

This dissertation examines the construction of images of „West“ and „East“ in modern Turkish fiction from its beginnings in the 1870s to the end of the „Kemalist prose“ in the 1950s. It shows how the process of Westernization of Turkish society is reflected in literature, how the alteristic discourse about „us“ and „the Others“, East and West, is developed in literary texts and what impact it has on the shaping of modern Turkish identity.

Part I focuses on the period of the „literary Tanzimat“ (1870s – 1890s) and analyzes the perception of West and East in the novels of Namık Kemal, Şemsettin Sami, Mizanur Rıza, Samipaşazade Sezai, Nabizade Nazım, Beşir Fuad, Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem and Ahmet Midhat. Special attention is given to Ahmet Midhat who had been studying and comparing both civilizations all his life. In this part, we also attempt to reevaluate some of the prevalent views of the Ottoman cultural transformation in the 19th century. We argue that this transformation was not based on the duality and collision of Western and Ottoman-Islamic ideas, institutions, lifestyles or practices (alafranga vs. alaturka), but that it gave birth to a uniquely Ottoman modernity, coming to life on the borders of both epistemological and semiotic systems and embracing positively the „hybrid“ character of Ottoman society.

Part II explores the post-Tanzimat literary production from the Ottoman fin de siècle to the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence in 1919. It focuses on the writings of the Servet-i Fünun (Riches of Science) group, the novels of Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar and two texts of the so-called „national literature“ (milli edebiyat). It illustrates what role the perception of West and East had played in the fiction of this period, it draws attention to the highly important function of the Turkish novel as a tool for interpreting the sociocultural transformation on an aesthetic level and it looks into the narrative practices used for depicting the impact of Westernization on different classes of Turkish society.

The last part covers the „Kemalist writing“ (1920s- 1950s) and offers several case studies of texts written by Kemalist authors like Yakup Kadri Karaosmanlı, Reşat Nuri Güntekin, Halide Edip Adıvar, Peyami Safa or the „Turkish humanists“ (the Blue Anatolia movement).