıyafeti emrî ve emrini icra ettirebilir. Yahut bu yolda bir heves-i cahilanenin koca bir halka delâlet etmesi dahi mümkündür. Fakat size şunu söririm ki şimdî Paris halkına bir abâ, potur cepken filan giydirsek, başlarına dahi kocaman birer fes veya hât sarık koysak Parisliler barbar olurlar mı?

Cartrisse – Yok!

Nasuh – Öyle ise teslim ediniz ki terakkide, tedennide, medeniyette, bedeviyette elbise ve kıyafetin hiçbir dahî yoktur. İstanbul’un terakkiyatına dair başka deliliniz var ise onu görelim” (Mithat 2000a: 28f.).

The author, who occasionally describes and discusses certain issues that occupy him under the title of *Bazi Dakayık* ('Points to Consider') in his travelogue, also discusses the issue of attire under this heading. Ahmet Mithat states that, except for his fez, his new Ottoman clothing is not different from that of a European. For this reason, he himself and his travel companions, the Egyptian Fikri Pasha and his son, who also dress like him, do not draw any attention in the streets and boulevards. On another occasion, he describes how the delegates who go around in complete Eastern attire arouse plenty of interest, and even large crowds gather around them. Ahmet Mithat himself refers to these people's clothes as bizarre:

"Among these, the clothes of the Egyptian Sheikhs are similar to our clergy's clothes, while the attire of the Algerians with their combination of robes and white woollen headscarves created a more curious sight, and the effect of these bizarre clothes in drawing this crowd of people can't be denied [...]."<sup>29</sup>

The crowd, which sees nothing weird about him and Fikri Pasha as they are dressed in 'Western/modern attire' (apart from the fez), regards the rest of the group in awe.<sup>30</sup> For example, even though they all smoke, they point to those in Eastern clothing and yell in astonishment: "and they are smoking, and they are smoking." What Ahmet Mithat tries to highlight here is discrimination solely based on looks and clothes.<sup>31</sup> Even though this sometimes turns into positive discrimination where flaws are overlooked, it is a practice of 'exoticizing' and 'othering' that he believed did not exist in Europe before he travelled.

Mithat depicts how even if they don't speak a European language those in modern/European clothes are accepted as Europeans in society while those in old-fashioned/oriental clothing are perceived as exotic objects even if they speak a couple of European languages. This latter group of individuals othered solely on the basis of their clothing thus does not have to be concerned with conforming to European etiquette, while the first group – of which Mithat is a part – is severely criticized on issues such as attire or table manners from time to time. This critique deeply disturbs him and he warns his readers to comply with the

<sup>29</sup> "Bunlardan Mısırlı şeyhlerin kiyafetleri bizim ulemaya mahsus kiyafetlerin aynı demek olduğu gibi Cezayirliilerin kiyafetleri bornos ve beyaz yünden ibaret başörtülerinin de inzimamıyla eğer biraz daha garabet peyda eyledğinden halkın bu izdihamına şu kiyafet garibinin büyük dahlî inkar olunamaz ise de [...]" (Mithat 1889/90: 227a).

<sup>30</sup> It was Börte Sagaster's article *Beobachtungen eines "Okzidentalisten"* which drew my attention to Ahmet Mithat's discussion of this theme of clothing and how Europeans perceive the Orientals related with their clothes, see Sagaster (1997).

<sup>31</sup> "Resmî gayrî resmî gûna-gûn adamlar ile vuku bulan mülâkat ve mübâsehâtimdan anladığımı göre Avrupalılar biz Osmanlıları ve Mısırları ve bir de İranlıları kısmen mütemeddin addediyorlar. Bu temeddünümüzü kısmen diye kayda sebep kisve-i cedîde-i milliyemizi lâbîs olanlarla bir de kisve-i kadîme-i milliyemizi lâbîs bulunanları yekdiğerinden âdetâ başka başka bir kısım addetmelerinden nâşidir" (Mithat 1889/90: 227a). Findley also quotes this part while mentioning the difficulties that Ahmet Mithat himself has related with European etiquette. As a visitor clothed in the Western style he was expected to know the rules (Findley 1998: 47).

etiquette should they travel to Europe. He does underline the necessity of remaining true to one's own tradition, and yet just as Nasuh attempted earlier to argue that clothing is irrelevant to civilization, Mithat tries to explain to other delegates, particularly those who have been to Eastern countries, that one should not directly link attire to civilization, but the majority disagree.

After his return to Istanbul Ahmet Mithat wrote a book on the rules of good manners in Europe (*Avrupa Adab-ı Muşereti yahut Alafranga*, Mithat 1894), where he explains in detail what to wear for different occasions, most probably because of his experience with the difficulty of knowing how to dress. He also created some characters in his novels who thought to be westernized through changing their clothes and mocked those characters. Those dandies of the Tanzimat novels who want to become 'westernized' and 'European' with their 'wannabe clothes', without knowing much about Europe, can't become like Europeans but become a mere caricature of the situation. Tanzimat authors all shared a similar attitude against those dandies and believed that the outfit was not enough to be westernized. In *Paris'te Bir Türk* we encounter both examples. Mr. Zeka, with all his ignorance and pretense, goes around in hats and fancy clothes, but is not accepted to Paris society no matter what. Meanwhile Nasuh is not obsessed with his looks or flamboyance, except for his fez, and dresses in accordance with what is expected in Parisian drawing rooms. But what actually renders him acceptable is his perfect French that enables him to pass for a Frenchman and his knowledge of European social life and culture. This is how Ahmet Mithat has *imagined* it in his novel. This is actually the ideal world of an Ottoman intellectual/writer. When the same writer travels to Europe himself, he encounters a completely different picture: it is actually possible for an Easterner to be regarded as a Westerner just because of his clothes. He has once again encountered another face of the ideal West constructed by the Ottoman intellectual and is confused by this. As for our context, this time the dialogue between the different kinds of travel does not work and the flaw of the Europeans has punched a hole in the author's universe. The mental does not overlap with the real.

Another opportunity for reality check is the rarely mentioned moments where Ahmet Mithat faces some difficulties during his journey. The experiences of Nasuh, the fictional traveller, and Ahmet Mithat, the real traveller, don't always overlap. Ahmet Mithat, who encounters the 'real Europe', is not always as flawless and comfortable as the protagonist of his literary world Nasuh, but he doesn't care to admit it. His narration of his experience at the Cologne train station is a good example of how Ahmet Mithat turns the situation to his favour when he writes about it, even if he sometimes has difficulties. Unlike Nasuh, who has no difficulty expressing himself in any given situation, at the Cologne Station Mithat misses his train because he can't communicate with the station attendants – in fact the reason for this is that the station attendants do not really speak any French! They think he is Algerian because he is wearing a fez and speaks French and direct him to the

southbound train. However, Mithat is to travel north to Hamburg and to Stockholm from there. He is really upset by the situation, but can't do anything about it. But instead of elaborating on this misunderstanding, swiftly using someone who wanted to talk to him as a pretext, he proceeds to describe how Ottomans and Russians are the nations with the best command of the French language. He even adds a subsection where he describes this phonologically and philologically at length; listing for instance the sounds Germans are not able to produce when they speak French (Mithat 1889/90: 73–74). He thus indirectly takes revenge from Cologne Germans with whom he is totally upset.

The difficulties mentioned above are not reflected as being very important issues by the author. It is the close reading that enables us to realize those moments of confusion which give us some clue on how his perfect construction does not always work. The author, who does not want to harm his credibility, never questions his position and the disharmony between the Europe of his imaginations and the real one. What actually disappoints him deeply is the Europeans' opinions of Eastern nations, rather than his own perception or 'failures'.

### *Conclusion*

At the end of his travelogue Ahmet Mithat repeats that his travel is not just a simple, personal and touristic travel. Ahmet Mithat, who never quits his role as a teacher and mentor, carrying those responsibilities also during his travels, aims to inform his reader in a correct and credible way. At least that is the manifest purpose of the travelogue that he declares. This privileged author never identifies himself with the reader and also does not allow the reader to feel himself close to the writer. On the contrary he insistently constructs a distance and tries to keep that distance between himself and the readers. He stresses that as a pioneer traveller and author he is special and different from 'them': the readers. And to me, when he mentions the readers he actually implies the other authors of his period. This makes him privileged when it is about Europe and travel. The author in some way looks down on the others and says: "I went, I saw and that was not just an accidental journey. I was very well prepared for it and my travel was quite a professional one. And now I share it with you – the ordinary reader."

Even though Ahmet Mithat has never lost faith in his knowledge of Europe, especially Paris, and confidence in his understanding of European culture, there are significant differences between the Europe – particularly Paris – he conceived/imagined and the 'real' one. On the one hand he easily locates the finest details, such as a relief on the buildings or bridges he has previously memorized, on the other hand, being at the mercy of the art of painting, he is astonished to see how much smaller many of the places he has imagined or embellished in his mind actually are. Ahmet Mithat elaborates on how deceptive painting and photography is, but does not mention the deceptiveness of the text. As soon as he emphasizes

the deceptiveness of writing, or even believes it momentarily, the world of imagination and reality he has constructed will be shattered, his privilege of having a say on Europe will be challenged. The author, who can't relinquish the image of Paris he has constructed, declares to have 'learned Paris by heart' through reading on it for years. Yet he never revokes his authority in face of the reader. Ahmet Mithat is disappointed, but his confidence in the text and himself is not shattered. More significantly, the interactions, references, and relations between the imaginary, literary and real realms which were analyzed in this article provide a privilege to the Ottoman occidentalist Ahmet Mithat, who authors *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*. Constantly substantiating himself in the universe he himself has created, Mithat creates a domain of power and authority for himself. It is not up to anyone, and definitely not the ordinary reader, to challenge his knowledge on the subject.

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