Contents

Preface

As storm Mortimer was battering the island of Wangerooge, one of the East Frisian islands on the North Sea, where I was spending a few days and cherishing the opportunity to delve into my manuscript, I started to question the necessity of a chapter devoted to the poet Nâzım Hikmet. Was my book not meant to focus on writers who had been written out of the history of literature? While Nâzım, who was stripped of his Turkish citizenship in 1951, might once have had the status of a pariah in Turkey half a century ago, this is far from being true today. It is undeniable that for decades his works were banned and could only be circulated clandestinely. To be found in possession of one his books could even be used as evidence for far-left political sympathies in court cases against progressive militants in Turkey. But this was long ago and, since the 1990s, people from all spectrums of political life have been appropriating the poet. Indeed, in October 1994, Alpaslan Türkeş, the leader of the religious ultra-nationalist Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (National Action Party) referred in positive terms to Nâzım Hikmet and read out one of his most popular poems, namely "Bu Memleket Bizim" (This Country is Ours), during the party's congress, in an attempt to achieve a Turkish version of a *Querfront* uniting left and right-wing nationalists. In May 2007, the Ankara-based literary monthly *Hece*, with roots in Islamist literary circles, published a special issue devoted to the poet with the title "Türkçenin Sürgün Şairi: Nâzım Hikmet" (The Exiled Poet of the Turkish Language: Nâzım Hikmet), putting emphasis on his contributions to Turkish poetry beyond ideological differences. In those years, the poet was also included in the curriculum for Turkish literature classes in secondary education, which was equivalent to his canonization. In 2009, his citizenship was restored posthumously after much back and forth. So, had he not become too much part of the mainstream?

Another problem was that I had already written on him on various occasions—mainly in French and Turkish, but also in English—addressing some of the issues at the heart of the chapter that was tormenting me. Somehow

the chapter seemed increasingly redundant. And now I was also starting to have doubts about the previous chapter on Namık Kemal and Samuel Hirsch. It was as if the seams of the whole book were starting to unravel. Meanwhile, the storm had cut off the island from the mainland.

And yet, I could not let it go. The very first novel written by a Turkish author that I read, more than thirty years ago, had been a German translation of Nâzım Hikmet's *Yaşamak Güzel Be Kardeşim* (Life's Good, Brother), so I had an emotional attachment to his presence in the book, as well as—I won't deny it—political sympathies for his lifelong struggle. Furthermore, I tried to convince myself that the aspects of his works which I had chosen to focus on were perhaps not so well known—his critical engagement with orientalist representation and his exploration of themes and topics that made sense in the context of post-colonial theory—and that they fitted the problematics discussed in the second part of the book. In other words, the chapter had to stay.

This momentary crisis was an opportunity to rethink the purpose of the book. I was struck, more than when I originally conceived it, that the book's two parts represented the two "great" themes that had marked my teaching of and writing on Turkish literature over the last two decades in Ankara at Bilkent University and at the University of Oxford. These two themes were, on the one hand, what I had called in an earlier book "the footnotes of literary history"[1]—authors and works that had been kept out of the great narrative of literary history; and, on the other, the problematization of the idea that the history of modern Turkish literature was a history of its Westernization—a questioning that occurred in that book through a focus on some authors' (among whom was Nâzım Hikmet) critical engagement with what is today known as orientalist representation. In other words, the two problematics were the question of the "others" within the late Ottoman Turkish literary field, that is to say non-Muslim authors, women writers, and political undesirables, as well as the problem of Turkey as the "other" of the West. This sensitivity to the problem of othering and Western supremacism stems from my discovery, back in my teenage years, of the absolute horror of the Shoah and of how the history of antisemitism is a continuous call for vigilance and a constant reminder of the dangers of othering and its consequences. This made, at least in my eyes, the chapter on Kemal and Hirsch an absolute necessity.

1 See Laurent Mignon, *Ana Metne Taşınan Dipnotlar: Türk Edebiyatı ve Kültürlerarasılık Üzerine Yazılar* [Footnotes Moving to the Main Text: Writings on Turkish Literature and Intercultultutalism] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009).

As I have noted above, some of the material that served as a basis to the chapters of this book has been previously published and my thanks go here to the journals, publishers, and editors that have given me the opportunity to explore these ideas, publish them, and then make use of them in this book. Details of these works can be found in the footnotes and bibliography. Further, there is no doubt that many of the ideas here were first tested on students. I will be always extremely thankful to my students at Bilkent University in Ankara and at the University of Oxford, with whom I so often had engaging discussions. Giving a list of all the colleagues and friends to whom I am also deeply indebted for sharing their insights would be too long. They know who they are. However, I cannot help but mention by name my daughters İdil and Leyla, who, more than once, had to tolerate the grumpiness of their father and my partner Katja, without whom I would never have been able to finish this book. In the end, as she knows, not all was bad with Mortimer.

Acknowledgements

As I mentioned in the preface, this book engages with some of the themes that have marked my teaching and writing over the years, including in my Turkish-language essays. They have been collected in five volumes, namely *Çağdaş Türk Şiirinde Aşk, Âşıklar, Mekânlar* (Love, Lovers, Spaces in Modern Turkish Poetry, 2002), *Elifbalar Sevdası* (The Passion for Alphabets, 2003), *Ana Metne Taşınan Dipnotlar* (Footnotes Moving to the Main Text, 2009), *Hüzünlü Özgürlük* (A Sad Freedom, 2014), and *Edebiyatın Sınırlarında* (In the Borderlands of Literature, 2016), where early traces of my elucubrations can be observed.

Chapter 1 develops material first discussed in "The Literati and the Letters: A Few Words on the Turkish Alphabet Reform" (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 20, no. 1 [2010]: 11–24).

Chapters 2, 3 and, 4 integrate material from "A Pilgrim's Progress: Armenian and Kurdish Literatures in Turkish and the Rewriting of Literary History" (*Patterns of Prejudice* 48, no. 2 [2014]: 182–200); "Lost in Transliteration: A Few Remarks on the Armeno-Turkish Novel and Turkish Literary Historiography" (in *Between Religion and Language: Turkish-Speaking Christians, Jews and Greek-Speaking Muslims and Catholics in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez [Istanbul: Eren, 2011], 111–123); "Minor Literatures and their Challenge to 'National Literature': The Turkish Case" (in *Turkey and the Politics of National Identity: Social, Economic and Cultural Transformation*, ed. Shane Brennan and Marc Herzog [London: I. B. Tauris, 2014], 194–214); and "*Πάτερ bizim*: Notes on the Nature of Karamanlı Literature" (in *Cultural Encounters in the Turkish Speaking Communities of the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Ölmez [Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2014], 137–148).

Chapter 5 develops ideas first investigated in "Avram, İsak and the Others: Notes on the Genesis of Judeo-Turkish Literature" (in *Between Religion and Language*, ed. Evangelia Balta and Mehmet Sönmez [Istanbul: Eren, 2011], 71–83); "From İshak to İsak: The Birth Pangs of Jewish Turkish Literature"

(in *Turkish Jews in Contemporary Turkey*, ed. R. Bali and Laurent-Olivier Mallet [Istanbul: Libra Books, 2015], 257–282; and "Ringen mit Dämonen: Gibt es eine jüdisch-türkische Literatur?" (in *Ni kaza en Turkiya: Erzählungen jüdischer Autoren aus Istanbul*, ed. and trans. by Wolfgang Riemann [Engelschoff: Auf dem Ruffel, 2018], 125–144).

Chapter 6 develops material from "Of Moors, Jews and Gentiles" (*Journal of Turkish Studies* 35, no. 1 [June 2011]: 65–83).

Chapter 7 explores material from "Venger Aziyadé," in *Regards sur la poésie du 20ème siècle*, ed. Laurent Fels [Namur: Les éditions namuroises, 2009], 251–270).

A Note on Conventions

The problem of transliteration is always challenging when working on Ottoman Turkish texts. When dealing with a relatively common word of Arabic origin in an Ottoman Turkish text that is, however, rarely used in modern Turkish, such as the broken plural أسباب (reasons), should one follow the rules for Arabic romanization and transcribe it as *'asbāb* or should one follow a transliteration closer to modern Turkish pronunciation and orthography, an approach nowadays favored by most Ottomanists, and go for *esbāb, esbâb*, or even *esbab*?

My strategy in this book has been, as far as possible, to stick closely to modern Turkish orthography as defined by the Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Institute). As a consequence, I transliterate أسباب as *esbap*, in line with orthographical rules reflecting final-obstruent devoicing. However, were the final consonant to be followed by a vowel, as for instance in أسبابی (her reasons), it would retain its voicing as *esbabı*. I have also applied this rule when it came to transliterating the names of people throughout my text, thus following contemporary orthography. Hence أحمد is Ahmet and not Ahmed. I have also followed those rules when transliterating Armenian, Greek, and Jewish names. This approach is not born out of a desire to Turkify or modernize the Ottoman literary field. But, as this book mostly deals with authors from various ethno-religious backgrounds who wrote in Turkish, but have often remained unmentioned in standard historiographies and in the canon, I believe that it is important, at this stage of the discussion on Turkish-language literature, not to create additional estrangement by following the different transliterations system developed for Armenian, Greek, and the other Ottoman languages.

Another problem is the question of surnames. The Surname Law which enjoined all citizens of the Republic of Turkey to take a (Turkish) surname was adopted on June 21, 1934. Hence, most of the authors discussed in this book never had, or only adopted, a surname in the later part of their lives. For matters of convenience and standardization I will only indicate the surname in square brackets at first mention and refer to the authors using what the Turkish law

referred to as the "öz ad"—the original name. Hence the novelist Halide Edip [Adıvar] will be referred to as Halide Edip and not as Adıvar in the main text. In the footnote references and the bibliography, I refer to their surnames, adding between square brackets the names under which they have published. Hence, Avram Galanti Bodrumlu, who published under the names Abraham Galante, Avram Galanté, and Avram Galanti will be found under Bodrumlu in the footnote references and the bibliography.

Another challenge is posed by the publication years of some of the works under discussion. The Republic of Turkey has been using the Gregorian calendar since January 2, 1926. The Ottoman state replaced the lunar Islamic calendar, or *hicri* calendar, by the solar *Rumi* (Roman) calendar for civic matters on March 13, 1840, in the context of the Tanzimat reforms. Both the *hicri* and the *Rumi* calendars begin with the year 622 AD, when the prophet Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina with his followers. In the publishing world, both calendars continued to be used, and, unless a full date is indicated in a published work, it is often difficult to establish whether the publication year refers to the *hicri* or the *Rumi* calendars. In order to solve this problem, I have in most cases relied on M. Seyfettin Özege's seminal five-volume catalogue *Eski Harflerle Basılmış Türkçe Eserler Kataloğu* (Catalogue of Turkish Works Printed with the Old Letters, 1971) when referring to works published in the Ottoman Turkish script. In footnote references, the publication date is indicated according to the Gregorian calendar, followed by the *hicri* (abbreviated to h.) or *Rumi* (abbreviated to r.) year in square brackets. Gregorian years indicated between square brackets refer to the year of first publication. For Armeno-Turkish works, I have relied on Hasmik Stepanyan's bibliography of Armeno-Turkish publications; and for Greco-Turkish (Karamanlı) works I have used the catalogues established by Sévérien Salaville and Eugène Daleggio that were reviewed and expanded by Evangelia Balta.

Introduction: In the Footsteps of Baha Tevfik

"It is necessary to free oneself of every form of tyranny. The past, just like nationhood, is tyranny."[1] Written on the eve of the First World War, at a time when the nationalist Ottoman Turkish ruling elite, still traumatized by the defeats suffered during the previous Balkan conflicts, was nurturing revanchist proclivities, Baha Tevfik's condemnation of nationalism and his conceptualization of the past as a burden were out of the ordinary. These were the years when nationalist intellectuals were in the process of vanquishing on the ideological battlefields the proponents of supranational ideologies, such as Ottomanism, Islamism, or, more rarely, socialist internationalism.

Baha Tevfik (1881–1914), a philosopher and publisher, was not the first Ottoman intellectual writing in Turkish to question nationalism and denounce historiographical mythmaking. As early as 1862, İbrahim Şinasi (1826–1871), a reformist publisher, poet, and playwright, had written a verse celebrating the unity of humankind—"Humankind is my nation, the earth my homeland"—inspired by Victor Hugo's (1802–1885) Romantic vision of world citizenship.[2] Half a century later, Tevfik Fikret (1867–1915), who was himself a promoter of Enlightenment ideals and in many ways Şinasi's spiritual heir, endorsed the

1 Baha Tevfik, *Felsefe-i Fert* (Istanbul: Giteun Bedrosyan Matbaası, 1915 [h.1332]), 86.

2 Şinasi, "Mesari," in *Müntahabât-ı Eş'ârım: Divân*, ed. Muallâ Anıl (Ankara: Akba Kitabevi, 1945), 37. The verse was inspired by the final sentences of the foreword that Victor Hugo, the French Romantic poet and author, had written for his play *Les Burgraves* in 1843: "One day, let us hope, the entire globe will be civilized, all points of the human abode will be enlightened, and then the magnificent dream of intelligence will be fulfilled: to have the world as your homeland and humankind as your nation" (Victor Hugo, *Les Burgraves: Trilogie* [London: Courrier de l'Europe's Office, 1843], 25).

idea that "the earth is my homeland, humankind my nation"[3] in "Haluk'un Amentüsü" (Haluk's Credo) a poem celebrating the creed of a new generation. In this way, Fikret was paying tribute to Şinasi and the Ottoman progressive tradition. Tevfik Fikret would go even further, as he believed that history was an impediment to the coming of a new enlightened age. "Tarih-i Kadim" (Ancient History), a poem composed in 1905 and published posthumously in 1924, denounces human history as a litany of wars, destruction, and corruption.[4]

However, Şinasi and Fikret, unlike Baha Tevfik, were embraced by republican literary historiography. In *Edebî Yeniliğimiz* (Our Literary Renewal), a revised edition of his groundbreaking 1921 *Türk Teceddüt Edebiyatı Tarihi* (History of New Turkish Literature), published by the State Press in 1930, İsmail Habib Sevük (1892–1954) argued that Şinasi had been "the father of our literary renovation" who had "taught the nation the language of observation and negotiation."[5] Tevfik Fikret, whose works were much admired by Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] (1881–1938)[6] also fares well in Sevük's worldview, though the literary historian chose to focus more on the poet's social realist verses than on his revolutionary outbursts. Unsurprisingly, both Şinasi and Fikret were among the authors whose complete works were listed for transliteration into the new romanized Turkish alphabet, adopted in 1928 by the Turkish Language and Literature Department of the Ankara-based Faculty of Language, History-Geography (Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi) at the First Turkish Publishing Congress (Birinci Türk Neşriyat Kongresi) in 1939. The aim of this meeting was to consider the crisis in the publishing world and the consequences of romanization.[7]

Though Baha Tevfik could arguably be seen as a radical follower of the Enlightenment ideals promoted by the two poets, his name was not to be found on this list. It is true that his literary achievements were minor: he only published a few short stories and prose poems that did not make a major impact. Prose poetry was fashionable at the turn of the century and there is no doubt

3 Tevfik Fikret, *Bütün Şiirleri*, ed. Nurullah Çetin and İsmail Parlatır (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 2011), 541.

4 Ibid., 639–645.

5 Quoted by Elif Baki in *Ulusun İnşası ve Resmi Edebiyat Kanonu* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2010), 60.

6 Zeki Arıkan, "Türkiye'nin Çağdaşlaşmasında Tevfik Fikret ve Atatürk," *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 6, no. 22 (1998): 123–125.

7 [Anon.], "Ankara Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesince Türk Harfleri ile Neşri Teklif Edilen Eski Eserler," in *Birinci Türk Neşriyat Kongresi: Raporlar, Teklifler, Müzakere Zabıtları* (Ankara: Maarif Vekilliği 1939), 299. For a discussion of the congress, see chapter 1.

that the hybridity of the genre was attractive for someone like Baha Tevfik who was uneasy with boundaries of any kind. Thematically, it might be tempting to see those short narratives that focus on objects and had, in spirit, some vague resemblance with British eighteenth-century it-narratives as expressions of the author's materialist outlook. Yet it is doubtful that a prose poem such as "Domino Taşları" (Domino Tiles, 1907), about the jealousy felt by domino tiles towards each other could easily be integrated into any philosophical agenda. Nonetheless, it seems that he considered his short stories as opportunities to explore philosophical ideas.

There were noteworthy exceptions, namely "Ah Bu Sevda" (Oh This Passion, 1910) and "Aşk, Hodbinî" (Love, Selfishness, 1910) which discussed homoerotic themes at a time when a controversy about homosexual themes in literature divided the Ottoman literary world after the publication of Şahabettin Süleyman's (1885–1921) play Çıkmaz Sokak (Dead End Street, 1909), which dealt with a lesbian relationship.[8] In a couple of journalistic pieces, Tevfik also took aim at Raif Necdet [Kestelli] (1881–1936), a critic who had been leading the charge against Süleyman's play which he denounced as morally harmful and foreign to Ottoman mores.[9] The context of the publication of the two short stories that Tevfik published in his own magazine *Piyano* (Piano) show that they were political statements about the right of the artist to complete freedom of expression.

Baha Tevfik's main accomplishments as a writer, however, were in the field of nonfiction. By 1914, the year of his untimely death, the thirty-three-year-old writer had published no less than fourteen books on a variety of topics, ranging from an essay on feminism to literary criticism.[10] Together with Ahmet Nebil [Çıka] (d. 1945) and Memduh Süleyman, two kindred spirits with whom he coauthored books and articles, Tevfik promoted a radical form of materialism heralding the advent of a moral society cleansed of religion and superstition, a discourse that departed from materialists such as Abdullah Cevdet [Karlıdağ]

8 Since the 2000s, there has been increased interest in the study of homoerotic themes in modern Turkish literature. See, e.g., Priska Furrer, "The Problematic Tradition: Reflections on Ottoman Homo-Eroticism in Modern Turkish Literature," in *Ghazal as a Genre of World Literature I: Transformations of a Literary Genre*, ed. Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag et al., 2005), 383–393 and Laurent Mignon, "Roses et barbelés: Notes sur un amour apatride," *Inverses* 10 (2010): 267–284.

9 For a summary of the controversy and Baha Tevfik's stance, see Rıza Bağcı, *Baha Tevfik'in Hayatı Edebî ve Felsefî Eserleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma* (Izmir: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996), 50–53.

10 For an exhaustive list of his publications, see ibid., 232–243.

(1869–1932) who still believed that Islam, albeit secularized, had a role to play as a set of moral principles for a future society.[11] Indeed, in 1911 Tevfik translated with Ahmet Nebil some popular works of materialist philosophy, including Ernest Haeckel's (1834–1919) 1892 profession of faith "Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft: Das Glaubenbekenntnis eines Naturforschers" (Monism as Connecting Religion and Science: The Credo of a Naturalist) under the Turkish title "Vahdet-i Mevcut: Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini." Interestingly, he chose to translate the term "credo" (*Glaubensbekenntnis*) as "religion" (*din*), even though the Ottoman Turkish "amentü" could have been used to signify "profession of faith," as in the case of Tevfik Fikret's abovementioned "Haluk'un Amentüsü." The same year, both of them also published a translation of Ludwig Büchner's (1824–1899) *Kraft und Stoff* (*Force and Matter*, 1855), as *Madde ve Kuvvet* (Matter and Force).

Hence Tevfik's contributions to the history of materialism in Turkish as well as his activities as a publicist should have earned him at least a footnote in the history of Turkish literature: did Ahmet Hamdi [Tanpınar] (1901–1962), the acclaimed novelist and poet, but also an influential literary scholar whose *Ondokuzuncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (History of Nineteenth Century Turkish Literature) is still unsurpassed in its field, not argue that a history of literature also had to be a history of ideas, because "the study of nineteenth century literature [revealed] intellectual and social change"?[12]

Baha Tevfik, however, went too far for many. He questioned some of the principles that were to become the building blocks of the Turkish republic. Like Şinasi and Fikret, he was a promoter of the Enlightenment and an advocate of Westernization, but he went further. He did not simply chant the universality of the Enlightenment in all its abstractness and the consequent world citizenship, he also directly attacked Turkism which he considered to be essentially reactionary. "Turkishness might have had some characteristics that were seen as appropriate in the past, but today they are extraordinary defects. One should not try to revive them, they should be destroyed. Rather than lifting them up to the domain of implementation, we should bury them in the depths of history,"[13] he wrote in "Millileşmek Emeli" (Nationalization as a Goal), an article

11 Şükrü Hanioğlu, "The Second Constitutional Period 1908–1918," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 4, *Turkey and the Modern World*, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 105.

12 Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's lecture notes from 1953/54, quoted by Turan Alptekin in *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar: Bir Kültür bir İnsan* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 139.

13 Baha Tevfik, *Felsefe-i Fert*, 83.

published in May 1913. He would include this article in his major political work *Felsefe-i Fert* (The Philosophy of the Individual, 1914),[14] an eclectic collection of articles, loosely bound around the themes of individual freedom and emancipation. The book reflected the author's own libertarian convictions[15] and explored themes central in anarchist philosophy, such as the critique of power, nationalism, and the state.[16] These were sensitive issues—and his conclusion that humanity had evolved in stages "from slavery to proletarianism" and "from proletarianism to socialism" and would finally "reach anarchism, where it would experience the complete independence and the whole greatness of the individual" was a direct challenge to the established order.[17]

Tevfik was a free thinker and cannot easily be categorized into any anarchist school. In his work, one would look in vain for references to the classics of anarchist thought. Nonetheless, he engaged with authors who were close to anarchist ideas: he cowrote, with Ahmet Nebil and Memduh Süleyman, a monograph on Friedrich Nietzsche (1840–1900)—*Nietzsche: Hayatı ve Felsefesi* (Nietzsche: His Life and Philosophy, 1912) and he translated, with Hüseyin Kami (1878–1912), Leo Tolstoy's (1847–1910) *Voskreséniye*, known in English under the title *Resurrection* (Ba'sü Bade'l Mevt, 1910), a staunch condemnation of man-made laws and the corruption of the church.

In the early years of the Republic of Turkey, there was no room for an author who openly rejected most of the principles on which the new state was being built and who heralded the advent of a communalist, anarchist society.

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14 While it is easy enough to translate *felsefe* as "philosophy," the concept of *fert* is more complex. The most common translation is "individual" and many scholars have classified Baha Tevfik as an "individualist" thinker. However the semantic range of the word *fert* is broad enough to encompass the concept of "person." Baha Tevfik's advocacy of a communalist anarchism—the ultimate stage of society—leads me to think that he believed that the fulfillment of the individual could only be achieved in communion with others. From that point of view, Tevfik shares, in this late work at least, some common traits with forms of nontheistic personalism. That for some French personalists, i.e., those who gathered around the journals *Esprit* (Spirit) and *Ordre nouveau* (New Order), a society organized along the lines of Proudhonian anarchism was the most appropriate for personal development is another invitation to start thinking of Baha Tevfik in terms of proto-personalism. However, this is a subject which requires more research, as does the history of Turkish personalism in general. For that reason, I have kept the more traditional translation "individual."

15 I use the term "libertarian" in its original European leftist meaning, as a political stance that is fundamentally egalitarian and critical of capitalism, private property, and the power of the state, before its co-option by supporters of *laissez-faire* capitalism in North America.

16 For a discussion of anarchist themes in *Felsefe-i Fert*, see Mignon, *Ana Metne Taşınan Dipnotlar*, 25–34.

17 Baha Tevfik, *Felsefe-i Fert*, 119–120.

After the alphabet change, the works of Baha Tevfik, the author and thinker, disappeared from the public eye and Turkish readers would have to wait until the 1990s for new editions of his works.[18] His exclusion from literary history would not have surprised or overly upset him. On the one hand, he shared with Nietzsche a critical, quasi-nihilistic, approach to traditional historiography and its lack of engagement with the present. On the other hand, his own iconoclastic views on literature and literary criticism invite a radical rethink of official histories of literature and of the literary canon.

A great lover of polemics, Tevfik argued in a series of articles that literature, in particular poetry, had a damaging influence on society and was the product of sick minds. Poetry, he maintained, was written in a heightened state of emotionality at a time when a human being was not fully in control of their intellectual faculties—an argument that drew, perhaps, on Plato's poor view of poets:

> If we were to analyze, even superficially, our literary and social history, we would be struck by the fact that all our poets are a legion of lunatics who lack self-control and suffer from the strangest manias. Can you name a single poet of ours who is not drunk? Which author of ours has a private life about which we could talk about without blushing? Which artist of ours can you mention who has not authored a *Hamam-Name*[19] or a similarly

18 The interest in Baha Tevfik's works was sparked by Burhan Şaylı's edition of *Felsefe-i Fert* under the title *Anarşizmin Osmanlıcası 1: Felsefe-i Ferd* (Istanbul: Altıkırkbeş, 1992). A new edition by Alper Çeker was published in 2017 with the same publisher: *Felsefe-i Ferd: Anarşizmin Osmanlıcası* (Istanbul: Altıkırkbeş, 2017). There are no less than four editions of Tevfik's monograph on Nietzsche, coauthored with Ahmet Nebil and Memduh Süleyman. The first edition was prepared by Burhan Şaylı and published by the Istanbul-based publisher Karşı Kıyı in 2001. In 2002, Ali Utku and M. Abdullah Arslan prepared a new edition for Birey publishers in Istanbul. Şaylı's version was reedited in Istanbul by Babil publishers in 2004, while Utku and Arslan's edition was republished by Çizgi publishers in Konya in 2013. Çizgi publishers have played a major role in promoting the works of Baha Tevfik, publishing *Muhtasar Felsefe*, edited by Güler Eren in 2014; *Felsefe-i Edebiyat ve Şair Celis*, edited by Kemal Kahramanoğlu and Ali Utku in 2014 and *Teceddüd-i İlmî ve Edebî*, edited by Veli Kılıçarslan in 2016. They have also republished Tevfik's translations of Louis Büchner's *Madde ve Kuvvet*, co-translated with Ahmet Nebil and edited by Kemal Kahramanoğlu in 2012, of Ernst Haeckel's *Vahdet-i Mevcut: Bir Tabiat Aliminin Dini*, co-translated with Ahmet Nebil and edited by Remzi Demir and Bilal Yurtoğlu in 2014, and Odette Laguerre's *Feminizim: Alem-i Nisvan*, edited by Ali Utku and Kemal Bakır in 2015. Notably, the Ministry of Culture in Ankara published an edition of *Yeni Ahlak ve Ahlak Üzerine Yazılar*, prepared by Faruk Öztürk in 2002.

19 The Hamam-Name or *hamamiye* is a genre of Ottoman Turkish divan poetry exploring the pleasures of the *hamams*, the Turkish baths, often with an homoerotic dimension.

> despicable work? Or spoken passionately about women and love, these outmoded important literary topics, akin to chronic diseases.[20]

These were extraordinary words to flow from the pen of a published poet and short story writer who had himself provocatively explored the theme of homoerotic love in some of his stories. To argue that his views changed over the years and that he grew disillusioned with literature is not convincing. The very year that he published his homoerotic stories, Tevfik stood in court defending the view that literature was a sickness of the mind. Indeed, the young philosopher practiced what he preached. His views on literature became the building block of the defense at a court hearing where some members of the *Fecr-i Ati* (Future Dawn) neo-Symbolist literary movement were being tried for having roughed up Hüseyin Nazmi, the publisher and owner of *Eşref*, a satirical magazine. Nazmi had allowed the publication of pieces that were critical of what he considered to be the immorality of the works of one of the members of the group. The controversy, that would lead to violent exchanges, was triggered by two plays by Şahabettin Süleyman that deeply shook the socially conservative strands of the literary world: The first one, entitled *Siyah Süs* (Black Ornament), a love story between a black eunuch and a white concubine, dealt with taboo themes in Ottoman Turkish society, such as sexuality, gender, authority and race. The second one was the above-named *Çıkmaz Sokak*, exploring the consequences of a lesbian relationship on a family.

The future novelist and diplomat Yakup Kadri [Karaosmanoğlu]'s (1889–1974) defense of *Çıkmaz Sokak* is noteworthy. He argued that writing a play on "a platonic love that has entered ancient Greek philosophy, reached its most beautiful expression in a quasi-mythical woman poet's verses named Sappho and even entered sacred books with the story of Sodom and Gomorra in the Torah" was natural for someone versed in classical literary culture.[21] These were not, however, the arguments that convinced the judge to discharge the overly enthusiastic neo-Symbolist mob. Baha Tevfik's intervention as a witness called by the plaintiff tipped the balance in favor of the defendants, to the great distress of the owner of *Eşref*.

20 Baha Tevfik, *Teceddüd-i İlmî ve Edebî* (Istanbul: Müşterükü'l-Menfaa Osmanlı Şirketi Matbaası, 1911 [r.1327]), 128.

21 Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Gençlik ve Edebiyat Hatıraları* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1969), 45.

> Respected delegation of judges; before giving my testimony, I would like to present you an issue. There is a psychological disease called the illness of literature. Those who suffer from it—and I am one of those—somehow cannot distinguish between reality and imagination. In consequence, did I see these people (pointing to the accused) in the office of the *Eşref* periodical, or in some other place? Who said what? Who attacked whom with a walking stick? I do not know. All of my recollections of this event dance in my brains.[22]

The judge then interrupted the proceedings and after a short consultation with his colleagues reached the verdict that "the grounds for the accusations consisted of illusions" and the accused were acquitted, while the plaintiff had to pay for the court costs. That Baha Tevfik should have been the managing director of *Eşref*—that he was Hüseyin Nazmi's employee in other words,—adds yet more spice to this extraordinary anecdote that Yakup Kadri related in his literary memoirs. The whole story provides us with useful information when it comes to make sense of Baha Tevfik's attacks against the literary world. His disrespect for the court proceedings and his refusal to endorse his employer's version of events in his farcical intervention are in line with the criticism of power and authority that underpins his *Felsefe-i Fert.* And, to say the truth, the literati—whether they envisaged a didactic role for literature and proclaimed themselves the teachers of the nation or whether, hailing from an ivory tower, they advocated an elitist aestheticism detached from the social realities of their day—were certainly in a position of authority and wielded considerable symbolic, and even sometimes, political power.

Baha Tevfik, indeed, was one of the very first authors who condemned intellectuals' unhealthy longing for state employment (*memuriyet*) and recognition.[23] Celebrated authors often worked for the state that they wished to reform, Yakup Kadri being a case in point as he would become an MP for the ruling Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party) after the establishment of the Republic, and later a diplomat. Unlike Tevfik, the novelist is recognized as a staunch pillar of liberation war literature and is part of the modern Turkish canon. His youthful flirtation with neo-Hellenic thought and aesthetics in the

22 Ibid., 47.

23 Baha Tevfik, *Felsefe-i Fert*, 31–45.

context of the *Nev-Yunani* group, which he cofounded with the poet Yahya Kemal [Beyatlı] (1884–1958), is explained away as the folly of a young man who would write his major works after having embraced nationalism, albeit keeping a critical distance to the Kemalist project.[24] Moreover, the novelist lived long enough to take care of his literary legacy after the alphabet change and render his works available for later generations. Tevfik did not have such an opportunity. He died at the young age of thirty as a consequence of hepatic insufficiency. His views condemned him to the footnotes of literary history and he did not have the opportunity to dig himself out.

His staunch rejection of nationalism and questioning of authority is an invitation to rethink the history of Turkish literature. A first step on this path is to switch the focus from the ethno-nationally demarcated concept of Turkish literature (*Türk edebiyatı*) to a language-centered understanding of "literature in Turkish" (*Türkçe edebiyat*), which, as will be seen in the following pages, enables the incorporation of a wide range of texts written in Turkish and of authors who might not have necessarily defined themselves as Turks, yet used the Turkish language in their work.[25]

This being said, when writing in English on modern literature in Turkish, one must not underestimate the importance of the pioneering studies of scholars who engaged in English with the history of the Turkish novel, such as Ahmet Ö. Evin[26] and Robert Finn,[27] or wrote introductory essays on modern

24 That this is not the whole story and that traces of his neo-Hellenism can also be found in his later works can be gathered from Şevket Toker, "Edebiyatımızda Nev-Yunanilik Akımı," *Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1 (1982): 135–163.

25 The use of "*Türkçe edebiyat*" (literature in Turkish), rather than "*Türk edebiyatı*" (Turkish literature), remains very controversial in Turkey. The Cypriot poet Mehmet Yaşın, who writes in Turkish, started the debate in a series of articles which he published between December 1994 and September 1995 in *Adam Sanat*, one of Turkey's leading cultural magazines of the time. Since then, the debate has been regularly rekindled, not the least in the context of discussions led by Kurdish authors and poets writing in Turkish. For an overview of those discussions see Mesut Varlık, "Tartışılmayacak bir Tartışma: Türkçe Edebiyat," K24, November 1, 2020, accessed on December 30, 2020, https://t24.com.tr/k24/yazi/tartisilmayacak-bir-tartisma-turkce-edebiyat, 2920..

26 Ahmet Ö. Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1983).

27 Robert P. Finn, *The Early Turkish Novel 1872–1900* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1984).

Turkish poetry such as Orhan Burian (1914–1953)[28] and Talat Sâit Halman (1931–2014),[29] at a time little material was available on the topic in the English-speaking world. While those scholars, just like their colleagues writing in Turkish, espoused a view of "national literature" in line with Western European understandings of the "nation," their very focus on a non-Western literature was an invitation to scholars to look beyond the narrow borders of Western literature and think of literature as a global phenomenon. Evin was conscious that his monograph was "the first attempt in English to offer a critical introduction to the development of the Turkish novel" and he reached out beyond Turkologists and specialists of the Middle East to "comparatists in general," thus situating Turkish literature among the literatures of the world.[30]

However, as will be seen in chapter 2, histories and studies of Turkish literature have generally excluded the works of the non-Muslim writers—Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, and Jews—who contributed to the development of Turkish-language literature in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and even in more recent years. Those scholarly volumes and articles, unwillingly perhaps, contributed to an incomplete, and incorrect, picture, of the literary field in the Turkish-writing world. Thus, it is important to create spaces for the discussion of Armeno-Turkish, Greco-Turkish, Judeo-Turkish, Syro-Ottoman and, as will be seen, missionary literatures and their role in the field of literature in Turkish.

While this is not the aim of this book, there is also much to be said in favor of a comparative history of the various literatures of the Ottoman Empire as envisaged by Johann Strauss in his remarkable article "Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th–20th Centuries)?" which explores the possibilities and opportunities of intercommunitarian and interlinguistic literary exchanges.[31] Strauss is indeed a pioneer of a new type of literary history and has been one of the first scholars to look at the various minority literatures of Ottoman Turkey in relation to each other, thus questioning nationalist narratives of literature.

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28 See, for instance, Burian's 1951 essay "Modern Turkish Poetry," *Journal of Turkish Literature* 1 (2004): 31–43.

29 See, e.g., the relevant articles and reviews collected in Talat S. Halman, *The Turkish Muse: Views and Reviews, 1960s–1990s*, ed. Jayne L. Warner (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006) and Talat S. Halman, *Rapture and Revolution: Essays on Turkish Literature*, ed. Jayne L. Warner (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

30 Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel*, 7.

31 Johann Strauss, "Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th–20th Century)?," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 1 (2003): 39–76.