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KENDİ İMKÂNSIZLIĞINI İTİRAF EDEN ÜTOPYA: ALİ KEMÂL'İN *FETRET* ROMANI

The Utopia That Confesses Its Own Impossibility: Ali Kemâl's Novel *Fetret*

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ÖZ

Bu makale, Ali Kemâl'in Fetret romanını, II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nin siyasi, ahlâkî ve entelektüel krizini "distopik" bir "fetret" hâli olarak teşhis eden ve buna karşı birey merkezli, liberal bir kurtuluş ütopyası sunan ideolojik bir manifesto olarak analiz etmektedir. Çalışmanın temel tezi, Ali Kemâl'in, dönemin cahil ve lafazan aydınını, yozlaşmış entelektüel hayatını ve düşünceyi aktaramayan "hasta" Osmanlı dilini eleştirerek mevcut düzenin çürümüşlüğünü sergilediğidir. Bu distopyaya karşı sunulan ütopik projenin merkezinde, Türk-İngiliz sentezini biyolojik ve pedagojik olarak temsil eden başkahraman Osman Fetret'in şahsında tasarlanan "yeni insan" modeli yer almaktadır. Makale; romanın dil, akademi, kamusal tartışma ve aile gibi alanlarda rasyonel, Batıcı ve liyakate dayalı modernleşme modelleri önerdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bununla birlikte, projenin halkı dışlayan seçkinci doğası ve kendi yapaylığını ("tekâmül" yerine "ihtilâl" ürünü olması) metin içinde itiraf etmesi gibi içsel çelişkilerine dikkat çekilmektedir. Son olarak, romanın tamamlanmamış olmasının, yazarın trajik kaderiyle birleşerek, bu iddialı ütopyanın gerçeklik karşısındaki başarısızlığının ve imkânsızlığının trajik bir metaforu olarak okunması gerektiği savunulmaktadır. Eser, bu yönüyle bir kurtuluş reçetesinden çok, modernleşmeci aydının kendi toplumuyla arasındaki kapanmaz uçurumu belgeleyen dokunaklı bir metin olarak değerlendirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Fetret, Ali Kemâl, II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi, Ütopya, Modernleşme.*

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes Ali Kemâl's novel Fetret as an ideological manifesto that diagnoses the political, moral, and intellectual crisis of the Second Constitutional Era as a dystopian state of "interregnum" (fetret) and, in response, presents an individual-centered, liberal utopia of salvation. The study's central thesis is that Ali Kemâl exposes the decay of the existing order by criticizing the era's ignorant and verbose intellectuals, its corrupt intellectual life, and the "sick" Ottoman language, which was incapable of conveying thought. At the center of the utopian project proposed against this dystopia lies the model of the "new human," designed in the person of the protagonist, Osman Fetret, who biologically and pedagogically represents a Turkish-English synthesis. The article reveals that the novel proposes rational, Westernist, and merit-based models of modernization in fields such as language, academia, public debate, and family. However, attention is also drawn to the project's internal contradictions, such as its elitist nature that excludes the populace and its in-text admission of its own artificiality (being a product of "ihtilâl" [revolution/rupture] rather than "tekâmül" [evolution]). Finally, it is argued that the novel's incompleteness, combined with the author's tragic fate, should be read as a tragic metaphor for the failure and impossibility of this ambitious utopia in the face of reality. In this respect, the work is evaluated not so much as a prescription for salvation but as a poignant text documenting the unbridgeable gap between the modernist intellectual and their own society.

Keywords*: Fetret, Ali Kemâl, Second Constitutional Era, Utopia, Modernization.*

Giriş

Utopia, one of the oldest mental acts in human history, existed as a product of humanity's painful relationship with current reality long before Thomas More's work (1516) lent its name to a literary genre in the Western canon. Its philosophical origins trace back to Plato's realm of absolute "Ideas" beyond the flawed world perceived by the senses and to his quest for the "good society." Its psychological foundations lie in the fundamental search for pleasure, which, as Sigmund Freud pointed out in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930 /1961, p. 42), conflicts with the restrictions of culture and civilization , and in the desire to complete the "lack" that can never be fully closed, as described by Jacques Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (1964 /1998, p. 203). Northrop Frye similarly defines utopia in *The Educated Imagination* (1964/140) as the production of a vision of the society we wish to live in, by seeking liberation from the society we are forced to live in. This vision becomes particularly salient as a refuge and a roadmap during periods of great social upheaval, political crises, and civilizational breakdowns.

In such moments of "interregnum" (fetret), the injustices, moral decay, and dysfunctionality of the existing order present such a grim picture of "dystopia" that the mind, in reaction to this darkness, turns to designing a radically different, idealized "good-place" (eutopos). It is precisely at this juncture that utopia, one of the most concrete products of human consciousness's ability to conceive the "ought to be" rather than merely accepting the "is," is born out of dissatisfaction and a sense of deficiency regarding existing living conditions. In this sense, every utopia is not only the fantasy of a place that does not exist (outopos) but also a brutal critique of the existing and a programmatic desire for intervention toward the future. Thus, every utopia serves as a complaint, a diagnosis, and a prescription for remedy.

The Second Constitutional Era (1908–1918), one of the final and most critical turning points of the Ottoman Empire, was a laboratory where this type of crisis and quest climate was experienced in all its facets, where history was accelerated. The declaration of "liberty" in 1908, which ended the autocracy of Sultan Abdülhamid II, initially generated a wave of enthusiastic optimism that united all components of the empire. The lifting of press censorship led to an intellectual and political explosion. However, this "holiday atmosphere" quickly gave way to deep disappointment. Political instability, partisan conflicts, territorial losses, and the looming shadow of the Great War pushed the era's intellectuals into a desperate search for saving the state and the nation.

The increasingly centralist and authoritarian policies of the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Terakkî Cemiyeti) that ruled behind the scenes, the trauma caused by the March 31 Incident (31 Mart Vakası), the significant territorial losses in the Italo-Turkish and Balkan Wars, and the dark shadow of the approaching World War, all stifled the enthusiasm for freedom, plunging the country into total uncertainty. This environment of chaos triggered a fierce struggle of ideas among intellectuals on how the empire could be saved. Ideological currents such as Westernism (Batıcılık), Islamism (İslamcılık), and Turkism (Türkçülük) presented their own salvation recipes, while the political arena became a polarized field of harsh and often unrefined polemics.

It was in the heart of this political, moral, and intellectual fetret that one of the era's most notable dissident intellectuals, Ali Kemâl, wrote his novel *Fetret* during his exile in England in 1911—an undoubtedly personal, most ambitious, and most programmatic utopian endeavor presented as a radical utopian project.

Even the title of the work provides a conscious diagnosis that reveals the essence of the project: Fetret, or the "period of anarchy and uncertainty between two reigns," signifies a crisis of mentality, morality, and culture alongside a political power vacuum. In the novel's mukaddeme (preface), Ali Kemâl declares from the outset that his work is not a traditional novel aiming for aesthetic pleasure but a didactic text written with the goal of extracting a "poem of the future" (istikbal neşidesi) from the current state of fetret. He writes: "*Fetret is not a story, it is a history... Fetret is a tableau of our present state, a hymn to our future*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 3) This statement suggests that the novel must be read as an alternative manifesto for salvation offered by an individualist, liberal, and elitist intellectual against the collectivist and authoritarian modernization project of the Committee of Union and Progress.

The central thesis of this article is to demonstrate that *Fetret*, transcending traditional novelistic conventions, was penned by the author with an ideological mission rather than literary concerns; it diagnoses the political, social, and intellectual fetret of Second Constitutional Turkey as a "dystopian" atmosphere, and against this backdrop, it proposes an individual-centered, liberal, and Western-oriented utopia of salvation. Ali Kemâl utilizes the novel form as a platform to communicate his liberal worldview and the model of salvation he designed for the empire. Ali Kemâl's project, in a Platonic manner, focuses on the construction of the "ideal man" and the "ideal mentality" that will sustain the state's institutional structures, before attempting to redesign those structures themselves. The novel first sketches a dystopian tableau by showcasing the era's ignorant and verbose intellectual type, the "ailing" literary language incapable of conveying thought, and corrupt social relationships. It then proposes, as a remedy, the prototype of the "new man"—Osman Fetret, the protagonist—conceptualized as a perfect example of the East-West synthesis. In this sense, *Fetret* functions as a didactic platform for a social engineering project that designs the pure and rational "new language" the new man will use, the "new intellectual life" in which he will flourish, and the "new social relations" he will establish.

To substantiate this thesis, the study first sketches the crisis-ridden political and intellectual atmosphere in which the novel was written, then analyzes the dystopian features of the existing order and the utopian counter-model embodied by Osman Fetret in the domains of language, intellectual life, public debate, and family. The emphasis is kept on those aspects that most directly illuminate the novel's diagnosis of "fetret" and its proposed remedy; broader theoretical background is treated only insofar as it clarifies that central argument.

1. The Mental Orıgıns of Utopıa

Humans simultaneously feel a lack and design ideal forms to compensate for this lack. These forms are never fully realized because utopia is essentially a teleological imagination: an end, a direction, an aim of desire. What gives it existence is its unattainability, because the moment it is achieved, utopia is no longer utopia. Therefore, utopia is not merely a "place" but a mental act, a state of being, a quest. Every utopia is an objection to existence; it is the opening up of what is accepted as "what is" to "what could be." The natural consequence of this is that utopia is a metaphysical domain where thought is liberated, desire is infinite, and meaning is reconstructed. Incorporating utopian ideas into the historical process as a product of philosophical and psychological mental processes will be important in seeing the limits of utopia.

Mina Urgan states that starting from the seventeenth century with the Age of Enlightenment and the appearance of the French Encyclopedists, the place of fictional literary utopia was taken by works written in a didactic style and essay form that offered designs for the ideal state (Thomas More, 2015, 210). In addition to these, two utopias by Thomas Spence (1750–1814), entitled *Description of Spensonia* (1795) and *The Constitution of Spensonia* (1801), focus on the fair distribution of land and taxation. The work of the Frenchman Étienne Cabet (1788–1856), *Un Voyage en Icarie* (1840), was also influential enough to lead to the establishment of the Icarie communities later and idealized an excessive egalitarian sharing of everything in the imaginary land of Icarie. Edward Bellamy's (1850–1898) novel *Looking Backward or 2000–1887* (1888) is also a utopian work. Mina Urgan points out that while utopias written until then dealt with an order established on an unknown island discovered in the newly explored world, this work is different as it is a utopia set in the future, as its name suggests. The novel's protagonist, Julian West, falls asleep in the America of 1887, mired in violence and chaos, and wakes up in a peaceful and flourishing country after a 113-year sleep in the year 2000. (Thomas More, 2015, 211)

Sadık Usta, asserting that "*Ottoman intellectuals, in the mid-19th century, did not yet know the concept of utopia, but they were quite familiar with works containing fantastic and utopian elements inherited from the depths of our history*," lists the utopian-characterized works in the Turkish-Islamic world across a broad spectrum:

> "*The Dede Korkut Stories, One Thousand and One Nights, Al-Farabi's Al-Madīnat al-Fāḍila, the egalitarian traditions of the Mazdakites, the communal initiatives of the Qarmatians and the Hurramites, the Babaî Rebellions, Kutadgu Bilig, the Orkhon Inscriptions, the Battal Ghazi Epics, etc. Political treatises (Siyasetnâme) written in the Turkish and Islamic tradition, such as Nizam al-Mulk's Siyasatname, demonstrate that egalitarian and utopian thought was active in the Islamic and Eastern tradition, especially in Anatolia*." (Usta, 2014, 64)

In the process extending from the 19th century to the Republican period, the idea of utopia in Ottoman-Turkish society was shaped as a reflection of the desire for modernization and crises. Starting from the Tanzimat period, Ottoman intellectuals who had contact with the West began to write down their visions of an ideal society.[1] In the Ottoman-Turkish intellectual tradition, utopia, unlike the systematic examples in the West, mostly appears in the form of a dream (rüya), and this narrative form is used both as an aesthetic choice and a political strategy. Expressing social designs for the future through a dream is part of a tradition based not only on individual but also on collective memory. This situation becomes particularly pronounced during periods of political and social crisis; intellectuals who desired reform turned to the description of alternative political structures through imaginative narratives in circumstances where they could not directly criticize the existing order. Ziya Paşa's work *Rûyâ* (Dream) from this period is one of the first utopian attempts shaped by anti-autocratic criticisms. A common feature of such works is that their authors were not only literary figures but also political actors. For figures like Nâmık Kemâl and Ali Suâvi, utopia was an ideological intervention and a call that invited the public to political imagination. Consequently, utopia in the Ottoman context was intertwined with the dream form, blended with local narrative traditions, and functioned as the literary expression of political transformation projects.[2] (Usta, 2014, 67)

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[1] Namık Kemâl's novels *İntibah* (1876) and *Cezmi* (1880), although not directly utopias, show a longing for the virtuous social order of the past. *Cezmi*, in particular, is filled with the dream of the unification of the Islamic world and an ideal political solidarity. In this respect, it contains "Pan-Islamist utopia" elements. Ali Suavi, in his writings in publications like the newspaper *Ulûm* and *Muhbir*, criticized centralism and proposed a government based on public participation. His suggestions for political reform and social transformation contain utopian visions. Ahmet Mithat Efendi, in *Yeniçeriler* (1871) and his various novels, has a vision of an ideal society framed by themes such as "civilization," "progress," and "education." However, these are more didactic-modernizing fantasies; they are not systematic utopias. Although the majority of these works do not fully conform to the classical definition of utopia, they can be evaluated as proto-utopian or texts carrying a utopian consciousness, with their discourse criticizing the existing social order and expressing a longing for a more just, rational, and progressive future. This thought becomes more systematic and pronounced in the novel genre, especially leading up to the Second Constitutional Era.

In the Second Constitutional Era, the utopian discourse further diversified with discussions on political pluralism and decentralization; themes such as women's rights, educational reform, and development came to the fore. Ali Kemâl's novel Fetret also focuses on some of these themes. With the proclamation of the Republic, utopia largely gave way to the foundational narratives of the official ideology; individual dreams became intertwined with the state's modernization projects. Nevertheless, this period can be read as a phase where utopian thought maintained its continuity in terms of the desire to produce a social design oriented towards the future. Utopia plays an important role as both a form of critique and a vision of the future in the intellectual adventure of Ottoman-Turkish modernization. The fact that the frequency of utopian works in Turkish literature coincides particularly with periods of various crises and quests makes it necessary to reflect on the question: Is utopia a characteristic work of abnormal periods? At this point, for a better analysis of *Fetret*, a work of a crisis/interregnum (fetret) period (the Second Constitutional Era), it is necessary to provide a detailed account of the historical context that gave rise to its formation.

With this condensed conceptual frame in place, the discussion can move directly to the Second Constitutional conjuncture that turns utopia in *Fetret* from a general intellectual horizon into a concrete diagnosis of crisis and a program of remedy.

2. Hıstorıcal Context: Wrıtıng a Utopıa Wıthın the "Fetret"

Ali Kemâl's novel *Fetret* is a primary source reflecting the political, intellectual, and cultural atmosphere of the early years of the Second Constitutional Era (II. Meşrutiyet), the period in which it was written (1908–1918). The novel was penned in 1911 during Ali Kemâl's exile in England, a date that is of key importance for understanding the conjuncture of the era. First and foremost, Ali Kemâl begins his work by calling it a "history" (tarihçe), not a novel. This is more than mere modesty; it is a conscious choice that declares the work to be a utopian project:

> "*Fetret is not a story, it is a history, no, a tarihçe, a short history that presents a period from our social life, but presents it in a truthful manner. It shows reality even within fantasy. Because while some attitudes, actions, and tendencies of Fetret*

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[2] For detailed and original information on this subject, see, Özgül, Metin Kayahan. *Türk Edebiyâtında Siyâsî Rûyâlar*, Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, n.d., 149.

> *may slightly resemble fantasy today, its tomorrow is entirely reality*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 3)

These statements demonstrate that the author's aim was not to provide aesthetic pleasure but to communicate a "truth" and to construct the "tomorrow" from today. This is precisely the fundamental motivation of all utopian writers: to intervene in reality through fiction. Ali Kemâl codes the corrupted order of his time—its dystopia—as a "fetret" (interregnum/chaos). This fetret not only points to a political power vacuum but also strikingly presents a state of cultural, moral, and intellectual crisis. The novel is filled with vivid testimonies to this crisis. Here is the political conjuncture of the Ottoman Empire during the period in which the novel was written:

2.1. The Political Conjuncture of the Second Constitutional Era: Liberty, Polarization, and Crisis

2.1.1. The Initial Euphoria of "Liberty" and the Subsequent Disappointment

Fetret addresses the turbulent period immediately following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, which ended the autocratic rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II. The Revolution generated great enthusiasm with the re-establishment of the constitution (Kanûn-ı Esâsî), the opening of the General Assembly (Meclis-i Mebûsan), and the declaration of press freedom.[3] Bernard Lewis expresses this enthusiasm with the words: "*Turks and Armenians were embracing in the streets; the age of liberty and fraternity had arrived. The writings of the time reflected an almost delirious joy that found echoes even in the skeptical European press*." (Lewis, 1998, 210) However, this "festival of liberty" was short-lived. The Second Proclamation of the Constitution had ended the long night of Abdülhamid II's autocracy, ushering in the dawn of freedom. Bernard Lewis, referring to the words of Y. H. Bayur in *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi I*, which he considers an important source for the history of the period—"*Very few movements in the world created such great hopes as the Ottoman constitutional movement, and likewise, very few movements dashed the hopes they created so quickly and decisively*"—evaluates the process with these sentences:

> "*The Second Constitutional regime lasted longer than the first, but it too ended in failure, bitterness, and disappointment. The dangers and difficulties, both internal and external, were too great; the defenders of the Constitution were too few, too weak, and too incompetent. Although the constitution remained in force and elections were held again, the regime degenerated into a kind of military oligarchy of the Young Turk leaders, which ended only with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918*." (Lewis, 1998, 210)

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[3] Ahmed İhsan Tokgöz expresses the constitutional fervor in these lines: "*Flags, bands, processions of demonstrators, drums and clarinets were everywhere. Street orators stopped and spoke, shouting wherever they happened to be! The people had a right to this: for thirty-three long years, they had been unable to display flags of their own free will, play band music, or gather in groups of three. Furthermore, speaking to a crowd, giving an oration, was unheard of during the Abdülhamid era. … The demonstrators for freedom were packed into phaetons, they had hung Turkish flags on the carriage lamps, and decorated the wheels and hoods with flowers. The demonstrators also wrapped wide, red-and-white cords around their chests like amulets, upon which the words 'Hürriyet, Müsavat, Uhuvvet' (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity) were embroidered. The demonstrators' carriages went all the way to the Palace, filling the Yıldız road. They toured around, even entering distant neighborhoods. All of Istanbul was in commotion.*" (Tokgöz, 1993, 129–130)

While Lewis notes that there were writings attributing the proclamation of the Constitution to Jews, Masons, the Roman Catholic Church, Positivists, the House of Orléans, the German General Staff, and the British Foreign Office, he draws attention to the fact that the Young Turk Revolution was fundamentally different from these theories. Underlining that the aim was simple and straightforward, he defines the group as: *"a patriotic movement of mostly military Muslim Turks whose aim was to remove an inept and incompetent sovereign and replace him with a government better able to protect and defend the empire against the dangers threatening it.*" He then expresses the Young Turks' essential goal with the following sentence: "*The essential problem that concerned them was the survival of the Ottoman state, which they and their forefathers had served for generations, and both their activities and discussions revolved around this central problem: How can this state be saved?*" (Lewis, 1998, 211–212)

The 1908 Young Turk Revolution is significant in that, commensurate with the immense expectations it generated, it failed to bring fundamental solutions to the entrenched problems, but it did pit many different prescriptions against each other for the survival of the country.

2.1.2. The Rule of the Committee of Union and Progress and the Birth of the Opposition

After the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era, a new political structure, mentality, and a mass opposing it emerged, leading to increasing polarization and tension within society and the army. Despite proclaiming the Constitution, the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Terakkî – CUP) failed to establish absolute authority in governance, and its arbitrary personnel policy prepared the ground for political chaos. For instance, their move to increase the number of Hunter Battalions in Istanbul under the pretext of a Bulgarian threat alarmed the Kâmil Pasha Government. The "school-trained vs. field-trained" divide within the army and rumors of the purge of non-commissioned officers led to conflict. The exemption of seminary students (medreseliler) from military service caused objections from the military academy students (Harbiyeliler), and the imposition of a simple literacy and basic fiqh exam on the seminary students fueled the "seminary-military Academy" conflict. Meanwhile, newspapers critical of the CUP and advocating for reaction/absolutism, such as Derviş Vahdetî's *Volkan* and *Mizan*, suffered from this pressure. Thus, societal polarization gradually escalated into conflict, paving the way for political assassinations, such as the murder of *Serbesti* newspaper's chief editor, Hasan Fehmi, on April 7, 1909, with the blame placed on the CUP. A week after this incident, the CUP announced through the press that it was no longer a secret society but an ordinary political party. (Lewis, 1998, 214)

Dissatisfaction with the CUP's policies, the instigation of reactionary propaganda by the opposition, and the provocations of the Hunter Battalion soldiers in Istanbul who rebelled against their officers, escalated into a major revolt against the Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha Government. The revolt was suppressed by the CUP's Action Army (Hareket Ordusu) located in Salonica (Third Army) and Edirne (Second Army), and the pro-constitutional populace. A rebellion that began militarily gradually acquired a religious character due to the provocation of fundamentalists (softalar). This event became a turning point for the CUP to eliminate its political rivals, depose Abdülhamid II, and consolidate its control over the country's politics. The novel's title, *Fetret* (Interregnum/Chaos Period), refers to this political uncertainty and power struggle. The CUP, which ruled from behind the scenes, increasingly shifted toward a centralized and authoritarian line.[4]

Despite the enthusiasm for the promises of liberty and equality in domestic politics following the 1908 revolution, the nations and ethnic groups within the country began to turn the crisis into an opportunity in their favor. In 1908, Bulgaria declared its independence, and Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1911, when the novel was written, Italy occupied Tripoli (Trablusgarp). These continuous territorial losses caused deep pessimism, damage to national pride, and a hardening of political debates in the country.

2.1.3. The Intellectual Struggle Among the Ideologies of Westernism, Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism

Bernard Lewis, citing V. D. Smirnov's *Manuscrits turcs de I'Institut des langues oriantales* (1897), notes that as early as the first quarter of the 19th century, particularly in the face of Russian expansionism and the Western threat, Âkif Pasha, who later became the Head Scribe (Reîsülküttâb), wrote a three-option memorandum in 1822 to protect the state:

> "*The Moslems must choose one of three decisions: either we must, relying on the command of God and the law of Muhammad, defend to the last the provinces which still remain in our hands, without regard for our possessions and lives; or we must abandon them and withdraw to Anatolia; or, lastly—which God forbid—we shall follow the example of the peoples of the Crimea, India, and Kazan, and descend to the level of slavery. In short, what I have to say may be reduced to this: let us proclaim a Holy War in the name of the religion of Muhammad and the law of Ahmed and abandon not a single span of our lands*." (Lewis, 1998, 323)

The dangers forewarned by Âkif Pasha even before the Tanzimat reforms continued exponentially throughout the century, finally ending with the National Struggle. For a full century after this memorandum, the Ottoman intellectual constantly produced ideas and struggled for the well-being of the state. Starting from the end of the century, especially against the autocracy of Abdülhamid II, young people—particularly those from military and medical backgrounds in secret committees, and enlightened youths in European cities like Paris and Geneva, and Cairo—embraced the ideas of Westernism, Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism to save the state from the threat of extinction it faced.

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[4] Bernard Lewis notes that after suppressing the March 31 Uprising, the Committee of Union and Progress issued the "Law on Associations" on August 23, which forbade the establishment of political associations based on or bearing the names of ethnic and national groups, and subsequently closed the Greek, Bulgarian, and other minority clubs and associations in Rumelia. Furthermore, the "Law on the Prevention of Banditry and Mischief" was issued on September 27, which provided for severe measures, including the formation of special "pursuit detachments" from the army, aimed at disarming and suppressing armed gangs and Balkan committee members, imposing heavy penalties on those who failed to report the activities of committee members to official authorities and those who carried weapons without a license. He even mentions steps taken to conscript non-Muslims into the army. Lewis, after detailing these actions which underscore the CUP's authoritarian turn, expresses the failure of "Ottomanism," the basic structure that had sustained the Ottoman Empire until then, with this striking comment: "*With the spread of nationalism among the subject peoples of the Empire and the eventual catching of the nationalist virus even by the dominant Turkish nation, the 'Ottomanist' dream of a free, equal, and peaceful union of nations living in a common allegiance to the ruling dynasty of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire came to an end forever*." (Lewis, 1998, 217) This situation, one might argue, led to a clash of ideologies for the survival of the state during the period, thus spearheading a kind of "fetret" period.

Yusuf Akçura discussed these three ideas at length in his article "Üç Tarz-ı Siyâset" (Three Types of Policy), published in three issues of the *Türk* newspaper in Cairo in 1904.[5] Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that the ideological struggles, which intensified toward the Second Constitutional Era and evolved into factionalism during that period, were fundamentally rooted in the ideas expressed in Akçura's article. Since Ali Kemâl also had objections to Akçura's article, it will be appropriate to discuss the ideological struggles of the period around his "Three Types of Policy."

First of all, it is necessary to explain why "Ottomanism" was not included in "Three Types of Policy." Niyazi Berkes cautiously states that Turkist intellectuals coming from Russia applied the terms used by Russian intellectuals there—"Westernizers," "Slavophiles," and "Russifiers"—to the Ottoman reality, deriving the names Turkism, Islamism, and Westernism. He then explains why "Ottomanism" was excluded and the other three ideologies gained currency in the context of the Ottoman Empire. According to Berkes, the Turkist intellectuals coming from Tsarist Russia, arguing that Russia and the Ottoman Empire had similar ethnic structures, underlined the similarity between the struggles of the Turkish, Tatar, Ukrainian, Polish, and Baltic nations within Russia's ethnic structure to find their identities and the causes of the Armenian, Greek, Macedonian, Albanian, and Arab nations within the Ottoman Empire. They believed that the Ottoman state could not maintain absolute sovereignty over these nations in the existing conjuncture. This is because the Turkist intellectuals were themselves struggling to preserve their Turkish identity in Russia. Therefore, they thought that the Ottoman state could not keep the ethnically disparate nations together under the same roof with the Ottomanist identity. It can be said that the Turkist intellectuals arriving from Russia exhibited an attitude that saw the ideology of Ottomanism as unnecessary/useless while in the Ottoman state, in a manner that justified their own situation in Tsarist Russia, and they were even persecuted by the Ottoman administration for this reason. According to Berkes, Turkism gained legitimacy when Ziya Gökalp positioned his Turkism under "Ottomanism" along with Islamism and Westernism, and was accepted with Ziya Gökalp's trilogy, "Turkify, Islamize, Modernize" (Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak). (Berkes, 2003, 411)

In the aftermath of the Second Constitutional Era, intellectual movements generally debated why the Ottoman state lagged behind the West and what should be understood by Westernization. Berkes states that the question of why the Ottoman Sublime State (Devlet-i Âliyye-i Osmâniyye) lagged behind had been constantly asked since the Tulip Era, and that after the Second Constitutional Era, all ideologies engaged in debate by giving various answers from different perspectives. According to Westernists, the main reason for backwardness was Islam, and Islamic Sharia, which permeated every area of life in its stagnant, unrenewed state, was the primary cause of this backwardness. Berkes mentions that Abdullah Cevdet, a fervent supporter of Westernism, conducted a survey in the first issue of *İçtihâd*, which began publication in Geneva in September 1904, with the questions: "*What are the reasons for the decline of Muslims, and what are the most effective measures to save Muslims from this situation*?" He then notes that Cevdet determined the fundamental cause of the regression was "our Asiatic mind and degenerated traditions" and concluded that the "system of religious-state integration" would always be the main factor holding them back. (Berkes, 2003, 412)

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[5] The publication details of the issues of the *newspaper* where the article "Üç Tarz-ı Siyâset" was first published are as follows: Akçuraoğlu Yusuf, "Üç Tarz-ı Siyâset", Türk, Birinci Sene, nr. 24, 29 Muharrem 1322/25 Mart 1320/14 Nisan 1904, Perşembe, pp. 1–2; Birinci sene, nr. 26, 12 Safer 1322/10 Nisan 1320/28 Nisan 1904, Perşembe, pp. 1–2; Birinci sene, nr. 27, 19 Safer 1322/22 Nisan 1320/5 Mayıs 1904, Perşembe, pp. 1–2.
When this article was published as a book in 1327 (1909/10), the following note was added to the title page: "*These three articles were collected in booklet form in Egypt after being included in the issues numbered 24-34 of the newspaper 'Türk' published in Egypt. Since the copies of the booklet were out of print, it was printed again*." Akçuraoğlu Yusuf. "Üç Tarz-ı Siyâset"; Ali Kemâl. "Cevâbımız". Ahmed Ferid, "Bir Mektûb". İstanbul: Matbaa-i Kader, 1327. This incorrect information in this source has been repeatedly cited in subsequent studies. However, Yusuf Akçura's article was completed by being published in issues 24, 26, and 27 of the *Türk* newspaper.

Berkes states that the Islamists, while accepting the reality that the Islamic world was lagging behind in the spiritual realm as well as the material field of civilization, thought that the core problem was not Islam itself, but rather the failure to properly apply the Islamic Sharia in every area of life. Berkes substantiates the Islamists' views on this matter by summarizing the opinions of Sait Halim Pasha. Sait Halim Pasha argues that religions in no way impede progress, that Islam had established the highest civilization in the past, and thus, as a religion of reason, did not impede progress. He asserted that Islamic fanaticism (taassub) was actually a belief propagated by Christian fanaticism. The real reason for the backwardness of Muslims, he claimed, was the survival of pre-Islamic and non-Islamic beliefs, and that the national traditions maintained by non-Arab peoples prevented them from becoming fully Islamized. He suggests that the crisis emerged after the Christian world established political dominance over the Islamic world, leading to the latter's subjugation to Christian rule, and that the idea that Islam was the cause of the universal Islamic decline began to gain currency. After stating that the notion of Islam impeding progress—which originated in the West—prevented Muslims from grasping the real cause of their backwardness, leading them to attribute it to autocracy, the ignorance of the ulama, the neglect of religion, and religious fanaticism, Sait Halim Pasha determined that proponents of Westernization failed to distinguish between adopting necessary things from Europe and becoming Europeanized. He then asserted that Islam was politically, morally, and socially superior to Christianity in every respect. He reinforced that the way to overcome backwardness was not Westernization but Islamization. (Berkes, 2003, 413–14)

Berkes notes that Ziya Gökalp, as the representative of Turkism, presented an antithesis to Sait Halim Pasha's theses. Accordingly, he countered that the Pasha's finding—that the persistence of old traditions among Islamized nations hindered development—was incorrect. He argued that if that view were true, these nations should have been backward from the very first period of adopting Islam, whereas they had only lagged behind in the last few centuries. Ziya Gökalp commented that their backwardness did not stem from external factors like the Crusades, the Mongol Invasion, or European dominance. Instead, he argued that Muslims failed to keep pace with changing world conditions and interpret their religion accordingly. When Islamic civilization collapsed against the West, the Sharia law of the Ummah civilization superseded the national cultures of the Islamized nations, and these Islamized nations could not sustain their existence without a national culture. (Berkes, 2003, 414–15)

All representatives of intellectual movements during the Second Constitutional Era now accepted the absolute superiority of the West, but they differed in what they understood by "the West." The Westernists believed that the understanding—which had prevailed since the Tanzimat—of only authorizing the material side of Western civilization would be insufficient. They thought that unless the material and spiritual elements of the West were accepted as a whole, and the founding values of the West were fully grasped, the regression against the West could not be fully averted. According to them, the foundational values that allowed the West to become an idealized absolute power were the individual's emancipation from divine bonds, i.e., secularization, and thus the transition from subject to individual; the recognition of human nature and the definition of the limits of their rights; the shift from faith-based meaning-making in life to reason and rationality; and, as a consequence, structuring life under the guidance of science.

Islamist intellectuals, on the other hand, understood Westernization to mean a Christian civilization that could never be reconciled with Islam. In fact, according to the Islamists, the consciousness that elevated Western civilization was not an opportunity provided by Christianity; rather, it was the result of the severance of ties with Christianity, the overcoming of Christian fanaticism, and the emergence of scientific and technical progress through a rationalization driven by philosophical development. So much so that Islamist intellectuals argued that the West owed its scientific and technical elements to the Islamic Renaissance period and that Islam inherently prioritized reason more than Christianity did. For instance, Sait Halim Pasha believed that Christianity was an obstacle to progress. Pointing to the difference in the issues faced by Christian and Islamic societies, Sait Halim Pasha thought that feudalism, monarchy, imperialism, and oligarchy in Christian societies led to class division, producing inequality, and necessitating a struggle for democracy for equality. Conversely, he believed that since Islam inherently rests on equality, there was no place for a Western-style struggle in Islamic societies. Therefore, he claimed that attempts to imitate the West in Ottoman society—such as constitutional regimes, legislative bodies, and parliamentarism—were futile and even hampered the progress of Islam. Despite this, Berkes asks a very pertinent question: With what would the superiority of Western civilization over the world—which Islamists did not deny—be interpreted, given that it was so morally and religiously ailing? Berkes states that the Islamists answered this by saying that the West did not gain dominance over the world through scientific superiority, but rather through the exploitation and enslavement of other nations, based on a secular worldview that replaced religion. However, the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, the indifference of the Western powers to the war, and even their instigation of it, were regarded as betrayal by the Islamists and increasingly vindicated them. According to Berkes, the secularization of life—its liberation from the grip of religion—which the Westernists deemed the most valuable aspect to adopt from Western civilization, was, in the eyes of the Islamists, the most dangerous aspect of the West to avoid. (Berkes, 2003, 416–17)

Turkists were more cautious in interpreting the West. They were not as swept up in Western enthusiasm as the Westernists, nor as reactive towards the West as the Islamists. Ziya Gökalp approached the West from the perspective of "nation-building." Accepting that a monolithic Western civilization could not currently be spoken of, he emphasized that there were still separate European nations that had not yet formed a unity, each with its own distinct culture. He argued that the essence of modern Western civilization was constituted by these national cultures, which included religion. Ziya Gökalp opposed both ideologies, arguing that Westernism did not mean adopting the culture of Western civilization, which would impede the formation of Turkish national consciousness and culture. Conversely, he argued that the aspects the Islamists opposed would harm the national culture rather than religion. (Berkes, 2003, 418) Ziya Gökalp was influenced by the Populism (Narodniklik) movement that came from Russia via Macedonia while he was a member of the central executive committee of the Committee of Union and Progress in Salonica. Directed by this environment to focus on the public, Ziya Gökalp concentrated on the elements that held society back, concluding that many of them were religion-based. He argued that the criterion for Westernization should be values and ideals, and he constructed a modernization plan—not with a Jacobin approach—based on the determination of the Turkish people's ideals and values. According to him, the ideals represented by the Islamists were the concept of the Ummah centered on religious principles, which was not the need or desire of Turkish society and hindered its modernization. He emphasized that Ummahism was anachronistic and could no longer be a factor in the age of the nation-state—which began in the West and spread worldwide, even within the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, he stated the necessity of getting rid of the excess elements that had entered Islamic Sharia. Based on the fact that every nation preserved its own culture (hars) within the multi-national structure of Western civilization, he argued that the "good" aspects of Western civilization should be adopted while staying clear of its culture-specific (harsî) elements.

All these intellectual ideological struggles point to a period when, with the freedom brought by the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era, ideologies openly debated the issue of the country's salvation.

2.2. Intellectual and Cultural Conjuncture: Identity Crisis and Major Debates

The re-proclamation of the Constitution in 1908 should be evaluated as the beginning of a radical transformation in Ottoman intellectual and cultural life. Following the removal of the intense censorship and oppressive environment of the Abdülhamid II regime, the liberal environment of this period enabled the expansion of intellectual production and cultural pluralism, leading to a great revitalization of thought. Issues such as freedom, the constitution, rights, the relationship between the ummah (Islamic community) and the millet (nation/ethnic community), and Westernization were intensely debated. Unlike the liberal thought of the Tanzimat period, this era witnessed intense competition among intellectual movements such as Ottomanism, Westernism, Islamism, and Turkism. This dynamism, vitality, and diversity of intellectual life manifested itself in the excessive increase in the number of publications compared to the previous period. In this context, Bernard Lewis comments: "*Perhaps the most interesting and most important aspect of the Young Turk period lies in its intellectual and cultural life*." (Lewis, 1998, 229)

In fact, the intellectual movements aimed at reviving the Ottoman State were conducted around three core ideologies: Ottomanism, which aimed to keep the different nations constituting the state together, as in the old days of peace; Islamism, based on the solidarity of the Islamic ummah, which was the state's founding religion; and Turkism, centered around the will to unite all Turkish nations, not just the founding nation of the state, under a single flag.[6]

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[6] Erik Jan Zürcher does not add Westernism as the fourth to these three. According to him, the two themes these existing ideologies for the revival of the Ottoman Empire focused on were the measure of Westernization and what should be taken as the basis for loyalty to the Ottoman State and what was

The most evident change brought about by the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era in the intellectual/cultural sphere was the expansion of the boundaries of freedom of thought beyond expectation. This liberal environment, coupled with the revitalization of journalism and publishing, allowed different intellectual currents such as positivism, materialism, liberalism, socialism, and Islamism to be discussed more openly. In this atmosphere, new interpretations of Islamic thought, along with Western-originated ideas, found a broad platform for discussion. So much so that even within the Young Turks, Ahmet Rıza, Mehmet Murat, and Prince Sabahaddin approached issues from completely different ideological perspectives. While Ahmet Rıza was a positivist Unionist (CUP member), Mehmet Murat was a proponent of a constitutional monarchy based on Sharia, and Prince Sabahaddin was an intellectual with decentralist and liberal tendencies. These intellectuals created an environment for the emergence of some political parties. The Committee of Union and Progress was influenced by Ahmet Rıza's ideas, while the Ahrar Fıkrası (Liberal Union) was founded by Mizancı Murat, and the Ittihad-ı Muhammedî (Muhammadan Union) was established through the efforts of Prince Sabahaddin and Islamist thought leaders. This pluralistic foundation allowed Ottoman intellectuals to question issues of identity and civilization more freely.

The discussion of the influence of religious authority, especially in the areas of education, law, and the press during the Second Constitutional Era, indicates that secularization gained a cultural and intellectual dimension. This period was one in which intellectual reflexes questioning the absolute determination of the religious sphere in the public domain became institutionalized. Niyazi Berkes emphasizes the contribution of the Second Constitutional Era to the development of secular thought, stating that the "madrasa enlightenment" was an important phase in the modernization and secularization of the Ottoman Empire. According to Berkes, the madrasa, a symbol of the Ottoman tradition, held a religious institutional position in the religious-state separation in Europe. In the old Ottoman tradition, the madrasa was not a religious institution but functioned as a state institution providing legal education. In the enlightenment process of the Second Constitutional Era, the inclusion of modern sciences in the madrasas' curriculum would lead these institutions to break away from the traditional line, reinforcing the idea—as envisaged by Turkist, Ottomanist, and Islamist ideologies—that Islam was a religion of nature and reason. In this context, efforts were made to modernize the madrasas starting in 1909. Probably due to its symbolic value, the Fatih Madrasa, chosen as a pilot institution, was modernized in a ceremony attended by the Grand

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necessary. Therefore, while Zürcher emphasizes that the prescriptions offered by these three ideologies were different from each other, he underlines that there was no separate group called Westernism, that no one objected to the West in the context of civilization, but that intellectuals affiliated with Westernism were present in different doses and degrees within the other groups, around Nâmık Kemâl's fundamental problem: "*The great majority of intellectuals favored the adoption of what were seen as the useful elements of European civilization. For most of them, the most difficult and most urgent problem, and the one on which most of their discussions focused, was the question that Namık Kemâl had tried to answer: How could a synthesis of European elements and Muslim Ottoman civilization be achieved, in other words, how was it possible to modernize while remaining oneself?*" Zürcher also states the fluidity between the adopted ideologies with the following sentences*: "It was not the case that one of these ideological currents was advocated while the others could not be: Many Young Turks who rationally advocated Ottomanism were at the same time romantic Pan-Turkists, deeply attached to nationalism with strong feelings, and devout Muslims.*" (Zürcher, 1996, 187)

Vizier, the Sheikh al-Islam, and the Minister of Education, transforming it into an institution with a curriculum of positive sciences. (Berkes, 2003, 457) [7]

One development that hindered the challenging modernization/secularization goal during the Second Constitutional Era was the expansion of the Sheikh al-Islam's authority towards the sphere of justice as a cabinet minister with executive power. Turkist circles objected to this, realizing that the contemporary religious reform and the efforts to use education as a tool for Westernization could not succeed "*as long as the Sheikh al-Islam sat in the cabinet as a member of the government, held the Sharia courts in his hands, took half of the education system under his authority, and even gained legislative power in some areas*." In this context, the Committee of Union and Progress took action and commissioned Ziya Gökalp to prepare a memorandum. According to Berkes, "*These measures are part of the movement that began toward the separation of religion and state. With these, religion was losing its worldly powers in the state, education, legislation, judiciary, and finance. Its powers and functions were being narrowed down to the sphere of 'diyanet' (religious affairs), a term coined by Ziya Gökalp*." (Berkes, 2003, 458–459) [8]

These reflexes heralded the birth of a new public culture shaped around individual freedom, rationality, and scientific thought. With the development of secular thought, cultural production during the Second Constitutional Era had a character oscillating between tradition and modernity. At the core of this duality lies the Ottoman effort to forge a specific synthesis between its internal dynamics and Western modernity. Modernity was no longer just a model imported from outside, but a cultural project attempted to be reconstructed in harmony with local conditions. Thus, "hybrid forms" emerged in fields such as literature, education, music, and architecture. These forms were the creative responses of the Ottoman intelligentsia to the crisis of cultural identity.

The Second Constitutional Era, as a result of the Ottoman desire to develop "its own style of modernization," was a turning point that led to multi-layered and radical transformations in Ottoman intellectual and cultural life. This period was more than a political reform; it was a process of "cultural opening." The liberal atmosphere of this era created marked developments in secularization, pluralism of ideas, modern education, and publishing. Consequently, this period is one of the unique examples of the Ottoman late modernization experience in terms of both intellectual pluralism and cultural production. These developments also formed the intellectual foundation for the secular and contemporary social engineering projects of the Republican period. In this context, it is useful to address the perception of Westernism during this process.

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[7] Berkes, alongside this modernization step, mentions that one of the members of the Sheikh al-Islam's office prepared a project to turn the madrasas into higher education institutions, including the opening of a) a faculty of Sharia sciences, b) a faculty of wisdom (Hikmet), c) a faculty of history, and d) a faculty of language in this "madrasa university." According to Berkes, this madrasa university was becoming an Islamic university affiliated with the Sheikh al-Islam, in parallel with the Darü'l-fünûn (University) affiliated with the Ministry of Education. Berkes expresses that this development in the Second Constitutional Era even contradicted the earlier periods of the modernization process with the following sentences: "*This initiative, which seemed hopeful to everyone, actually meant that the strengthened Sheikh al-Islamate was gaining an authority it did not possess even during the periods of Mahmut II, Tanzimat, and Abdülhamid II. It began to be a superior authority equipped with new powers not only in the field of action but also in the field of thought.*" (Berkes, 2003, 457–458)

[8] According to this memorandum, the duty of the Sheikh al-Islam is to issue fatwas, and there were decisions that modernized/secularized the state and even formed the core of the principles of the Republic, such as: "*a) The removal of the Sheikh al-Islamate from the cabinet; b) The transfer of Sharia courts from the Sheikh al-Islamate to the Ministry of Justice; c) The separation of the Evkaf (Pious Foundations) administration from the Meşihat (Sheikh al-Islam's office) and its complete separation from religion as a separate financial-commercial department of the state, placed under the management of one of the cabinet members; the transfer of the financial affairs of all religious institutions such as mosques and madrasas to the newly established Ministry of Evkaf; d) The transfer of all madrasas from the Meşihat to the Ministry of Education*." (Berkes, 2003, 459)

2.2.1. The Ideology of Westernism (Garpçılık)

Although its roots appeared a century earlier, with the Tanzimat, the foundations of an relentless move toward a new society and way of life began to be laid in Ottoman-Turkish society. This move pointed to a civilizational shift from East to West. This orientation was the product of an understanding that non-Western societies would only achieve contemporary civilization if they interacted with the West. The result was the acceptance of the absolute superiority of the West. Nâmık Kemâl, in his article "Terakki" (Progress) written in 1288/1872, even before the Constitution was proclaimed, expressed his astonishment at his impressions of London, admiringly accepting the superiority of Western civilization:

> *"If one were to contemplate London closely, the beauties one would see would astound the mind. It is no exaggeration to call London the microcosm of the world. If the progress existing on Earth were to be photographed, it could only show contemporary civilization to the extent of London*." (Nâmık Kemâl, 1288, 1/3)

After this observation, he lists, with a sigh and comparison to his own country in the back of his mind, the development of London across many observable elements. Similarly, in 1885, Sadullah Pasha's poem "On Dokuzuncu Asır" (The Nineteenth Century), like Nâmık Kemâl's observations of London, reflected the spirit of the time within the framework of a scholastic-modern mindset comparison, praising the technical/material development of the West. With the final couplets of the poem:

> "*Alas, the West became the birthplace of knowledge/What remained of the fame of Rome and Arab, nor Egypt nor Herat - Time is the time of progress, the world is the world of sciences/Is the permanence of societies possible with ignorance,"* (Sadullah Paşa, 1302, 1453–1455)

He definitively asserts that the birthplace of "irfan" (knowledge/enlightenment) is the West and that the West is superior in technical/material civilization.

In the late 19th century Ottoman Empire, where theocratic rule prevailed and Western superiority was acknowledged, confusion arose regarding the extent of interaction with the West as a result of this backwardness. This situation, which was reflected in literary works as a conflict between traditional and modern thought, was practically attempted to be resolved by separating material civilization from spiritual civilization. In his work *Teaddüd-i Zevcâd - Zeyl* (Polygyny - Supplement, 1316/1898), published first as a series of articles and subsequently as a book in 1896, Seydişehirli Mahmud Esad Efendi debated the contemporary issue of polygyny with Fatma Âliye Hanım. Here, he emphasized that their intellectuals, who admired European science and culture, did not adequately know either the religion of the West or Islam, and that their opposition to a man marrying multiple women was futile. He stressed that a man's polygyny was actually a requirement of natural law, and that Sharia did not forbid it. In this context, he expresses the mindset and perspective on Westernization (civilization) of the traditional/conservative intellectual with the following sentences:

> *"As understood from its definition, civilization has a spiritual aspect and a material aspect: The spiritual aspect consists of virtuous morals, religion, and sect, in short, other spiritual matters. Its material aspect consists of industrial inventions, tools and equipment, roads, trade, and other material things that we see in our time, from a sewing needle to railways and armored cannons.*
>
> *Shall we ask, 'Should we not civilize ourselves?' If the purpose of the question is civilization in the spiritual sense, then Alhamdulillah (praise be to God), the glorious Sharia of Muhammad, to which we are bound, brought us such a virtuous civilization thirteen centuries ago that Europe, which dazzles our eyes with its outward splendor, needs to put in much more effort to reach that degree of civilization, or rather, it needs to accept all the holy Islamic rules at once, not one by one. The civilizing rules taught to us by the pure Islamic Sharia are sufficient for us; we have no need for the morals, civilization, and spirituality of Europe, which are marred by thousands of ailments and defects. We would not condescend to accept that civilization. Our national grandeur and self-respect prevent us. We leave their civilization in this sense, along with all their foreign ways, to themselves. Ask the learned sage in question what the meaning of European civilization entering this country is; let him show you with evidence.*
>
> *But if the purpose is the material part of civilization, our need for this progress is obvious, just like any other nation. Therefore, wherever we see progress, we are the first to hasten to adopt it. Our Sharia's command is also thus. The high-minded royal thoughts of our great and most sacred benefactor, the Padishah, our Lord, the great judge, are also along these lines. Even the progress we have achieved in this path over the past twenty years is at a degree worthy of gratitude and praise. However, since human needs are constantly increasing with the changes of time, and progress continues to follow progress compared to earlier times, who can claim that the degree of progress we are at now is the ultimate peak, so that I should claim it? In accordance with the royal intentions and purposes of our high-ranking Padishah, Ghazi Abdülhamid Han II, it is the sacred duty of all members of the nation to strive for progress in this way*." (Fatma Âliye-Mahmûd Esad, 1316, 46–49)

Mahmud Esad Efendi's response to Fatma Âliye Hanım very clearly reflects the mentality of the Eastern/traditional wing of the late 19th-century Ottoman intelligentsia, which was divided into two poles. From this picture, we see that the Ottoman intellectual of every persuasion was not fundamentally opposed to Westernization in its totality, and accepted the superiority of the West. However, the conservative/traditional wing, whose reference point was Islamic Sharia, tried to save itself from being discarded by creating a solution in its own way, dividing civilization into material and spiritual aspects. The traditional Ottoman intellectual saw no harm in authorizing the material side of Western civilization, while simultaneously placing an embargo on its spiritual side—even with disdain. At this point, Nâmık Kemâl, who equated Westernization with civilizing, was on the side of Mahmud Esad Efendi. He revealed that he did not view Westernization as monolithic, separating the material and spiritual aspects of civilization with the sentences:

> *"The state of civilization in Europe is filled with thousands of defects and evils. Why should the nations striving to acquire civilization have to imitate Europe completely? ... If we now desire to promote civilization, we will borrow such useful truths wherever we find them. Just as we are not obliged to eat slug kebab from the Chinese to become civilized, we are also not obliged to imitate the dances or the*

> *marriage customs of the Europeans. The dictates of our own morals and the approval of our own minds are sufficient for the auxiliary matters of civilization, with additions*." (Nâmık Kemâl, 1288, 1–2)

He even considered themselves sufficient and superior in terms of the morality aspect of civilization.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Westernization—which intellectuals of every persuasion were trying to define and authorize in their own way—continued its underground activity under the autocracy of Abdülhamid II. Politically, the struggle was to abolish the theocratic Ottoman absolute monarchy and proclaim a constitution, centered on the French Revolution's understanding, that would prepare the ground for a republic. However, the same reformist Westernized intellectual was more openly active in culture and literature. Strangely, during the reign of Abdülhamid II, while religion cemented its absolute power in the eyes of the state, as communication with the West increased, positivist-materialist ideas from the West began to fill the minds of the intellectuals, and Westernized reformist intellectuals became the dominant force on the intellectual platform in the country. "Objectionable" ideas belonging to the "spiritual side" of Western civilization now reached the Ottoman intellectual without tariffs.

Hüseyin Cahit [Yalçın], one of the intellectuals of the period, in his book *Edebî Hâtıralar* (Literary Memoirs) published in 1935, asked, "*What factors pulled my faculty of thought out of this swamp of custom and opened wider horizons before my eyes, freeing my soul from captivity?*" in the section titled "The Effects of French Culture," describing how he acquired the ideas in his novel *Nadide* during his childhood years, when the wind of Westernization was in vogue, and answered as follows:

> "*I find French and Western culture at the head of these. The effort I made and the difficulty I endured to translate 'Hélène et Mathilde' is enough to show how eager I was for French... To be able to read novels, I would not wait for them to be translated; I would be able to access the original novels in the French language. It was with this passion that I attacked French novels. There was no other way for me to learn French. I did not have the opportunity to take private lessons. I could do nothing but try to read the French novels I came across by looking up words in dictionaries. This path, which I found instinctively and unintentionally, led me to where I wanted to go*." (Yalçın, 1975, 121)

As seen, Hüseyin Cahit, in his memoirs written during the Republican years, criticizes the traditional thought of the 1890s, when the wave of Westernization intensified, referring to it as "swamp" and "captivity of the soul." On the other hand, he adopted the French language and French/Western culture, to which he was passionately devoted, with great motivation, idealizing them and turning them into a gateway to salvation. This reveals the extent to which Westernization aroused excitement in the reformist Ottoman-Turkish intellectual.

Hüseyin Rahmi [Gürpınar], another man of letters from the same period, points to how much Westernization permeated social life, the inevitability of acknowledging it, and its popularity. In the introduction to his novel *Şıpsevdi* (Giddy), titled "The Story of My Story," in response to the accusation that he ridiculed alafrangalık (Western ways), Hüseyin Rahmi conveys very important information about the reality of Westernization at the time. Underlining that the idea of progress should be separated from the reduction of alafrangalık to dandyism, Hüseyin Rahmi states that the "torch of awakening" and the direction was the West.

After listing the destructions caused by the autocratic regime in the country, and noting that Western works strengthened the minds of young people amidst this chaos, Hüseyin Rahmi draws attention to the demand for Western works with this striking example:

> "*I was observing something. Our national bookstores, adorned with bright names like 'İkbal,' 'Tefeyyüz,' 'Şafak,' and big painted signs, were catching flies in the face of counterfeit books with gilded covers published with official permission, while the most reputable and honest ones, like poor Arekel Efendi, were going door-to-door with their bankruptcy records under their arms. Meanwhile, the shops selling foreign books were working like ant-nests. Moreover, their number in the vicinity of Bâbıâli alone increased from one to two, from three to four.*" (Hüseyin Rahmi, 1327, 6)[9]

This reality highlights the popularity of Westernization in the world of publishing. Hüseyin Rahmi, after stating that the enthusiastic youth of the period were influenced by the works of Western thinkers such as Spencer, Ribot, Richet, Poincaré, Le Bon, seeing them as a "soulmate" and always carrying them in their pockets, praises these young people for the happiness and development of the homeland, saying that the future belongs to them. He also underlines with the following sentences that the transition from darkness to light during the autocratic period was achieved through Western works:

> "*When the flame of our thought and understanding was about to be completely extinguished during the period of autocracy, it was maintained by the sparks that flew here from Western perfections. Today, the minds that think well, write, and defend freedom are those enlightened by these sparks of the West.*
>
> *In those dark nights of our misfortune and misery, those treasures of thought, those books, became our kind friends and helpers. We learned to think, to wander in such novel themes, and the love of freedom from them. The latest literary revolutions in our style of thinking, our prose, and our poetry occurred with the magical wind of knowledge blowing from the West. Today, no individual who wishes to undertake serious literary, scientific, or technical services in our country can remain independent of the intense need for proficiency in one, perhaps several, European languages.*" (Hüseyin Rahmi, 1327, 8)

The last sentence of Hüseyin Rahmi, in particular, clearly expresses that the only address for salvation from the late 19th century onward was the West, and the only remedy was Westernization.

Niyazi Berkes draws attention to the paradox that neither the West nor the East—as if feeding each other—had ever been idealized as much as during the reign of Abdülhamid II. He mentions that against the decision to teach philosophy at the Civil Service School (Mülkiye), students organized a boycott with the justification that "they will make us infidels," and emphasizes that in the press of a period where philosophy was not taught until the Second Constitutional Era, the names of

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[9] Hüseyin Rahmi indicates that the solution to the destruction wrought by absolutism was Westernization, painting the following picture: "*When the national education [system] went bankrupt, foreign education came to its aid. Just as the attention of parents turned favorably toward foreign schools, the intellectual appetite of our youth also inclined in that direction. The philosophers, scholars, historians, littérateurs, and poets of Europe were known and read more than our own national authors [lit. 'men of the pen'], and the abundance of publications from the West filled the display windows of bookstores here. I encountered young people who, due to the prohibition on its use in the printed pages of the Turkish language of poetry and literature, had neglected their mother tongue but demonstrated enough proficiency in French to have their writing read.*" (Hüseyin Rahmi, 1327, 6-7)

Haeckel, Schopenhauer, Büchner, Darwin, Draper, Renan, Taine, Spencer, Le Bon, Poincaré, Ribot, Richet, Flammarion, J. S. Mill, Flaubert, Balzac, Zola, and second and third-rate intellectuals were mentioned. After this, he states the undeniable reality about the inevitability of Westernism:

> "*In an environment without regular science and philosophy education, the real meanings of these people's thoughts may not have been properly evaluated; but these names show us that as many materialists, naturalists, deists, and rouges (radicals) as there were in Europe, they reached minds by crossing Abdülhamid's customs walls*." (Berkes, 2003, 378)

As seen, on the eve of the Second Constitutional Era, Westernism had become a sine qua non (essential condition) for the reformist Ottoman-Turkish intellectual. Berkes expresses the result of this phenomenon, which began as a "dramatic reality" in the youth of the period and gradually evolved into a "tragic reality," with the following sentence:

> *"The young generation of this era wove a fabric of thought suitable to their minds from the naturalist, materialist, atheist, socialist, or anarchist threads in the writings of authors who gained fame in European thought, the most distinctive feature of which is the rejection of the past and the desire to catch up with and keep pace with the era*." (Berkes, 2003, 379)

We will see that all the different intellectual movements that were effective during the Committee of Union and Progress period after Abdülhamid II tried to adopt Westernization within their own understanding and "red lines," and that Westernization, with the ideal of "the level of contemporary civilization," ultimately formed the fundamental philosophy of the foundation of the Republic.

The main theme of Fetret is Westernization, the most fundamental problem of the Ottoman intellectuals. The character Selman Bey reflects Ali Kemâl's own views: he advocates that salvation is possible only through a comprehensive Westernization in science, technology, social life, and thought structure, completely shedding the fanaticism (taassub) and backwardness of the East. The character Fetret is designed as the ideal product of this synthesis: the "new Ottoman" type, born of a Turkish father and an English mother, who has embraced both cultures at the highest level.

2.2.2. Language Debates

Turks used the Arabic alphabet for centuries, an adherence that originated from the influence of Islam and especially the attribution of sacredness to the Quran.[10] Despite technical problems such as the great differences between spelling and pronunciation, extraordinary works were written in Ottoman Turkish by very powerful men of letters until the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Turkish—the written language of the state dignitaries rather than the spoken language—which was originally Turkish but enriched by the inclusion of Arabic, Persian, Greek, and Slavic languages as a result of the empire's acquisitions over time, widened the gap from the language of the common people by applying the grammatical rules of the languages from which it borrowed its vocabulary. Since the language could not establish a semantic unity that would integrate society with its components, cultural confusion prevailed in society. Whenever the state entered a turbulent period, the linguistic consistency was disrupted along with the general intellectual confusion; the expression of meaning was hampered by excesses, and the language became unable to meet the needs of the literate scholarly class of the time, who wanted to disseminate modernization to the wider masses.

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[10] Bernard Lewis draws attention to the close relationship between religion and script—not language—which he notes was clearly evident in the Ottoman Empire, with the following words: "*The language of the South Slavs is written by Catholic Croats in Latin letters, and by Orthodox Serbs in the Cyrillic alphabet. In Syria, Muslims write the common Arabic language in Arabic script, Christians in Syriac, and Jews in Hebrew script. In Anatolia, Turkish-speaking Christians would write Turkish in Greek or Armenian letters, according to their church affiliation, while in Crete, Greek-speaking Muslims would write Greek in Arabic letters. The external and visible sign distinguishing Muslim from infidel was script, not language*." (Lewis, 1998, 421). Here, Lewis explains the reason why the Arabic script had such strong foundations by establishing a link between the Ottoman Empire being governed by religious principles, the fact that the language of religion was Arabic, and the revelation of the holy book in Arabic.

It is seen that the language debates, which progressed on a theoretical ground among intellectuals starting from the second half of the 19th century, were not reflected in practical life. The intellectual of the period preferred to use a language that was heavily concentrated with Arabic and Persian words and very far from the life being lived, even if it was very different from the ideas he defended in theory. However, Niyazi Berkes mentions the existence of a different and effective current in the world of publishing towards the end of the century, perhaps due to the simplifying effect of the newspaper language. Berkes draws attention to a certain enlightenment seen in the broad masses of the public, whose minds were filled with stories of heaven, hell, jinn, and fairy tales, as a result of the increase in printing houses on Bâb-ı Âli Street and the number of printed books, and the translation of low-profile, easy-to-read adventure novels, popular series, travel, and science topics—which were scorned by high literary circles in the West—followed by murder and detective novels. Berkes underlines that these works were also effective in the modernization of the language; despite the official language becoming even more incomprehensible during this period, the language of these works came very close to the language used by the public. He also states that men of letters and linguists such as Ahmed Midhat, Şemsettin Sâmi, Hüseyin Rahmi, Hüseyin Cahit, and Ahmed Râsim started their writing careers by translating *ordinary novels* ((adi roman) commissioned for Bâb-ı Âli booksellers and even for the Sultan. This situation can be considered a step toward closing the gap between the popular Turkish language and the Ottoman Turkish of the state dignitaries. (Berkes, 2003, 369-370)

After the Second Constitutional Era, the Turkist team that published the *Genç Kalemler* (Young Pens) magazine in Salonica in 1911 pursued a policy of popularizing a language that the broader masses could understand, within the framework of the *Halka Doğru* (Towards the People) understanding, with the *Yeni Lisan* (New Language) movement, in order to reach the wider public for the state's conjuncture. The history of the first attempts of this movement actually goes back to the Turkish poems written by Mehmet Emin Yurdakul during the 1897-98 Ottoman-Greek War. Modernist intellectuals like Ömer Seyfeddin, Ali Cânib Yöntem, and Ziyâ Gökalp, who were concerned that the nationalization policies of ethnic identities under the influence of the Revolution would result in the disintegration of the State during the last period of the Ottoman Empire, prioritized the Turks, who constituted the majority of the common people, the main element of the State, and advocated for the language of the people (which can be called the language of the nation) instead of the imperial language (which can be called the language of the ummah) in the field of language. In fact, this linguistic move and intervention they made was to construct a modernist national language by incorporating the data of modernism into the language, wiping away the remnants of empire/feudalism, and articulating/expressing the values of modernism. They wanted to speak modernism in Turkish, the language of the nation, not in the language of the ummah. In other words, they endeavored to exist and construct modernism within Turkish. During this period, New Ottomans like Hüseyin Cahit, Abdullah Cevdet, and Celâl Nuri still advocated for the adoption of the Latin alphabet, and Enver Pasha continued the discussions on writing by implementing the reform of Arabic letters in the army.[11] On the eve of the Republic, although the influence of Arabic and Persian continued on the language of Ottoman dignitaries, the language was simplified to some extent, reaching a level that the bureaucracy could understand.

Selman Bey's long speeches in *Fetret* reflect one of the most heated debates of the period: the simplification of the language. In the process of linguistic simplification mentioned above, Ali Kemâl/Selman Bey advocated for a "correct and proper" Ottoman Turkish with modernized syntax, capable of expressing thought clearly and fluently like Western languages, rather than a pure Turkish purged of Arabic and Persian words. The criticisms directed at poets like "Hayret Bey" in the novel are criticisms directed at the shallowness and imitativeness of the post-Servet-i Fünûn generation.

2.2.3. Vitality and Pollution in the Press Life

One of the most striking cultural effects of the Second Constitutional Era was the proliferation of the press and the expansion of the public sphere. The expectation of all intellectuals was that the world of the press, which had been characterized by fatigue and silence due to the long autocratic rule, would regain its vitality with the Second Constitutional Era. Yakup Kadri, in his memoirs written sixty years later, expressed this situation, which he called the "publishing frenzy," with these words:

> "*Upon the proclamation of the Constitution, daily newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines began to overflow with the poems and prose of a host of poets and writers whose names had never been heard before. Most of these newly launched newspapers and magazines were thus successively covering the press arena. It was permissible to call this a publishing frenzy in the full sense of the word.*" (Karaosmanoğlu, 2018, 253)[12]

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[11] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu states that Abdullah Cevdet had long advocated for the Latin alphabet in the context of Westernization, providing the bibliographic details of the following articles: "'Mukadderat-ı Tarihiyye Kari'lerine', İçtihad, no. 56, 28 Şubat 1328, s. 1249-50. 'Lâtin Harfleri Menşe İtibarıyla Bizim Hareflerimiz Demektir', Akşam, no. 2689, 2 Nisan 1926, 'Doit-on adopter ou nos les caractères Latins', L'akcham, no. 2691, 7 Nisan 1926, [Abdullah Cevdet], 'Lâtin Harfleri Hakkında', İçtihad, no. 204, 16 Mayıs 1925, s. 3973-5, İçtihad, [Abdullah Cevdet], 'Son Darbe-i Tahlis: Harflerimiz', İçtihad, no. 189, 1 Ekim 1925, s. 3773, A[bdullah] C[evdet], 'Son Darbe-i Tahlis: Harflerimiz', İsmail Şükrü, Asrî Türk Harfleri, Kütübhane-i İçtihad, İstanbul, 1925, içinde, s. 3-6." M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, Üçdal Neşriyat, Üçdal Neşriyat, 1981, p. 393.

[12] However, the extraordinary quantitative inflation seen in periodicals fell far short of fostering the expected hope. Indeed, the sheer number of publications did not translate into quality. In the continuation of his article, Yakup Kadri draws attention with the following literary phrases to the fact that the Constitutional Era, which followed the absolutism that had turned the world of the press into winter, failed to bring the expected spring and summer. He notes that these publications, which went no further than imitating the recognized masters of the old era, fell far short of expectations:
"*But, how strange it is that even amid this abundance, I still felt myself hungry. All those piles upon piles of literary products did not give me even a single drop of the world of spirit and thought I was*

Ahmed İhsan Tokgöz, a famous figure in the press world of the period, also describes this situation as follows:

> *"Bâbıâli Street, in particular, showed very strange scenes from the point of view of journalism and writing. What was it? It was as if everyone in the country who could wield a pen was becoming a writer! Whoever had a few pennies immediately started a newspaper! Those who did not have ready money sold their belongings at home and opened printing houses and newspapers. The number of daily newspapers that started publication exceeded fifty; the number of magazines and booklets was countless*." (Tokgöz, 1993, 151)

The years of the Second Constitutional Era were an extremely fruitful period in terms of press freedom. The freedom of thought, suppressed by the censorship of the autocracy, attained an unprecedented liberty following the proclamation of the Kanûn-ı Esâsî. Bernard Lewis draws attention to the intensity of the public's hunger for the press by citing: "*On July 25, 1908, İkdam printed 60,000 copies, and Sabah 40,000 copies; these copies circulated hand-to-hand in the afternoon at forty times their selling price*." (Lewis, 1998, 230) With this dynamism, centers like Istanbul, Salonica, and Cairo became places of intellectual production and discussion after 1908. This publishing activity both encouraged the intellectual participation of the public and created a serious expansion in literary genres.

Press freedom after 1908 led to an explosion in newspapers and magazines. However, this also caused an increase in vulgar polemics, blackmail, and provocative writings based on ignorance. *The Kâmran* newspaper and its chief writer, "Kahraman Bey," in the novel, are a reflection of Ali Kemâl's accusations of "ignorance," "historical unawareness," and "demagoguery" directed at the Unionist press. The section that criticizes historical inaccuracies regarding Napoleon and Alemdar Mustafa Pasha is a concrete example of this situation.

3. Between Fıctıon and Realıty: the Traces of Alı Kemâl ın *Fetret*

3.1. His Portrait as an Oppositional and Liberal Intellectual

Ali Kemâl is one of the sharpest writers and most controversial figures in early 20th-century Turkish political and literary life. His temperament positioned him constantly against the authorities, and his oppositional identity, coupled with a liberal worldview that saw Western civilization as a panacea for salvation, formed the bedrock of his life and works. Yahya Kemâl expressed this characteristic with the following sentences:

> *"Ali Kemâl was not created to be devoted to one society or one purpose. (...) Against the existence of our state and nation, Ali Kemâl was completely pessimistic*

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seeking. Some of them were like unripe fruit, others like overripe fruit—tasteless and dry [lit. sapless]. Some, meanwhile, resembled the artificial pears, apples, and grape clusters placed in the middle of tables merely for decoration.
And yet, I had been expecting such a fruitful spring, such a dynamic summer in our world of thought and literature as soon as the country attained its freedom. I thought the dry earth would suddenly turn green, and the vitality and warmth of a brand-new life would gush forth from every side. Accordingly, even the aged masters of word and pen from the old era would be rejuvenated, their tongues, held captive under the pressure of 'absolutism,' would be loosened, and they would tell us many new things. Halit Ziya's prose would cease to be a wall decoration and would become a harmony flowing from soul to soul, and Tevfik Fikret would finally cast aside his Rubab-ı Şikeste [The Broken Lute] and play the lyre of Orpheus. Yet, both of them, and those who followed them, did nothing but repeat their old melodies to us." (Karaosmanoğlu, 2018, 253-254)

> *from the inside. He was born to be an opponent. The most natural path for him to take in politics was opposition*." (Yahya Kemâl, 1968, 80)

The text that most clearly depicts this portrait is his novel *Fetret*, which acts as a political manifesto and is interwoven with autobiographical traces. When the work is read alongside Ali Kemâl's biography, it reveals how his oppositional stance was fueled by his liberal ideals and how these ideals were reflected in literature in the form of a utopia.

Ali Kemâl's oppositional identity was an uncompromising stance that he maintained from his years at the Civil Service School (Mülkiye) until the end of his life. Despite joining the Young Turk movement, he soon became one of the fiercest critics of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), waging a relentless campaign against the government through his editorials in newspapers like *İkdam* and *Peyâm*. The novel is a scathing critique of the intellectual and literary circles of his own period. This militant spirit is directly reflected in the plot of *Fetret*. Characters such as the "edîb-i muazzam" (magnificent man of letters) and the poet "Hayret Bey," whom the protagonist Osman Fetret meets in Istanbul, are caricatures of the Ottoman intellectual type that Ali Kemâl found shallow and inadequate. The fact that these characters confuse even the most basic facts of European history (such as mixing up General Suvorov with Kutuzov, or Louis XIV with Louis XVIII) and try to mask this ignorance with a "pompous construction" is a critique aimed at the Edebiyât-ı Cedîde (New Literature) and the intellectuals surrounding it, with whom Ali Kemâl engaged in real-life pen wars. Through these scenes, the novel transforms into a platform where the author legitimizes his own intellectual stance and condemns the mindset he opposes using a literary language. Ali Kemâl's opposition is not merely a destructive criticism; it is fundamentally underpinned by the dream of establishing a liberal society and state order in the Western sense. This liberal vision, reinforced by his education at the Paris School of Political Science (Sciences Po), transforms into a concrete utopia in the novel *Fetret*.

As a figure who stood out with his liberal ideas in Ottoman intellectual and political life during and after the Second Constitutional Era, Ali Kemâl's liberalism is evident in his political and social writings. He considered Western-style parliamentary democracy principles such as constitutional order, parliament, press freedom, and individual rights essential for the salvation of the Ottoman Empire. He positioned himself along an Ottomanist line, believing that different ethnic and religious communities could coexist on the basis of equal citizenship. With this understanding, he was also close to Prince Sabahaddin's decentralist ideas, supporting local autonomy and free enterprise. Economically, Ali Kemâl advocated for free trade, private property, and minimal state intervention in the economy. He attracted the most attention with his fierce opposition to the centralist and authoritarian practices of the Committee of Union and Progress, finding their war policies and suppression of the opposition contrary to the principles of "freedom" and "constitutional regime." However, his liberal approach, especially his stance on the occupations after the Armistice of Mudros, was viewed as "collaborationism" by large segments of society, isolating him against the rise of the nationalist movement. Therefore, Ali Kemâl's liberalism can be evaluated as a search for a libertarian constitutional order and a tragic loneliness within the political conditions of the period. We can express the reflections of Ali Kemâl's oppositional and liberal identity in the novel as follows:

Osman Fetret as the Ideal Individual: The novel's protagonist is the embodiment of Ali Kemâl's liberal ideal. Born to a Turkish father and an English mother, raised in England, and educated in France, he becomes a cultural and intellectual synthesis. He is the "new human" type, neither confined to the dogmatism of the East nor the blind imitation of the West, but rather combining the best aspects of both civilizations within himself. This character is a reflection of the dream Ali Kemâl had for his own son, Wilfred, and the ideal he drew for the Ottoman youth.

Westernization as the Salvation Formula: The most didactic sections of the novel are the long monologues of Selman Bey, who acts as Ali Kemâl's mouthpiece. Selman Bey argues that the salvation of the Ottoman Empire lies solely through one path: "*... for us Ottomans to get rid of the Eastern slope, that obstacle, that fanaticism, and attain a Western education (terbiye-i garbiyyeye mazhar olabilmektir)*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 21-22) This idea forms the basis of Ali Kemâl's radical Westernism and liberalism, which extended to his support for a British mandate during the National Struggle years. According to him, since Ottoman society could not experience an "tekâmül" (evolution) through its own internal dynamics, adopting Western civilization as a whole was as necessary and inevitable as a "ihtilâl" (revolution).

Social and Political Liberalism: Fetret advocates for a liberal order in social life and politics, along with education. The modern and open relationship between Fetret and Seher, and the attempts of the female characters (Güzîde and Selma) to exist as individuals, are a critique of the traditional social structure of the period. Similarly, the discussions on the French Revolution in the novel demonstrate Ali Kemâl's commitment to fundamental liberal principles such as "hâkimiyet-i âmme" (popular sovereignty) and "müsâvât" (equality).

Ali Kemâl was an intellectual who fueled his oppositional identity with liberal ideals and constructed these ideals as a utopia in the novel *Fetret*. The work is a literary front in the war he waged against the Committee of Union and Progress, the literary circles of the period, and an entire mentality he believed was responsible for the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire. In this respect, *Fetret* is as important and indispensable a source as Ali Kemâl's biography for understanding his oppositional and liberal portrait.

3.2. The Reflection of Exile Conditions and Personal Tragedies in the Work

The novel *Fetret*, along with Ali Kemâl's political and social ideas, is an autobiographical expression of the deep personal tragedies and spiritual collapse he experienced during the most turbulent years of his personal exile. The work was written in 1911 in England, where he had sought refuge after the March 31 Incident, a period when he was grappling with homesickness and the greatest sorrow of his life. Therefore, in every line of the novel, the loneliness of an intellectual in exile and the grief of a mourning father left alone with his children are intertwined.

The most striking aspect of the novel is the almost one-to-one placement of Ali Kemâl's personal tragedy at the center of the plot. Shortly before the book was written, Ali Kemâl lost his dearly beloved English wife, Winifred Brun, who gave birth to his son Wilfred. This profound trauma, caused by being alone with his two small children (Selma and Wilfred) far from his homeland, directly shapes the destiny of the novel's main characters:

The Mother's Death in Childbirth: The English mother of the novel's protagonist, Osman Fetret, dies during childbirth, just like Ali Kemâl's wife Winifred. The following expressions in the text are a direct reflection of the author's own pain: "*His wife died giving birth to Fetret, at the age of only twenty-five, extinguished at the peak of her beauty and splendor*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 10) This sentence is less a fictional event than a literary cry of the author's fresh wound.

Selman Bey as the Father Figure: The central father character in the novel, Selman Bey, is a portrait of Ali Kemâl himself. The lines describing his despair after the death of his wife and his finding solace only in his children are an autobiographical outpouring:

> "*After this disaster, the poor husband was heartbroken, struck in his most vulnerable spot, for he loved his companion with all the strength of his heart; ... He knew how to endure those sorrows and found all comfort in dedicating his hopes to the two products of his life, one a girl and one a boy.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 10)

The fact that Selman Bey's daughter, Selma, shares the same name as Ali Kemâl's daughter further reinforces this parallel.

Osman Fetret: The Idealized Child: The hero who gives his name to the novel, Osman Fetret, is an idealized projection of his son Wilfred, who would grow up motherless. Ali Kemâl endowed the Fetret character with the qualities he dreamed his son would possess as a future Turkish youth. Born in England and raised in France, yet deeply devoted to his homeland, Fetret is a symbol of the author's search for a synthesis of East and West and his hopes for the future. This is a father's attempt to create a utopia of salvation for both his son and his country, stemming from his personal tragedy.

The Psychology of Exile and Intellectual Loneliness:

Ali Kemâl's exile, which lasted over twenty years, permeates the intellectual texture of the novel and the characters' view of the world. The novel reflects, from beginning to end, the perspective of an intellectual looking at his homeland from the outside, constantly comparing it with the West. Selman Bey's long analyses to his son Fetret about the backwardness of Ottoman society are a summary of the articles Ali Kemâl wrote over the years in newspapers like *İkdam* and *Türk*. This is a typical example of an intellectual in exile approaching his own society with both affection and sharp criticism.

Fetret is a work written by Ali Kemâl at his most vulnerable moment: as a political opponent, a grieving husband, and a father. The intellectual accumulation brought by exile, combined with the deep pain of personal tragedy, transformed the novel into a multi-layered text that reflects the political atmosphere of the period and recounts a human drama. Ali Kemâl tried to overcome his suffering and loneliness by dreaming of a future for his son and his country, using literature as a refuge and a vehicle for hope in the process.

3.3. The Novel's Effort to Present an Individualist Alternative to the Unionists' Collectivist and Authoritarian Modernization Project

During the Second Constitutional Era, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) pursued a collectivist and authoritarian modernization project that centralized the state, strengthened the army, and viewed the individual as a tool that could be sacrificed for the sake of the "fatherland" ideal. Ali Kemâl, a liberal intellectual and one of the most uncompromising opponents of this project, shifted his political struggle to a literary ground. In the novel *Fetret*, he constructed an individualist alternative to the Unionist model, centering on the freedom and intellectual development of the individual. In this respect, the novel is a literary reflection of the political polarization of the period and a liberal counter-manifesto.

The CUP's understanding of modernization primarily aimed at the survival and strength of the state. The ideal citizen in this project was a disciplined and organized "fedaî" (self-sacrificer) who sacrificed himself for the interests of the society (and later the nation). Ali Kemâl, who personally experienced the CUP's authoritarianism through the closure of his newspaper and his exile, offers a radical critique of this mentality through *Fetret.* According to him, the salvation of the state is not achieved through collective discipline; it is only possible through the cultivation of free-thinking individuals with developed intellects, tastes, and morals.

The novel's protagonist, Osman Fetret, is the embodiment of this individualist ideal. He is not a committee member or a soldier, as idealized by the Unionists, but a cosmopolitan intellectual raised in the most refined cultural centers of the West (England and France), who speaks multiple languages and is immersed in art and philosophy. Ali Kemâl believed that the destiny of a nation rested not on an anonymous collective spirit, but on the shoulders of well-equipped and independent individuals like Osman Fetret, whose value derived from their personal "tekâmül" (evolution) before their functional contribution to the state.

While the Committee of Union and Progress imposed modernization through revolutionary and authoritarian methods, such as the Raid on the Sublime Porte, meaning top-down decisions, Ali Kemâl championed the liberal principle of "gradual change" (tedricî değişim). This contradiction is explained in the novel through the concepts of "tekâmül" (evolution) and "ihtilâl" (revolution), as articulated by the character Selman Bey. According to Selman Bey, while civilized countries like England progress through a painful but organic process of "tekâmül," the Ottoman situation is an "ihtilâl," a rootless and chaotic upheaval. Referring to Fetret, Selman Bey says: "*A Turkish child who was born to an English mother, born in England, and raised in France. Ottomanism cannot evolve this way; if it does, it will be a revolution.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 124-125) This is an implicit critique of the Unionists' radical and coercive modernization project. Ali Kemâl's alternative is a natural and liberal transformation that is not possible through state force but will emerge as a result of the enlightenment of individuals through Western education ("terbiye-i garbiyye").

As the spirit of the period was increasingly evolving into a Turkist and nationalist collectivism, the vision Ali Kemâl presented in *Fetret* is universalist and cosmopolitan. The ideal hero Fetret is a synthesis of blood and culture. His Turkishness is an intellectual commitment to his homeland by an intellectual equipped with the most advanced Western ideas, rather than an ethnic belonging. The constant references in the novel to the literary, political, and philosophical heritage of the West prove that Ali Kemâl saw salvation not in a narrow nationalism, but in inter-civilizational interaction and universal liberal values. This is an individualist and outward-looking alternative presented against the Unionists' desire for introspection and to create an increasingly homogeneous society.

Fetret is the most comprehensive literary and political critique Ali Kemâl penned against the collectivist and authoritarian modernization project of the

Unionists. By centering the individual instead of the state, consent instead of imposition, and cosmopolitanism instead of nationalism, the novel is a work where a liberal intellectual both offers a formula for salvation for his own period and opens a unique window for today's reader to understand the ideological struggle of that era.

3.4. The Dual Meaning of the Concept "Fetret": From a Personal Tragedy to a National Metaphor

The word "Fetret" chosen by Ali Kemâl as the title of his novel is a stroke of genius and a deliberate choice that offers the key to the work. This concept weaves a dual layer of meaning into the fabric of the novel: the first is the political and social crisis the Ottoman Empire was undergoing; the second is the individual collapse and existential emptiness in the author's own life. These two meanings feed into each other throughout the novel, transforming a personal tragedy into a national metaphor.

Historically, the "Fetret Devri" (Interregnum Period) refers to the 11-year existential crisis the Ottoman State experienced following the Battle of Ankara in 1402, a period marked by a lack of a single Sultan and filled with throne struggles. Ali Kemâl takes this historical metaphor and applies it to the Second Constitutional Era he was living through. According to him, with the collapse of the Abdülhamid autocracy, the old order had ended, but a stable, healthy, and functioning new order could not be established in its place. The state was experiencing a complete "fetret" with the endless political struggles between the Committee of Union and Progress and its opponents, the territorial losses on the eve of the Balkan Wars, and the ideological chaos created by identity searches such as Westernism, Islamism, and Turkism. Ali Kemâl clearly expresses this diagnosis in the novel through the mouth of the character Selman Bey. He explains why he gave his son Osman Fetret this name: "*I did not give you the nickname 'Fetret' so unanimously when you were born. You came into the world in a strange covenant, your homeland was in fetret in every aspect: language, literature, and politics*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 27) In this context, "Fetret" is the name of an interregnum where old values have collapsed but new ones have not yet matured, dominated by an authority vacuum and a lack of direction. The novel's hero, Osman Fetret, is designed as the symbol of the new generation and the new synthesis that will lead to an exit from this chaotic period.

The second and more poignant meaning of the concept belongs to Ali Kemâl's personal life at the time he wrote the work. In 1911, while in exile in England, Ali Kemâl was also living through the darkest days of his own "fetret" period. Away from his homeland and the political stage, he was in a political vacuum. He had suffered the greatest tragedy of his life, losing his beloved English wife, Winifred Brun, shortly after she gave birth to his son Wilfred. This loss left him utterly alone with his two young children, creating a profound emotional void and "fetret" in his life. As an intellectual who had spent years in Europe, he belonged neither entirely to the East nor to the West. This cultural identity crisis was also part of his personal "fetret."

In the novel, which is a reflection of this personal pain, the character Selman Bey, who loses his wife in childbirth and finds solace in his children, is Ali Kemâl himself. Osman Fetret, who loses his mother at birth, is a projection of hope and the future that the author built for his son Wilfred, who would grow up motherless. By naming his son and his novel "Fetret," Ali Kemâl essentially named his own pain, loneliness, and the period of uncertainty he was in.

Ali Kemâl's genius lies in inextricably weaving these two "fetret" concepts together. The author's personal tragedy allows him to feel and understand the empire's crisis more deeply. He draws a tragic parallel between the political and cultural "fatherlessness" of the country and the motherlessness of his own children. The solution he offers combines these two meanings: the character Osman Fetret symbolizes both the ideal intellectual generation that will rescue the country from political "fetret" and the ideal child who will be a light of hope for his father's personal "fetret." Thus, Ali Kemâl universalizes his individual pain, making it a metaphor for a national problem, and presents his own formula for salvation as the formula for the country's salvation.

4. The Center of the Utopıa: the Constructıon of the "New Human" (Osman Fetret)

At the heart of every utopian project lies the model of the "new human" who will populate and sustain that ideal world. It can be said that the construction of a utopian society begins with the construction of the individuals who will form that society. From Plato's "philosopher-king" to Thomas More's "Utopian," the ideal individual is the founder and most competent product of the ideal society. In *Fetret*, Ali Kemâl assigns this role to the novel's protagonist, Osman Fetret, a meticulously designed prototype of the "new human." Fetret is a walking, talking, and acting model of the author's utopia, one whose mere existence, knowledge, and identity shake the surrounding dystopian order and demonstrate what ought to be. His presence serves as both a critique of the existing dystopia and the concretization of the ideal future. The construction of Fetret is realized through three fundamental projects: biological, pedagogical, and moral.

4.1. Fetret as a Biological and Pedagogical Project

4.1.1. Biological Project: The Manifestation of the East-West Synthesis in a Single Body

Born to a Turkish father and an English mother, Osman Fetret biologically represents the East-West synthesis, and his physical and moral structure is idealized through this "hybrid" identity. Ali Kemâl, like many intellectuals of his time, contemplated the tension between the East and the West and the possibilities of a synthesis arising from this tension. He does not leave the ideal synthesis merely as an abstract idea; he constructs it as a biological reality within Fetret's body, almost as a social engineering or eugenic project. Fetret is a "hybrid" not by chance, but as the product of a conscious project:

> *"This young man, scarcely twenty years old, had light blue eyes, copious blond hair, and a pinkish-white complexion, (...) However, his whole face still appeared within a singularity; at first glance, he resembled Westerners more than Orientals, especially an Englishman. But, on the other hand, the slight prominence of his cheekbones and the relative flatness of his nose remotely recalled the Turks, the Tatars. (...) Fetret's father was Turk, his mother was English."* (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 9-10)

This physiognomic description is laden with symbolic meanings and summarizes the entire ideological substructure of the novel. Fetret's blue eyes, blond hair, and white complexion, which are highly deliberate and symbolic, represent his Western (Anglo-Saxon) rationality, discipline, and modernity, and specifically England. However, the "prominent cheekbones" and "flat nose" are an indelible reference to his roots, his Turanian/Turkish identity, and as the product of this union, Fetret reflects this synthesis even in his physical features.

This physiognomic analysis bears traces of the positivist and ethno-anthropological approaches of the period. The "blue eyes" and "blond hair" are references to the rational and "level-headed" characteristics often attributed to the Anglo-Saxon world. This is a sign that Fetret will act with his mind rather than his emotions. However, Ali Kemâl does not want this new human to be entirely detached from his roots. Features described as Turanian/Asiatic, such as the "prominence of the cheekbones" and the "flatness of the nose," symbolize his Turkish vein, his genetic and cultural heritage. As if wishing to take the realities of the period into account, Ali Kemâl fears that complete Westernization would lead to a loss of identity, and thus preserves the "stamp" of Turkishness in Fetret's body. This is a superior synthesis, neither fully Oriental nor fully Occidental, but one that combines the best characteristics of both. This biological synthesis also forms the basis of his moral and intellectual structure. This is the guarantee that Fetret, unlike the Westernizers of the Tanzimat era, will not be a Western imitator (züppe) but will build Western civilization upon his own core identity. The body is seen as a reflection of morality and the mind: "*That young man was like that not only physically but also morally. He resembled both Orientals and Occidentals*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 10) This hybrid identity makes him a unique individual with a critical distance, as it allows him to belong to both worlds and look upon both from the outside. This is a radical "third way" proposal against the superficial Western mimicry or rigid Oriental conservatism of the period. The human of the utopia is not pure-blooded but hybrid and cosmopolitan.

4.1.2. Pedagogical Project: The Ideal/Cosmopolitan Education Curriculum

Fetret's educational journey, which consists of a triple foundation—physical and moral discipline in England, intellectual formation in France, and the Eastern culture he received from his father—is presented in the novel as the ideal education program. Fetret's superiority stems from the blood flowing through his veins and the flawless education he received, and his pedagogical journey is a manifesto of Ali Kemâl's implicit critiques of the Ottoman education system and his ideal curriculum.

English Discipline (Morality and Body): Fetret's early years are spent in England, next to his grandmother, in "one of those prosperous, tranquil, and excellent villages." This period, idealized in the novel, focuses on his physical health and the foundations of his character:

> *"He had not experienced swaddling or binding; he was accustomed to freedom from the cradle, he was washed every day, (...) He ate, slept, and woke up at set times. (...) Whether winter or summer, whenever the weather was good, the child would go out for walks in the countryside with his nurse, both mornings and afternoons; he would certainly breathe such a pure breeze.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 11)

This is a model for raising a disciplined, free, and healthy body, in harmony with nature, and is a critique of the unhealthy and confined environment of Ottoman city life. Furthermore, his engaging even in a "fistfight" underlines that he is resilient enough to engage in physical struggle when necessary, as well as being intellectual.

French Education (Mind and Aesthetics): Fetret later goes to Paris and enrolls in the "*high school in Saint-Germain*," which is where he completes his mental and cultural formation. "*In this school, he learned French perfectly*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 11) Learning French, the language of science, philosophy, and art of the period, allows Fetret direct access to the intellectual accumulation of Western civilization. The fact that he spends his holidays in England and does not forget his English reinforces his multilingual and multicultural structure.

Turkish Education (Roots and Identity): Despite all this Western education, Fetret works privately with his father, Selman Bey, to learn Turkish and Eastern culture, which form the basis of his identity, ensuring he does not lose his roots.

> "*He mostly worked with his father in the evenings. He learned Turkish quite well, from its language to its literature. Even before he reached the age of eighteen, when he went to Istanbul with his father to see his homeland and complete his Eastern education, Fetret could, both in language and knowledge, make many who merely passed as minor men of letters envious*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 12)

This is the most crucial proof of the utopian thesis that Westernization does not mean denying one's language and culture, but rather building modern knowledge upon that culture. The fact that Fetret, "*although he knew excellent English, excellent French, preferred to write in Turkish, perhaps due to the effects of heredity*," (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 12) emphasizes that he is not a Levantine but a modern Turkish intellectual devoted to his roots. Forged in the crucible of three civilizations, Fetret, as a flawless intellectual and moral weapon, is the prototype of the ideal Ottoman intellectual in Ali Kemâl's mind: an individual as disciplined and practical as an Englishman, as intellectual and refined as a Frenchman, and as loyal to his own language and culture as a Turk. This is an educational project that the Ottoman State could never achieve through its own institutions (schools like Gülhane Rüştiyesi, where Fetret's father "learned nothing") but which could only be conceived in the imagination of a utopian writer.

4.2. The Agent and Object of the Utopia

4.2.1. The Agent of the Utopia: The Individual Who Judges the Dystopia

When Fetret arrives in Istanbul with his intellectual arsenal, he does not remain a passive character but acts like a judge, refusing to be silent in the face of ignorance and superficiality. On the contrary, he critiques the ignorance and deceit he encounters, either internally or directly. He describes his general observations and criticisms of the writers, poets, and intellectual circles in Istanbul with these sentences:

> "*Oh, my God! Were these great literary celebrities truly this empty... First of all, it was not General Suvorov who fought so cunningly against Napoleon around Moscow, but Kutuzov. When did Suvorov live? What did he do? When did he die? Not to know, to confuse him with his successors, that fanatic general who savagely and barbarically massacred thousands of our coreligionists and citizens, along with innocent women and children, whose hands and feet were bound in İsmail, does this suit a Turkish man of letters, especially a Turkish historian? Besides, even General Kutuzov was not the one who randomly set fire to the city of Moscow corner by corner; it was the city's governor, Rostopchin, Rostopchin, who initially denied this terrible action he committed out of patriotic fervor but was later forced to admit it... And where is the eloquence and grace in that strange style of writing*

> *that drowns the truth of meaning in a multitude of unnecessary, irrelevant metaphors?*
>
> *Somehow, perhaps due to the influence of that environment, this audacious young man did not dare to assert his correct observations against these masters, contrary to his habit, but he necessarily began to look upon those men with contempt*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 13)

He does not hesitate to expose the literary and historical ignorance of Hayret Bey and the other students. With the warning, "—*After Napoleon came not Louis the Fourteenth, but Louis the Eighteenth. There is a very big difference...*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 14) He corrects a blatant historical error made by Hayret Bey to his face. Furthermore, Fetret severely scolds his friend, who blindly praises Hayret Bey, for his obvious ignorance and mistakes regarding literature, with the following sentences:

> "—*My prince, forgive me, but you do not know what you are saying. An individual at the intellectual, literary, and knowledgeable level of your Hayret Bey would not dare to write or publish works in Europe. I wonder what it signifies for you to attempt to compare this man with the French poets you casually mentioned?*
>
> *I say casually; because bringing together Verlaine and Fernand Grec, and then including Mallarmé, indicates that you have not read any of these poets, or if you have, you have not understood them.*
>
> *Moreover, you have not even touched Fleurs du Mal (The Flowers of Evil); because that very well-known collection of poems belongs to Baudelaire, not Verlaine. (...)You are deprived of even this basic literary knowledge. Furthermore, your attributing 'L'Albatros' to Mallarmé shows your lack of familiarity with French literature.*
>
> *Read, read a lot before you attempt such reasoning and comparisons*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 15-16)

These scenes are the moments when the utopia judges the dystopia. Fetret's existence acts as a litmus test, exposing how decayed the existing dystopian order is. In this case, the utopia is implied to be more than just a goal; it must be an agent (an actor) who will destroy the existing dystopia. Fetret is a catalyst on the path to the ideal, in addition to being an ideal outcome.

4.2.2. Fetret as a Comparative Figure

In the novel, we encounter Ali Kemâl's third way—the cosmopolitan and liberal "new human" model—positioned between Tevfik Fikret's "Halûk," who loses his identity in the West, and Mehmed Âkif's indigenous and national "Âsım." Tevfik Fikret's Halûk is a cosmopolitan but rootless figure who risks becoming alienated from his own culture by going to the West. Mehmed Âkif's Âsım, on the other hand, is the exact opposite: a model steeped in the "spirit of Gallipoli," deeply committed to indigenous and Islamic values, yet equipped with Western science. Osman Fetret proposes a third path between these two models. He neither fully Westernizes and loses his identity like Halûk, nor does he embrace the West merely as a "technique" like Âsım. Fetret is a liberal individual who has internalized Western civilization as a whole but has synthesized it with his own Turkish identity. He is not limited by the dogmas of religion or rigid nationalism but takes reason, merit, and universal culture as his guides. This is the "new human" that Ali Kemâl places at the center of his liberal and cosmopolitan utopia, in opposition to other ideologies.

As we saw in the previous sections, Fetret is neither completely Western nor completely Eastern. Ali Kemâl emphasizes this synthesis from the very beginning when he sketches his physical and moral portrait. This distinguishes him from Halûk's rootlessness and Âsım's rigid indigenism. Thus, Ali Kemâl achieves the physical and characteristic construction of Fetret as an East-West synthesis, creating a physical and moral duality within the same body. Fetret is an innate synthesis, carrying both civilizations in his blood and soul, demonstrating the impossibility of confining him to a single cultural mold.

Fetret has a cosmopolitan identity, embracing multiple languages and cultures as his mother tongue/culture. This demonstrates his mastery of universal culture and his candidacy as a liberal world citizen: "*(...) he conversed with an English friend he encountered in fluent English, and with another in equally fluent French; he spoke Turkish in a very pleasant but strange manner, yet with perfect fluency*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 9) The following expressions also reveal that Fetret does not belong solely to the West, like Halûk, and that he is fluent in his own language and culture, but that this fluency is enriched by universal knowledge, rather than being a defensive indigenism like Âsım's:

> "*He was only seven or eight years old, he knew no other language than English. (...) He came to his father's side in Paris around that time. He enrolled in the high school in Saint-Germain. He learned French perfectly in this school. Since he spent his holidays in England with his maternal grandmother and sister every year, he did not forget his English; on the contrary, he improved it*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 11)

Against the danger of Halûk losing his identity in the West, Fetret, despite all his Western education, preserves his Turkishness and love for his homeland. However, this love is not a passionate nationalism, like Âsım's, but a critical attachment:

> *"This Turkish child, born in England and raised in France, loved his country more than the most prosperous nations of the world, with all its deficiencies. He loved it, whether due to the influence of the past, the hope for the future, or whatever else*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 65)

Fetret shows that he was not "melted" in the West; on the contrary, he consciously claimed his own cultural roots. For him, Turkishness is the primary identity through which he expresses himself on the universal stage:

> "*It is strange that, although he knew excellent English, excellent French, he preferred to write in Turkish, perhaps due to the effects of heredity. (...) Perhaps, in this predilection, he took into account the famous saying of one of the celebrities: 'It is better to be first in a village than to be second or third in a city*.'" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 12)

Ali Kemâl has the father, Selman Bey, personally confess that Fetret did not emerge from the natural evolution of Ottoman society; rather, he is the product of a radical intervention, a "revolution." This suggests that the model is a utopia and a proposal:

> *"What is Fetret in our social structure? Is he a fruit of evolution? A product of revolution? No. Perhaps he is a result of upheaval (ihtilâl). A Turkish child who was born to an English mother, born in England, and raised in France. Ottomanism does not evolve this way; if it does, it will be a revolution.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 124-125)

From this, we can say that Fetret, as a "third way," is the construction of an ideal, yet "revolutionary," new human. However, Ali Kemâl implies that the ideal "new human" cannot spontaneously grow in the current social conditions (dystopia) but can only be created by means of the West, using an "external" and "revolutionary" method. This positions Fetret as a consciously designed liberal project that distinguishes him from both the rootlessness of Halûk and the traditional molds of Âsım.

5. Sub-Systems and Ideals of the Utopıan Socıety

After the construction of the ideal individual, Fetret, Ali Kemâl's utopia also designs the sub-systems of the ideal society that this individual will inhabit and that will sustain him. These systems are primarily the foundational areas that shape the mindset rather than the institutional structure of the state, and they are headed by language, intellectual life, and social relations.

Every utopia implicitly or explicitly accepts the existence of a dystopia it criticizes. *Fetret*'s utopia derives its brilliance and necessity from the dark, decayed, and dysfunctional Ottoman reality it confronts. Through the testimonies and dialogues of his characters, Ali Kemâl vividly portrays the state of "fetret" (interregnum) that gives the novel its name—the political instability, moral degradation, and intellectual misery of the period. This is the dystopian ground upon which the utopia is to be built.

5.1. The Reconstruction of Mindset: The Utopia of Language and Literature Reform

In *Fetret*, language is more than a simple communication tool that advances the plot; it is the carrier and founder of a mindset. Selman Bey's long, monologue-style analyses of language and literature throughout the novel are essentially the manifesto of Ali Kemâl's project for a mindset revolution built on language reform.

5.1.1. Diagnosis: The "Sick" and "Enslaved" Ottoman Turkish (Dystopian Condition)

The current Ottoman Turkish, described in the novel as a turgid, "sick" language incapable of conveying thought, is, according to Selman Bey, the most obvious indicator of the dystopian order, being both the cause and the result of the Ottoman Empire's backwardness. The main problems with this language are:

Artificiality and Meaninglessness: The language masks thought with flowery but empty words instead of expressing it clearly. Selman Bey's example of "Tahtgâh-ı saltanatın..." (The Capital Seat of the Sultanate) perfectly summarizes this situation. Although the phrase sounds pompous, it lacks the deep historical and geographical meaning carried by the word "Istanbul." "*There are thousands of capital seats of the sultanate in the world. Do not all those Mahdis, Imams, and minor sultans in the African deserts have their capital seats? But 'Istanbul...' (...) is a world unto itself, an ocean, a history*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 26) This is a critique of language being turned into a tool for grandiloquence, detached from reality.

Slavery to Arabic and Persian: The language's deviation from its natural structure and its submission to the grammar and vocabulary yoke of Arabic and Persian is more than a linguistic issue; it is intellectual enslavement. The Ottoman intellectual is repeating borrowed ideas with a borrowed language, rather than expressing his own thoughts. Selman Bey directly expresses this enslavement while criticizing the period's understanding of literature and language to his son, Fetret: "*Indeed it is; but until the beginning of the last century, how limited, how confined to the elite, obscure, vague, and even, we can say, primitive this language was; it was merely a victim, a captive of Arabic and Persian*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 25) Selman Bey emphasizes that even the reform efforts after the Tanzimat failed to fully escape this captivity: "*Our fathers, we went further; we shed that blemish in a short time. We began to write what we thought; yet, still not breaking free from the East and Orientalism, we did not give our language the Western trait, that naturalness, that perfection*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 23) The novel presents the unconscious and incorrect use of Arabic and Persian words as one of the most obvious signs of this intellectual enslavement:

> "*However, many of our men of letters, especially the youth, do not accept the necessity of Arabic for the Ottoman language at all; they show no inclination toward its study. But, strangely enough (ve mine'l-garâib), they inundate their writings with Arabic words, and wrong ones at that. For instance, while there is a pure, pleasant, simple Turkish equivalent like 'kolay' [easy], they write the difficult-to-pronounce Arabic word 'sehl'—which they naturally horribly mangle because they do not know Arabic—as 'sehîl,' calling it 'şöhret-i sehîle'* [easy fame]." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 44)

Monotony: Despite its flashy structure, this language was monotonous and incapable of reflecting the different states of the human soul, complex and deep ideas, or the naturalness, pauses, and repetitions of spoken language. Selman Bey, one of the protagonists, expresses in a conversation with his son Fetret that this monotony was one of the biggest flaws of the literary style that developed after the Tanzimat:

> "*The second flaw of this literature, this language, this style of writing is that it is monotonous. It is so because of that preoccupation with splendor, that anxiety for pomp. They say 'style is the man himself,' but not for this style. When a person speaks, or even delivers a speech, he adopts various attitudes; sometimes he stops abruptly, sometimes he intentionally repeats a word several times, he breaks and lengthens his sentences; in short, he follows nature, naturalness. However, in that new language of ours, these nuances, these attitudes, these naturalnesses did not exist.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 26)

Selman Bey further states that even in the hands of pioneers like Şinasi, Ziya Pasha, and Nâmık Kemâl, this "flashy" but spiritless style did not achieve full naturalness:

> *"Şinasis, Ziyas, Kemâls could not write exactly as they spoke, they could not demonstrate that simple inimitability (sehl-i mümteni). They were eloquent, no, we can't say very eloquent, eloquence is something else; they were pompous, they were exciting, but they were not so natural, so simple, so sincere. Yet, in truth, progress and ascension, for whoever it may be, especially for a nation, lies first and foremost in naturalness, in benefiting from nature in an abundant and simple manner.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 26)

This criticism is further concretized in another section of the novel through the bombastic but meaningless style of a famous writer of the period. While criticizing the writer's complex and artificial sentence: "*Vaktâ ki cihangîr-i vahime-fürûzun... azm-i hârik-engîzine gûyâ feverân içinde bir silsile-i berâkinden iz'an-rübâ olduğu mertebede âteşîn bir hâil çekti...*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 12) the lack of depth in this style is emphasized as follows: "*And where is the eloquence and grace* *in that strange style of writing that drowns the truth of meaning in a multitude of unnecessary, irrelevant metaphors?*” (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 13)

5.1.2. Treatment: The Utopia of a Simple and Rational Turkish “Like a Western Language” (Utopian Ideal)

The novel adopts the ideal of a simple and functional Turkish “like a Western language,” which enables logical and rational thought, as advocated by Selman Bey, and language is constructed as a tool for transforming the mindset. Ali Kemâl’s utopian solution to this linguistic dystopia is a radical reform to turn Turkish into a “Western language.” This does not mean abandoning Turkish to speak French, but equipping the structure of Turkish with the rational, analytical, and functional features of Western languages. At this point, the characteristics of the ideal language are:

Clarity (Vuzuh) and Simplicity: The novel contains many sections emphasizing clarity and simplicity. The author clearly states his ideas on this matter, especially in the “Mukaddeme” (Preface) and through his character Selman Bey, emphasizing that his style aims to convey ideas clearly rather than through ornate narrative:

> *The greatest virtue of this style of expression, to me, is that it serves the conveyance of ideas in the most serious, most sincere manner. To be able to describe and analyze the deepest, most difficult ideas and issues, but to be easily understood by all those who can read and write, to make our literary language familiar not only to the elite but also to the common people, is the most appropriate style, in our opinion.*” (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 6-7)

Furthermore, in the novel, while criticizing the literary language of the period to his son Fetret, Selman Bey emphasizes how ornate and artificial expression hinders understanding by comparing the old and new styles, and he discusses the importance of simplicity:

> *“Those gentlemen seek eloquence, elegance, and in short, literature, in that pompous construction, and find the simple, broken, natural Turkish written by you and me foreign, attributing it to inability or inexperience; because they take their examples not from the West, but essentially from the East.*” (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 19)

Selman Bey says the greatest achievement of the new generation is their ability to express even the most complex ideas in a clear and understandable language:

> “*Today, you have elevated Turkish almost to the level of a Western language. Whatever you think, whatever you want, you express it in this language with extraordinary ease, with fluency, with safety; you do not sacrifice any of your ideas to grandiloquent words, or even to difficulties of expression...*” (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 23)

These excerpts clearly show that the novel advocates for a style that aims to convey ideas clearly, simply, and directly, in opposition to an ornate and incomprehensible language. This aligns directly with the Yeni Lisan (New Language) movement of the period in which the novel was written.

Democracy (Demokratiklik): Ali Kemâl explicitly states at the very beginning of the work that the most fundamental feature of the style he aims for must be that it is not elitist and that it addresses everyone:

> "*To be able to describe and analyze the deepest, most difficult ideas and issues, but to be easily understood by all those who can read and write, to make our literary language familiar not only to the elite (havâss) but also to the common people (avam) is the most appropriate style, in our opinion*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 6-7)

The goal in this statement, which is the very definition of the "democracy" ideal, is to rescue the literary language from the monopoly of the elite and make it available to the public. Ali Kemâl also claims that his own style can convey even the most difficult subjects to "everyone who knows the language" without boring them, in the concluding sentence of the "Mukaddeme":

> *"For me, it has always been that [style] which helped and assisted me to explain the most intricate and even the most difficult issues, whether historical, political, or anything else, to all those who know this language, and even to make them read without being bored, and especially to be able to express my intentions with fluency and safety*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 7)

This reinforces the idea that language should serve everyone who speaks and reads it, not just an elitist group.

The critique of the dystopia in the novel, in the context of an incomprehensible, elitist, and "anti-democratic" language, is where Selman Bey and Fetret set the stage for the ideal language by criticizing the detachment, dysfunctionality, and role of the old, ornate language in obscuring the truth. The following sentence, which Fetret sees in a writer's draft and receives with astonishment, reveals the hollowness of the elitist language:

> *"When a fiery barrier was cast before the prodigious determination of General Suvorov—that fear-instilling conqueror, whose resolve had until that time withstood even the calamities of nature's primordial power—it was seemingly [a barrier drawn] from a chain of volcanoes in full eruption, to a degree that confounds perception....*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 12)

Through this sentence, which Fetret criticizes for both its historical errors and meaningless ornamentation, language is portrayed as a purely elitist tool of display that the public cannot understand and that fails to convey reality. Selman Bey explains why the old generation could not be understood:

> "*...those gentlemen seek eloquence, elegance, and in short, literature, in that pompous construction, and find the simple, broken, natural Turkish written by you and me foreign, attributing it to inability or inexperience; because they take their examples not from the West, but essentially from the East*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 19)

Here, the "simple, broken, natural Turkish" represents the "democratic" language spoken and understood by the public, while the "pompous construction" symbolizes the old style understood only by the elite and considered "foreign" by the public. Selman Bey heralds that Fetret's generation has successfully constructed this new and "democratic" language. This language is rational and functional, like Western languages. The sentence *"Today, you have elevated Turkish almost to the level of a Western language. Whatever you think, whatever you want, you express it in this language with extraordinary ease, with fluency, with safety; you do not sacrifice any of your ideas to grandiloquent words, or even to difficulties of expression...*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 23) emphasizes that the greatest achievement of the new language is that it does not sacrifice thought for ornate words (tumturak-ı elfaz). The goal is not ornamentation, but to express every kind of thought with ease (sühûlet-i harikulâde).

All these quotations clearly demonstrate Ali Kemâl’s language utopia, which he sees as a civilization project alongside an aesthetic preference. This utopian language is “democratic” in structure: rescued from the monopoly of the elite, appealing to the general public, allowing for rational thought, and presenting even the deepest ideas with a clarity that everyone can understand.

Functionality: In the novel, and especially in its “Mukaddeme,” Ali Kemâl defines the main function of the language and style he seeks to develop as the ability to express even the most complex ideas clearly and understandably. This means that language should be the carrier of philosophical and scientific thought, in addition to being an aesthetic tool. The author explains the greatest virtue of his own style with this functionality:

> “*The greatest virtue of this style of expression, to me, is that it serves the conveyance of ideas in the most serious, most sincere manner. To be able to describe and analyze the deepest, most difficult ideas and issues, but to be easily understood by all those who can read and write, to make our literary language familiar not only to the elite but also to the common people, is the most appropriate style, in our opinion*.” (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 6-7)

Fetret establishes a direct link between the modernization of language and scientific progress. According to him, it is impossible to spread science and technology to society without a developed and pure language: “*If we do not have a pure, rich, solid Turkish, can we attain scientific and technical progress? By what means can we instill those sciences and arts in our children and youth?*” (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 33-34)

Selman Bey, while narrating the historical evolution of the Turkish language to his son Fetret, chronologically lists the stages of this language revolution. He says that the Divan poets like Ahmed ü Necâtî laid the “foundation,” Tanzimat pioneers like Âkif Pasha somewhat “renewed” the language, and Şinasis and Kemâls established “new literature” but could not fully “naturalize” the language. He states that this task falls to Fetret’s generation, the new humans of the utopia. He heralds the realization of this utopia by saying to them:

> *“But in this field, in the field of renewal, you have far surpassed us. Today, you have elevated Turkish almost to the level of a Western language. Whatever you think, whatever you want, you express it in this language with extraordinary ease, with fluency, with safety...*” (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 26)

According to Selman Bey, the new generation's success in raising the Turkish language to the level of Western languages, making it a source of hope and pride for the nation's future, is more than a simple language reform; it is proof of an intellectual leap and a civilized ascent:

> *“No, to make our Turkish attain this progress, to uproot it boldly from the East and put it into the form, the position of a Western language like this, is a miracle. To despair of the future of a nation that has demonstrated this miracle is at least unfair, frivolous, and impatient.*” (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 23)

5.2. The Utopia of Intellectual Life: Meritocracy and Depth

In Ali Kemâl’s utopia, the reorganization of intellectual life is vital, as the ideal society is governed and shaped by ideal intellectuals. The novel presents a utopia of intellectual life based on seriousness, meritocracy, and depth, against the shallow and personally polemical intellectual environment of the Second Constitutional Era.

5.2.1. Critique of the Intellectuals

The shallow, ignorant, and conceited intellectual type of the period is caricatured through the character "Hayret Bey" in the novel. *Fetret*'s utopia gains strength from the dystopian ground it criticizes. The sharpest target of the novel's dystopian critique is the intellectual decay of the period's intelligentsia. According to Ali Kemâl, the intellectual of the Second Constitutional Era is a false elite who superficially imitates the West, is ignorant of his own history and culture, lacks merit, and, most importantly, hides his ignorance with grandiloquent language. This portrait is concretized in the early chapters of the novel through the personalities Fetret encounters in Istanbul. The "owner of a great newspaper, a man of letters and a historian" whom Fetret first meets in Istanbul is a caricature of the period's intellectual. This man does not hesitate to distort historical facts; he confuses General Kutuzov, Napoleon's opponent in the Moscow campaign, with General Suvorov, who died years earlier and massacred thousands of Muslims at the Fortress of İsmail. Even more appallingly, he covers this blatant ignorance with a bombastic and meaningless style, presenting it as an achievement and receiving praise from those around him. The author takes an X-ray of the period's mindset through a single sentence uttered by this character: "*When a fiery barrier—as stupefying [lit. 'reason-robbing'] as a chain of volcanoes in eruption—was drawn against the prodigious resolve of that fearsome world-conqueror, General Suvorov; a resolve which had, until that time, withstood even the calamities of creative power [nature] itself...*" [*Vaktâ ki Ceneral Sovarof o cihangîr-i vahime-fürûzun o zamana kadar âfât-ı kudret-i fâtıraya bile mukavemet eyleyen azm-i hârik-engîzine gûyâ feverân içinde bir silsile-i berâkinden iz'an-rübâ olduğu mertebede âteşîn bir hâil çekti...*] (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 23) In Ali Kemâl's eyes, this sentence is a summary of the period's literature and intellectual life: an empty structure, detached from reality, filled with meaningless Arabic and Persian compounds, and consisting only of sound and verbal clutter. Fetret's astonishment at this situation ("Aman yâ Rabbi. Were these great literary celebrities truly this empty...") is the novel's reflection of the author's own rebellion. Fetret's inner voice analyzes this dystopian condition:

> "*First of all, it was not General Suvorov who fought so cunningly against Napoleon around Moscow, but Kutuzov. Not to know when Suvorov lived, what he did, when he died, to confuse him with his successors, that fanatic general who savagely and barbarically massacred thousands of our coreligionists and citizens (...) in İsmail, does this suit a Turkish man of letters, especially a Turkish historian?*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 13)

This passage is more than just a correction of a factual error; it reveals how alienated the period's intellectual was from his own history and sufferings. Moreover, this ignorance is applauded by the other "intellectuals" around him and is glorified with words like, "*Master, live long this time, you have reached the peak of not only history but also literature and eloquence*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 13) This is a complete intellectual dystopia where grandiloquence and charlatanry are valued, not merit, and knowledge is devalued.

Similarly, the poet "Hayret Bey," referred to as the "Sully Prudhomme of the Turks," completes this dystopian intellectual portrait. Hayret Bey tries to display his intellectual accumulation by mentioning that he lived in the West, but again makes a fundamental historical mistake: "*For example, a great revolution occurs in France, a Napoleon emerges, and everything is in turmoil. Then, after that turmoil, a Louis the Fourteenth comes, and things return to normal.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 14) Fetret's cool correction, "*After Napoleon came not Louis the Fourteenth, but Louis the Eighteenth. There is a very big difference...*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 14) does not faze Hayret Bey. He dismisses the subject by saying, "*That's not the point, the point is...*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 14) As seen, Hayret Bey is—astonishingly—ignorant of Western literature and history; he lacks such basic historical knowledge that he thinks Louis XIV came after Napoleon. When cornered in the discussion, he resorts to sophistry to avoid the topic. This ignorance is not limited to Hayret Bey. His friend, a student from the Imperial High School (Mekteb-i Sultanî), who defends him, is a bitter proof of how this dystopian mindset has permeated the young generations. In defending Hayret Bey, the young man reveals his shallowness about Western literature; he lumps Verlaine and Fernand Grec together, includes Mallarmé, and, worst of all, attributes Baudelaire's famous work *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*) to Verlaine. Fetret's harsh and knowledgeable reply to this young man is the utopia's first intellectual victory against the dystopia:

> *"My prince, forgive me, but you do not know what you are saying. (...) Moreover, you have not even touched Fleurs du Mal (The Flowers of Evil); because that very well-known collection of poems belongs to Baudelaire, not Verlaine. (...) Read, read a lot before you attempt such reasoning and comparisons.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 15-16)

Through these scenes, Ali Kemâl creates dystopian segments designed to show how shallow, filled with hearsay, and lacking in merit the intellectual environment of the period was, and he portrays the intellectual of his time as a class that is "unreading, unresearched, ignorant of fundamental facts, but attempting to hide this with flowery words and false confidence." Ali Kemâl's utopia in *Fetret* will be established as a rejection of this intellectual misery and deceit.

5.2.2. The Ideal Academy and Public Sphere

Fetret is not just a utopia of individual salvation; it also presents an institutional model for how social enlightenment should occur. At the heart of this model is an "Ideal Academy" reconstructed with Western methods and based on merit, and a conception of an honest and elevated "Public Sphere" that this academy enlightens by producing knowledge. The novel contrasts the relationship between these two structures with the corrupt intellectual environment of the period. According to Ali Kemâl, the country's salvation is possible only through a class of intellectuals, educated in the West and possessing intellectual integrity, purifying the public sphere from ignorance and personal polemics through the academy.

The academy in *Fetret* is idealized from its physical space to its actors. The novel describes in detail the new Dârülfünûn-ı Osmânî building, modeled after the Sorbonne, as a symbol of the break from the old and corrupt. This building was established with the "repented wealth" of Nerîman Pasha, who made a fortune through corruption; this is a symbolic message that the sins of the past can only be cleansed through science and knowledge. The figures who fill this ideal institution are also idealized:

The New Generation Academic (Baydur Bey): Baydur Bey, who studied history at the Sorbonne in Paris, is the prototype of the new academic. He is an intellectual who is proficient in Western scientific methods, competent in his field, and does not hesitate to share his knowledge in the public sphere. His first public lecture at the Dârülfünûn is a symbol of the academy opening its doors to society.

This conference takes place in a modern and enlightening environment, attended by women: "*On a Sunday afternoon at two o'clock, a great crowd, mostly composed of male and female students, had gathered in the lecture hall dedicated to ceremonies at the Ottoman University (Dârülfünûn-ı Osmânî).*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 67)

The Guide and Mentor Academic (Selman Bey and Hakan Bey): Selman Bey, with his experience and wisdom, guides the younger generation and is the moral and intellectual defender of the academy in the public sphere. Hakan Bey, the inspector of Ottoman students in Paris, is the person who established the system that will train these ideal academics. Hakan Bey's philosophy is that students should go to Europe not just to learn a language, but to specialize in a specific field ("ikmâl-i tahsil" - completion of education). This is an academic understanding that advocates for depth against shallowness: "*In Hakan Bey's opinion, Ottoman students should come to Paris not for education, but for the completion of education; before coming, they should have tasted the pleasure of science and acquired its fundamentals entirely.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 146)

The most important arena for the public sphere in the novel is the press (matbuat). Ali Kemâl divides the press into good and bad:

Corrupt Public Sphere (*Kâmran* Newspaper): The *Kâmran* newspaper, whose editor-in-chief is Kahraman Bey, represents ignorance, passion, personal interests, and low-level polemics. It turns Baydur Bey's scientific lecture into a personal attack by claiming he committed "plagiarism" (intihal). This is a critique of the corrupt public sphere where knowledge is devalued, and gossip and slander thrive. Selman Bey describes this attack as "very low" and "personal, vulgar."

Ideal Public Sphere (*Selâm* Newspaper): The *Selâm* newspaper, managed by Timur Bey, is presented as an ideal publication that values merit, knowledge, and high-level debate. As soon as Timur Bey sees Kâmran's attack, he immediately calls Selman Bey, the true expert in the field, to write the truth about the issue. This depicts an ideal situation where the press takes on the responsibility of informing the public: "*In my opinion, this answer should be given not by Baydur Bey, but by you; you should talk purely about history and knowledge, leaving aside personalities and those dry attacks. It would be very appropriate and effective*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 88)

The Academy's Intervention in the Public Sphere: One of the most critical points in the novel is the article Selman Bey publishes in *Selâm*. This article, besides defending Baydur Bey, systematically exposes *Kâmran* newspaper's historical errors, effectively giving the public a lesson on "how to produce correct information." Selman Bey's refutation of Kahraman Bey's ignorance regarding Alemdar Mustafa Pasha and the Napoleonic era with evidence, and his emphasis on the importance of academic knowledge, is an example of the academy's mission to leave its ivory tower, enlighten, and cleanse the public sphere.

Ultimately, the public also plays a role in this enlightenment process. The public, which initially believed Kâmran's slanders, changes its mind after Selman Bey's evidence-based article. Samed, one of the novel's characters, interprets this situation as a tribute to the public's common sense:

> *"Despite their constantly mentioned shortcomings, our people have a great virtue, and that is their sound judgment, their fairness, and their inclination and attraction*

> *to safety and justice. For instance, those who read Selman Bey's article today found it so correct and right.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 104)

Through Fetret, Ali Kemâl presents an enlightenment utopia where a Western-style reorganized academy shapes the public sphere through a responsible press, where knowledge replaces ignorance, and where elevated debate replaces polemics. In this utopia, the intellectual's duty is, first and foremost, to produce knowledge and then to lead a collective enlightenment by disseminating this knowledge to the general public.

5.2.3. Ideal Discussion Procedure and Press

Ali Kemâl's novel *Fetret* offers a sharp critique of the press life and intellectual discussion culture of the period while also presenting an ideal model. In the novel, the press is positioned as a mirror reflecting the intellectual and moral level of a nation. This mirror has a "corrupt" face, represented by the *Kâmran* newspaper, which reflects ignorance, passion, and personal hostilities, and an "ideal" face, represented by the *Selâm* newspaper, which is based on knowledge, meritocracy, and the responsibility to enlighten the public. According to Ali Kemâl, the ideal discussion procedure should be conducted on a foundation free from personal attacks and based entirely on knowledge, merit, and objectivity.

The novel concretizes the corrupt understanding of the press through the *Kâmran* newspaper, whose editor-in-chief is Kahraman Bey. The discussion method of this newspaper focuses on destroying the opponent's personality instead of seeking the truth. It relies not on knowledge, but on passion and prejudices shaped by the "level of comprehension of the common people." The most obvious example of this is the article published in Kâmran after the young academic Baydur Bey's scientific lecture at the Dârülfünûn. Kahraman Bey, instead of discussing the historical information presented by Baydur, directly accuses him of plagiarism (sirkat) and charlatanry, even issuing threats about his private life:

> "*They call this type of excerpt plagiarism, or more explicitly, theft (sirkat). (...) I believe a certain Turkish poet said that the tongue of one who steals poetry should be cut off. We do not wish to go that far. We believe it is sufficient to tear the pens of these charlatans, who attempt to insult the true owners of honor and serious knowledge despite their nature and virtues being clear, into pieces and thrust them into their mouths...*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 92)

This style is the peak of the approach Ali Kemâl rejects, one that drags the discussion onto the grounds of personal animosity and ignorance.

Against this corrupt approach, the *Selâm* newspaper, managed by Timur Bey, is presented as an ideal platform. Timur Bey, a figure who values intellectual quality and public responsibility despite having commercial concerns, seeks the solution not in a personal polemic but in an enlightening article by an expert in the field when he sees *Kâmran*'s vulgar attack. What he asks of Selman Bey when he calls him is precisely this: to remove the discussion from the personal and bring it to the grounds of knowledge.

> "*Did you see Kâmran's attack on Baydur Bey today? How unfair! And especially how personal and vulgar! We must not leave such an aggression unanswered. In my opinion, this answer should be given not by Baydur Bey, but by you; you should talk purely about history and knowledge, leaving aside personalities and those dry attacks. It would be very appropriate and effective.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 88)

This request is the novel's manifesto on how the ideal press should operate: The press should be a pulpit that informs the public with correct information, not a tool for gossip and slander.

Selman Bey's reply article published in the *Selâm* newspaper concretizes the principles the novel puts forward regarding the ideal discussion procedure:

Based on Knowledge and Objectivity: Selman Bey refutes Kahraman Bey's historical errors with evidence, without uttering a single word about his person. He shows how the discussion should be based on knowledge by chronologically correcting the dates of Napoleon's Moscow campaign and the Russian occupation of Bender and Hotin:

> *"Let it be absurd to expect such political truths from those who write Kâmran. But these gentlemen do not even know that Napoleon launched his famous Moscow campaign at the end of 1812. The Russians, however, occupied the fortresses of Bender and Hotin in 1806*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 95)

Impartiality and Intellectual Honesty: The ideal intellectual should be able to objectively critique the people they defend, as well as their opponents. Even while defending his student Baydur Bey, Selman Bey does not hesitate to point out his shortcomings. He views Baydur's failure to adequately criticize Napoleon's despotism, while only narrating his brilliant aspects, as a deficiency:

> *"However, the role of the historian is not merely to describe the bright side of this magnificent medal, but rather to describe the reverse side. Otherwise, if Napoleon and Napoleon's reign had only been as described by Baydur Bey, would it have collapsed so resoundingly and immediately after the retreat from Moscow?*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 99)

This is an ideal intellectual stance that shows that loyalty to the truth is superior to personal ties.

Politeness and Decorum: The ideal discussion in the novel requires that politeness be maintained even on the toughest subjects. This principle is best embodied in the character of Sheikh Nebhan Efendi. Even in religious debates, he advocates for answering his adversary with logic and wisdom instead of insults: "*One who cannot maintain propriety of language in such high discussions reveals his pettiness. (...) He strove to refute his adversary not with insults, but with logic and wisdom*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 47) This moral stance is a standard the novel proposes for all public discussions.

Fetret views the press and discussion culture as a civilization test for a nation. A press driven by ignorance and personal ambitions corrupts society, while a press based on knowledge, objectivity, and the responsibility to enlighten the public elevates that society. The ideal intellectual, in the person of Selman Bey, is positioned as a guide who undertakes this task of elevation and raises the level of discussion from personal animosities to the search for universal truth.

5.3. Modernization of Social Relations: Rational Love and the New Family

The novel *Fetret* also proposes a modern model for family and interpersonal relationships, which are the cornerstones of Ottoman society. The novel idealizes a new form of relationship based on reason, intellectual compatibility, equality, and mutual respect, and the "new family" built upon this foundation, in place of traditional, arranged, or purely emotional unions. This modernization is presented alongside a critique of the old order, through the tragedy of enlightened women like Güzîde Hanım trapped within the traditional structure, and the drama of women like Nesteren Hanım, driven to suicide by being treated as an object by her husband. The most concrete example of this new and ideal model is the relationship between the novel's two main characters, Fetret and Seher.

5.3.1. The Ideal Union Based on Reason and Equality: Fetret and Seher

The love between Fetret and Seher is a micro-level reflection of the modern social order proposed by the novel. Their relationship does not arise from a coincidental passion or a union arranged by families. On the contrary, it blossoms in the environment of the "müsâmere" (social gathering), a modern space for socialization where young men and women can come together to discuss literature, politics, and ideas. This shows that the foundation of the relationship is intellectual sharing before emotions.

Fetret, whose love for Seher is built on mutual intellectual admiration, values Seher not only for her beauty but also for her intelligence, intellectual development, and modern demeanor. When he explains his love and future plans to her, he positions Seher as an intellectual and moral partner, even a guide, as well as an aesthetic complement to his life. He sees her as a "saving angel" who will prevent him from going astray during his education in Paris:

> "*My Seher, you are the light of my life, the light of my dawn (nûr-ı seherisin). (...) Whenever I am tired, whenever I am stressed, and whenever I feel like straying from the right path because of this necessity, I am sure that your smiling image will innocently appear before me, become my refuge, and instantly save me from those misfortunes. My Seher, you are my angel of salvation (ferişte-i necâtımsın).*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 110)

This approach defines love not as a romantic emotion but as a rational force that serves the individual's self-realization. For Fetret, his love for Seher is a moral anchor that will prevent him from getting caught up in the "amusing field" (saha-i tarab-engîzine) of Paris.

The couple's relationship is based on an egalitarian foundation in the Western sense. Fetret proposes marriage and expresses his intentions directly to Seher, seeing her as an equal individual with whom he will make decisions about his future. Seher is not a passive figure. She openly expresses her anxiety about Fetret going to Paris and her fear of losing him to a Western woman (which she recounts through a dream). This reflects her modern female identity, one who possesses her own thoughts and feelings: "*Ah, but now you are going to Paris! (...) You will meet girls in those places where you will live, who are superior in beauty and knowledge, French and English (...) I wonder if one of those distinguished acquaintances will one day make you forget me, this little Seher?*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 116-117) Fetret's taking these concerns seriously and providing her with lengthy reassurances shows that the relationship is based on mutual communication and understanding, not on one-sided male dominance. This modern union is crowned with a modern ceremony. The elders of the family, Kerim Pasha and Selman Bey, announce the decision that the young people matured themselves, in front of all their friends and family during a picnic. Kerim Pasha's words formalize the new understanding of marriage, one based on the will and love of the young people, replacing the old system of arranged marriages: "*My brother Selman Bey and I have seen and understood for months that these two products of our lives love* *each other; they love each other seriously, sincerely. This love was worthy of such a happy outcome...*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 122)

The relationship between Fetret and Seher forms the foundation of the novel's social modernization project: this new union, where emotions are balanced by reason, where the parties elevate each other intellectually and morally, and which is based on equality and open communication, is the ideal family model for the "utopian Ottoman" society aimed for.

5.3.2. Dystopian Contrast and Moral Decay: "What a Revelry!.."

The novel *Fetret*, through its central characters Osman Fetret and Seher, carries the desire to establish a modern model of love and family based on reason, mutual respect, and national ideals. This "utopian" quest reinforces its meaning by creating its own antithesis within the novel's narrative. The chapter titled "Bir Cümbüş Ki!.." (What a Revelry!..) in the second book, which covers Fetret's student life in Paris, serves exactly this function. This section exposes a "dystopian" Western experience—one based on moral decay, momentary whims, and misery—the exact opposite of the Westernization model idealized by the author. By doing so, the value of Fetret's rational and pure love for Seher is elevated through comparison with the moral misery of Paris's bohemian life. At the center of this dystopian tableau is Zâhir Pasha, presented as a rusty remnant of the Ottoman past. The Pasha is a figure who lives only for pleasure, unaware of the intellectual and moral depth of Western civilization. His past paints a portrait that is the direct opposite of the modern family:

> *"He had married two or three times with the most distinguished Turkish girls, had children, but each time he had abandoned his family and children and devoted himself to an endless whim and fancy. [...] Those who seek only a material pleasure in love truly do not know what it means to love, they cannot love, and they cannot be loved*." (Ali Kemâl, 1330, 42-43)

Zâhir Pasha's life in Paris, characterized by his relationship with his mistress Mariette, which is based on jealousy, distrust, and mutual self-interest rather than love, is a continuation of this moral decay. Mariette, on the other hand, is a tragic figure who represents the dark side of Paris's promise of "freedom." Driven to prostitution by destitution, this woman, whose only purpose in life is to care for her illegitimate child, sees her relationship with Zâhir Pasha as a form of security while suffering the pain of not being able to satisfy the longings of her soul and body. The narrator summarizes her misery with these words:

> "*There were days when Mariette would not leave her room; she would sew, even if it was useless, or read a book; but when she ran out of money, she was inevitably forced to go to cafes, mostly to the Panthéon Café*." (Ali Kemâl, 1330, 45)

The distorted relationship established by these two characters is the exact opposite of the "new family" model idealized by the novel. The "revelry" (cümbüş), from which the chapter gets its name, brings this moral decay to its peak. The night, which begins with Zâhir Pasha taking Mariette to a cafe to console her, turns into a drunken, noisy, and immoral entertainment with the participation of Fetret's friend Savlet. Savlet, unlike Fetret, is a caricature of the Ottoman youth who embraces only the hedonistic side of the West. Mariette's daring interest in Fetret and her momentary escapade with Savlet show how much the relationships in this environment are based on fleeting whims.

In the midst of this moral chaos, Fetret is a spectator and a judge rather than a participant. He joins this "revelry" accidentally and unwillingly. His internal reckoning late at night contains the core message of the chapter and the author. Fetret compares the two different faces of Paris: one is a nest of science, knowledge, and civilization; the other is a swamp of moral decay and hedonism. He further solidifies his own moral compass on the direction Westernization should take through this dystopian experience:

> "*Yes, Paris is truly a rising-place of excellence (matla'-ı meâlîdir), it elevates a young person intellectually, it elevates him; it raises him to a high level in science, philosophy, and technology, but... on the condition of working day and night, enduring all hardships... If not, Paris is a disaster, it burns, ignites, and reduces the youth to ashes. Just as it has done to that poor Savlet... Today, life for this young man consists of a continuous base craving, and often a bestial lust*." (Ali Kemâl, 1330, 52)

Fetret uses this night of revelry as a touchstone for his pure love for Seher and the ideal of the modern family he dreams of establishing with her. The moral degradation he witnesses reinforces his belief in the correctness of his path, and the words of wisdom directed at him by one of the women at the party at the end of the night are like an internal criticism of this collapse: "*You are young, you are intelligent, you are valiant, flee, flee from this world, from such gatherings... Lest your youth, your intelligence, your grace be wasted for nothing, lest they be plundered unjustly.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1330, 57)

The chapter "Bir Cümbüş Ki!.." serves as a moral allegory in the novel. This dystopian tableau, in which the obsolescent Ottoman mindset is represented by Zâhir Pasha, the misunderstood Westernization by Savlet, and the dark side of Western society by Mariette, is an effective element of contrast constructed to highlight the novel's core thesis: the ideal of "rational love and the new family." This section acts as a crucible that tests Fetret's moral character, ensuring he emerges from it with his identity as the "new Turkish youth" idealized by the author solidified.

6. Lımıts, Contradıctıons, and Faılure of the Utopıa

Despite presenting a brilliant utopian vision, *Fetret* must be evaluated, like any ambitious project, along with the inherent limits, contradictions, and questions it contains. These elements indicate that the text is not merely a naive fantasy but a complex thought experiment that is also aware of its own impossibility.

6.1. The Elitist Project: Where is the People?

Ali Kemâl's "utopian" future vision in *Fetret*, although carrying an ideal of national salvation and ascent, harbors a profound elitism at its core. This project is not an organic evolution arising from the people themselves but a plan for a specially trained elite, educated in the West, to transform society "from top to bottom." When the novel's structure, characters, and ideological discourse are examined, the question "Where are the people?" becomes prominent, and the answer reveals the project's most fundamental contradiction and limitation: the people are not the subject of this utopia, but a passive object that needs to be transformed. This elitist approach is explicitly announced in the author's own "Mukaddeme" (Preface). Ali Kemâl clearly distinguishes the audience of his novel, stating that he wrote his work not for the ordinary reader but for an intellectual stratum. This is a striking contradiction, showing that a project claiming to enlighten the public excludes the public from the very beginning:

> "*Based on these considerations, I do not suppose that those who read stories merely for entertainment, or even for profitable entertainment, will enjoy this work; but I also do not suppose that those who seek all kinds of intellectual pleasure in thought will be displeased with this composition. In my opinion, the aim is essentially to serve this second class of our people.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 3)

The "people" Ali Kemâl wants to serve are, in fact, the already enlightened havass (elite) class. Although he mentions elsewhere the desire "*to make our literary language familiar not only to the elite but also to the common people*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 7) the novel's target and content contradict this intention entirely. Salvation will be realized despite the people and through a chosen elite, not with the language of the people and in conjunction with them.

The embodiment of this project is the novel's protagonist, Osman Fetret. Fetret is not a figure who emerged from Ottoman society; he is a hybrid ideal "imported" from outside for the success of the project. The son of an English mother and a Turkish father, born in England and raised in France, Fetret is less a part of the Ottoman people and more a potential savior looking at them from the outside. His physical and cultural makeup symbolizes this "foreignness" and elitism. More importantly, his father, Selman Bey, the novel's chief ideologue, personally admits that this project cannot be realized through the internal dynamics of Ottoman society. Fetret's existence can only be the product of a "revolution" (ihtilâl)—a radical break created by external intervention—not an evolution (tekâmül):

> "*What is Fetret in our social structure? Is he the fruit of an evolution? Is he the product of an transformation? No. He is perhaps the result of a revolution. A Turkish child who was born to an English mother, born in England, and grew up in France. Evolution for the Ottoman state does not happen this way; if it does, it becomes a revolution.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 124-125

This confession is the clearest expression of the project's lack of confidence in the people. Since Ottoman society is deemed too "backward" and "obsolete" to create its own savior, the solution is sought outside, in a model melted and reshaped in the crucible of the West.

One of the rare moments when the public is concretely represented in the novel is Selman Bey's encounter with the boatman "Abullabut Mehmed of Kumkapı," an old school friend. However, this encounter is not a coming together but a nostalgic tableau that underlines the class and intellectual gulf. The boatman represents the common person, who failed to become an elite, fell outside the education system, and remained a "boatman." His words to Selman Bey show how the people are coded as "those left behind" in this project: "*You studied, and look, thank goodness you became a gentleman. We could not study. So we ended up as boatmen, and we grew old in the profession*." (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 59) Selman Bey's attitude towards the boatman, while containing pity and nostalgia, is not one that takes him seriously or considers including him in his project. The boatman is a charming but outdated memory of a failed past education system. He is a remnant of the old order that must be overcome, not a part of the utopia that needs to be saved.

Fetret's utopia is an elitist project conceived despite the people, not for them. The people remain either an audience the author does not deign to address, an "other" who cannot find a place within the ideal savior, or an element of a nostalgic landscape. Therefore, the novel's salvation project cannot be more than a top-down, contradictory fantasy lacking a social base.

6.2. "Revolution" or "Evolution"? The Artificiality of the Project or the Sustainability of the "Ideal" as an Internal Contradiction

The salvation project Ali Kemâl puts forward in Fetret contains a fundamental tension within itself: Is this project an organic evolution (tekâmül) arising from the society's own dynamics, or is it a radical break, a revolution (ihtilâl), imposed from outside? Selman Bey, the novel's chief ideologue, oscillates between these two concepts, involuntarily confessing the inherent artificiality and sustainability problem of the project. This internal contradiction constitutes the weakest link in the utopia and the main reason for its failure.

Osman Fetret, who is at the center of the novel's utopian project, is not the product of an "evolution" but almost a laboratory experiment. He is a specially cultivated model developed under the most ideal conditions in the West, not a set of values that blossomed from within Ottoman society. This situation is explicitly stated by the architect of the project, Selman Bey, himself. In a conversation with his friend Kerim Pasha, Selman Bey admits that Fetret's existence is not a natural development for Ottoman society but the result of a radical and external intervention.[13] This admission exposes the artificiality at the core of the project. "Evolution" is the gradual ascent of society upon its own roots. The Fetret model, however, is an attempt to skip these roots and plant a ready-made sapling taken from the West. The reason behind this "revolutionary" approach is Selman Bey's lack of faith in the Ottoman society's ability to transform itself. In his view, the society is too "conservative" and "too alien to modern progress" (terakkıyât-ı asrıyyeye pek bigâne) to change on its own. Thus, the intellectuals have chosen the path of bringing a model from outside—the "valley of revolution"—instead of transforming the society from within. However, this choice has an inevitable consequence: a deep alienation emerges between the created "ideal" and the society that is intended to be saved. Selman Bey expresses this tragic break with the following words:

> "*...and with this motive, we have become somewhat separated from our social body, from the genuine Ottoman masses, and we are separating more day by day. Generally speaking, our compatriots do not understand us, they do not approve of us; those who understand and approve are only a small clique, and they too are revolutionaries.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 125)

This is where the project's sustainability problem arises. How can this product of "revolution," created and understood by a handful of elites, be made available to the public? How can Fetret, an exception, become the pioneer of a general "evolution"? Selman Bey cannot answer this question; he only expresses a wish: "*When can we become the true servants of this homeland? When we can mold the actual revolution into an orderly form of evolution, or a reasonable style of transformation!*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 125) However, the novel does not present a concrete roadmap for how this transformation will occur. It is unknown how the artificial model created by "revolution" will evolve into a social "evolution."

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[13] See. 126th footnote.

The artificiality and unsustainability of this project were tragically proven outside the novel, in real life. Ali Kemâl's son, Wilfred (Fetret in the novel), the inspiration for the novel, failed to realize the East-West synthesis his father dreamed of and, on the contrary, was completely assimilated into his Western identity. As stated in M. Kayahan Özgül's foreword to the Latin-script transcription of the text, titled "Fetret or the Utopian Dream of Dystopian Ottoman," the real-life fate of this utopian project was a complete failure: "*Ali Kemâl died without seeing that Fetret, the symbol of the Ottoman future, had grown up, completely forgotten his Turkishness, and become a devout Christian Englishman faithful enough to fight for his country*." (Ali Kemâl, 2003, 38)

Fetre”"s utopia experiences its greatest contradiction by being condemned to the method of "revolution" while carrying the desire for "evolution." The "ideal" model, created in sterile conditions outside, is expected to integrate into a society it does not belong to and transform it. However, this artificial project is neither embraced by the society nor can it sustain the synthesis within itself. Thus, the novel's formula for salvation remains a theoretically contradictory and practically failed experiment.

6.3. The Author's Fate and the Novel's Fate: Utopia as an Unfinished Project

The fate of a work cannot be considered separate from the fate of its author. The unfinished nature of Ali Kemâl's novel *Fetret* is more than a mere publishing misfortune; it is a tragic metaphor for the utopian project it represents, crashing and shattering against the wall of political and social reality. The fact that the novel was physically incomplete is the most concrete evidence that the idealistic future it contained was also condemned to remain a fantasy.

The novel itself is, by nature, an "unfinished" project oriented toward the future. Ali Kemâl clearly states this intention in the work's "Mukaddeme." *Fetret* is not the story of a lived past; rather, it is the poem of a hoped-for future:

> "*Fetret is not a story, it is a history; no, it is a chronicle. [...] It shows the truth even within the imagination. Because if some of Fetret's attitudes, actions, and tendencies resemble imagination a little today, his tomorrow is entirely true. [...] in my opinion, Fetret is a tableau of our present, and a poem (neşîde) of our future. Even if it is not so, it was written with that high aspiration.*" (Ali Kemâl, 1329, 3)

This "poem belonging to the future" became a victim of the author's own political struggle. The reason why the novel was abruptly cut short was not an aesthetic or commercial choice but a purely political one. *Peyam* newspaper, where Ali Kemâl served as editor-in-chief, was published daily between November 14, 1913, and July 22, 1914, for 242 issues, but was closed when it did not cease its anti-government publications despite the government's warning. The unexpected cessation of Fetret's publication was due to this reason.

This ban was the project's first blow. But the truly fatal blow came with the author's own tragic end. Ali Kemâl, who designed a utopian Ottoman future, was brutally lynched and murdered during the very years of chaos and violence where that future was supposed to be built. Due to the outbreak of World War I following the existing parts of the novel, and the author's tragic lynching, the remaining parts of the novel could not be completed. Thus, the author's fate and the novel's fate became inseparably linked. The author, who designed a utopian future, is destroyed by the dystopian violence of the real world, and his work remains incomplete forever. The novel's title, Fetret (The period of uncertainty and turmoil between two reigns), becomes an ironic title that narrates both the political atmosphere of the period the author lived in and his own unfinished fate. The story, designed to be three volumes, in which the hero Fetret was expected to return from Paris and realize his ideals, is abruptly cut short at the beginning of the second volume. This interruption symbolizes the half-finished state of not only a text but also the hopes of a generation, a political project, and an intellectual dream.

Ali Kemâl, in this respect, ironically—perhaps a twist of fate or a bad coincidence—shares the unfortunate destiny that many utopian writers have faced throughout history. Although the reason for his assassination cannot be reduced to his utopian novel *Fetret*, the main reason is cited as his siding against and writing articles against the Turkish War of Independence. Throughout world literature, governments have always exhibited hostile attitudes toward utopias, which are often considered a rebellion against the established order.[14]

Perhaps Ali Kemâl foresaw this tragic end, as he held a hope that he would be understood after his death and that the righteousness of his cause would be acknowledged. His belief becomes even more poignant when combined with the fate of his unfinished novel. The incomplete *Fetret* stands as a literary monument to the voice silenced for the sake of its author's political struggle, and in every unwritten page, it tells the sad story of how political reality suffocates utopias. In this regard, *Fetret* delivers its most powerful message not in its completed pages but in the one and a half volumes that were left unwritten.

Conclusion

Ali Kemâl's novel *Fetret* is a highly personal and ambitious utopian attempt penned by an intellectual aiming to save society amidst the painful yet hopeful atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Era. Setting aside its literary flaws and weak plot, the text is an invaluable resource for mapping the intellectual landscape of the period.

The most original and definitive conclusion to be drawn from this comprehensive analysis of the novel is that the work is not merely a naive salvation utopia seeking solutions to the crises of the Second Constitutional Era, but a deeply conscious and layered text that confesses the modernizing intellectual's own internal contradictions, tragedy, and the impossibility of their own project. The true genius of *Fetret* lies not in providing a recipe for salvation, but in courageously exposing the internal contradictions that demonstrate why this recipe would never fully take root in its own soil. While the novel presents a vision of an ideal society, it functions as a laboratory of mindsets, and the result emerging from this laboratory is how fragile and “foreign” the project itself is.

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[14] Kumar presents this situation with the following examples: "*Anton Francesco Doni, the author of the utopia I Mondi (1553), was publicly accused by Venetian authorities as a renegade priest and was forced to leave the city. Campanella was imprisoned and tortured by the Inquisition. Campanella's work, The City of the Sun, was written in 1602 while in prison in Naples. The book was not published until 1623, and when it was, it was published not in the Italian in which it was penned, but in a heavily scrutinized and diluted adaptation in Latin. Kepler's Dream and Francis Godwin's The Man in the Moone were found provocative enough to justify the years-long delay in their publication. Cyrano de Bergerac's The Other World was published posthumously in a heavily censored form. Editions that could be considered complete were not produced until the twentieth century. … However, twentieth-century utopian authors continued to face difficulties. Zamyatin's We was written in Russia in 1920, and the hostility of Soviet authorities led to its first publication being in English in New York in 1924. Zamyatin himself was forced into exile. We was not published in Russian until 1952, again in New York; it was never published in the Soviet Union.*" (Kumar, 2005, 137-139)

The originality of the novel lies in its diagnosis that the foundation of the Ottoman “fetret (interregnum/turmoil) is, before anything else, a crisis of mindset, morality, and the individual, going beyond a simple political or institutional crisis. According to Ali Kemâl, the problem lies in the corrupt minds that operate the state institutions, rather than the decayed institutions themselves. In his view, the intellectual of the era is incompetent, superficial, verbose, and distant from knowing the West and their own history. This intellectual and moral destitution is both the cause and the most evident symptom of political and social collapse.

The novel’s central argument is that the state of “fetret” the Ottoman Empire finds itself in is rooted in a deep pathology of mindset before any political or military weakness. Through characters like Hayret Bey, Ali Kemâl portrays the intellectual of the era as a carrier of ignorance and verbosity when they should be a carrier of knowledge. This intellectual destitution, combined with an emptied language that cannot produce thought, forms the basis of social collapse. This dystopian diagnosis is remarkably sharp: The problem is not with the system, but with the mind of the “human” who is to operate the system. This is why Ali Kemâl’s utopia, with a Platonic approach, focuses on the construction of the “ideal individual”—Osman Fetret—before institutional reform.

Following this profound diagnosis, the “treatment” proposed by the author, the “new human” model embodied by the protagonist Osman Fetret, constitutes the most brilliant and simultaneously the most problematic aspect of the project. Fetret is designed as a perfect biological and pedagogical engineering marvel of the East-West synthesis (multi-cultural education), as the child of a Turkish father and an English mother (Turkish-English synthesis). He is the “form” in the author’s mind: perfect, rational, and competent.

However, the most sophisticated and tragic aspect of the project is the author’s awareness of how far removed this engineering marvel is from authenticity. The author, through the mouth of his alter ego Selman Bey, honestly reveals the project’s biggest dilemma: Selman Bey’s confession that his son Fetret is the product of an extremely exceptional and external “revolution” (ihtilâl/break) created under artificial conditions, not an organic “evolution” (tekâmül) stemming from the Ottoman society’s own dynamics, forms the aporia (logical impasse) at the center of the text. This is the utopia self-destructing itself. Ali Kemâl tells his reader: “This perfect solution I offer you can only exist outside of this soil, under exceptional and imported conditions.” This admission shows that Ali Kemâl was aware of how disconnected and “foreign” his designed ideal solution was from the socio-cultural reality of his own land.

This is the greatest dilemma of the modernizing intellectual: the model they propose to save society is so distant from the society’s own reality that its implementation is impossible. This situation also exposes the elitist structure inherent in the project. Transformation is a project to be carried out despite the masses, by this “savior intellectual” and his perfect prototype, not by the will of the people. It can be argued that the utopia remains a thought experiment that can only exist in a sterile laboratory environment, rather than a feasible model, and this adds a tragic depth to the text. In this context, *Fetret* becomes a document attesting to the unbridgeable gulf between a liberal and elitist intellectual’s vision to save the society they live in and the reality of that society. The elitism at the heart of the project—the assumption that transformation will be realized from top to bottom by "savior intellectuals" like Fetret—is the clearest indicator of this detachment.

Ultimately, the fact that the novel was abruptly cut short and left unfinished should be read not merely as a result of the author's biographical misfortune, but as the most accurate and powerful metaphor for his ideological and philosophical collapse. This is a narrative breakdown that symbolizes the utopia's inability to sustain itself. A completed utopia could have created the illusion that the project succeeded. In contrast, an unfinished utopia becomes a metaphor for the real-life fate of that project. Had the novel continued, it would have been forced to confront the question of how this "perfect" and "artificial" hero would cope with the reality of a flawed and organic society. Critical questions, such as what Fetret would do within the complex moral and social fabric of Paris and how he would maintain his idealism, remain unanswered. This is because the answer to these questions is likely the defeat of the ideal against reality. The text's incompleteness avoids this confrontation, freezing the utopia as a "püre" but unrealized potential. Therefore, the ultimate message of *Fetret* is less a hopeful plan for the future and more a melancholy inventory of a project that proved its own impossibility. In this context, the collapse of the narrative symbolizes the collapse of the ideology. The work leaves us not with an achievable ideal, but with the most honest and poignant monument to an intellectual's distant and tragic relationship with their own society, a well-intentioned but fragile dream of salvation. Ali Kemâl, perhaps consciously or unconsciously—in addition to the reasons determined—did not finish his dream so that it would remain in its purest and most untouched state.

The significance of the conclusions derived from *Fetret* in this article is not solely to bring a forgotten literary text back into the light. The true value of this analysis lies in using *Fetret* as a case study to decipher a fundamental pathology of the Turkish modernization adventure: the "tragedy of the rational engineer." This tragedy is the delusion of "fixing" a complex, historical, and multi-layered society with a flawless, logical project designed on a drawing board. Ali Kemâl's project lays bare the unbridgeable distance between the Westernizing intellectual, who disregards the "irrational" yet extremely powerful dynamics of culture, tradition, collective identity, and history, and their own society. This situation aligns perfectly with Şerif Mardin's "center-periphery" paradigm, developed to explain Turkish modernization (For the theoretical explanation of the model, see Mardin, "Center-Periphery Relations..."; for the cultural and ideological analysis of the model, see Mardin, *Religion and Ideology*). Ali Kemâl, with his project, draws the portrait of a complete "center" intellectual, while the Ottoman society that needs to be saved is, in his view, a passive "periphery" that must be transformed. The character Osman Fetret is a perfect model, educated in the laboratories of the West, i.e., according to the ideals of the "center," and imported to reform the "periphery." The project's internal confession of "revolution" is nothing but a literary reflection of the profound cultural break and communication breakdown between the center and periphery noted by Mardin. Similarly, the top-down, radical reformist mindset, detached from the social base, described in Niyazi Berkes's *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, gains literary concreteness in Ali Kemâl's project (See Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, pp. 370-385). Ali Kemâl's distrust of the society's organic evolution ("tekâmül") and his offering of a radical break ("ihtilâl") as a solution is the very tragic dilemma of the modernist intellectual analyzed by Berkes. Therefore, understanding *Fetret* and its failed utopia is, on the one hand, merely a literary history exercise, while on the other, it is a confrontation with the chronic tension embedded in the DNA of Turkey's modernization—and still manifesting in different forms today—between the "ideal designs of the elites" and the "resilient reality of the society."

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