

# ISLAMOPHOBIC TENDENCIES AND THE OTHERIZED OTTOMAN IN THEATER PLAYS FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE TO THE REPUBLIC (1860-1950)

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## Abstract

Islamophobia has been among the most emphasized concepts in various parts of the world for almost a quarter of a century, especially in the West. The idea, similarly discussed in Islamic countries, draws attention as a product of understandings in which orientalist and self-orientalist perspectives are determinant. Based on the alterity and hostility of a particular segment through the production of a

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fictionalized image, this approach is the name of an attitude and behavior that has continued in Turkey since the Tanzimat Period. The attempts to ensure that the masses accept the official (Kemalist) ideology in the nation-identity building process, which started mainly after the establishment of the Republic, entails the otherization of “Ottoman” and “Islam” and injecting Islamophobic elements into the masses and revealing the negative image of Islam were among the most used strategies. At this point, it can be asserted that art, in particular, and theater, in general, were strongly instrumentalized, and the texts of the plays were structured directly or indirectly with Islamophobic tendencies for this purpose. Thus, this situation, predominant in the early phase of the Republic, continued to be the dominant tendency of humorous plays in the later periods.

**Keywords:** Ottoman, Islamophobia, Orientalism, Self-Orientalism, Turkish Theatre, Republic.

### Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e (1860 – 1940) Tiyatro Oyunlarında İslamofobik Eğilimler ve Ötekileştirilen Osmanlı

#### Öz

Neredeyse çeyrek yüzyıldır, başta Batı olmak üzere dünyanın çok çeşitli bölgelerinde üzerinde en fazla durulan kavramlar arasında İslamofobi bulunmaktadır. Benzer şekilde İslam ülkelerinde de tartışılan bu kavram, büyük ölçüde oryantalist ve self-oryantalist bakış açılarının belirleyici olduğu anlayışların bir ürünü olarak dikkat çekmektedir. Kendiliğinden olmayıp kurgulanmış bir imaj üretimi üzerinden belli bir kesimin ötekileştirilmesini – düşmanlaştırılmasını temel alan bu yaklaşım, aslında Tanzimat'tan beri Türkiye'de de süregelen bir düşünce ve davranış biçiminin adıdır da. Bununla birlikte, özellikle Cumhuriyet'in kurulması sonrasında başlayan ulus – kimlik inşa sürecinde resmi (Kemalist) ideolojinin kitlelere tanıtılıp kabullenilmesinin sağlanması çalışmaları “Osmanlı”nın ve “İslam”ın” değersizleştirilip ötekileştirilmesini gerektirirken; islamofobik unsurların kitlelere enjekte edilip İslam ve müslümanlara dair olumsuz imajın bir kanaat olarak belletilmesi çabaları da başvurulan yöntemlerin başında gelmekteydi. Bu noktada özelde sanat genelinde ise tiyatronun güçlü bir şekilde araçsallaştırıldığı; oyun metinlerinin de bu amaç doğrultusunda, doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak İslamofobik eğilimlerle yapılandırıldıkları net olarak söylenebilir. Son kertede, baskın olarak Cumhuriyet'in erken evresinde söz konusu olan bu durum, daha sonraki dönemlerde de, özellikle mizah ağırlıklı oyunların başat eğilimi olmaya devam etmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı, İslamofobi, Oryantalizm, Self-Oryantalizm, Türk Tiyatrosu, Cumhuriyet.

#### Introduction

The author of *The New Orientalists*, Ian Almond, who taught at Boğaziçi University for a while (1997-2005), recounts a memory of the February 28 process in his book as follows: “I remember the female students in my class crying because they had to take off their

headscarves when entering the building. I will never forget a lecture at this backward university where I taught James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* because I was surprised that the religious half of the class emphasized Stephen's alienation<sup>1</sup> completely in that lecture".<sup>2</sup> This situation had associations that opened the door for us to relate to Shayegan's definition of "cultural schizophrenia" and "wounded consciousness"<sup>3</sup>, and also referred to the homelessness of the (traditional) masses whose cultural codes were caricatured and made passive in the face of dominant elements. Undoubtedly, the reason for such an association can be explained by the fact that the orientalist-self-orientalist acts that have been going on since the Tanzimat period have activated our mental reflexes.

While orientalism is the name of Westerners' efforts to evaluate, make sense of, and locate the East according to their value criteria, self-orientalism, despite being Eastern (Turkish), is the name of the efforts to evaluate, define and make sense of the East (the self, the universe of values being in) with the codes, concepts, values and perspectives of the West. Although self-alienation can often be seen in the nature of self-orientalism, on the other hand, it can also be considered as one's "effort to catch up with modernism".<sup>4</sup> However, what matters in both cases is the existence of an attitude (or aspiration) of ideological superiority with a Eurocentric perspective.

These two situations have a nature that is incompatible with ethical values and moral norms on the one hand and a character with machiavellian and pragmatist tendencies on the other. With this character, the person otherizes non-Western values, exhibits pejora-

<sup>1</sup> Stephen is a philosopher in his way. He filters himself and his surroundings and seeks to analyze them. However, some ruling classes/forces around him restrict Stephen's freedom and want him to be in harmony with the norms of the society they have created. They put pressure on him for this. The psychoses that are experienced make him experience alienation in all its depth and ultimately exile himself. At the end of the novel - when he realizes his alienation - Stephen says; "I will no longer serve what I do not believe in, whether it be my home, my country, or my church. I will try to find a style of life or art in which I can express myself as freely and as completely as possible. To defend me, I will use the weapons I know how to use; silence, exile, and creativity". James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Berkshire: Penguin Popular Classics, 1996), 281.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Almond, *Yeni Oryantalistler* (İstanbul: Pinhan Yayıncılık, 2013), 8. ]Istanbul: Belge 13.

<sup>3</sup> Daryush Shayegan, *Yaratıl Bilinç* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2012) page?.

<sup>4</sup> Grace Yan - Carla Santos, "China, Forever": Tourism Discourse and Self-Orientalism", *Annals of Tourism Research* 36/2 (2009), 298.

tive behavior models, sees everything as “permissible,” and makes “utilization” the center of his life to achieve his goal.

One of the action patterns that this characteristic resembles is the Islamophobic discourse, behavior, and attitudes, which undoubtedly constitute one of the pillars of this study. At this point, it should be said that in line with the descriptive research method of our study, it is aimed to evaluate both the general-historical appearance of the phenomenon of Islamophobia and (especially) its existence in the early Republican Period through theatrical play texts and to make a situation determination. In addition, it is among the objectives of the study to examine the subjects, in line with the descriptive research method, such as how the differences of perspectives on the East and the West determine the relationship between the phenomenon and its image, how what others say at the point of creating perception affects vision, the deployment of the ‘other’ with the nation-building efforts in the early Republican period, how the historical periods that are tried to be bracketed at this stage are handled with the definitium such as ‘forgetfulness,’ ‘breaking from the roots and ‘dehistoricization,’ how art and theater are articulated to the political and ideological conjuncture, how much the official state ideology affects islamophobic tendencies in the process of ‘reasonable citizen’ production, and how the play texts written as a result of these tendencies act as the spokespersons of the islamophobic elements and ideological rhetoric.

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### **1. Islamophobia from Phenomenon to Definitium (Concept)**

Although Islamophobia is a definitium that has been used frequently since the 1990s<sup>5</sup>, as a phenomenon, it is a trend<sup>6</sup> that has existed since the early times of the emergence of Islam. While it was first used in the literature by Alain Quellien in the work *La politique musulmane dans l’Afrique Occidentale Française-1910* published in Paris, in today’s sense/definition, it was first used in English by

<sup>5</sup> The first official article in which the definitium of Islamophobia was used by the states was the report titled “*Islamophobia: A Challenge For Us All*” written by the Runnymede Trust think tank in 1997.

<sup>6</sup> “I know it when I see it” (I cannot define but I know it when I see it) is an expression used by chancellor Potter Stewart in 1964, referring to the situation where a fact/ an observable fact precedes the concept (name) that defines it, or the fact is not the concept Paul Gewirtz, “On ‘I Know It When I See It’”, *Yale Law Journal* 105 (1996), 1023-1047. This form of expression, which is frequently used in the literature of law, is constantly used in different fields.

Edward Said in 1985 in the context of 'Islam hostility in the West,' 'recognition of Islam as a political and public enemy'.<sup>7</sup>

Having become more visible with the report of the Runnymede Trust and more widespread after the attacks of September 11 (2001), Islamophobia, which is used with concepts such as anti-Islamism, racism, exclusion, alterity, hostility, demonization, caricature, humiliation, and incitement, constructs itself through phobia, one of the basic concepts of psychology and socio-psychology. Although phobia has dictionary meanings such as panic, fear, anxiety, sadness, and dread, which means "meaningless, unrealistic, exaggerated fear," "aggravating something more dangerous than usual," and "extreme fear that can lead to panic," it is a form of social pathology -like agoraphobia- which also leads to a state of hostility and hatred.<sup>8</sup> İbrahim Kalın also considers this situation as cultural racism. According to him, cultural racism is produced, directly or indirectly, by cultural hierarchies in which some cultural behaviors are considered "modern, civic, liberating, and rational". In contrast, others are portrayed as "opposite, tyrannical, bigoted, irrational, and reactionary" and are preserved.<sup>9</sup>

When reading such a distorted form, which has psychological and social dimensions, over the concept of Islamophobia, the first thing that strikes the eye is that it points to "invented" and "internalized fear"<sup>10</sup> and perception management systematically carried out by the dominant mentality/ideology/power. This concept, which generally shows customized hostility towards the followers of Islam<sup>11</sup>, includes "anti-Muslim prejudice, bigotry, racism, intolerance towards Muslims,

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<sup>7</sup> Robin Richardson, "Islamophobia or Anti-Muslim Racism -or What?- Concepts and Terms Revisited" (2012).

<sup>8</sup> Farid Abdulkemim, "The consequences of Islamophobia on young men. The viewpoint of a Muslim citizen of France IN:Seminar Report", I. Islamophobia and Its Consequences on Young People, (Budapest, Hungary: European Youth Centre, 2004), 8; Engin Geçtan, Psikodinamik Psikiyatri ve Normaldışı Davranışlar (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1997), 186; Rasim Bakırcıoğlu, Ansiklopedik Psikoloji Sözlüğü (Ankara: Anı Yayınları, 2012), 532; Aaront Beck - Gary Emery, Anksiyete Bozuklukları ve Fobiler (İstanbul: Litera Yayıncılık, 2011), 206.

<sup>9</sup> İbrahim Kalın, "Islamophobia and the Limits of Multiculturalism", Islamophobia, The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century, Ed.by. İbrahim Kalın, John L. Esposito, Oxford University Press, 2011, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Yağup Zaki, "İslamofobi Politikası" (İslamofobi: Kolektif Bir Korkunun Anatomisi Sempozyumu, Sivas: K. İbn-i Hümam Vakfı, 2010), 163.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Shyrock, "Islam as an Object of Fear and Affection", *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend*, ed. Andrew Shyrock (İndian: İndian University Press, 2010), 29.

*hatred of Muslims, anti-Islamism, anti-Muslimism, Islamophobia, demonization of Islam or Muslims*".<sup>12</sup> Islamophobia, which is a part of the perspective and mentality of the Westerners towards Islam and Muslims, is the interpretation of the Westerners as a manipulative religion<sup>13</sup> that is monolithic, closed to change, containing violence and terrorism, confrontational, has non-common values with other cultures, barbaric, incompatible with civilized values, irrational, and using religious beliefs for political and military purposes.<sup>14</sup> Geisser states that this is "not a revival of the old crusader-jihad theme or the result of a religious rivalry, but a deepened modern form of anti-Muslimism."<sup>15</sup> Zafer İkbāl interprets this form as "Islamophobia is a new word for an old fear."<sup>16</sup>

When we look at the course of Islamophobic discourse, attitude, and behavior in the historical process, it is seen that the West describes Islam and Muslims as the "barbarian other" with deep-rooted prejudice and hatred. There are severe historical facts full of a deep reflex and prejudices towards demonizing Muslims (the only enemy focus) in the historical consciousness of the West.<sup>17</sup> In this context, although various reasons can be given, the main one is as follows: After the capture of some cities, which are symbols of the Christian world, by the Muslims, the Europeans were afraid of their lands being invaded, and this fear, which was felt throughout the Middle Ages and later, turned Islam into an object of hatred and threat. Cesari says that the West's understanding of the East is the influence of the narratives that begin with the discovery of the mysterious East in much older times than the works of writers, travelers, and chroniclers who contributed to the Enlightenment period in the West. Sim-

<sup>12</sup> Richardson, "Islamophobia or Anti-Muslim Racism -or What?- Concepts and Terms Revisited" (2012), 3.

<sup>13</sup> The elements mentioned here are the 8-item justifications for the necessity to make Islam hostile, published in the first official report, "Runnymede Trust".

<sup>14</sup> Mehmet Ali Kirman, "İslamofobinin Kökenleri: Batılı mı Doğulu mu?", *Journal of Islamic Research* 21/1 (2010), 24.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent Geisser, "Islamophobia in Europe: from the Christian anti-Muslim prejudice to a modern form of racism" (Ramberg, I. Islamophobia and Its Consequences on Young People, Hungary: European Youth Centre Budapest, 2004), 39.I. Islamophobia and Its Consequences on Young People, Hungary: European Youth Centre Budapest, 2004

<sup>16</sup> Ahmet Dağ, "İslamofobia: Hegemonyayı Derinleştirme ve Bir Hegemonya Projesi Olarak Euro-Islam" (Uluslararası Sosyal Bilimler ve Müslümanlar Kongresi, Konya: Necmettin Erbakan University Press, 2016), 38.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Shaikh-Ali Anas, "Islamophobic Discourse Masquerading as Art and Literature: Combating Myth through Progressive Education", *Islamophobia: the challenge of pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, ed. John L Esposito - İbrahim Kalın (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 147; Chris Allen, *Islamophobia* (England: Ashgate, 2010), 19.

ilarly, historical events such as the crusades of the West, and even before that, the Eastern Roman Empire bordering the Muslims in the early years of Islam, and later the expanding Islamic geography extended to the Pyrenees, caused Islam to be seen as a threat.<sup>18</sup> Based on such a threat perception, Pope Urbanus II, who declared the First Crusade in 1095, described Muslims as the devil's servants and then stated that the war with Muslims was between the enemies and friends of God.<sup>19</sup>

There is no doubt that Islamophobia has historically been rooted in some perception efforts that have directed the masses in the West. At this point, various works written by some writers and thinkers have played a profound role. These works were almost used as an influential force in the construction of the social mind, and as the primary motivation, they were designed to create an image of Islam and Muslims, which were made ugly, repulsive, and hostile. For example, in his works *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Reasons for the Faith Against Muslim Objections*, Thomas Aquinas introduces Islam as a lustful and violent religion that fools believe and Muslims as ignorant and bedouin. This point of view existed earlier than Aquinas due to a culture of rejection and polemics. It was maintained to continue throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. Thomas More reflects Islamophobia through "Turks," which he identifies as a "representation of the power of evil and darkness," "incomparable brutality," and "high evil and hatred." Luther also condemns Islamophobia through the Turks. The Turkish usages in Luther's expressions are not related to the Turks but refer to the Muslims as a whole. According to him, the success of the Turkish soldiers in Europe was a divine punishment that Christians were subjected to for their sins, and Islam was an unwise act of violence in the service of the Antichrist in the Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> While Leibniz was writing a letter to the French King to expel the Turks from Europe, Voltaire stated that he did not like Muslims at all, portraying them as "subversive and enemies of the arts," and then he asked German King II. Friedrich to expel the Turks from

<sup>18</sup> Jocelyne Cesari - John Esposito, *İslam'dan Korkmalı mı?* (İstanbul: Birey Yayınları, 1999), 9-15; cited in Mustafa Sami Mencet, "Tarihsel Arka Planıyla Türkiye'de İslamofobi", *Muhafazakar Düşünce Dergisi* 14/53 (3 Nisan 2018), 195.

<sup>19</sup> Murat Aktaş, "Avrupa'da Yükselen İslamofobi ve Medeniyetler Çatışması Tezi", *Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi* 13/1 (1 Mayıs 2014), 39-40; cited in Dağ, "İslamofobia: Hegemonyayı Derinleştirme ve Bir Hegemonya Projesi Olarak Euro-İslam", 38.

<sup>20</sup> Tomaz Mastnak, "Western Hostility Toward Muslims: A History of the Present", *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend*, ed. Andrew Shyrock (Indian: Indian University Press, 2010), 38-39.

his country.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Voltaire embellishes and equips the image of Islam in the minds of the Christian West with Islamophobic elements, with a play he wrote called *Fanaticism, or Mahomet the Prophet*. Guibert de Nogent's *The Deeds of God Through the Franks*, Vincent de Beauvais' *The Mirror of History*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy* make heavy islamophobic evaluations<sup>22</sup> by considering Islam and Muslims in line with ugliness, the epitome of ignorance, and the representative of barbarism to be feared.<sup>23</sup>

Although such examples can easily be seen in every phase of history, what is in question here is to be able to see that the efforts to produce negative images of Islam and Muslims are carried out systematically by a power (state/class/ideology), the masses are manipulated in line with this image, and the mental codes are conditioned/formed around a fiction with Islamophobic elements. Nathan Lean explains this situation with the concept of the 'islamophobia industry' and emphasizes that the Islamophobia industry is a growing planned and programmed initiative that knows the devastating effects of fear on society and wants to both produce and abuse this fear.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. The Problem of Indistinguishability of The Phenomenon and Its Image

In reality, Islamophobia is not a phenomenon that spontaneously occurred but was invented. In addition, while there are primarily Muslim armies as the enemy subject in the historical background of the phenomenon of Islamophobia, what is today is no longer Muslim countries or armies but directly "the image of Islam". The effect of state policies and the indoctrination/direction/motivation actions of the elite/intellectual segment is obvious, especially in the efforts to stereotype Muslims with negative images, which are carried out by using the manipulative power of art and the media. Undoubtedly, these efforts and actions are not only to negate the image of Islam but also to gain supporters and sharpen the current supporters' ide-

<sup>21</sup> Onur Bilge Kula, *Batı Felsefesinde Oryantalizm ve Türk İmgesi* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2010), 34.

<sup>22</sup> Dağ, "İslamofobia: Hegemonyayı Derinleştirme ve Bir Hegemonya Projesi Olarak Euro-İslam", 37-39.

<sup>23</sup> Francesco Stella, "Avrupa'da İslam Hakkında Bilinenler", *Ortaçağ*, ed. Umberto Eco (İstanbul: Alfa Yayınları, 2014), 642-648; İbrahim Kalın, "Batı'daki İslâm Algısının Tarihine Giriş", *Divan İlmî Araştırmalar*, 15/2 (2003), 12-13.

<sup>24</sup> Nathan Lean, *İslamofobi Endüstrisi*, (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2015), 301.



ological approaches. In addition to these, it is to separate Islam from its sacred space, to devalue the personality that makes a Muslim a Muslim -by caricaturing- and blend the Muslim identity with secular values that have been made an object of wannabe, to spoil its nature and to leave it out of existence in minds.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, the endpoint leaves no distinction between the phenomenon (Islam) and its image (representation), making Islam and its image indistinguishable and reifying.

In the context of the “*relationship between the phenomenon and its representation*,” it would be appropriate to point out a fundamental difference between the Western and the Eastern perspectives.

The Western point of view does not establish an identity between the *fact* and the *artwork* structured on the phenomenon. A Virgin Mary painting or Jesus statue is not identical to the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. They are simply works of art. For example, when these works of art are criticized, only the works of art are charged, and there is no negative reference to the value of the *fact* handled in the artwork. Therefore, the distinction between the *phenomenon* and *representation* is sharp in the West. However, this is not the case in the East. There is no difference between a Buddha statue and a Buddha. Or the picture of an Islamic figure and that personality are not separate things, but the *phenomenon* and the *representation* (picture) are in direct contact. For example, in the movie *The Message*, this is the main reason why Anthony Quinn, who plays Hamza, is very popular among Muslims, and even the attention shown goes beyond love. Another example can be given over the Atatürk statues in Turkey. Any pejorative discourse or action against Atatürk statues is perceived as done directly on Atatürk. Connecting/identifying is quite rigid.

As a result, it can be said that for Muslims who do not see a difference between the phenomenon and its representation, all kinds of negative images are undoubtedly directly identified with the phenomenon itself.

At this point, it would be appropriate to point out the existence of a segment that unwillingly uses Islamophobic elements. This segment is the orientalist who are not aware of such an Eastern (Muslim) point of view (mental perception code) but who create an Islamophobic perception with their (unwillingly or without an

<sup>25</sup> Mencet, “Tarihsel Arka Planıyla Türkiye’de İslamofobi”, 195.

islamophobic purpose) actions. For example, this group might consider a discourse regarded as an element of insult and offense among Muslims as freedom of expression, and they may say that this is a requirement of democracy. They are also right in their way. Because they approached the event/discourse from the perspective of the West, in other words, they evaluated the events through their value judgments without being aware of the perception codes (identity with representation) peculiar to the East. This is the main reason for the debates, stalemate, and separation between the East and the West, primarily based on the concepts of democracy and freedom of expression. Undoubtedly, it would be appropriate to oppose this approach by reminding the “Law of Blasphemy” and expressing that the Western world has been using “freedom of expression” only for its values.

### 3. “What Other People Say May Change What You See” or Agenda Setting

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Undoubtedly, one of the most effective communication channels in directing the viewpoints of the masses is art. Aestheticized communication channels, manipulative power, and provocative effect make it one of the most powerful propaganda devices of the power (state/ideology/class) in directing, intimidating, and misleading the masses and at the point of integrating the codes to be built with the mass. It can be easily said that functions such as regulating society, forming a common opinion in individuals, and shaping their attitudes have

<sup>26</sup> Sandra Blakeslee, “What Other People Say May Change What You See”, *The New York Times* (2005), 53-55; cited in Serdar Kaya, *Endoktrinasyon ve Türkiye’de Toplum Mühendisliği* (İstanbul: Nirengi Yayınları, 2011), 53-54.

opened the art to the use of power throughout history, transforming it into a power (propaganda) device in the hands of the power.<sup>27</sup>

Propaganda art, which manipulates people directly and indirectly with suggestions and directions such as “look at this, look over here” and shapes their perceptions, is used quite effectively, especially in our age. For example, art is one of the most effective carriers - together with the media - in the imposition of Islamophobia on the masses as an attitude and opinion and in creating a perception of the masses against Islam / Muslims. Similarly, art is one of the strongest carriers of orientalism and self-orientalism.

#### **4. The Early Stage of The Republic and The Construction of “The Barbarian – Other.”**

At this point, especially in the early stages of the Republic, during the rebuilding of the state, it should be emphasized that art is strongly instrumentalized at the stage of the acceptance of the official (Kemalist) ideology and its dissemination and adoption by the masses, and the invention of new traditions<sup>28</sup>, and in the work of commemorating the negative image of Islam and Muslims as an opinion through the injection of Islamophobic elements to the masses with self-orientalist approaches. In that, it would be safe to say that the early Republican period (intensely between 1930-1950) was the sharpest phase in imposing self-orientalist approaches and islamophobia on society through art in the history of the Republic.

Undoubtedly, nations and civilizations constantly find “others” to protect themselves or rebuild themselves in every phase of history.<sup>29</sup> For the West, the “other” is the “barbarian-other.” This distinction is significant. To say, “*We are the civilized, the right and the good, and the barbarian is the one we otherize.*” This is a historical reality and a

<sup>27</sup> Bünyamin Aydemir, *Sanatta Dirijizm / Devrimden Telkine Halkevleri-İnkılap Oyunları* (İstanbul: Mitoş Boyut Yayınları, 2017), 16-30.

<sup>28</sup> Eric Hobsbawm uses the definitium of “invented tradition” in his book *The Invention of Tradition*: Eric Hobsbawm - Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983). While tradition is normally the whole of common life and behaviors that occur spontaneously in the historical process, Hobsbawm uses this definitium -in general terms- for the special invention of power, that is, for the conscious-forced formation of life culture. In particular, after the Industrial Revolution, in the process of the collapse of empires and the deployment of nation-states in their place, it is aimed to explain the new states’ aim to “insert repeated behavior patterns” through certain rules, rituals and symbols; in short, it uses it for the social internalization of the symbols and values of national identity.

<sup>29</sup> Aktaş, “Avrupa’da Yükselen İslamofobi ve Medeniyetler Çatışması Tezi”, 46.

general-natural tendency inherent in nation-building processes. But what is unnatural here is the efforts to place the values of Islam and the Muslim type on the “barbarian-other” side. Because the values of Islam and being Muslim are at the forefront of the fundamental ontological motivations embedded in every moment and texture of the Turks’ history, culture, and daily life. From the Seljuks to the Ottomans, the Turks defined themselves with these values and named their existence with these values.

### 5. The Ones Put into Parentheses, Forgetting, Breaking from the Roots, Dehistoricization

Turks, who turned their faces to the West with the Tanzimat, attempted to spread some Western tendencies in the social layers until the Republic and tried to realize this through concepts such as reform, modernization, westernization, and secularization, especially by mediating the intelligentsia (elite) segment. In this respect, it is possible to say that the westernist tendencies, modernization efforts, and the new society model in the Republican period are the continuation of the westernization in the Ottoman Empire. However, there is a sharp difference between these two periods. While the modernization efforts in the Ottoman Empire were the things that the modernization architects did by remaining Muslim and even fully aware that they were a Muslim state, the modernization project in the Republican period consisted of the efforts of the state per se and Kemalist ideologues to carry out this by otherizing and putting Islam in parentheses.<sup>30</sup>

Kemalism, known as the ideology of the republic and accepted as the creator of the national identity, is interpreted as the world view of creating a social model in the western style by changing the political and social structures left from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>31</sup> Although the basic principles of Kemalism were included in the Constitution in the mid-1930s and made the official ideology of the state<sup>32</sup>, it actually is a state project whose power and influence that began unofficially to be felt gradually from the mid-1920s. Füsün Üstel exp-

<sup>30</sup> İsmail Kara, *Cumhuriyet Türkiyesi’nde Bir Mesele Olarak İslam* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2014), 25.n çalışılmasının yegane sebebi dilmiştir. m.çekleştirilen islamofobik manipülasyonları akalenin çalışılmasının yegane sebebi d

<sup>31</sup> Şerif Mardin, *Türkiye’de Toplum ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 181. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 250-410.

<sup>32</sup> *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Programı* (Ankara: Devlet Basımevi, 1935), 3.

lains this situation, which is an effort to replace the existing social reality with the fictionalized reality, as “*not a communal socialization based on volunteerism, but an institutional socialization that is the expression of the legitimate power’s forcing its rules and sovereignty*”.<sup>33</sup>

Kemalism wanted to put its arguments on scientific foundations to root its ideology and keep its feet firmly on the ground in constructing national identity. For this, relativistic-scientific arguments were produced under the name of Turkish History Thesis and ideological starting points were determined. The Turkish History Thesis, which Kemalist ideology determined as the transformative motivation of society, had two fundamental pillars. The first was the execution of policies that emulate the Westerner lifestyle and the advances of the West in science and technology, in line with the rational and secular requirements of modernism; the second was the view that the Turkish civilization is one of the oldest civilizations in history with an origin based on Central Asia. This civilization was the source of inspiration for all cultures and nations. According to this view, the Seljuk and Ottoman periods are intermediate-lost in Turkish History. It is necessary to save the Turkish identity from being lost in the Islamic identity.<sup>34</sup> For this, Islam and being Muslim must be removed from being the constituent elements of the Turkish identity. Afet Inan, in her book *Civil Information and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s Handwritings*, says: “*(This religion) loosened the national ties of the Turkish nation, it numbed national feelings and national excitement. This was very natural because the aim of the religion founded by Muhammad was a comprehensive ummah policy above all nationalities*.”<sup>35</sup>

Islam, named “*the religion founded by Muhammad*” by Afet Inan, was one of the critical paradigms of social assimilation and adoption, permeating all life practices of Turkish society for over a thousand years. However, with this assimilation, Kemalist ideology demanded the rejection of all Ottoman and religious values and, thus, a complete break from the roots of society. At the same time, this break should have been evaluated as “*a general state of forgetfulness that would cause the people to become alienated from their cultural practices,*” in other words, to dehistoricize society.

As a result, this new state otherized what belonged to the old one. By rejecting thousands of years of ancient traditions and putting

<sup>33</sup> Füsün Üstel, *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 132.

<sup>34</sup> Aydemir, *Sanatta Dirijizm / Devrimden Telkine Halkevleri-İnkılap Oyunları*, 34-39.

<sup>35</sup> Üstel, *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde*, 225.

the Ottoman Empire in parentheses, it considered the break from its roots the only parallel of its existence. In Koçak's words, it was now "the official enemy was the Turk's own past rather than the Greek."<sup>36</sup> Tanıl Bora said the following about the efforts to make the Greeks, who had just fought for independence, "a guide, not an enemy":

*"The overthrow of the old Turkey in the minds was frantically dealt with, and everything else remained under this campaign. The Greeks attempting to invade the country are only a secondary enemy, a tool alongside the evil forces of the past in the eyes of those who carry out this campaign. For example, in Civil Information Book for Citizen, written by Afet Inan under the supervision of Mustafa Kemal, the Sultan, who "encouraged them to move forward" rather than the Greeks, is blamed. Recep Peker, in his Revolution Lectures in 1934-35, tells that the Turkish nation "fought with the palace, all the elements of backwardness and the ignorant people who followed them without understanding the truth, on the one hand, and fought against the foreign soldiers and wild armies on the other hand." The Greeks are one of the "foreign soldiers, wild armies," that is all. Who is anyone? The past is gone. The real calamity is the palace, the backward elements, and the ignorant; luckily, they are passed. We can roughly assume such a feeling. Another reason for the indifference shown to our "enemy" in the War of Independence, directly related to the priority of grappling with the past, is that the New Turkey is enthusiastically engaged in the struggle for Westernization. This effort overshadows everything else and does not want to be overshadowed by anything else. Moreover, Greece is also a part of the West. The Turkish Revolution also embraced the "Greek" as a part of owning the West and Westernism."<sup>37</sup>*

<sup>36</sup> Orhan Koçak, "Defter'den", *Defter Dergisi* 32 (1998), 8.

<sup>37</sup> Tanıl Bora, "Milli Kimliğin Kuruluş Döneminde Resmi Metinlerde 'Yunan Düşmanlığı' Neden Eksikti, Nereye Gitmişti?", *Defter Dergisi* 32 (1998), 35-36.

Althusser says, “*paradoxically, every new revolution manifests itself through the new order’s reproduction of oppression*”.<sup>38</sup> At this point, it would be appropriate to say that the efforts to build national identity and the self-orientalist orientation of Kemalist ideology for the production of new/reasonable citizens and the identification of corrupt practices with Islam and Muslims as the only valid paradigm of the period opened the door to social severe breaks/vulnerabilities. About these social vulnerabilities, it is undoubtedly possible to talk about cultural schizophrenia as a result of ignoring/devaluing society’s values, attempting to erase cultural memory, and detaching it from the center of social consciousness. In addition, it can be mentioned the morbid emotional states of being displaced, being cut off from the realm of property, deterritorialization, injury to consciousness, isolation, being forced into mental exile, and loss of what belongs to oneself.

## 6. Assignment of Art - Theatre

It should be emphasized again that the effort to build a new order accepted by all segments of society, where everyone is melted and kneaded, and shaped by the Kemalist paradigms and the Turkish History Thesis propositions, is the dominant character of the Early Republican period.

Various political tools and propaganda channels were used to construct the new order. Foremost among these, art, in general, and theater, in particular, had an important function. İsmet İnönü says: “*The only spiritual force that will nourish and enlarge the whole body of the revolution, bring the revolution to its purpose, and make the nobility of the revolution effective on the masses is the fine arts*”.<sup>39</sup> Behçet Kemal Çağlar, one of the elites of the period, makes a similar emphasis, “*For some Revolutionary movements to be fully beneficial to the people and to be fully absorbed in the soul of the people, they must be shined in the hands of art and pass through the alembic of art*”. He adds the following, “*In countries of revolution like ours, art should consider being at the disposal of the revolution, no matter what, as a pleasure of the heart, a debt of conscience, a remedy for life*”<sup>40</sup>. On the other hand, Münir Hayri Egeli, one of the influential playwrights of

<sup>38</sup> Ana Monteiro Ferreira, “Art and Ideology”, *Gaudium Sciendi* (Eastern Michigan University, 2012), 103.

<sup>39</sup> Ferit Celal Güven, “Halkevleri ve Güzel Sanatlar”, *Ülkü Halkevleri Mecmuası* 8/73 (1939), 13.

<sup>40</sup> Behçet Kemal Çağlar, “Gönüllü Sanat”, *Ülkü Halkevleri Mecmuası* 4 (1935), 336-337.

the period, says, “*theatre was discussed at among the means, actually at first place, used to spread the new ideas born in the era of revolutions*”<sup>41</sup>, while İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu asserts that the artist is not free, can not do whatever he wants, and “*it is a stern necessity for art to submit to the wishes of the revolution*”.<sup>42</sup> Yaşar Nabi Nayır does the same conditioning. He accuses the artist, who does not serve the Kemalist revolutions, of treason.<sup>43</sup> While Sevda Şener, one of today’s theater scientists, says, “*For the revolutions to be digested by the nation, the faults of the Ottoman period, which ended with the Republic, should be exhibited and criticized. The theater has been a suitable expression for this criticism, as well*” Metin draws attention to the fact that the essential backbone of the play texts produced in that period is the opposition between the “*Ottoman remainder*” and the “*idealist generation*.”<sup>44</sup>

Undoubtedly, the expression “Ottoman remainder” here both points to the Ottoman values and Islamophobic tendencies that were otherized in the plays of the period and implies the reflection of “de-historicization,” “forgetting,” and “breaking from the roots.”

## 7. The Appearance of Islamophobia in Plays from The Tanzimat to The Republic

It would be appropriate to say that art and theater’s use of the islamophobic elements started gradually from the Tanzimat period and subsequently caught a strong vein with the Republic. Indeed, the period in which the West-centered orientalist view systematically turned into self-orientalism was the Tanzimat period (1839-1876). In this period and the following processes, Islam was ascribed to a vulgar picture in every field of art, especially in humor publishing, and Muslims were portrayed as evil, barbarian, bigoted, ignorant, sorcerer-healer, treacherous, dishonest, perverted, disgusting, and ridiculous beings, and in theater plays, they were reflected as the types who were the carriers of blindness, ignorance, superstition, backwardness, and evil.

For example, such image productions were included even in the first play of the Turkish Theater with a text, *Şair Evlenmesi*

<sup>41</sup> Münir Hayri Egeli, “Bugünkü Manasiyle Tiyatro Nedir?”, *Ülkü Halkevleri Mecmuası* 18 (1934), 434.

<sup>42</sup> İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, “Teşkilatsız Edebiyat”, *Yeni Adam* 9/119 (1936), 119.

<sup>43</sup> Yaşar Nabi Nayır, “İnkılâp ve Vazife”, *Varlık* 1/9 (1933), 129.

<sup>44</sup> Metin And, *Türk Tiyatrosunun Evreleri* (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 1983), 365.



(1860). The humor in the play, written by İbrahim Şinasi, is based on an imam marrying a Western-educated young man to her ugly older sister, not the girl he loves, and then correcting this mistake only by taking a bribe. The hero of the play is Müştak Bey, a Western, educated young poet. The opposing hero is a religious man (imam) named Ebüllâklâka, who is a bigot, dishonest and corrupt. Müştak Bey loves a girl (Kumru) with pure and romantic feelings, while Imam Ebüllâklâka deceives him with all his impulsiveness and marries Müştak to the girl's forty-two-year-old sister. When the incident is revealed, Müştak Bey is very upset about this situation but does not accept it. Imam Ebüllâklâka attempts to scare him by saying that he will be imprinted if he does not take this marriage. The neighborhood residents living there also justify Ebüllâklâka. Anyway, whatever Imam Ebüllâklâka says is expected by the neighborhood residents without thinking and questioning:

*A Neighborhood resident- We don't want.  
Atak Köse - We do not want.  
Hikmet Efendi – (overtaking Atak Köse) What do you not want?  
Atak Köse - How should I know! The neighbor residents say we don't want it, and that's what I say. Of course, they have a right to say so.<sup>45</sup>*

db | 1135

When the situation comes to a dead end, Hikmet Bey, who is a friend of Müştak Bey, finds the opportunity to give Ebüllâklâka a purse of money (bribe).

*Ebüllâklâka – What else? He doesn't want the girl I married; he wants her younger one. What does this mean?  
Hikmet Efendi - Sir, do not be angry; we want the young girl from you (showing a secret money bag).  
Batak Ese - Sir, what is that? Are you taking a bribe?  
Ebüllâklâka - (to Batak Ese) Do I accept such a thing? (Secretly to Hikmet Efendi) Put it in my side pocket. (Hikmet Efendi secretly puts the bag in the imam's side pocket.)*

<sup>45</sup> İbrahim Şinasi, *Şair Evlenmesi* (Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2019), 15-16.

*Atak Köse - Are you secretly saying, "put it in my side pocket"?*  
*Ebüllâklâka - No. Don't stand next to me; I say go until you do not doubt me.*<sup>46</sup>

Taking the bribe, Imam Ebüllâklâka changes his words and says that he married him to Kumru Hanım, and he convinces the neighborhood residents of this again. The play ends with Müştak Bey and Kumru Hanım entering the bridal chamber.

The play, which reflects the Muslims (neighborhood) as the type of people who do not think and question, and reflects the imam who represents Islam as a dishonest, manipulative, and bribe taker, is mentioned not only as the first theatrical play text of the Turkish Theatre but also as the first Turkish play text adorned with Islamophobic elements.

A similar attitude manifests in the Constitutional Period's plays (1876-1920). Islamophobic elements were obviously and more frequently used in these periods, which spread to the Republican period at an increasing speed.

1136 | db

It is possible to give examples of this period through the plays of Ahmet Mithat Efendi. For instance, in his play named *Açıkbaş*, Muslims (the people) are a mass that accepts what the cleric (Açıkbaş Hodja) says without thinking, asking and investigating, and at the same time easily accepting various immorality for their interests, and the imam, who is also an Islamic value as an image, is caricatured through the hodja figure who deceives the people, is a demon, a magician. A similar theme is also seen in the author's plays *Çengi yahut Daniş Çelebi*, *Eyvah*, and *Fürs-i Kadimde Bir Facia yahut Siyavuş*.

Such plays, which are said to criticize the corrupt aspects of society, undoubtedly draw attention as texts that are structured with functions such as caricaturing the values of Islam and Muslims directly and/or indirectly, showing that these values are intertwined with the bad ones, and discrediting the Muslim identity.

### **8. Islamophobia in The Early Republican Period Plays**

The most important feature of the Early Republican period -as mentioned in the sections above- is the creation of the consciousness

<sup>46</sup> Şinasi, *Şair Evlenmesi*, 17-18.

of “*Turkish History without the Ottomans*” by bracketing Turkish history and ignoring Muslim Seljuk and Ottoman history and all sorts of values related to these periods, and this is carried out by the state itself (official policy). Such tendencies, which some intellectuals and writers realized during the Tanzimat and Constitutional Monarchy periods, were determined as state policy in the early Republican period. This undoubtedly shaped theater plays around the official ideology.

It is possible to read the general characteristics of the plays of this period, primarily through the plays’ characters. In the plays, the antagonists usually represent the Ottomans or the Muslim clergymen. These people, often presented as traitors, are positioned as Arab-like clergymen (hafiz, imam, etc.) with all kinds of ugly, low, and immoral features. The other is the Ottoman and its values. The religion of Islam, on the other hand, is not one of the essential values of the Turkish nation but an understanding that represents the darkness as well as the brightness of pre-Islamic Turkish history. It would be appropriate to note that such elements occur, especially in the so-called Revolution plays.

The first thing that can be said in evaluating the texts written during the period, called the Revolution Plays, is the effort to explain the ideology through allegories. Almost all of the readers are on the theme of reinforcing the commitment to the principles and revolutions of the Republic, criticizing everything that goes against these values, and instilling confidence in the people. The second major theme in the plays is the use of Ottomans and Muslims as enemy objects. The people in the play who are pro-Ottoman and clergy members representing Islam, who are structured with qualifications such as reactionist, conspirator, and bigot, are fighting against progressive-Republican heroes (protagonists) as antagonists. They are otherized to such an extent that they are fictionalized by the act of treason, especially in the National Struggle. Along with this situation, which is also an expression of the break from the roots, the plays also include issues such as the Ottoman’s administrative weaknesses, the malfunctions in the justice system, the corruption in the religious structure, and the ignorant rulers. In these plays, Kemalist characters are also reflected in their modern, idealistic, combative, valiant, self-sacrificing, and patriotic sides.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Aydemir, *Sanatta Dirijizm / Devrimden Telkine Halkevleri-İnkılap Oyunları*, 129-134.

For example, in *Kahraman*, the last play of the trilogy written by Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, which also includes the plays *Akın* and *Özyurt*, the main opposition is the image of Atatürk, which is ennobled, and the Ottoman Empire equipped with Kemalist revolutions and pejorative elements. While the play is built on the predicament of “fight for the homeland or the girl you love” on the surface, what is felt is the glorification of Atatürk and his revolutions by vilifying Islamic and Ottoman values.

In this context, the deification of Atatürk with certain concepts used mainly in religious terminology, the belittlement of institutions and people to whom the religion of Islam ascribes holiness, and the alterity of their values can be exemplified by the following lines in the play:

*HÜSEYİN - How much do you love him?  
AZİZ - This is not love,  
This is an inclination that overshadows the glorification!  
He is the sun...  
Like a single sun of four seasons,  
Having the powers that both burn and create,  
HÜSEYİN - Is he beautiful?  
AZİZ - No god is more beautiful than him! <sup>48</sup>*

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In another part of the play, Aziz says: “..no matter how mournful we are / he makes us dream / He beats in the stoniest breasts like faith, / like excitement in the hearts, blood in the pulses. / Seeing him, the houses prostrate themselves / Villages, houses, men come to life again.”<sup>49</sup>

In one part of the play, Atatürk is compared to the prophets.

*AZİZ - While bowing to the prophets without knowing his name,  
Who doesn't believe in a light competing with the sun?  
We saw him, solely we believe in him.”<sup>50</sup>*

<sup>48</sup> Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, *Kahraman* (İstanbul: Ali Fehmi Cumhuriyet Kütüphanesi, 1933), 42-43.

<sup>49</sup> Çamlıbel, *Kahraman*, 88.

<sup>50</sup> Çamlıbel, *Kahraman*, 38.

Undoubtedly, the fact that this play is not regarding overthrowing the religious values of a people who won the War of Independence, favoring Atatürk over the prophet, and belittling and vilifying those who bow (believe in) to the prophets as burdensome can be interpreted as a ‘challenge’ or a ‘proposal to break from the roots by the stage to the people and their values. It can be interpreted as ‘proposing a break from the roots of society. In this respect, it is possible to consider Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, the author of the play, among the “founding generation that glorifies the sultan and is accustomed to seeing a father figure for themselves,” which Hasan Ünder describes in his article titled ‘Atatürk İmgesinin Siyasal Yaşamındaki Rolü’ (The Role of the Atatürk image in Political Life). Because, Çamlıbel in his plays “replaced the sultan-father figure, which disappeared with the abolition of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, and the God, of whom some of the sultans were his shadow, with Mustafa Kemal.”<sup>51</sup>

Another example of the plays in which the Ottoman Empire was vilified, and the Republic and Atatürk were exalted in Yaşar Nabi Nayır’s *Beş Devir*. Sultan Abdulhamit is at the center of the satires and demonization acts in the play. He is merely a beast:

*“That sultan who painted the whole country  
red,  
Shot every young person who wanted to rise in  
the brain.  
A deadly star, a welfare star  
Having consumed us for thirty years”.*<sup>52</sup>

db | 1139

Atatürk, on the other hand, is the “unbelievable miracle of the Turks.” “He gave all he had to fifteen million today / Is it too much for the nation to deify him.”<sup>53</sup>

The main thing that draws attention in the play is that Atatürk, besides being a superhuman being, is transformed into a cult leader who is almost deified (“worshipped”) with the religious terminology. Besides, the alterity (even condemnation) of the Ottoman Empire and the depiction of the Palace as a treacherous front are also among the central thematic elements of the text.

<sup>51</sup> Nilgün Firidinoğlu, “Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel’in ‘Kahraman Destanı’ ve Yazınsal Metnin Üretim Sürecinde İdeolojik Zorunluluğun Rolü”, *Tiyatro Eleştirmenliği ve Dramaturji Bölümü Dergisi* 17 (22 Aralık 2011), 91.

<sup>52</sup> Yaşar Nabi Nayır, *Beş Devir* (Ankara: Hâkimiyeti Millîye Matbaası, 1933), 7.

<sup>53</sup> Nayır, *Beş Devir*, 30-31.

A similar theme exists in another play of the author, *İnkılâp Çocukları*. While Atatürk was a deified and prophesied figure in previous plays, in this play, Atatürk's book, *Nutuk (The Speech)*, is introduced as almost a holy book:

*"We all ended in a common mind  
As we spelled love in the same book.  
This book, you know, was the Speech,  
That gave us the new faith".<sup>54</sup>*

This attitude, which means the rejection of Ottoman and Islamic values in some ways, can be considered a break from the roots and history and the construction of a new sacred. In the play, in which some concepts of holiness in religious terminology are identified with Atatürk and the ideology of the Republic, Islamophobic elements are dominant, and the Sultan and the Palace are also at the center of the satire:

*"Sultans would look at the future without being  
able to see,  
They would try to seize the world for pleasure.  
They had people who would die without questioning".<sup>55</sup>*

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One of the influential writers of the period is Aka Gündüz. In his play *Mavi Yıldırım*, "Atatürk knows everything, everything unknown would have a presentment to him."<sup>56</sup>

In the play, Firuz, the clerk of Damat Ferit Pasha, is in love with the republican Türköz. Firuz, the man of the palace (representing the Ottoman Empire), is the leader of the traitors. Türköz asks Firuz; "Do you have any idea about that enemy invasion?"

*FİRUZ - Look, I have three ideas, not one, for this. First, I do not consider those who come as enemies. On the contrary, I consider them as messengers who brought civilization. Second, this is not an invasion. They came to civilize us by force, which the centuries could not. Third, mandated by Western. Besides, it is unnecessary*

<sup>54</sup> Yaşar Nabi Nayır, *İnkılâp Çocukları* (Ankara: Hakimiyeti Milliye Matbaası, 1933), 9.

<sup>55</sup> Nayır, *İnkılâp Çocukları*, 13.

<sup>56</sup> Aka Gündüz, *Mavi Yıldırım* (Ankara: CHP Temsil Neşriyatı, 1934), 45.

*to explain them to you (Ironically). Because I know you're an idealist (Laughter). But just in case, why don't you believe I will be tarred with the same brush?*<sup>57</sup>

Firuz, who represents the Ottoman Empire, does not consider the enemy who invaded the lands as the enemy and introduces them as “*prophets of civilization*,” which can be viewed as an act of demonization beyond treason. Besides, the Hodja image given in the play takes part among the Islamophobic elements. Hodja, played by major, is a play character who is bigoted, ignorant, and prone to being treacherous.

*Yarım Osman* is another play written by the author with the method of brightening the Republic and darkening the Ottoman Empire. The play is basically constructed on two oppositions. On the one hand, there is the pro-Ottoman, rude, tyrannical, and unscrupulous Mültezim (taxman) and on the other hand, Kemalist Osman, who is called “*Yarım Osman*” (half Osman) because he was injured in his left eye and left arm during the First World War. In the play, Islam is typically imaged through the often-used old and turbaned man.<sup>58</sup>

*Gavur İmam* is another play structured on a similar theme. In the play written by Burhan Cahit Morkaya, Islamophobic elements are dominant, and Islam is linked with the enemy, betrayal, and darkness. In the play, where the Mufti of Biga and the imam of the mosque are on the treacherous side, the Sultan (Ottoman) is presented in the position of collaborating with the enemy, and concepts such as the Sultan, the Istanbul Government, and the Caliphs are always used to represent the treacherous side. It is said somewhere in the play: “*We will not give mercy to the caliphs and sultans who led the innocent Turkish peasants to banditry under the banner of religion.*”<sup>59</sup>

The plays, in which the Kemalist ideology is brightened with the contrary Islamophobic elements, and the values of the Ottoman Empire and Islam are displaced and uglified, constitute the most characteristic theme of the period. In this respect, it is possible to say that almost every play written in this period used Kemalism as the protagonist and Islam and Ottoman as the antagonist. To multiply

<sup>57</sup> Gündüz, *Mavi Yıldırım*, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Aka Gündüz, “*Yarım Osman*”, *Okullara Milli Piyesler Antolojisi* (İstanbul: Günaydın Kitabevi, 1968), 87.

<sup>59</sup> Burhan Cahit Morkaya, *Gâvur İmam* (İstanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1933), 15.

examples, Celal Tuncer's *Devrim Yolcuları*, S. Behzat Budak's *Ana*, Vasfi Mahir Kocatürk's *Yaman*, and Feyzi Kutlu's *Timurhan* plays can also be mentioned. The line "You have dissolved Turkishness in the religion of the Arabs"<sup>60</sup> in *Timurhan* is quite remarkable in that it parallels the words discussed above by Afet Inan.

Besides such plays, there were plays specific to the period called "Revolution Plays," in which the characteristics and values of the Republic and Kemalist ideology were explained. At the same time, Islam and Muslims were directly or indirectly excluded and presented as objects of hatred. These plays, commissioned to be written by the Republican People's Party (CHP), representing the state since the early 1930s, often included Islamophobic elements and tendencies, even though their writing techniques and theatrical features were weak.

It is incorrect to say that there were no plays to be called qualified among these plays. Ertuğrul Şevket's *Şeriatçısı* and İbnürrefik Ahmet Nuri's *Şeriye Mahkemesi* plays, which gave comprehensive coverage to Islamophobic tendencies while satirizing the Ottoman justice system, are among the highlights. In *Şeriatçısı*, the clergy is depicted as people who use religion as an exploitative tool and commit all kinds of immorality, especially bribery. A similar theme is also included in *Şeriye Mahkemesi*.

Musahipzade Celal is undoubtedly one of the most powerful writers who wrote plays with the support of the state during that period. In fact, Musahipzade Celal is a writer who has been writing plays since the Constitutional Monarchy and bases the central humor of his plays on caricaturing the Ottoman and Islamic values indirectly in almost every play. However, in the 1930s, he also wrote government-promoted plays to present and inure the Republic's values.

In almost all plays of Musahipzade Celal, all the characters representing Islam and the Ottoman Empire, such as pilgrims, hodjas, dervishes, judges, and members of the palace, are lust-worshipping, rapist, self-seekers, stingy, bribe taker, greedy, rude, tactless, reactionist, bigoted, ignorant and ugly-faced people.<sup>61</sup> For example, in *Aynaroz Kadısı*, the Muslim judge (qadi) is a lover of lust, money, and goods. Here, Qadi Yakup Efendi attempts to seize the inheritance of an underage Russian girl before the monastery with lies and

<sup>60</sup> Feyzi Kutlu, *Timurhan* (İstanbul: Mürettibiye Matbaası, 1934), 38.

<sup>61</sup> *Ölümünün 20.Yılında Musahipzade Celal* (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1980), 60.



deception. Qadi, who also tries to take advantage of the girl sexually, bribes everyone from the Shaykh al-islam to the qadis who also manage the court.

The play *Mumsöndü*, written by the author in 1930, presents the representation of a money-lover, perverted and lying dervish and the hidebound people caricatured. In the play, Dervish Nihani is a respected person among the public who makes an impact with his words, and using these features, he makes false statements to the court and looks for ways to acquire them illegally. Dervish Nihani has sexual perversion as well as his love of money. He also abuses women by using his situation of being a hodja. In the second table of the play, he first approaches the girl he invites to recite the Qur'an and say a prayer, then touches her, caresses her, and kisses her at last.<sup>62</sup>

It is clear that the author, who reflected the negative hodja image on Daniş Hodja in *İtaat İlamı*, actually depicts the clergy in a perversion in almost all of his other plays and gives them as many ugly images many as possible. Another element he caricatured and satirized in his plays is the Ottoman Empire. The author, who prefers to caricature and reflect the Ottoman values and representatives with the dimensions of their reflection on social life, photographs the corrupt and rotten aspects of the social order and system through these values and representatives.

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Reşat Nuri Güntekin is another playwright who uses the valid paradigms of the period in his plays and places Islamophobic tendencies at the center of the elements against these paradigms. In his play *Hülleci*, not only is a portrait of a negated clergyman presented, but also the play's central theme is made by caricaturing a fundamental principle of the marriage law of Islam.

According to this principle, which is known as "hülle" among the people and can be easily abused in cases where Islamic sensitivity is ignored, the possibility that the same people can remarry after the divorce only depends on the fact that the woman has married another man, that is, the woman has had another marriage in the meantime.<sup>63</sup>

The author approached an Islamic principle as an empty, underestimated, reduced value and banalized and satirized it as an irra-

<sup>62</sup> Musahipzade Celal, *Mumsöndü* (İstanbul: Kanaat Kitabevi, 1935), 18-23.

<sup>63</sup> Bakara Suresi-230, "Kur'an-ı Kerim", *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (03 Haziran 2021); Safet Köse, "Hülle", *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 03 Haziran 2021.

tional and imposing religious and social rule by building the central theme of his play on this situation. This indirect method of satire, which counts toward the whole play, manifests itself more objectively through the Imam's character. Imam is a money-lover, coward, two-faced person, and crafty. However, the society is a Muslim population that turns a blind eye to all kinds of immorality of the Imam for the sake of their benefit.

It is possible to say that there are Islamophobic elements in some of Nazım Hikmet Ran's plays. For example, Islamic values and traditions are banalized in a play called *Bir Ölü Evi*. Religious and social customs and rules performed after a person's death are used as the material of black humor in comedy logic. The hodja figure in the play is also presented under this logic.

Undoubtedly, plays written in the early Republican period and including Islamophobic elements can be exemplified further. Besides, it is possible to say that the plays, which started with the Tanzimat and turned into a state project in the early periods of the Republic, were written in the way that "Islamic values are satirized, vilified and belittled in a way that creates phobia to brighten the values of the Republic and Kemalism, and that Islam and Muslims in the society turn into an object of hatred with negative images" continued almost as a tradition in later periods. To exemplify, the following list of plays can be given: In the play *Teneke* (1955), Yaşar Kemal portrays one of three different types of landlords as a scheming man with a green skullcap and constantly talking with the name of God. In the play *Bir Yol* (1966), Talip Apaydın finds the reason for the poverty of the village in the villagers' backwardness. In the play, the sheiks and hodjas are self-seeker characters who deliberately leave the public in the dark. In the play *Pir Sultan Abdal* (1969), Erol Toy presents the character of a hodja who takes bribes even from a loan shark.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, many plays by Cevat Fehmi Başkurt, Vasıf Öngören, Hal-dun Taner, and Aziz Nesin, and today's plays by Murathan Mungan, especially *Mahmud ile Yezida*, and Ferhan Şensoy's plays can be given as an example.

The main character in the writing tendencies of such plays and writers is, on the one hand, positive characters such as intellectuals, teachers, youths, minstrels, laborers, and peasants, and on the other

<sup>64</sup> Sıddıka Sümeyye Karaarslan, *Tiyatro ve Din: Türk Tiyatrosu Örneği* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2010), 58.

hand, ‘demonized’ people in the play represented by some Islamic-identical names such as pilgrim, hodja, dervish, and sheik.

### Conclusion

The concept of path dependency can also be used to explain the stimulation of the new life model to be created by instrumentalizing art and theater in the early Republican period. It includes opening a path shaped in line with the basic arguments of Westernization and Kemalist ideology, making the masses dependent on that path, in other words, building an internalized order... This means shaping society’s perception in line with “*the things said*,” based on the logic of “*what other people say may change what you see*.” Play texts designed with Islamophobic elements are undoubtedly among the most striking among the “*the things said*.” It is clear that such texts, which started with the Tanzimat and continued until today, gained a general tendency, especially in the early Republican period.

Such plays, written in the direction of the propositions, impositions, and orders of the official state policy, aimed to raise awareness in line with the creation of a new tradition/national identity, modernization, and other arguments of Kemalist ideology. However, while doing this, they also positioned the act of cleansing, devaluing, ignoring, demonizing, and altering the old order, circulating traditional understandings, social values, social consciousness, and social memory as the opposite center of the plays. This tendency, peculiar to the early Republican period and primarily created through serious-heroic plays, showed itself mostly in comedy plays in the periods before the Republic and the period after the 1960s. Islamophobic elements were constantly used either in the center or at the border of the satirical, humorous plays, which formed almost all the repertoires of private theaters, especially after the 1960s. In a sense, the cultural and religious values of the society were made the target of the language of irony and satire.<sup>65</sup> In this context, it would be appropriate to say that the two main focuses in the plays as antagonists are the Ottoman period/representatives and Islamic values. It can be observed that the people and images representing these two focuses generally have the following characteristics: bigot, reactionist, ignorant, rude, ugly, cruel, barbarian, the enemy of civilization,

<sup>65</sup> According to the Superiority in Humor Theory, mocking, belittling, matching the other person with ridiculous images, association with caricatured cliches are tools of psychological struggle.

lustful-perverted, bribe taker, cheater, liar, treacherous, and enemy collaborator, etc.

Such heavy analogies and matchings will produce negative images of Muslims, Islam, and the Ottoman Empire in the perception of society. Indeed, such acts carried out consciously and/or unconsciously caused the Ottomans and Muslims to be discredited, otherized, humiliated, and become objects of hatred. They will ultimately serve to become the objects of stereotypical prejudice in society.

Art and artistic transmission do not impose anything directly but indirectly evolve the target audience. Besides, telling something through an indirect, aestheticized theme will increase the effectiveness of the described thing. Therefore, art gains all its magic, manipulative power, and provocative influence here. The metaphor of “boiling frog”<sup>66</sup> used for similar situations in social psychology is an excellent example of how vital the indirect impact is, especially contrary to impositions of sudden change, in changing and shaping the thoughts, values, attitudes, and convictions of the individual or society.

The last instance shows that the common view of everyone sensitive to humans and society is that if art is to be instrumentalized for something, it must be in the direction of good, proper and beautiful. The opposite would be to serve the creation of a “sub-real world” as Shayegan articulates in *Wounded Consciousness*. In such a world -as mentioned before- (Muslim) man and society are reduced to a creature being isolated, broken, devalued, insecure, dispossessed, and displaced, having lost what belongs to him, whose memory and consciousness are broken off from those in circulation.

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<sup>66</sup> The frog that is thrown into the boiling water in the pot to be boiled naturally throws itself out of the pot. However, throwing the same frog into warm water and heating the water slowly will cause it not to show resistance, but even to relax in the increasingly hot water and enjoy it. As the temperature rises, the frog will pass out slowly, and after a while, it will boil being unaware of the changes that occur in itself, and its existence will have disappeared.

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# ISLAMOPHOBIC TENDENCIES AND THE OTHERIZED OTTOMAN IN THEATER PLAYS FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE TO THE REPUBLIC (1860-1950)

Bünyamin AYDEMİR\*

## Genişletilmiş Özet

Neredeyse çeyrek yüzyıldır, başta Batı olmak üzere dünyanın çok çeşitli bölgelerinde üzerinde en fazla durulan kavramlar arasında islamofobi bulunmaktadır. Benzer şekilde İslam ülkelerinde de tartışılan bu kavram, büyük ölçüde oryantalist ve self-oryantalist bakış açılarının belirleyici olduğu anlayışların bir ürünü olarak dikkat çekmektedir. Batıların kendi değer yargılarına göre genelde doğuyu özelde Müslüman dünyasını değerlendirme, anlamlandırma, konuşlandırma çabalarının adı olan oryantalizm ile Doğulu ve / veya müslüman - Türk olmasına karşın –salt modernizmi yakalama çabası uğruna- kendi kimliğine ilişkin değerler evrenini Batı'nın kodlarıyla, kavramlarıyla, değer yargıları ve bakış açılarıyla ele alan self-oryantalizm, bir yandan Avrupamerkezci ideolojinin üstünlük tutumunu yaşam kültürü haline getirirken diğer yandan islamofobik eğilimleri sözü edilen bu üstünlük tutumunun bir gereği haline getirmiştir. Bu kuşkusuz marazi bir durumdur. Kendiliğinden olmayıp kurgulanmış bir imaj üretimi üzerinden belli bir kesimin ötekileştirilmesini – düşmanlaştırılmasını temel alan bu marazi yaklaşım aslında Tanzimat'tan beri Türkiye'de de süregelen bir düşünce ve davranış biçiminin adıdır.

Bununla birlikte, özellikle Cumhuriyet'in kurulması sonrasında başlayan ulus – kimlik inşa sürecinde resmi (Kemalist) ideolojinin kitlelere tanıtılıp kabullenilmesinin sağlanması çalışmaları Osmanlı'nın ve İslam'ın değersizleştirilip ötekileştirilmesini gerektiren islamofobik unsurların kitlelere enjekte edilip islama ve müslümanlara dair olumsuz imajın bir kanaat olarak belletilmesi çabaları da başvurulan yöntemlerin başında gelmekteydi.

Bu noktada genelde sanat özelde ise tiyatrunun güçlü bir şekilde araçsallaştırıldığı, oyun metinlerinin de bu amaç doğrultusunda, doğrudan ya da dolaylı olarak islamofobik eğilimlerle yapılandırıldıkları net olarak söylenebilir. Kuşkusuz kitlelerin bakış açılarını yönlendirmede en etkili iletişim kanallarından biri sanattır. Estetize edilmiş iletişim olukları, manipülatif gücü ve provakatif etkisi onu kitleleri yönlendirme, sindirme ve yanıltmada, beraberinde inşası yapılacak kodların kitleye entegre edilmesi noktasında erkin (devlet / ideoloji / sınıf) en güçlü propa-

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ganda aygıtlarından biri haline getirmiştir. Şu rahatlıkla söylenebilir ki, toplumu düzenleme, bireylerde ortak kanaat oluşturma ve tutumlarının biçimlendirmesi gibi işlevler sanatı, tarih boyunca erkin kullanımına açmış, onun güç (propaganda) aygıtına dönüştürülmesine yol açmıştır. Bu bağlamda özellikle Cumhuriyet'in erken evrelerinde, bir taraftan devletin yeniden inşası, resmi (Kemalist) ideolojinin kabulü ve kitlelere yaygınlaştırılıp kanıksatılması ile yeni geleneklerin icadı aşamalarında bir yandan da self-oryantalist yaklaşımlar vasıtasıyla islamofobik unsurların kitlelere enjekte edilip islama ve müslümanlara dair olumsuz imajın bir kanaat olarak belletilmesi çalışmalarında sanatın güçlü bir şekilde araçsallaştırıldığına vurgu yapmak yerinde olacaktır. Öyle ki, Cumhuriyet tarihinde self-oryantalist yaklaşımların ve islamofobinin sanat aracılığıyla topluma dayatılması işleminde erken Cumhuriyet döneminin (yoğun olarak 1930-1950 arası) en keskin evre olduğunu söylemekte beis olmayacaktır.

Ulus kimlik inşa çabalarının ve Kemalist ideolojinin yeni / makul vatandaş üretimi adına self-oryantalist yönelimleri ve yozlaşmış uygulamaların İslamla ve müslümanlarla özdeşleştirilme politikaları dönemin yegane geçerli paradigması olarak belirlemesinin ciddi toplumsal kırılmalara / kırılmalara kapı araladığını söylemek gerekir. Söz konusu toplumsal kırılmalıkların başında kuşkusuz toplumun değerlerini yok saymanın / değersizleştirilmesinin, kültürel belleğin silinme girişimlerinin ve toplumsal bilincin merkezinden koparılmasının sonucu olarak kültürel şizofreniden söz etmek olasıdır. Yanı sıra yerinden edilmişlik, mülkiyet alanından kopartılmışlık, yurtsuzlaşma, bilincin yaralanması, yalıtılmışlık, zihinsel göçe zorlanma (zihinsel sürgün) ve kendisine ait olanın kaybedilmesi durumlarındaki marazi duygu hallerinden de söz edilebilir.

Son kertede sözü edilecek şey erken Cumhuriyet döneminin sanatla ilişkisi ise, sanatın ve tiyatronun tüm kesimlerince kabul edilmiş, içkinleştirilmiş Kemalist paradigmalar ve Türk Tarih Tezi önermeleriyle biçimlenen yeni bir düzenin inşasına -çok çeşitli politik araçlar ve propaganda kanallarının yanı sıra- doğrudan hizmet ettiğini; bu itibarla da bu türden araçsallaştırmaların / çabaların Erken Cumhuriyet döneminin başat karakteri olduğunu söylemek gerekir. Bununla birlikte sanatın ve tiyatronun islamofobik unsurları kullanımının Tanzimat'tan itibaren yavaş yavaş başlayıp akabinde Cumhuriyet'le birlikte güçlü bir damarı yakaladığını söylemek yerinde olacaktır. Şurası kesindir ki, Batı merkezli oryantalist bakışın self oryantalist dönüştüğü evre Tanzimat (1839-1876) dönemidir. Bu dönem ve devamındaki süreçlerde sanatın her alanında, özellikle mizah yayıncılığında İslama kaba bir resim yakıştırması yapıp müslümanlar kötü, barbar, yobaz, cahil, büyücü- üfürükçü, hain, sahtekâr, sapık, iğrenç ve gülünç varlıklar olarak gösterilmekte, tiyatro oyunlarında da karanlığın, cehaletin, hurafenin, geri kalmışlığın ve kötülüğün taşıyıcısı olan tipler olarak yansıtılmaktaydı. Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'in erken evresine dek süre gelen bu durum daha sonraki dönemlerde de, özellikle mizah ağırlıklı oyunların başat eğilimi olmaya devam etmiştir. Yanı sıra erken Cumhuriyet döneminin bir başka temel karakteri de müslüman Selçuklu ve Osmanlı tarihinin ve bu dönemlere ilişkin her türlü değerlerin Türk tarihi içerisinde paranteze alınıp görmezden gelinmesi ve 'Selçuklu'nun ve Osmanlı'nın olmadığı Türk tarihi bilincinin oluşturulması politikasıydı. Bu politika da, yine o dönemde kaleme alınan tiyatro oyunlarının ana izleklerinden biriydi. Oyunlar bir yandan Selçuklu'yu ve Osmanlı'yı görmezden gelirken diğer yandan eski düzeni, dolaşımda olan geleneksel anlayışları, toplumsal değerleri, toplumsal bilinci ve toplumsal belleği temizlemeyi, değersizleştirmeyi, yok saymayı, öcüleştiren ötekileştirmeyi kurguların sac ayağı haline getirmişlerdi.



Nihayetinde böylesi bir dünya için şu çıkarımda bulunmak olasıdır: Müslüman kimlik / insan ve toplum yalıtılmış, kırılmış, değersizleştirilmiş, güvensiz bırakılmış, mülkiyetinden kopartılıp yerinden edilmiş, yurtsuzlaşmış, kendisine ait olanı kaybetmiş, beğeri ve bilinci dolaşımında olandan koparılmış birer ucubeye / varlığa indirgenmiştir. Sanat ve tiyatro ise bu yolun başat gereci haline getirilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı, İslamofobi, Oryantalizm, Self-Oryantalizm, Türk Tiyatrosu, Cumhuriyet.

