SONG AND STAGE, GENDER AND NATION: THE EMERGENCE OF KANTO IN LATE OTTOMAN ISTANBUL

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to explore the formative period of "kanto," a genre of Turkish-language musical theatre and dance which arose in Istanbul during the early 1880s, and was characterized by short, humorous songs of satirical or erotic nature. In particular, this thesis examines kanto theatre as emblematic of the social, political and sexual discourses prevalent during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909).

In contrast to earlier studies, kanto is understood here not simply as a synthetic genre of performance adapting Western cabaret to Ottoman tastes. Instead, this thesis aims to show that kanto was, in its original form, the product of an urban youth subculture which directly reflected the cosmopolitan and multiethnic setting from which it arose. Furthermore, this thesis places kanto within the rich Ottoman tradition of satirical theatre, albeit influenced by continuing processes of heteronormalization and national redefinition.

In the first chapter of this thesis, the broad contours of late Ottoman kanto culture are outlined, with kanto performers and their audiences analyzed according to categories of class, gender, ethnicity and age. Kanto singers, predominantly Greek and Armenian women, were both conscious of their own identities and yet also quintessentially Ottoman in their performative styles and stage characters. In the second chapter, kanto is examined as the final cultural product of a long process of Ottoman heteronormalization, which is traced through the evolution of Ottoman erotic dance. In the last chapter, the effects of nationalist and orientalist discourse on the representations of ethnic types in kanto theatre are discussed, with a particular focus on depictions of Roma and Iranians. Ultimately, this thesis aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how kanto culture was intertwined with the cosmopolitan character of late Ottoman urban social life. This connection would make the performance of early kanto increasingly untenable in the era of nationalist Turkish Republic, despite several attempts at adaptation and revival.

ÖZET

ŞARKI VE SAHNE, CİNSİYET VE MİLLET: GEÇ OSMANLI DÖNEMİNDE İSTANBUL'DA KANTONUN ORTAYA ÇIKMASI

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Anahtar Kelimeleri: Osmanlı, Cinsiyet, Mizah, Dans, Müzik, Tiyatro, İstanbul

Bu tez, 1880'lerin başında İstanbul'da gelişen, taşlamalı sözler, mizahi şarkılar, ve erotik danslar ile karakterize edilmiş Türkçe bir müzikal tiyatro ve dans türü olan "kanto" üzerine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Çalışma bilhassa, II. Abdülhamit döneminde (1876-1909) sıklıkla rastlanan sosyal, siyasal ve erotik temalı kanto müzikallerine odaklanmaktadır.

Daha önce yapılan çalışmaların aksine bu çalışmada kanto, batılı kabare tiyatrosunun Osmanlı zevklerine adapte edilmiş bir uyarlaması olarak ele alınmamaktadır. Bilakis, kantonun çok dilli, çok kültürlü kozmopolit Osmanlı dünyasını doğrudan yansıtan, orjinal bir forma sahip, genç-şehirli alt kültür gruplarına hitap eden bir tür olarak geliştiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Dahası, çalışma kantoyu, zengin, Osmanlı hiciv geleneğine dahil etmekte, hetero-normalizasyon ve uluslaşma sürecinin tesiri altında geliştiğini öne sürmektedir.

Tezin birinci bölümünde, kantonun kültürel sınırları genişçe çizilmekte, kanto sanatçıları ve seyircileri, sınıf, cinsiyet, yaş ve etnik köken kategorilerine göre analiz edilmektedir. Mesela, çoğunlukla Rum ve Ermeni kadınlardan oluşan kanto şarkıcıları, hem kendi etnik kimliklerinin bilincinde, hem de oyun tarzları, sahne performansları ile özlerinde Osmanlıydılar. İkinci bölümde kanto, erotik içerikli Osmanlı raksının tekamülü ile seyreden uzun soluklu bir hetero-normalizasyon sürecinin kültürel sonucu olarak ele alınmaktadır. Son bölümde ise milliyetçi ve oryantalist söylemin kanto tiyatrosundaki etnik tiplemeler, özellikle Çingene (Roman) ve Acem (İranlı) betimlemeler, üzerindeki etkileri tartışılmıştır. Nihayet bu çalışma, kanto kültürünün, son dönem Osmanlı toplumunda sosyal kent hayatının kozmopolit karakteri ile nasıl iç içe geçtiğine dair kapsamlı bir analiz sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Nitekim, tüm intibak ve ihya girişimlerine rağmen kanto kültürü, milli bir devlet olan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde giderek önemini yitirmiştir.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION..1

1.1 The Life and Death of *Kanto*..1

1.2. *Kanto* Sources...11

2. *KANTO* DURING THE REIGN OF ABDÜLHAMİD II...16

2.1. Song and Stage: The Morphology of *Kanto* Performance................................19

2.2. Dramatis Personae: *Kantocu*s and Their Audience..27

2.3. Sex and the City: *Kanto* Lyrics as Urban Theatre..55

3. KANTO AND THE EMERGENCE OF OTTOMAN HETERONORMATIVITY..67

3.1. From *Çengi* to *Kantocu*: The History of Erotic Dance in Ottoman Culture......76

4: NATIONALISM AND EROTICISM IN THE HAMIDIAN-ERA THEATRE...108

4.1. Ethnic Types in *Kanto* Performance: *Çingene Kantosu*..................................122

4.2. Ethnic Types in *Kanto* Performance: *Acem Kantosu*......................................130

4.3. Ethnic Types in *Kanto* Performance: Other Ethnic Types...............................136

5. CONCLUSION...140

BIBLIOGRAPHY..150

ILLUSTRATIONS..169

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Life and Death of *Kanto*

When Peruz Terzakyan retired from the stage in 1912, at the age of 47, her place in the history of the Turkish-language theatre must have seemed assured. She was renowned throughout Istanbul, known popularly as *Afet-i Devran*: "The World's Beauty." She possessed a broad audience that spanned from the lowest underclasses of the city to the daughters and sons of sultans and pashas; writers from Ahmet Rasim to Ahmet Mithat Efendi had described her in their novels,[1] and her profile was well-known enough to be the subject of caricatures in the popular press (See Figures 3, 4).[2] She was carried in a sedan chair by adoring fans and wore expensive jewels given to her by wealthy lovers and admirers;[3] for a night of performance, she earned eight gold *mecidiye*s,[4] over one hundred times the average wage at the time,[5] and during Ramazan this could go up to sixty *mecidiye*s or more. With this money she had acquired several properties around the city,

1 See, for example, the descriptions of the *kanto* scene in Ahmet Rasim's 1894 memoir *Gecelerim* and his 1912 collection of essays, *Şehir Mektupları,* or the short reflection on *kanto* and the popularity of Peruz among Istanbuliote women presented in Ahmet Mithat's 1910 novel *Jön Türk*. See Ahmet Rasim, *Ahmet Rasim Bütün Eserleri 2: Gecelerim ve Falaka* (Ankara: Üç Harf Yayıncılık, 2005); Ahmet Rasim, *Şehir Mektupları,* Nuri Akbayar, ed. (Istanbul: Metropol Yayınları, 2005); Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Jön Türk* (İstanbul: Antik Yayınları, 2009).

2 See *Karagöz,* no. 128 (September 24, 1909), or, for a later example, *Yedigün*, no. 70 (August 11, 1935).

3 Hikmet Feridun, "34 Seneden beri Kanto Söyliyen Şamram Hanım Tiyatroculuğa Nasıl Başladı?" 001525847006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

4 Hikmet Feridun, "Herdem Taze Bir Sanatkar Kadın: Şamram Hanım, Muharririmize Hayatını Hatıralarını Anlatıyor," 001525846006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

5 Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 208.

including a mansion on the Bosphorus and apartments in the fashionable Akaretler complex, located halfway between the Ottoman Parliament at Dolmabahçe and the imperial palace at Yıldız.[6] She had managed her own theatre company, producing her own plays and bringing dozens of lesser lights to the stage; she had compiled and collected the songs of her age, many of which were her own compositions, into chapbooks which she paid to have published; she even, briefly, experimented in film. Nevertheless, despite it all, she continued to perform on the same ramshackle wooden stages that she had once, long ago, began her career upon. As the Istanbul-born American H.G. Dwight wrote of one of her last performances:

> "I remember watching, once, an almée who must have been in her prime before many of her public were in their cradles. But they had grown up in her tradition, and cries of "One more!"greeted each effort of her poor old cracked voice. There was nothing pitiable about it."[7]

In the eight years between her exit from the stage and her death, Peruz witnessed unprecedented calamities and the dying days of the Ottoman Empire. She lived to see the occupation of Istanbul by the victorious Allies following Ottoman defeat in the First World War, but not long enough to witness the foundation of the Turkish Republic and the wholesale social, cultural and political transformations that would, in only a few years, radically change the Istanbul that she had known. Even into the 1930s, the legend of Peruz continued to be kept alive by a circle of devoted fans, as well as by the numerous other singers, like Şamram Kelleciyan, Amelya Özcan or Mari Ferha, whom she had inspired and who carried on performing the genre – called *kanto* – that she had pioneered. Those who had grown up during "Peruz's sultanate," as some came to call it,[8] recorded their memories of her as part-and-parcel of the old Istanbul, a city that was rapidly disappearing in the era of modernization and national homogenization. Writers like Halide Edip Adıvar and Sermet

6 Semiha Ayverdi, *Hey Gidi Günler Hey* (İstanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyat, 2008): 117.
7 "Kantocu Peruz Hanım," 001525843006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.
8 H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople: Old and New* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1915): 273-274.

Muhtar Alus preserved her story in print and embellished the myths that surrounded her. She was, as Muhtar Alus wrote, "the queen of the *kanto* singers," who sung "as if she had just been removed from a surgical table and was awakening from the chloroform's drowsiness," and whose languid eyes and deep voice incited her audiences "into a great brawl."[9] For a young Halide Edip, the elder Peruz had been a kind of spectre; after witnessing an old man left impoverished by his "burning" love for her, Halide had imagined her "literally burning people's hearts with fire which she held with tongs, and eating, even chewing, their gold with her white teeth."[10] For good or for ill, well into the 1930s Peruz's fame lived on in literature, even as her songs increasingly ceased to be played on Istanbul's record players and stages in favour of jazz, swing, tango, and other more contemporary forms of music.

It was not to last. By the 1940s and 1950s, *kanto*, the genre of humorous and bawdy song and dance that Peruz had founded, was largely forgotten. *Kanto* singers (*kantocu*), who had been among the most popular celebrities of their time, began to disappear from the public imagination. Beginning in 1936 the genre's epicentre, the district of Direklerarası ("Between the Poles"), located near the modern Vezneciler metro station in Istanbul, began to lose its lustre.[11] As the first and second generations of *kantocu*s began to pass away, often in obscurity or poverty, *kanto* moved from the realm of popular culture into being considered something of a national embarrassment: a distraction from the true theatre, a detour in the history of Turkish music, and representative of the most frivolous and garish aspects of the old Ottoman world. *Kanto* lived on in the memories of obsessive collectors and historians of ephemeral life, like Reşad Ekrem Koçu, or in the minds of poets of lost urban spaces, like Ece Ayhan. But when Ece Ayhan wrote of Peruz and the old world of Direklerarası in his 1959 poetry compilation *Kınar Hanımın Denizleri* ("The Seas of Kınar Hanım"),[12] few were alive who cared to remember it; when he asked, in his 1956 poem *Bir*

9 Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Kantocuların Kadınnesi Peruz," *Yedigün* (August 11, 1935).
10 Halide Edip Adıvar, *The Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York-London: The Century, 1926): 152-53.
11 Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, ed. Süleyman Şenel. (Istanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı, 1997): 273.
12 Ece Ayhan, *Kınar Hanım Denizleri* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2018).

Elişi Tanrısı İçin Ağıt ("Elegy for a Handmade God"), "did the *kantocu* Peruz truly live?" there were few who remembered her well enough to answer.[13]

The decline of *kanto* perhaps had as much to do with the changing times as it did with the genre's mixed reputation. *Kanto* – a genre of light, comic burlesque, with energetic singing and dancing mixed with frivolous and slightly risqué lyrics – never broke into the realms of high culture, and as a consequence it found few defenders when the contours of a modern Turkish national culture began to be defined. Never particularly respectable, *kanto* soon became a genre that people were "ashamed to enjoy."[14] *Kanto* was the product of an admixture of "low Italian music" and late Ottoman *alafranga* ("European-styled") sensibilities. It was music made by those "who knew little of Turkish music," among whom were very few "serious" composers.[15] The genre's lyrics were "uniformly badly written."[16] Some went farther: for the author and poet Halit Ziya Uşaklığıl, *kanto* was a "scourge," a "disease," and symptomatic of Istanbul's cultural and moral decay during the oppressive reign of Abdülhamid II (r. 1876-1909).[17] For others, it remains seen merely as a waste of time and money; Sadık Albayrak, writing of the early *kanto* troupes, noted that they "put all their skills into fleecing people with their songs and belly dances," rather than contributing to the development of a true artistic theatre.[18] The *kanto* singers themselves – until the Republic, almost exclusively Greek or Armenian women – have likewise proved difficult to integrate into the notion of a national artistic history. As Cora Skylstad has written, "*kanto* was a nostalgic reminder of the Ottoman past that was never embraced or redefined as a

[13] One exception to this was the writer and poet Hilmi Yavuz, who responded in the affirmative in an article published in 1967. In this response, Yavuz argued that unlike the fictional muses of most of Istanbul's poets, *kantocu*s were true, living embodiments of the city's old spirit. See Hilmi Yavuz, "Kantocu Peruz Sahiden Yaşadı mı Patron?" *Varlık Dergisi*, no. 694 (May 15, 1967): 14.

[14] See the liner notes for the CD compilation *Kantolar,* written by Murat Belge and published in 1998. Murat Belge, *Kantolar: 1905-1945*. Kalan Müzik CD085 (Istanbul: Kalan Müzik, 1998): 18.

[15] Yılmaz Öztuna, "Kanto," *Büyük Türk Mûsikîsi Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1990): 424.

[16] Fahri Celâl Göktulga, "Kantolarımız" 001525834006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

[17] Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, "Musikî İşi: 6; Kanto Beliyyesi", *Sanata Dair* (Istanbul: Hilmi Kitabevi, 1938): 118-156.

[18] Sadik Albayrak, *Meşrutiyet İstanbul'unda Kadın ve Sosyal Değişim* (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi. 2002): 36.

part of Republican culture."[19] It was only much later, in the era following the 1960 coup d'etat, that *kanto* would be rediscovered and certain elements of the genre reclaimed.

The disappearance of *kanto* was presaged by the broader disappearance or abandonment of a whole spectrum of Ottoman genres of comic performance, from the shadow puppet theatre, *karagöz* (see Figure 11) to the improvisational street theatre, *orta oyunu* (see Figure 12). These theatrical styles were considerably different in form and presentation, but were in many ways genres of a broader Ottoman theatrical culture. The shadow puppet theatre, for example, was generally considerably freer and more fantastical than the live theatre, as plots and situations were limited only by the types of puppets and scenery that could be drawn and animated; nevertheless, shadow theatre plays were often performed live by *orta oyunu* actors, and vice versa. The stock characters of both styles were also shared. The central characters of the shadow theatre, the crafty layabout Karagöz and his educated, intellectual counterpart, Hacivat, were paralleled in the live *orta oyunu* characters Kavuklu and Pişekar (see Figure 20); the surrounding cast of *mahalle* (neighborhood) characters and ethnic types were shared entirely between the genres. These theatres were, essentially, popular art forms: they reflected the lived experiences of their audiences, and were accompanied by a strong and overt slapstick sexuality and an iconoclastic and ironic world-view.[20] Yet over the course of the 19th century, these forms, which had been so deeply entrenched in Ottoman culture for centuries, began to disappear. The 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by successive attempts to adapt these forms to compete with entertainments such as the staged theatre, the novel, the cartoon, or cinema. Despite these attempts, with rare exceptions, none of these genres – which had been present and productive in Istanbul since at least the 16th century – have been preserved as a popular or productive medium for contemporary performance. *Kanto* was, like *karagöz* and *orta oyunu*, a genre within the Ottoman theatrical tradition; ironically, however, the

[19] Cora Skylstad, "Acting the Nation: Women on the Stage and in the Audience of Theatre in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic," (M.A. Thesis, University of Oslo, 2010): 81.

[20] For the most comprehensive analysis of *karagöz,* alongside several transcribed plays (albeit from censored 19th century scripts), see Cevdet Kudret, *Karagöz* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004).

emergence of *kanto* itself has generally been described as a reaction to the pressures of modern entertainments. According to the common narrative, beginning in the early Tanzimat period (1839-1876) – the era in which the Ottomans formally began a lasting and bureacratically-driven program of top-to-bottom social, legal and cultural modernization – interest in European staged theatre, such as operas, operettas, dramas, and musical comedies, began to flourish among Istanbul's elite classes. Originally performed in French or Italian and frequented largely by Levantines (Ottoman-born Western Europeans), by the 1860s European plays translated into Ottoman Turkish had become increasingly popular among the Muslim Turkish portion of the city's population as well. In 1870, the Armenian actor and impresario Güllü Agop Vartovyan (see Figure 13), who had performed for the Sultan and developed aclose relationship to the imperial court, acquired a monopoly from the Ottoman state to perform translated plays at his Gedikpaşa Theatre, a converted circus hall.[21] As translated dramas and comedies had, by that time, become widely popular throughout the city, other theatre owners and actors were forced to seek ways around the monopoly. For some, this meant sponsoring original content, such as the comic opera *Leblebci Horhor Ağa* (1876);[22] for others, it meant turning to the corpus of traditional Ottoman theatre, such as *karagöz* and *orta oyunu*, and adapting these plots and characters for the stage. Out of the latter path a new genre was born: *tuluat*, a term of uncertain origin which came to refer to broad slapstick comedies using the neighborhood characters of the old *orta oyunu* tradition.[23] Unlike *karagöz* and *orta oyunu*, *tuluat* was partially scripted and staged with sets; furthermore, where in the earlier forms male actors had portrayed all roles, now both male and female actors performed together on stage. Yet audiences were still reticent to pay for these performances. To draw in new viewers and keep them entertained, *tuluatçı*s borrowed an old *orta oyunu* practice: to have semi-erotic dancers perform before and between acts. In the case of *orta oyunu*, this had been in the form of *köçek*s, male

[21] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu? Fetihten Zamanımıza Kadar* (İstanbul: Sühulet Kütüphanesi, 1927): 114.

[22] Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839-1923." *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 10 no. 1, (1983): 54.

[23] Mahmut Yesar, "Tuluat Tarihe Karışıyor," *Yedigün*, (December 21, 1935).

dancers dressed in feminine costume.[24] For *tuluat* theatre*,* these dancers were *kantocu*s. *Kanto* emerged first as an accessory to a stage performance, before later becoming an attraction in and of itself. By the 20th century, *kanto* stars had subsumed *tuluatçı*s in fame and fortune, and indeed *kanto* itself outlasted *tuluat*, which had largely expended itself by the end of Abdülhamid II's reign in 1909, following the Young Turk Revolution against his rule in 1908.[25]

As a consequence of this origin story, however, *kanto* has commonly been seen as having a somewhat accidential and peripheral role in the history of Turkish-language theatre. Though it is known that *kantocu*s were famous actresses during their day, and performed in popular Turkish-language comedies and dramas alongside professional actors, *kanto* is rarely included in the genealogy of Turkish stage theatre, which follows a general path from Güllü Agop, through playwrights like Namık Kemal and plays like *Leblebci Horhor Ağa,* to the foundation of the first national theatre conservatory, the Darülbedai, in 1914. Yet *kanto* is rarely placed within the history of traditional Ottoman theatre either. As a development of *tuluat* – itself already somewhat debased by modernity – *kanto* has been regarded as essentially Western in form and lacking any real connection to Ottoman tradition. Musically, too, *kanto* seemed neither fully Ottoman, nor fully Western. At best, it was an *alafranga* entertainment – that is to say, it was *like* Western entertainment, but in various innumerable and intrinsic ways, shoddily-made and altogether embarrassing.[26] As we shall see, the story of *kanto*'s emergence is slightly more complicated than this, and the genre itself far richer and more tied to the Ottoman theatrical tradition than regularly assumed. Nevertheless, *kanto's* position has led it to be almost entirely overlooked in academic discourse. There exists no academic monograph on the subject of Ottoman *kanto*, in Turkish or any other language, and references to the genre, its performers, its music and lyrics, or its audience, are sparse in Turkish theatre and musical historiography. Several

[24] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?,* 64-65.
[25] Ibid*.,* 116.
[26] For a more in-depth look at the notions of difference between *alafranga* and *alaturka* (Turkish-styled) music, see John M. O'Connell, "In the Time of Alaturka: Identifying Difference in Musical Discourse," *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Spring/Summer, 2005):177-205.

noted historians of Turkish theatre and music, such as Metin And, Bülent Aksoy, Murat Belge and Cemal Ünlü, have contributed short pieces on the subject of *kanto*, but these remain relatively limited in detail and scope.[27] Instead, the preservation of *kanto* ephemera and esoterica has largely been the purview of musicians and theatre directors such as Ruhi Ayangil or Haldun Domen, who have taken an active interest in the genre, and record labels such as Kalan that have sponsored the remastering of old *kanto* recordings.[28] Bibliophiles and collectors of old texts (known in Turkish as *sahaf*) have played an even more crucial role in the accumulation and collection of *kanto* material. Many of these *sahaf*, such as Burhan Arpad, Jak Deleon and Ergun Hiçyılmaz, are among the most knowledgeable historians of the lost popular culture of "old Istanbul," and have contributed to the study of *kanto* through the production of nostalgia books and articles that detail anecdotes and memories of the Ottoman and early Republican city. These writers – in particular, Ergun Hiçyılmaz, who is responsible for the collection and transcription of a vast number of surviving *kanto*s and whose 1999 book *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar* is the longest full-length monograph on the subject - have contributed a great deal towards the revival of interest in the genre.[29] Though the works of these writers, as Irvin Cemil Schick has argued, "make such uncritical and promiscuous use of the sources as to be essentially useless for scholarly purposes," for the study of *kanto* they are extremely useful for understanding not only the experiences of the performers and their audiences, but also how *kanto* culture came to be remembered as symbolic of an Istanbul lost to modernity and national homogenization.[30] Ultimately, however, it was the revival of *kanto* in the 1960s and 1970s

[27] See, for example, Metin And, "Tuluatçılar ve Kantocular Üzerine Notlar I", *Devlet Tiyatroları Dergisi* (1964): 36-38; Metin And, "Tuluatçılar ve Kantocular Üzerine Notlar II", *Devlet Tiyatroları Dergisi* (1966): 31-36; or Cemal Ünlü, *Git Zaman Gel Zaman: Fonograf - Gramofon - Taş Plak* (İstanbul: Pan Yayıncılık, 2004).

[28] See, for example, Haldun Dormen's play *Kantocu,* or the Kalan Müzik CD *Kantolar.* Haldun Dormen, *Kantocu* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2005); *Kantolar: (1905-1945),* Kalan Müzik: CD085, CD and liner notes, 1998.

[29] See Burhan Arpad, *Bir İstanbul Var idi...* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2007); Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar* (Istanbul: Sabah, 1999).

[30] İrvin Cemil Schick, "Nationalism Meets the Sex Trade: İstanbul's District of Beyoğlu/Pera During the Early Twentieth Century," Paper presented at the Amherst and Hampshire Colleges Workshop on"Crossing Borders: 'Unusual' Negotiations over the Secular, Public, and Private" Amherst College,

by noted *gazino* (social club) singers like Nurhan Damcıoğlu, Seyfi Dursunoğlu and Ayben Erman, that (although producing music considerably different in form and context to Ottoman-era *kanto)* has done the most to preserve the corpus and memory of the genre. This is particulary true because these revival singers - Nurhan Damcıoğlu, most notably – sought out the last living *kantocu*s of their era and incorporated their original performance styles and techniques into their own practices.[31] More than anywhere else, Ottoman-era *kanto* was preserved not in texts or recordings, but in the embodied performances of these latter-day stars.

It is only in the past fifteen years that certain scholars, such as Şefika Şehvar Beşiroğlu, her student Berna Özbilen, Özge Şen, Danielle J. Van Dobben and Cora Skylstad have produced thorough and comprehensive studies of *kanto* and *kantocu*s, and the place of this genre in Turkish theatre and musical history.[32] Berna Özbilen's and Özge Şen's M.A. theses, in particular, have greatly added to our understanding of *kanto.* The former thesis, entitled "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi" (The Evolution of Kanto and an Evaluation of Contemporary Performances) and completed in 2006, offers a broad sociocultural study of *kanto* from its earliest period, from around 1880 to 1935, to modern performances following the *kanto* revival of the mid-1960s. The latter thesis, "Taş Plak Kayıtlarındaki Kanto Örneklerinin Müzikal Analizi" (A Musical Analysis of Kanto Examples on Record), written in 2013, approaches the subject using a musicological methodology, and focuses on *kanto*s produced after the introduction of phonographic recording. While these theses have greatly extended our knowledge of *kanto* and have compiled in a more systematic form the recollections and anecdotes recounted in the nostalgia-books, their broad scope has left certain areas understudied. Most notably, the

MA, (16–18 February 2009): 2.

31 Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi" (M.A. Thesis, İstanbul Teknik University, 2006): 55.

32 See, for example, Şefika Şehvar Beşiroğlu, "İstanbul'un Kadınları ve Müzikal Kimlikleri." *İTU Dergisi*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2006): 3-19; Berna Özbilen, above; Özge Şen, "Taş Plak Kayıtlarındaki Kanto Örneklerinin Müzikal Analizi," (M.A. Thesis, İstanbul Teknik University, 2013); Danielle J. Van Dobben, "Dancing Modernity: Gender, Sexuality and the State in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic," (M.A. Thesis, University of Arizona, 2008); and Cora Skylstad, "Acting the Nation".

earliest period of *kanto* – from its emergence during the first years of the reign of Abülhamid II to the start of the First World War – has remained largely unexplored. This is notable, because it is during this era that the most remarkable innovations of the *kanto* genre are supposed to have taken place. It is during this time that *kanto* moved from the realm of "subculture" to mass culture,[33] and that its lyrical and performative characteristics were established. It is during this era, most clearly, that we see *kanto* in its original, cosmopolitan context, caught between the heritage of the Ottoman theatrical tradition and new artistic forms from abroad. Furthermore, it is during this time that *kanto*'s major innovation – the transformation of the female singer-actress into popular celebrity – occurred for the first time in Ottoman culture. If we are to understand *kanto* and place Peruz, Şamram, Amelya and the other kanto stars of this period into the broader narrative of Turkish-language theatre historiography, then it is the genre's early years that are of most interest.

This thesis aims to focus particularly on the emergent period of *kanto* during the reign of Abdülhamid II. It will continue past this era into the brief Second Constitutional Period (1908-1920) and to the early years of the Turkish Republic, although our story will largely end with the exit of Peruz from the stage in 1912. It is organized into three primary sections, each aiming to examine a specific facet of *kanto* culture. The first section offers an overview of *kanto* during the reign of Abdülhamid II, and will focus on three primary aspects of the subculture: *kanto* music and performance, the *kantocu*s and their audience, and the lyrical content and subject matter of the surviving *kanto* corpus from that era. The second section will examine *kanto* within the context of the history of Ottoman erotic dance. Beginning with *köçek*-*çengi* in the 16th century, the history of such performances will be analysed as indicative of changes in the broader Ottoman sexual system, with *kanto* as the end product of an indigenous process of heteronormalization enforced through censorship, legal sanctions, and new modes of social conduct. Lastly, the third section of this thesis will examine *kanto* within the context of nationalist pressures and orientalist

[33] Ruhi Ayangil, "Kanto," in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* vol 4. ed. İlham Tekeli (İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1993): 419.

discourse during the Hamidian period, with a particular focus on national representations in *kanto* theatre. Broadly, this thesis aims to write against the notion that *kanto* was simply an imperfect imitation of European cabaret, or else a frivolous and irrelevent detour in the history of Turkish-language theatre and music. Rather, *kanto* will come to be understood as the product of, and in contact with, a long Ottoman tradition, with the genre's songs and lyrics reflective of its social, political, national and cultural context. It will be seen as the product of a multi-communal and multilingual urban subculture, a youth subculture, which cut across class lines but was nevertheless rooted in the realities of lower-class Istanbul life. And, finally, it will be understood as neither an inevitable product of the cultural collision between East and West, nor as a brief and random fad, but rather as the result of the particular political and social circumstances of Istanbul during the last era of the Ottoman world.

1.2. *Kanto* Sources

When I first became interested in studying *kanto*, in the fall of 2015, I had assumed that there would be a wealth of sources already available regarding the topic. I had come across mentions of *kantocu*s in novels and memoirs from the early Turkish Republic, and I was struck by what appeared, at first glance, to be an Ottoman counterpart to the famous singers and dancers that populated the paintings of Toulouse-Lautrec or the early Picasso. Yet as I researched further, I found that, in fact, *kanto* had largely escaped academic attention. This was not solely for want of primary sources.

Though available primary sources on Ottoman-era kanto are, indeed, limited, they are also quite rich in content and relatively accessible. For *kanto* produced during the Republic, there is a true wealth of information available in the form of recordings, record catalogues and materials, newspaper articles, handbills and photographs. As this thesis focuses on the Hamidian period, however, only a relevant few recordings still survive, and other materials are considerably more sparse. What we do have in relative abundance are songbooks, chapbooks, and sheet music, which were largely produced after the genre

attained mass popularity in the late 1890s. Perhaps the most notable of these compilations include a collection of five bilingual (Ottoman-French) chapbooks named *Nubhe-i Elhan* (1900),[34] which contain in total 89 *kanto*s, as well as the songbook *Neşe-i Dil: Yeni Şarkı ve Kanto Memuası* (1905),[35] which contains over 400 songs including 49 explicitly labelled "kanto."[36] Alongside these two large compilations, there are several other books which contain a variety of kanto lyrics: a 1915 compilation entitled *Nevzad-i Musiki: Mükemmel Şarkı ve Kanto Mecmuası*[37] is remarkable for including photographic depictions of the members of prominent *kanto* troupe, while a 1921 songbook named *Ahenk: Eski ve En Müntehab Şarkı ve Kantoları Havi Mecmua* gives us a clue as to how *kanto* repertoires had changed at the start of the Republican era.[38] In addition to these books, a number of gazettes and publications were produced during this period, the earliest being a magazine entitled *Kantolu Şarkı Mecmuası*, published in 1890. Beginning in 1907, a magazine entitled simply *Kanto Mecmuası* was published by musician and sheet music producer Udî Şamlı Selim, which offers the single largest source of *kanto*s: a total of 610, distributed over several issues. The corpus of Hamidian *kanto* ultimately extends to perhaps one thousand songs – a truly extensive record of the musical tastes and cultural fascinations of the era, and one that deserves further systematic study. The majority of these sources can be found today in the collections of the Atatürk Library in Istanbul, although select works can also be found in the İSAM (İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi) Library and in private hands. The importance of these sources cannot be understated: alongside providing the lyrics to the songs and their musical notation – including rythms (*usul*) and melodic scales in the Ottoman musical system (*makam*) – but also record the songs' composers and, often, the performer most commonly associated with them. For musicologists, this information is particularly crucial,

[34] Şamlı İskender & the Tevfik Brothers, *Nuhbe-i Elhan* (İstanbul: Kasbar Matbaası, 1900?).
[35] Hasan Tahsin, *Neşe-i Dil: Yeni Şarkı ve Kanto Memuası* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Kütüphane-i Cihan, 1907).
[36] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 34.
[37] Kemençeci Aleko, *Nevzad-i Musiki: Mükemmel Şarkı ve Kanto Mecmuası* (İstanbul: Keteon Matbaası, 1915).
[38] Udi Sami, *Ahenk: Eski ve En Müntehab Şarkı ve Kantoları Havi Mecmua* (İstanbul: Sancakciyan Matbaası, 1921).

but even for sociocultural historians it is of great value, for it tells us about the identity of kanto performers and how they responded to changes in public taste.

Beyond the songs themselves, visual material is of great importance for understanding how kantocus were costumed and how they performed. As public celebrities, *kantocu*s were fairly regularly photographed in staged settings for the purpose of advertisements, newspaper articles, theatre hoardings, and postcards. As such, we have visual documentation of almost every notable *kantocu* of the Hamidian period, whether from photographs, or from caricatures drawn in the satirical magazines of the time. We also have illustrated depictions of some of the theatres that *kantocu*s performed in, which is important not only to understand the spaces in which they worked, but also to look at the audience that they performed to. Though we know that some *kantocu*s, like Peruz, experimented in film, unfortunately no examples of these have survived to the present day.

Generally speaking, however, the source that is of the most value to us are newspapers – both contemporary to the emergence of *kanto* and those recounting the genre's heyday – along with written descriptions of *kanto* performances and *kantocu*s in memoirs and novels. Newspapers of the Hamidian era, such the English-language *Levant Herald,* the French-language *La Turquie,* and the Ottoman theatre gazettes *Tiyatro* and *Müsavver Hale* are central to understanding the context which the *kanto* subculture interacted reflected. Satirical magazines, such as *Karagöz* and *Akbaba,* contain references to prominent *kantocu*s, as do gazettes with an avowedly social purpose, such as the women's magazine *Kadınlar Dünyası.* Newspapers of the Republican-era, such as *Yedigün*, *Hayat*, *Vatan* and *Perde ve Sahne* are also important for carrying the recollections of prominent figures in the early *kanto* scene, as well as nostalgia pieces and interviews with former and current *kantocu*s. Many of these print sources can also be found in the Atatürk Library, as well as in the newspaper archives of the Hakkı Tarık Us collection, the SALT Galata Research Archives, and the Taha Toros Archive in Istanbul. Archival records are of somewhat limited utility, but when it comes to the study of theatrical surveillance and the relationship between the state and the theatre, this thesis will utilize several examples from the Zaptiye Nezareti (Police Ministry) files at the Başbakanlık Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. In particular, archival evidence from the Tiyatrolar Müfettişliği (Theatre

Inspectorate) will prove important in showing the degree to which the Ottoman state surveilled and intervened in the *kanto* subcultural scene.

Novels, plays and memoirs are also valuable, not only for tracking the growth of *kanto*'s influence on the wider culture, but also for showcasing how *kanto* was reconstructed in the minds of authors who, in many cases, were only children when the subculture was at its height. Among these novelists and playwrights include Ahmet Mithat Efendi, Namık Kemal, Şemseddin Sami, Refik Halit Karay, and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar; among the memoirs include Leyla Saz, Ahmet Rasim, Halide Edip, and İsmail Dümbüllü, to name only a few. Two writers, in particular, play crucial roles in shaping our understanding of the *kanto* subculture. These are Ahmet Rasim (1864-1932) and Sermet Muhtar Alus (1887-1952), both of whom recorded a number of observations and memoirs of the early *kanto* scene. Ahmet Rasim was a man of many talents, from historian to journalist, composer to parliamentarian, but he is most remembered for his various short novels and memoirs recounting the urban lifestyles of late Ottoman Istanbul - in particular, his minute and often satirical depictions of the city's nightlife and social spaces. Having lost his father at an early age, Rasim was enrolled in the prestigious Daruşşafaka school, which aimed to give a free and comprehensive modern education to promising orphans. As he recounts in his memoirs, however, it was during this education that Rasim first began to explore the city's seedy underbelly, including its emergent *kanto* scene. Sermet Muhtar Alus was born considerably later, and as such he grew up amongst a *kanto* scene already flourishing and at the height of its popularity. Although trained as a lawyer, he also nurtured a passion for caricature, and became a noted observer of Istanbul's popular celebrities. Beginning in the 1930s, he began to write down his memories of the city's Ottoman culture for various newspapers, and became a contributor to Reşat Ekrem Koçu's (1905-1975) monumental and ultimately unfinished project of cataloguing everything of note in Istanbul's history: the famed *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*. Koçu, for his part, considered the long-dead Ahmet Rasim to be the greatest chronicler of Istanbul's nightlife and regularly

referenced him in his encyclopaedia.[39] This project, in itself, represents a major source not only on *kanto*s and *kantocu*s, but also on the greater cultural world that they inhabited.

Guidebooks and travelogues, such as those by H.G. Dwight, Edmondo de Amicis and Theophile Gautier, offer intriguing glimpses of Istanbul's theatrical culture, including *kanto*, from a consciously "outsider's" perspective. Lastly, as mentioned earlier, nostalgia books like Ergun Hiçyılmaz's 1999 *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar* will also prove extremely useful to our research, both for collecting various anecdotes and miscellaneous information in one source, but also for including a number of transcribed and transliterated kantos from Ottoman into modern Turkish.

The study of any subculture is in large part based upon memory and nostalgia, for it is rare that those involved in the beginning are aware of the importance or future impact of what they are creating. For an Ottoman subculture, we are presented with any number of new challenges – widespread illiteracy, a variety of different scripts and languages, the decay and loss of records, and the subsequent low cultural prestige of the genre – all hinder the usual tools of subcultural analysis. Yet the *kanto* corpus remains quite rich, and represents a wonderful and productive means through which to explore a number of broader questions about Hamidian-era Istanbul and late Ottoman society. Though, to our knowledge, Peruz did not leave us any interviews or autobiographical notes, many other *kantocu*s did, and as such we have access to the most precious memories of them all: the memories of those who lived and embodied the cultural scene. This study of *kanto* is in many ways a reconfiguration and intepretation of the memories of those who, long ago, found in *kanto* something "miraculous."[40] It is my hope that this thesis will open the door to further research of a genre long left unremarked and understudied.

[39] Indeed, as Orhan Pamuk notes, "in both the Istanbul Encyclopedia and the serials he "based on real documents" for the newspapers, Koçu took Ahmet Rasim's racy stories of old Istanbul and made them shimmer with evil, intrigue, and romance." See Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the* City, translated by Maureen Freely. (New York: Random House, 2006): 216.

[40] Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Kantocuların Kadınnesi Peruz."

2. *KANTO* DURING THE REIGN OF ABDÜLHAMİD II

In 1935, writing for *Yedigün* magazine, Sermet Muhtar Alus wrote a brief description of the archetypical *kanto* performance that has been repeated and reprinted in nearly every publication on the topic since. As he wrote:

> "The form of the established *kanto* is known. Firstly, the lyrics; then the shaking of the [*kantocu`s*] shoulder to the solo of the violin, turning around the axis; there is belly dancing and the swinging of her head in a garish way; at long last the action comes and the feet wander as if to a figure from a tango of a few seasons past, and she skips to the centre like a partridge and slowly is lost behind the curtain."[41]

What accounts for the popularity of this quote in the established literature? There is, of course, the vivid depiction of the energy of the performance, of a cacophony of music and dance. But even more striking, perhaps, is how succintly this passage seems to incorporate all of the cultural associations that Ottoman-era *kanto* performance has accrued. Alongside the open sexuality of the *kantocu*'s twisting movements and belly dancing, there is a certain quality of ridiculousness that pervades Muhtar Alus's description – the stale music, the dancer skipping like a "partridge," - that is, to our eyes, charming, and perhaps a little pathetic. When Muhtar Alus moves on to describe the appearance of Peruz, the

[41] Original: "Kuruldu kurulalı kantonun biçimi malum. Evvela aranağme; sonra güfte; daha sonra kemanın solosıyla omuz titretme, mihveri etrafına dönme; cafcaflı yerde gerdan kırıp göbek atma; en niyahette de harekete gelip tangonun birkaç sene evvelki figürü vari ayak dolayışlarla, ortada keklik gibi sekme ve yavaş yavaş kapanan perde arkasında kaybolma." See, Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Kantocuların Kadınnesi Peruz."

kantocu mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, he focuses on the extravagant artificiality of her costume:

> "On her brow and around the eyes, abundant smut and powder; hair which spills from front to back [...] On her back, chest and arms, glitter; her kneecaps, the colour of peach, of canary-yellow, cyan or sprout-green; colourful scales, a shimmering belt, a heavily-fringed dress."[42]

Beyond a celebration of the most famous *kantocu*'s makeup regimen – although, it should be noted, individual *kantocu*s were indeed well-known for their distinctive styles of makeup[43] - what is most remarkably presented here is what Susan Sontag once called "the essence of Camp:" that is, the "love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration."[44] Indeed, the appreciation of kanto was, in large part, driven by an interest in what would later come to be termed *camp;* if not at the genre's start, then certainly by the time that Ahmet Rasim, Reşat Ekrem Koçu, and Sermet Muhtar Alus were recording their memories of the scene. *Kanto* was sexual, of course, and in many ways it was tragic – a number of *kantocu*s met violent ends, some even dying on stage, and addiction and abuse were rife in both the Galata and Direklerarası theatrical scenes.[45] But *kanto* was also, to some degree, ludicrous, and it was this combination of factors which gave it, for both audiences of the era and audiences today, its camp quality. The genre's overly theatrical and flamboyant eroticism, as well as its strongly fin-de-siecle, decadent aesthetic, may have contributed to its later popularity among Turkish queer authors such as the aforementioned Reşat Ekrem Koçu; as Sontag notes, the popular culture of the 1890s, of which *kanto* was a particularly Ottoman type, held a strong appeal for aficianadoes of camp during the 1950s and 1960s. But what of the other feature of camp, as defined by Sontag – that "camp is esoteric -

[42] Original: "Kaşta, gözde bol rastık ve şürme; başta arkaya dökülmüş saç. [...] Sırtında, göğüş ve kolları dekolte, dizkapağa boyda, yavru ağzı, kanarya sarısı, cam göbeği veya filizi, rengarenk pullu, yanar döner kemerli, bol saçaklı fistan." Ibid.

[43] In fact, Sermet Muhtar Alus was something of an amateur expert on this topic; see "Eski Günlerde Saç ve Yüz Tuvaleti," 001581014010, Dosya No: 312, Taha Toros Arşivi, Istanbul, Turkey.

[44] See Susan Sontag, "Notes On "Camp,"" *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux 1966): 191.

[45] See Ahmet Rasim, *Ramazan Karşılaması* (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1990): 61.

something of a private code, a badge of identity even, among small urban cliques?"[46] While *kanto* quickly passed into the realm of mass culture, especially as *kanto* recordings became available in the early 20th century, there nevertheless always remained a dedicated core of *kanto* aficionadoes who remembered fondly the days when *kanto* was a subcultural phenomenon;[47] a product of the same rough taverns and seedy *gazino*s that produced Greek *rembetiko* and Turkish *cinayet destanları* (murder ballads). What drew these aficionadoes to this burgeoning subculture? Who were the *kantocu*s that made up its core, and what were their connections to the city's other performing artists? And how did *kanto* come to acquire an audience among the broader population of Istanbul, such that *kantocu*s were able to cross from underground singers into the realm of celebrity? These are large questions, made all the more difficult by the paucity of recorded evidence and by the lack of previous research on the topic. In trying to understand the origins of *kanto*, we are in essence attempting to break through that "private code" and reconstruct a subculture during its formative era. This is a fraught prospect, but one made considerably more possible by the volume of written material provided for us by contemporary writers such as Ahmet Rasim, and by the words of the *kantocu*s themselves. This chapter aims at offering a brief overview of the cultural scene of *kanto,* and to contextualize it within the Ottoman theatrical tradition: firstly, via an analysis of the musical structure of *kanto* performance; secondly, through an overview of Hamidian-era *kantocu*s and their audience, and lastly, through an analysis of the lyrical content of *kanto*s from this period.

Before we begin, however, it is worthwhile to note the scope of this chapter – and, indeed, this thesis as a whole. *Kanto* developed in Istanbul and it was there that it reached the height of its popularity; this thesis will thus examine *kanto* solely within that context. However, to what extent can we extrapolate *kanto*'s popularity within Istanbul towards a general reading of its place within broader Ottoman society? Entertainments similar to *kanto* existed in other cities of the Empire, such as İzmir,[48] and in places within the cultural

46 Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays,* 191.
47 Ruhi Ayangil, "Kanto," 419.
48 For more information on nightlife and cabaret culture in İzmir, which reflected the dominant Greek prescence in the city, see Lütfü Dağtaş, *İzmir Gazinoları 1800'lerden 1970'lere* (İzmir: İzmir Büyükşehir

sphere of the eastern Mediterranean, such as Alexandria or Cairo.[49] When the poet Constantine P. Cavafy lived in Istanbul in 1882, for example, his brother wrote to him from Alexandria complaining of the "cafe-chantants" that kept him awake with rowdy cries of "bis, bis!;"[50] yet had he stepped into the cafe-chantants of Galata's rougher districts, C.P. Cavafy would have heard much the same cacophony and, indeed, the same distinctive cries.[51] Yet *kanto* was also particularly Istanbuliote in terms of subject matter and audience, and it was this association, amongst others, which made it difficult for *kanto* to survive during the era of the Republic, when the city lost its political and cultural preeminence. For this reason, this thesis will understand *kanto* as a genre within the broader Ottoman theatrical culture, but also as one that was fundamentally rooted in the realities of daily life in the Empire's largest and most diverse metropolis.

2.1. Song and Stage: The Morphology of *Kanto* Performance

With this established, we can begin to explore the constituent components of *kanto* performance. *Kanto* in the Hamidian period was, fundamentally, a genre of dance, albeit one with a significant musical component. It was seen, and continues to be seen, as a product of low culture; as Refik Ahmet Sevengil wrote in 1927, a *kanto* performance was composed of "a composition, a dance, and lyrics without any aesthetic value," and for the audience "neither the music nor the dance was of any real importance." Instead, what the audience sought was sexual titillation; as Sevengil continues, "it is the naked woman who

Belediyesi Kent Kitaplığı, 2004).

49 Risto Pekka Pennanen, for example, notes that a similar musical form in Arabic, called *taqtuqa*, developed in Cairo roughly around the same time as *kanto*. See Risto Pekka Pennanen, "The Nationalization of Ottoman Popular Music in Greece." *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 48, no. 1. (2004): 9.

50 John C. Cavafy to Constantine P. Cavafy, 20 November 1882. http://www.cavafy.com/archive/texts/content.asp?id=38

51 As Ahmet Rasim wrote, describing a performance by the kantocu Büyük Amelya, " a rampaging throng of clapping, whistling, foot stomping, and cane clattering arose, as did echoes of "Bis, Bis!," - a sound the origin of which, and indeed, the meaning of which, is not known." See Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Amelya, Büyük" İstanbul Ansiklopedisi, vol. 2 (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1959): 757.

attracts attention, stimulating the people with her body movements."[52] It should be noted that this nakedness was certainly in the eye of the beholder: the playwright Musahipzade Celal, for example, wrote that the early *kantocu*s, like those of his time, "did not go out on stage naked," but rather wore modest clothing (*kapalı kiyafet*).[53] In any case, what has remained with us with is the notion that the "artistry" of *kanto* was essentially superfluous to the main purpose of the form, which was to engage the audience with sexually provocative and gently humorous light songs, often as an intermezzo between performances of some other, more artistic performance. This notion, as we shall see, is not incorrect *per se*, but misses certain remarkable elements of *kanto* performance – elements which not only reflected the social and political considerations of its era, but also incorporated themes and motifs from the long tradition of Ottoman urban theatre.

As mentioned earlier, the term *kanto* is a derivation of the Italian *canto,* "song, chant" or *cantare,* "to sing." It is this derivation that has led many to assume that *kanto* was directly inspired by the Italian comedy troupes and operetta singers who were frequent performers in the café-chantants of Galata and Pera, and who had become increasingly established in the city during the Tanzimat period. As Ali Ergur and Yiğit Aydın have written, "influences from Italian-style singing [...] shaped a new form of song, called "kanto", performed usually by women from ethnic minorities such as the Armenians or the Greeks."[54] In fact, by the time *kanto* arose, foreign musical troupes were more likely to be of Bohemian origin than Italian, at least in the settings common to *kanto*: in part, this was due to the extensive popularity of polka and waltz as recreational dances during this period.[55] Musically, as we shall see, in its initial form *kanto* also had little to do with Italian music, or with European music in general. From where did this name arise, then? As Metin And tells us, Ottoman theatrical performers possessed their own slang, which incorporated

[52] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?,* 116.
[53] Musahipzade Celal, *Eski İstanbul Yaşayışı* (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1946): 70.
[54] Ali Ergur and Yiğit Aydın, "Patterns of Modernization in Turkish music as Indicators of a Changing Society," *Musicae Scientiae,* (Special Issue 2005-2006): 97-98.
[55] See Malte Fuhrmann, "Down and Out on the Quays of Izmir: 'European' Musicians, Innkeepers, and Prostitutes in the Ottoman Port-Cities." *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 24, no. 2 (December 2009): 169–185.

elements of Italian, Greek and Romani, and which arose perhaps as a consequence of the multilinguistic community of traditional Ottoman theatre.[56] When we consider that *karagöz* performers, *çengi-köçek* dancers, *orta oyunu* actors, and the musicians who accompanied them all often came from different linguistic backgrounds, it is not surprising that a common vocabulary of theatre cant arose as a result, which drew upon the languages common to the performers. The first public staged theatres in Istanbul were operated by Italian and French troupes,[57] and as Ottoman performers became more familiar with the mechanics of staged theatre, they incorporated an increasing amount of Italian and French loanwords into their slang. The term *bosko* came to refer to painted stage landscapes, for example, derived either from the Italian magician Bartolomeo Bosco, who gave his name to the Bosco Theatre in Pera (later the Naum Theatre), or from the Italian word meaning "woodland." Similarly, the Italian *furia*, "fury," came into Ottoman theatrical slang as *fori*, "thunderous applause."[58] *Antrak*, from "entr'acte," likewise came to refer to musical performances in between the acts of a play. The term *kanto* likely was a product of the same process. It was not a simple loanword, but rather part of a long tradition of borrowing and cultural diffusion within a multilingual and cosmopolitan theatrical scene.

Indeed, *kanto* cannot be removed from the Ottoman theatrical context: it was intimately connected with it, both in content and form. As we have noted, the historiography of Turkish theatre has long focused on the introduction of European staged dramas to Ottoman audiences during the early Tanzimat period, and their translation into Turkish by Güllü Agop and his company at the Gedikpaşa Theatre in the 1867, as the starting point of the modern Turkish-language theatre.[59] But to think in such terms necessarily creates a "breaking point" where Turkish theatre was born, or where Ottoman theatre became Turkish. In fact, this was hardly the case: it is only with the benefit of hindsight that we can say that the Turkish-language stage play was the necessary survivor

[56] See Metin And, "Tuluatçılar ve Kantocular Üzerine Notlar II," 31-36.
[57] Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839-1923,"50.
[58] For more on *fori* and *forici*, see Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul,* 272.
[59] Metin And, "Theatre in Turkey," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (September, 1983): 23.

from this time of theatrical pluralism, for during the Tanzimat and Hamidian epochs there existed a variety of indigenous cultural forms which were all, in their own ways, reacting to the challenges of modernity. *Kanto*, for all of its "European" trappings, was fundamentally an Ottoman art form, and an examination of its musical forms, styles of dance, and its relationship to its theatrical counterpart, *tuluat*, bears this statement out.

Let us look at the music of *kanto* first. *Kanto*s, especially in the early period of the genre around 1880 to 1900, were essentially short songs in the style of the Ottoman *şarkı* – that is, a short vocalized composition, often drawn from a longer *fasıl* suite. Though Ottoman classical music historically characterized by long and complex compositions, often with several movements, over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries Ottoman classical music had become progressively simpler in terms of its rythmic and melodic vocabulary, and had begun to favour shorter compositions. The exact reason for this simplification remains to be explored in detail, although some explanations have been theorized: Ali Ergur and Yiğit Aydın, for example, connect it to the development of an urban capitalist economy, writing that "the newly emerging urban culture henceforth, characterized by capitalistic relations, was compressing time, making it precious for consumers, and affecting their world-perception in such a way as to create a more precipitated and calculated psyche."[60] But this explanation, if perhaps applicable to the 19th century Ottoman Empire, seems somewhat anachronistic for the 18th century when this process began. Furthermore, this simplification occured not only among music consumed by merchant classes or by the incipient Ottoman bourgeoisie (if such a thing can be said to exist during this period), but also among music produced by and for the court, for whom these economic considerations would seem to be of little import. Rather, it may be that an increased cosmopolitanism among Istanbul's musician class during the 18th century brought about a simplification of the diverse vocabulary of Persianate music, as musicians from various backgrounds – Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Jewish, Levantine, and Romani – forged a more localized 'Istanbuliote' musical language. Indeed, as Tülay Artan has written, "it is in the late eighteenth century that musicians of diverse cultural backgrounds are best

[60] Ali Ergur and Yiğit Aydın, "Patterns of Modernization in Turkish Music," 97."

recorded as circulating in equally diverse urban spaces, ranging from meyhânes ('taverns') to kahvehânes ('coffee-houses'), from princely courts to religious halls, teaching and performing the musical fashions of their times across communal lines."[61] It should be noted that as Ottoman classical music began to shift towards the shorter, simpler, and more "frivolous" *şarkı*, so too did the music of Istanbul's Greek community come to be dominated by *mismaiya,* or short, melancholic love songs.[62] Over time, the subject matter of the *şarkı* and the *mismaiya* became essentially similar. By the middle of the 19th century, the *şarkı* became increasingly formalized and developed by composers such as Hacı Arif Bey (for vocal music) and Tanburi Cemil Bey (for instrumental music), solidifying the dominance of the *şarkı* form over the other elements of the classical *fasıl*.[63]

Formalistically*, şarkı* were composed in *usul* (meters) of 9/8 time, called *aksak,* or 10/16 time, or *curcuna*. *Kanto*s, too, were generally composed within these rythmic patterns, although *kanto*s were somewhat flexible in this regard and could also be in 8/8 *düyek* or 7/8 *devr-i hindi* time, or could – later on – borrow rythmic patterns from foxstrot, ragtime, or jazz compositions.[64] It should be noted that these *usul*s – in particular, the 9/8 *aksak* - were also common to the *köçekçe* genre of music that accompanied the dancing of *köçek* erotic dancers before the prohibition of these performances in the mid-19th century.[65] *Kanto* thus utilized and referenced rythms which had already been established as accompaniments to sexualized performance. Melodically, *kanto*s were also similar to Ottoman *şarkı*s, and were composed within the traditional Ottoman system of *makam*s. Although *şarkı* could be in any *makam*, by the late 18th century only a few dozen *makam* were in consistent use, and *kanto*s likewise utilized only a select few of wide variety of Ottoman makams – generally those which could be easily transposed onto Western scales

61 Tülay Artan, "A Composite Universe : Arts and Society in Istanbul at the End of the 18th Century", in *The Ottoman Empire and European Theater. Vol. I. Sultan Selim III and Mozart (1756-1808)*, Michael Hüttler and Hans Ernst Weidinger, eds. (Vienna Don Juan Archiv /Lit-Verlag, 2013): 764.

62 Ibid., 765.

63 For brief summaries of these composers and their notable works, see Sadun Aksüt, *Yüz Türk Bestekarı*, (İstanbul: İnkilap Yayınları, 1993).

64 Ruhi Ayangil, "Kanto," 419.

65 Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers (Dancing Boys) from Ottoman Empire to Contemporary Turkey." (Ph.D diss., New York University, 2015): 56.

without excessive distortion, and could thus be easily played on European instruments like violins.[66] Among these makams were the *rast*, *hicazkâr*, *nihavend*, *hicazkâr-ı kurdi*, *uşşak*, and *hüzzam*, and it is within these makams that the vast majority of *kanto*s were produced up until the 1920s. Nevertheless, *kanto*s were also composed in more obscure *makam*s, such as the *gülizar*, *rahatül ervah*, *şedaraban*, and *nihavend-i rum*.[67] According to Sadi Yaver Ataman, *kanto*s also borrowed melodies from Romani music and local folk songs.[68] Although the earliest *kanto*s were composed largely without strict adherence to the rules of classical *makams*,[69] as *kanto*s came to be written by professional composers such as Muallim İsmail Bey, as well as by talented amateurs such as Ahmet Rasim, the songs came to fit more precisely within the Ottoman classical style.[70] What is most remarkable here is the complete absence of European rythms or melodies: though *kanto* would eventually come to absorb elements of European and American music, particularly during the Republic, during the Hamidian period its formal characteristics remained entirely within the Ottoman musical tradition. The aesthetic behind *kanto* would likely have been quite foreign to Istanbuliotes of the 18th century, but the music was in essence only a slight modification of a style that had been popular for at least a century before the genre's emergence.

It is only in instrumentation that European influence upon *kanto* is obvious. *Kantocu*s were generally accompanied by the same *antrak* orchestra that performed during the *tuluat* theatre play. This orchestra consisted of European instruments: a five-piece orchestra would normally include a trumpet, trombone, clarinet, violin, and contrabass.[71] Sadi Yaver Ataman gives a similar list, writing that the *kanto* orchestra consisted of a trumpet and violin, with trap drums (bass and snare) and bells for percussion.[72] The quality of this music is an open question, and certainly there are few sources that praise it as

[66] Gültekin Oransay, "Cumhuriyetin ˙Ilk Elli Yılında Geleneksel Sanat Musikimiz" *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: İletişm, 1983): 1500.
[67] Ruhi Ayangil, "Kanto," 420.
[68] Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 271.
[69] Ruhi Ayangil, "Kanto," 420.
[70] Türker Erol, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosunda Müziki Oyunlar, Tiyatro Müziği Besteciliği ve bu Alanın Günümüzdeki Durumu Üzerine Değerlendirmeler" (Ph.D diss., Erciyes Üniversitesi, 2015): 41.
[71] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 10.
[72] Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 271.

especially noteworthy: it is possible that Edmondo de Amicis was perhaps only being slightly dramatic when he called it "excretable" and recommended that only one with "a strong stomach" attend such a performance.[73] What is perhaps more remarkable for us, in any case, is the lack of Ottoman instruments – even ones common to popular music, such as *ut, kemençe* or *bağlama.* This is especially surprising, as musicians proficient in these instruments were common in the cultural scene of Şehzadebaşı where *kanto* came to be centered. It is possible that the staged theatre was associated in the Ottoman imagination with a particular sound, just as silent films came to be associated with a piano accompaniement, or how we today associate film scores with orchestral strings. It could also be that musicians had more experience "filling up" the open theatre space with sound using Western-styled orchestration than with Turkish or Ottoman instruments. Regardless, we should remember that, though trumpets and violins were instruments of European origin, they had nevertheless been present and utilized in Istanbuliote music since at least the reign of Selim III (r. 1798-1808),[74] and likely earlier. As such, we cannot claim that *kanto* instrumentation alone is sufficient to place the genre outside of the Ottoman musical tradition.

Kanto dancing can likewise be traced to the traditions of Ottoman dance rather than those of Western Europe. It is noteworthy that the *kantocu*s of the Hamidian period did not utilize dances common to European burlesque and music hall, such as the can-can, but rather stuck more closely to the techniques and styles of Ottoman popular dance. *Kantocu*s borrowed largely from the traditions of Romani dance: in particular, they were influenced by the *çiftetelli*, a belly dance involving the shaking and twisting of the hips and waist and vigorous movements of the upper body and neck.[75] Generally associated with Romani and Jewish dancers, the dance was also popular among Greeks (Greek: *Tsiftetelli*). Though generally a slower dance performed in 2/4 or 4/4 time, in *kanto* this was often adjusted to a much faster paced *düyek* or *aksak* rythm. The influence of *çiftetelli* was such that kanto was

[73] Edmondo de Amicis, *Constantinople*, (New York: G.P. Putnams & Sons, 1878): 138.
[74] Tülay Artan, "A Composite Universe," 762.
[75] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 2.

often considered to simply be the *çiftetelli* adapted for the stage, with the influence of certain wedding dances (*kasap havası*, for example) regularly noted.[76] In its open eroticism, *kanto* also heavily borrowed from the tradition of *çengi-köçek* performance – a connection that will be explored further in the following chapter. *Kantocu*s regularly referenced these forms, not just in their manner of performance, but also by lyrically taking on the characters of *çengi* (belly dancers, either female or male) or *köçek* (male belly dancers in feminine costume). It should be noted that *çengi*s and *köçek*s were also often stereotyped as Roma, although by the early 19th century the profession appears to have largely been dominated by Greeks.[77] Indeed, *kantocu*s also took over the role in *tuluat* theatre that *köçek*s had played for *tuluat*'s predecessor, *orta oyunu* – that is, acting as introductory and intermezzo performances between act changes.[78] Even by 1915, it appears that *kantocu*s had largely resisted incorporating increasingly popular styles of European and American dance into their stage performances; the Istanbul-born American H.G. Dwight describes a performance by Peruz during this time as being still "more of the East than of the West," writing of the dance that though "the basis of it is the Arab danse du ventre [belly dance], it is a danse du ventre chastened by the cult of the toe."[79] It was not until *kanto* had moved towards being a recorded musical form, during the Republic, that it began to incorporate more external styles of dance. By this time, however, jazz and swing had largely usurped its place in Istanbul's social scene.

[76] Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 271.

[77] For example, John Hobhouse, who visited the brothels of Karaköy in the early 19th century, noted that dancing boys he saw perform there were "principally insular Greeks and Jews, but never Turks." See John Cam Hobhouse, Baron Broughton, *A Journey Through Albania: And Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople, During the Years 1809- 1810,* vol. 2 (London: James Cawthorn, 1813): 885.

[78] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?,* 64-65.

[79] H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople: Old and New,* 273-274.

2.2. Dramatis Personae: *Kantocu*s and Their Audience

We may thus say that *kanto* music and dance, although evincing several clear European influences, was nevertheless firmly located within the Ottoman theatrical tradition. But who were the performers and consumers of this genre? And how did they relate to the performers and audiences of earlier Ottoman theatrical forms like *karagöz, köçek* and *orta oyunu*? These are crucial questions to explore if were are undertake a serious study of *kanto* and its relationship to the various sociopolitical trends – such as nationalism, orientalism, heteronormative discourse and feminism, for example – which were extant during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. To date, however, the question of *kantocu* identity – much less the identity of the genre's audience – has remained largely unexplored in a systematic fashion. Works such as Ergun Hiçyılmaz's *İstanbul Geceler ve Kantolar* contain a wealth of biographical information and (often somewhat titillating) accounts of *kantocu* life off-stage and on, but these accounts are rarely connected to broader processes, or used to form a coherent image of the *kanto* cultural scene as a whole. Where this has been done, such as in Berna Özbilen's M.A. Thesis "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreci ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," this analysis has focused primarily on one aspect of *kantocu* identity: that is, ethnicity. *Kantocu*s were, until the era of the Republic, (almost) entirely drawn from non-Muslim communities;[80] during the Hamidian period, almost exclusively Armenians and Greeks, and afterwards extending to include Levantines, Roma, and Jews.[81] The musicians and the *tuluatçı* actors and comedians were generally Greek, Armenian, or Muslim Turkish in background. Their audience was comprised generally of Turcophone Muslims, although we know that Arabic and Persian-

80 According to Vasfı Rıza Zobu, and repeated in several other sources, a Muslim woman named Kadriye Hanım may have performed as a *kantocu* under the Greek alias Papasköprülü Amelya, sometime around 1889; however, in any case, the stigma against Muslim performers was such even this remains somewhat doubtful. See Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 8-9.

81 Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 12.

speaking Muslims also constituted a small segment of the audience,[82] as did European observers (particularly during Ramazan festivities).[83]

These notions are commonly known in regards to *kanto*, and the texual evidence certainly bears them out. But while the communitarian and ethnic identity of the *kantocu*s and their audience was undoubtedly important, as was the nationalist connotations of the staged theatre in general (indeed, this will be in large part the focus of Chapter 4 of this thesis), we should not be blind to other aspects of identity which also played key roles in the evolution of the *kanto* subculture. In particular, issues of gender, class and age identity have largely been dealt with only at the most superficial level. While researchers have tied the *kantocu*s to the entry of women into the Ottoman workforce and to changing notions of female identity in the era of Westernization,[84] the exact intersection between *kanto* and the burgeoning Ottoman women's movement remains to be explored.[85] The study of class remains perhaps the largest blind spot, not only of *kanto*, but Ottoman studies in general: to what class did the *kantocu*s belong, and from what segments of society did they draw an audience? Age and youth, likewise, remain almost entirely outside the scope of previous research. Indeed, though *kanto* has been described as "subcultural music,"[86] whether or not this subculture was, in essence, a subculture of Istanbul's urban youth has yet to be properly discussed. This brings us to a last point. *Kanto* has been identified as an urban form, largely confined to the port cities of the Ottoman Empire's core: that is, Istanbul, Izmir, and Thessaloniki. But what precisely did this mean in an era of extensive urban renewal, change and expansion? Was *kanto* a culture of the old Istanbuliotes, who had inhabited the city for

[82] Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* vol. 1. (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1958):132-134.

[83] H.G. Dwight, of course, is one example, albeit Istanbul-born. Nevertheless, we may presume that others followed his example, although almost certainly in very limited numbers.

[84] See Ş. Şehvar Beşiroğlu, "Türk Müziğinin Popülerleşme Sürecinde Yeni Bir Tür: Kantolar," *Mavi Nota,* no. 635 (September 26, 2008).

[85] See Arzu Öztürkmen, "The Women's Movement under Ottoman and Republican Rule: A Historical Reappraisal", *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2013): 256-265.

[86] Ruhi Ayangil, "Kanto," 420.

several generations, or was it a product of rural migration and urbanization, as *arabesk* would be several decades later?[87]

This chapter cannot hope to explore all of these questions in depth, but it is hoped that the general overview of the *kantocu*s and their audience provided here will shed some light on important aspects of the *kanto* cultural scene. It is not my intention here to provide a comprehensive biography of every major *kantocu*, although this remains an area deserving of much further research.[88] Likewise, the literature on *kanto* is filled with an array of amusing and intriguing anecdotes, largely culled from the recollections of eyewitnesses like Sermet Muhtar Alus or Ahmet Rasim, or from the pages of *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi.* This chapter will only offer a small selection of these, and any interested reader should consult the sources listed above for further information. Instead, this chapter will first offer a brief history of the *kanto* form through a geneology of notable *kantocu*s, before focusing more specifically on how *kantocu*s and their audiences were defined by divisions of ethnicity, class, gender, and age. In the process, I hope to show that Hamidian-era *kanto* is not an art form that can be neatly placed within the categories of ethno-national music, but is rather more within the realm of a cosmopolitan youth subculture, drawing upon and reflecting the urban concerns of its time.

The identity of the first *kantocu* remains an enigma. According to Muhtar Alus, Peruz Terzakyan (~1865-1920) was the originator of the genre, or at least its first famous practicioner: as he writes, "they say Peruz was the inventor of this art, and the matriarch of its singers."[89] But, as he continues, "to this narrative there is another, in which Peruz's name is not central, but in which in a theatre at the end of Yogurtçu Meadow [in Moda, on the Asian side of the city], there was a dark haired, black-eyed, sweet and chubby woman named Aramik, who after singing a moving *kanto* ("*Muhaciriz, biçareyiz, ama ne bahtı*

87 See Meral Özbek, "Arabesk Culture," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, eds. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba. (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997): 211-232.

88 For the best compilations of information on the lives of individual kantocus, see Berna Özbilen's excellent M.A. thesis, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," or Ergun Hiçyılmaz's book *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar.*

89 Original: "Peruzun, bu kârın mucidi ve kantocuların piri olduğunu söylerler." Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Kantocuların Kadinnesi Peruz."

kareyiz...") would bounce around like a quail…"[90] According to İsmail Dümbüllü, this theatre was a shabby stall (*salaş*), and no information has survived about the performances other than the singer's name.[91] Nevertheless, there are some notions we can glean from these slight fragments: firstly, the name of the singer suggests that even before Peruz, *kanto* singing was dominated by Armenian women; secondly, the Yoğurtçu meadow area, along with the rest of the Moda seaside promenade, was a well-established area for *orta oyunu* and *köçek* performances.[92] That is to say, that even before *kanto* became interlinked with the staged *tuluat* theatre, or with Ramazan performances, it was already closely connected to the older Ottoman theatrical tradition.

In any case, it was with Peruz that *kanto* acquired its first star. In fact, Peruz's role in the evolution of *kanto*, and in the entertainment culture of Hamidian Istanbul in general, was truly extraordinary in its breadth: we might say that Peruz was the centre of gravity which coalesced these disparate elements into a true subculture. Of Peruz's origins we know rather little. Indeed, even the date that she first came to the stage is in dispute. According to an entry in *Türk Tiyatrosu Ansiklopedisi*, she was born in Sivas in 1866, moving to Istanbul in childhood and first performing on stage at the age of 14, in 1880.[93] Such a narrative would place Peruz at the very origin of *kanto*, if we are to believe Muhtar Alus's claim that during the era that the Armenian impresario Tomas Fasulyeciyan dominated the Istanbul theatre scene *kanto* had not yet been invented. As Fasulyeciyan left Istanbul for Bursa in 1879-1880,[94] this would seem to imply that the entry of Peruz to the stage and the invention of *kanto* were roughly simultaneous. Furthermore, though we know

90 Ibid.

91 See Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Dümbüllü İsmail Efendi* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Bankası Yayınları, 1974).

92 Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza, *Eski Zamanlarda İstanbul Hayatı,* Ali Şükrü Çoruk, ed. (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2001): 154.

93 See M. Nihat Özön, Baha Dürder, eds. *Türk Tiyatrosu Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Yükselen Matbaası, 1967): 345. This is contradicted by Sermet Muhtar Alus, who claims that she was the daughter of a Greek brothel-keeper named Kalifarga and a chicken-seller named Mihal; while possible, it is difficult to understand this claim in relation to other information we have on Peruz, unless what Muhtar means is that these figures *acted* as mother and father to her during her teenage years. See Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Karaköyden Tophaneye doğru..." *Akşam*, December 4, 1938.

94 Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?*, 124.

that Peruz's neice, Şamram Kelleciyan, was born in Istanbul in 1870,[95] it is not implausible that the Peruz's entire extended family moved from Sivas to Istanbul sometime between 1866 and this date, or that Peruz herself moved to the city to be with relatives that were already there. Sivas was the center of a large Armenian community, who constituted perhaps one fifth of the provincial population in the late 19th century, and more in the city of Sivas itself.[96] It was also a major source of immigrants to Istanbul: indeed, as Cengiz Kırlı has shown, for at least part of the 19th century Sivas was the largest single source of immigrants to the city.[97] These immigrants were mixed Muslims and Armenians, and generally consisted of extended family groups.[98] It is entirely possible that Peruz and her family were among these emigrants.

The account given in *Türk Tiyatrosu Ansiklopedisi* is, however, contradicted elsewhere: Sadi Yaver Ataman, for example, dates the origin of *kanto* to 1870, following the performance of an Italian comedy troupe which served as inspiration.[99] M. Sabri Koz likewise places Peruz's entry to the stage in the same year.[100] This would naturally place Peruz's birthdate considerably earlier, altering significantly the chronology of *kanto's* development. Regardless of the date, the rise of Peruz and the emergence of *kanto* seem to be strongly intertwined. Furthermore, when we consider the available evidence, it seems that that the later date is, in any case, more likely. Ahmet Rasim's 1922 autobiographical novel *Fuhş-ı Atik* represents a crucial piece of evidence in this regard. This novel, which also represents one of our best sources on the entertainment subcultures of early-Hamidian Istanbul, includes a scene in which the young narrator is taken to "a secret place" by a friend, which turns out to be the Theatro Evropi ("Europe Theatre") on today's Necatibey

95 Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu, *Türkiye Ermenileri Sahnesi ve Çalışanları* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Gösteri Sanatları Topluluğu Yayınları, 2008): 358.
96 Kemal Karpat, "Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82-1893," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Oct., 1978): 267.
97 Cengiz Kırlı, "The Struggle over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman İstanbul, 1780-1845" (Ph.D diss., SUNY Binghampton, 2000): 104.
98 Ibid.
99 Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 271.
100 M. Sabri Koz, "'Ortaoyunları' Kitapçığı...", *İstanbul Armağanı 3: Gündelik Hayat Hikayeleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, İz Yayıncılık, 1997): 152.

Caddesi, in the Karaköy district of Galata.[101] The narrator discusses the different *kantocu*s present in Karaköy – Peruz, Büyük Amelya and Küçük Amelya – and their various merits. At the theatre, he witnesses a performance by Peruz, which is interrupted by an attack of the infamous serial killer of the time, Bıçakçı Petri.[102] Peruz escapes the attack unharmed, but her companion, a Turkish sailor named Ahmet, is killed. According to Reşat Ekrem Koçu, who was particularly fascinated by the story of Bıçakçı Petri, this attack was the result of a case of mistaken identity: Petri had loved a girl named Peruz in his youth, and after hearing about a rising star of the same name from some Greek sailors in Kalikratya (modern Büyükçekmece), he travelled to the theatre in order to reclaim her.[103] According to Koçu, this attack occurred in 1880, which is consistent with Ahmet Rasim's recollection that he was about 15 or 16 at the time. There are a few things we can draw from these two sources: first, that by 1880 a *kanto* scene had already somewhat coalesced, with multiple *kantocu*s and their own respective fanbases; and secondly, that this was already a multicultural scene, with Greeks, Armenians and Turkish Muslims all present, albeit at this point largely dominated by Greeks (notably, unlike the later *tuluatçı*s, who were largely Turkish, the comedians Ahmet Rasim mentions associated with *kanto* are almost exclusively Greeks).[104] Lastly, it seems that *kanto* culture was spread initially by sailors and through other social networks of the Istanbul underclasses, with the raucous and multicultural theatres and clubs of the Karaköy docks acting as a nexus through which new songs and new singers could attain a measure of fame (see Figure 15).

Ahmet Rasim gives us colorful descriptions of these early *kantocu*s. According to Rasim, Peruz was already a cut above the others; her appearance and demeanor was more attractive, her personality more sweet, her humour more arch. Already, she had acquired a devoted following: as he writes, "for her, the theatre would be filled all the way up to the

[101] Ahmet Rasim, *Dünkü İstanbul'da Hovardalık "Fuhş-ı Atik,"* (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1992:. 98.

[102] See Nurçin İleri, "İstanbul'un Yeraltı Dünyası: Bıçakçı Petri ve Cinayet Destanları" *Kampfplatz*, vol. 7 (October 2014): 57-82.

[103] Hüseyin Kınaylı, "Galata Canavarı Bıçakçı Petri", *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Reşad Ekrem Koçu, ed. (İstanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971): 5891.

[104] For example, he mentions Paskal Andon, Georgi and Todori, and describes their "broken Turkish" as being very strange to listen to and difficult to understand. See Ahmet Rasım, *Fuhş-ı Atik,* 99-103.

stage."[105] Büyük Amelya and Küçük Amelya, unrelated (though both Greeks), were slightly less popular, but nevertheless had devotees of their own. In Rasim's words, the former was "full, tall, and pale white, with a strong voice and a slightly languid attitude," and was a somewhat older presence in the Ottoman theatrical scene. The "smaller" Amelya was, according to Rasim, popular largely due to her youth, her Greek-accented falsetto, and the sailor-suit costume that she wore while performing. The passion that she evoked in her audiences was noted by Rasim, who wrote that after her "drunken-sounding" performances the audience would erupt into "a great *fori* of fes-tossing, hat-throwing, whistling and clapping, sounding like a "pack of roosters.'" In fact, such frenzied approbation was not a new phenomenon: similar audience reactions are recorded for the district's *köçek* performances, both during the early 19th century when these were legal, and after 1856, when they went underground.[106] *Kanto* was clearly the main draw at this time. By comparison, the incipient *tuluat* theatre was hobbled by the extremely poor quality of the actor's Turkish; as Ahmet Rasim writes, "it was rubbish made from nonsense words" (*ibaret saçmasapan söz döküntüleriydi*).[107]

Relatively quickly, *kantocu*s established themselves as regular acts in the various theatres of Karaköy and Galata. Peruz dominated the Theatro Evropi, whereas Küçük Amelya entrenched herself at the nearby Theatro Amerikis ("American Theatre"). Büyük Amelya found residence at the Büyük Pirinççi Gazino, also in Karaköy, before moving on to the Kuşlu Theatre, a little farther away in Tepebaşı.[108] These theatres were Greek and Armenian-owned, but there was no correlation between the ethnicity of the performer and the theatre ownership: Büyük Amelya was Greek, for example, but worked at Armenian-operated theatres. Over the course of the 1880s, various other *kantocu*s found niches within

[105] Ibid., 101.
[106] For example, John Hobhouse describes a köçek performance in Karaköy by writing: "the wretched performers dance to the music of guitars, fiddles, and rebeks; and what with the exclamations of the master of the dancers, and sometimes the quarrels of the Turks, so much noise and disturbance ensue at mid-day as to bring the patrol to the spot." See John Cam Hobhouse and Baron Broughton, *A Journey Through Albania*, 885.
[107] Ahmet Rasım, *Fuhş-ı Atik*, 99.
[108] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, "Şamram'ın Dünyası", *Beni Toprağıma Gömün -İstanbul Azınlıkları,* (İstanbul: Altın Kitaplar Yayınevi, 1993): 63.

the theatres of Galata, such as the Greek Küçük Eleni, who moved into the Theatro Amerikis,[109] and the roster of performing artists grew considerably. Nevertheless, among this group Peruz remained the central figure – in part, perhaps, because generally composed her own songs. Peruz's fame also uplifted that of the subculture in general: as Muhtar Alus writes,"increasingly brilliant, renowned, she brought a higher measure of fame to the *tuluat* companies."[110] Her rising stardom inspired others to participate in the subculture: not only as *kantocu*s, but also as stage comics, or as amateur composers. The *tuluatçı* Şevki, for instance, quit his job at the telegraph office and became a comedian after falling in love with Peruz.[111] Şevki would later marry Peruz, as well as a number of other *kantocu*s after her, and would prove instrumental to the later development of the genre.

Possibly through her connections with the *orta oyunu* actor Kavuklu Hamdi, who also performed at the Theatro Evropi, Peruz came into contact with a number of Turkish Muslim *tuluatçı*s associated with the established comedian Abdürrezak, commonly known as Abdi (see Figure 17). A violent dispute between Abdi and his protege, Kel ("bald") Hasan (see Figure 18), had caused a rift between the various performers of the Ottoman theatrical scene in Galata, and Abdi had begun to establish a new base in the Direklerarası area of the historic city, at the Gülünçhane Theatre.[112] Kavuklu Hamdi and his stage partner, Pişekar Küçuk İsmail, (see Figure 16) were associated with Abdi's group, and they themselves performed on a small stage in Direklerarası next to a well-known greengrocers. *Kantocu*s soon followed these *tuluatçı*s, as did their fans, and Direklerarası gradually became the new centre of the *kanto* subculture (see Figure 6).

Direklerarası had a number of advantages for Turkish-speaking performers over Galata: firstly, it was much closer to the centre of the Turkish-speaking city, and was already the site of numerous coffeehouses, teahouses and promenade areas.[113] Compared to

[109] Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Karaköyden Tophaneye doğru..." *Akşam* (April 12, 1938): 8.
[110] Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Kantocuların Kadinnesi Peruz."
[111] S. Vural, "Peruz, Devrinin en Güzel ve en Civelek Artistiydi," 001525844006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.
[112] Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Karaköyden Tophaneye doğru..."
[113] See Haldun Taner, "Alaturka Broadway: Direklerarası," 001525733006, Dosya No: 169, Taha Toros Arşivi, Istanbul, Turkey.

Galata, which was known for prostitution, gambling, drugs and drinking, and which was "the very personification of everything that, in the eyes of certain critics, had gone wrong with Ottoman society,"[114] Direklerarası was considered a much more refined center of entertainment. Furthermore, Galata was generally regarded as a rather violent neighborhood, with vagrants, drunks and murderers roaming openly.[115] To make matters worse, as many criminals possessed foreign citizenship, they had relative immunity from Ottoman law. Direklerarası, by contrast, was regularly patrolled by the *Zabıta-i Ahlakiyye*,[116] the vice police, and posessed a much safer reputation. It was generally known as a place for the consumption of tea and coffee, for example, rather than alcohol or opium (although, as Ahmet Rasim notes, this did not stop the district's addicts from moving on to newer drugs, like morphine, ether, and cocaine).[117] For purely practical reasons, the move to Direklerarası also greatly extended the hours that the residents of the historic city could stay at the theatres, for it obviated the need to leave before the Galata bridge was raised for the evening.[118] As even crossing the bridge during the day invariably meant encountering "a living public health exhibition" - that is, the crowds of beggars and disease-stricken indigent that camped out on bridge and retreated to Yeni Cami at night – it is understandable why residents of the old city prefered to stay on the "right" side of the Golden Horn.[119] Finally, Direklerarası already had a reputation as an entertainment district, and possessed a long history of *karagöz*, *orta oyunu* and *meddah* performances.[120] By 1876 it was already well-known as a site of Ramazan entertainments, and *kanto* and *tuluat* quickly moved to fill in this niche as well. By the mid-1880s a number of theatres had

[114] İrvin Cemil Schick, "Nationalism Meets the Sex Trade," 2.

[115] These were the people Ahmet Mithat memorably referred to as "those whose eyes see red" (*gözünü kan bürümüş*). See Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Dürdane Hanım* (İstanbul: Tercüman-ı Hakikat Gazetesi, 1881), 5.

[116] Cenab Şahabeddin, *İstanbul'da Bir Ramazan* (İstanbul: İletişm Yayınları, 1994): 60.

[117] Ahmet Rasim, *Ramazan Karşılaması*, 61.

[118] There was no fixed time that it was raised, making a great deal of caution necessary unless one wished to spend the night in Galata or wander the streets until the morning. See Ahmet Rasim, *Şehir Mektupları*, 190.

[119] Sermet Muhtar Alus, *30 Sene Evvel İstanbul. 1900'lü Yılların Başlarında Şehir Hayatı,* Faruk Ilıkan, ed. (Istanbul: İletişm, 2005): 268–7.

[120] See Fikret Arıt and Orhan Tahsin, "Eski Ramazan Eğlenceleri," *Hayat* (July 20, 1959).

arisen in the areas of Direklerarası and nearby Şehzadebaşı, with each stage hosting a variety of theatrical genres (see Figures 7 and 8 for examples of these theatres).

Of these theatres, the Minakyan, which hosted the “Osmanlı Dram Tiyatrosu” (Ottoman Dramatic Theatre) troupe, was largely dominated by serious stage dramas or comic operas, and did not generally host *kantocu*s.[121] The comedian Kel Hasan’s "Hayalhane-i Osmani" (Ottoman Playhouse) troupe did include *kanto* performances quite regularly, and Küçük Eleni was its first star; nevertheless, it gave *tuluat* theatre primary billing. The same was true of Abdi’s “Handehane-i Osmani” (Ottoman Laugh-house) troupe. It was only in Şevki’s “Eğlencehane-i Osmani” (Ottoman Funhouse) troupe that *kanto* itself became a prime attraction, perhaps due in part to Şevki’s intimate relationships with several notable *kantocu*s.[122] *Kantocu*s played at both these theatres and at their older haunts in Galata. Some *kantocu*s, like Küçük Amelya, committed themselves to certain troupes and performed with them at specific theatres (in her case, Kel Hasan’s Hayalhane-i Osmani, perhaps because her husband, the comedian Todori, was closely associated with Kel Hasan).[123] Generally speaking, however, *kantocu*s and *tuluatçı*s performed at a variety of theatres, in both Galata, Şehzadebaşı, and other areas like Kadıköy, Pera and Çamlıca. Peruz was initially a member of Abdi’s troupe before establishing herself with Şevki, who she married; nevertheless, she remained a target of Kel Hasan’s, who attempted to bring her over to the Hayalhane-i Osmani by offering her large sums of money.[124] The late 1880s and early 1890s were marked by the increasing theatricality of Peruz’s fame: she acquired the stage name “Afet-i Devran,” (The World’s Beauty), perhaps to outshine the “city comedians” (*komik-i şehir*) like Kel Hasan and Abdi;[125] furthermore, she had a *tahtırevan* (sedan chair) constructed and began to be carried through the streets in this way, “like an empress.”[126] This sedan chair was the object of considerable fame in its day. We may read it

[121] Haldun Taner, “Direklerarasında Kadınlar İçin Ayrı Eğlenceler Vardı,” *Milliyet* (July 19, 1982).
[122] Refi Cevad Ulunay, “Şehzadebaşı,” *Milliyet* (December 25, 1967).
[123] Kemal Kamil Aktaş, “Eski Ramazanlarda Tiyatro,” *Perde ve Sahne* (October, 1941).
[124] Haldun Taner, “Direklerarası: Ramazan Takvimi” *Milliyet* (July 26, 1980).
[125] Berna Özbilen, “Kanto’nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi,” 17.
[126] Aysen Devrim, “Kayıp Geçen Yıldızlar: Türk Tiyatrosunun Unutulmuş Şöhretleri 18: Kantocu Peruz Hanım” 001525842006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

as a rather extravagant display of self-importance; as an artistic statement; or, even, perhaps, as a practical necessity, for during this era Peruz was known to have gained a considerable amount of weight, to the point that it was difficult for her to climb stairs.[127] In the context of the Ottoman theatrical tradition, it should be noted that the Janissaries also kept their most beloved and famous *köçek* dancers in similar seclusion,[128] and that the bearers of Peruz's sedan chair were *tulumbacı*s (neighborhood fire-fighters),[129] who carried on many of the Janissary traditions within their ranks. It is possible, then, that these *tulumbacı*s were in fact reviving (consciously or not) an honour that had once been given to Peruz's male predecessors.

Regardless, by the mid-1890s a second phase of "Peruz's sultanate" was to begin. A new wave of *kantocu*s came to the stage, most of whom had grown up amidst the *kanto* culture of the 1880s. The most successful among these was Şamram Kelleciyan (1870-1955), who was the neice of Peruz and who was introduced to *kanto* through her. Unlike Peruz, Şamram was born in Istanbul, and was educated at the Armenian-language Surp Krikor Lusavoriçyan School in Galata.[130] At a very young age, about 14 or 15, she married a contractor for the Ottoman Navy, and remained in this marraige for about 12 years. During this time she had two children. Beginning in 1894, what Şamram called "the Armenian incident" - that is, the Hamidian-era massacres of Armenians, which began in Anatolia but spread to Istanbul in 1895 and 1896 and ultimately claimed tens of thousands of lives[131] – led Şamram's husband to lose his job, and made their family situation increasingly difficult.[132] In late 1897 or early 1898, Şamram's husband divorced her, leaving her with the two children and no source of income other than minor acting jobs.[133] It was at this time that Peruz offered to take on her neice as an apprentice *kantocu*, in a

127 "Kantocu Peruz Hanım."
128 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Tarihimizde Garip Vakalar* (İstanbul: Varlik Yayinevi, 1971), 128.
129 "Kantocu Peruz Hanım."
130 Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu, *Türkiye Ermenileri Sahnesi ve Çalışanları,* 358.
131 See Selim Deringil, ""The Armenian Question Is Finally Closed": Mass Conversions of Armenians in Anatoliaduring the Hamidian Massacres of 1895–1897," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (Apr., 2009): 344-371
132 Hikmet Feridun, "Herdem Taze Bir Sanatkar Kadın."
133 Burhan Arpad, *Bir İstanbul Var idi...,* 44.

manner rather similar to the apprentices of *tuluatçıs* and *orta oyunu* actors. Although hesitant at first, Şamram ultimately accepted Peruz's offer (albeit under some duress), and became an immediate sensation in the Istanbul *kanto* scene.[134] Like Peruz, Şamram wrote her own *kanto*s, which tended to have a more personalized quality than those of the earlier *kantocu*s; Orhan Tahsin mentions that Şamram wrote one particularly popular *kanto* in the five minutes before taking stage, the product of "a very emotional day."[135] Şamram's more direct and authentic lyrical style reflected the broadening scope of the *kanto* genre, which was moving from torch songs in the classical *şarkı* tradition to more personal or satirical subject matter. According to Musahipzade Celal, Şamram came to be known for the quality of her singing and lyrics, whereas Peruz was more regarded for her dancing abilities.[136] Şamram alternated between Şevki's and Kel Hasan's troupes, gaining fans across the city, and from 1900 until about 1920 she became the most successful *kantocu* of them all.[137] Although some sources record a brief marraige to Şevki, after he had divorced from Peruz,[138] Şamram herself makes no mention of it, and her marraige to the Armenian filmmaker Aleksan Agopyan in 1909 is generally considered to be her second and last.[139]

There are a few important points that we can take from this. The first is the importance of kinship and marraige ties within the *kanto* scene. Peruz and Şamram were closely related, and a further *kantocu*, Zarife Hanım, was also a distant relative of Peruz. *Kantocu*s also brought their children into the culture as well. Furthermore, the kantocus generally married people within their same social circle – that is, *tuluatçı*s, actors, musicians, or theatre owners. Some actors, like Şevki, were in serial relationships with several *kantocu*s, perhaps for legal purposes, while others, such as Küçük Amelya and Todori, performed together on stage. As Orhan Tahsin notes, "all artists in Şehzadebaşı were related," and thus "no story could remain secret for long."[140] In an era in which *kanto*

[134] Hikmet Feridun, "Herdem Taze Bir Sanatkar Kadın."
[135] Fikret Arıt and Orhan Tahsin, "Eski Ramazan Eğlenceleri."
[136] Musahipzade Celal, *Eski İstanbul Yaşayışı*, 70.
[137] Boğos Çalgıcıoğlu, *Türkiye Ermenileri Sahnesi ve Çalışanları,* 358.
[138] See Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Dümbüllü İsmail Efendi*.
[139] Burhan Arpad, *Bir İstanbul Var idi...,* 44.
[140] Fikret Arıt and Orhan Tahsin, "Eski Ramazan Eğlenceleri."

was still only semi-respectable, it is understandable that *kantocu*s prefered – or were limited to – people working in the same cultural scene. Indeed, of the *kantocu*s only Şamram married someone outside of the theatre, although as a *sinemacı,* Aleksan Agopyan was also deeply enmeshed into the Şehzadebaşı cultural scene.[141] This is in rather remarkable in contrast to the French courtesan and theatre culture that *kanto,* in certain ways, resembled; while in Paris married actresses were frowned upon, with marraige often seen as breaking the illusion of an actress's sexual availability,[142] the *kantocu*s of Istanbul often sought to attain a kind of married respectability as quickly as possible. It does not appear that a *kantocu*'s marraige significantly altered the Ottoman public's appreciation of her, at least not to the extent that it did in France. Furthermore, unlike the brief and well-publicized marraiges of actresses like Sarah Bernhardt or courtesans like Liane de Pougy, Ottoman *kantocu*s generally remained in long-lasting relationships, which were known to the audience but usually kept somewhat outside of the public eye.

Beyond familial ties, *kantocu*s also were connected by master-apprentice relationships, in the manner of the traditional Ottoman theatre. Peruz played a key role in this process, both by directly training other women in performing kanto, and by writing popular songs.[143] As Orhan Tahsin noted, all of the Direklerarası *kantocu*s either took lessons from her or sang her songs.[144] Her role was more crucial for second-generation *kantocu*s like Zarife (and Küçük Virjin (1870-1966), as she introduced them to established theatre owners and troupe managers like Naşit Özcan (himself a former apprentice of Kel Hasan).[145] Newer *kantocu*s referred to their older counterparts as *usta* (master) and often took on their stage names; thus, alongside Peruz and Şamram, we also have Küçük Peruz and Küçük Şamram.[146] Some apprentices became stars in their own right, such as Küçük

[141] Burhan Arpad, *Bir İstanbul Var idi...,* 44.
[142] Lenard Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001): 108.
[143] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 35
[144] Orhan Tahsin, "Eski Ramazanlardan Hatıralar: Fasıl Okuyucuları ve Kantocular," *Hayat Mecmuası,* Vol. 1, No. 10, (1961): 9.
[145] M. Süleyman Çapan, "Hay, Ermenice Ermeni Demektir, Nar da Arapça Ateş Demektir: İstibdat Günlerinde Bir Kantocu Kadını Nasıl Zabtiye Nazırlığına Götürmüşlerdi?" 001525833006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.
[146] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 22.

Virjin, as well as her daughter Amelya (who ultimately married Naşit) and her son Niko. As this tradition became more established, Peruz decided to formalize these master-apprentice relationships by forming an all-female troupe of her own: the "Sahne-i Alem" (World's Stage) company, which included as core members Peruz herself, Küçük Virjin, her daughter Amelya, and two other new *kantocu*s, Viyolet and Flora.[147] According to Reşat Ekrem Koçu, Büyük Amelya also spent her latter days as a member of the company, although Koçu considered it to be a much more scandalous place than the theatre (*tiyatrodan ziyade bir rezalethane olan Sahne-i Alem*) and a step down for someone of Amelya's talent.[148] The significance of this development should not be understated: in an era when women's social organizations were being established in the fields of politics, literature, and the fine arts, Peruz was initiator of the first such development in the popular theatre.

It was around this time that the first publications were produced documenting the *kanto* scene. In particular, a number of songbooks, chapbooks and compilations were produced, which brought together and recorded a number of popular songs, alongside their composers and noted performers. While in 1890 an early publication, *Kanto Şarkı Mecmuası*, had been published by the Cemal Efendi publishing house,[149] it was the period from 1905 to 1908 that marked the most intensive period of *kanto* compilation. As was mentioned in the introduction, our primary sources for the lyrics and music of Hamidian-era *kanto*s are a compilation entitled "Neşe-i Dil" (The Heart's Joy), which was published under the well-known "Kütüphane-i Cihan" (World's Library) imprint in 1905, and several collections produced by Udi Şamli Selim, such as *Kanto Mecmuası*, which was published in 1907. A sheet music publisher, Şamlı İskender, also produced a number of bilingual (Ottoman-French) *kanto* chapbooks entitled "Nubhe-i Elhan," during this time period. The quality of these publications was at times somewhat suspect – one commentator later noted that Udi Şamli Selim's publications were full of incorrect notation and spelling mistakes[150] - but they nevertheless represented an earnest effort to preserve and popularize the music of

[147] Ibid., 17.
[148] Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Amelya, Büyük" *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, 757.
[149] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 34.
[150] Fahri Celâl Göktulga, "Kantolarımız."

what was rapidly becoming a mass culture phenomenon. In the years before the 1908 Revolution, *kanto* moved from the underground to a position of relative cultural respectability. *Kanto* performances, particularly during Ramazan, had become a popular attraction for a wide swathe of society, from high officials such as the Istanbul *şehremini* (city prefect) Rıdvan Paşa and the head of the secret police, Fehim Paşa,[151] to the tough *kabadayı*s and *külhanbeyi*s (street hustlers) that had made up the genre's early fanbase. Youth of all classes attended performances, including even girls of the elite, like a young Naciye Sultan.[152] As *kantocu*s became popular celebrities, they also began to acquire a certain amount of wealth: several *kantocu*s acquired property in the Galatasaray area of Pera, including Şamram (albeit on the somewhat rough Eski Çiçekci Sokak), while Peruz gained – both of her own accord and as gifts from wealthy admirers – a number of properties in the Akaretler complex in Beşiktaş.[153]

The period from the turn of the century to the start of the First World War was marked by the continued dominance of Peruz and Şamram, as well as the rise of new stars such as Mari Ferha and Agavni. Mari Ferha, who had been fascinated by *kanto* from an early age,[154] took to the stage and eventually married Şevki, performing with him well into the 1930s. Agavni represented a somewhat unique case. Beginning her career as a *kantocu* associated with the Greek musician Kemençeci Aleko Bacanos,[155] and married to the *tuluatçı* Hakkı Necip, over time she became associated with the more serious Minakiyan theatre troupe,[156] and during the era of the Darülbedai national theatre she transitioned into professional acting. During her time, this made Agavni rather famous, and the subject of admiring profiles in influential gazettes such as *Kadınlar Dünyası*;[157] however, as the

151 "Kantocu Peruz Hanım."

152 Rezzan A. E. Yalman, "Hayatım: Naciye Enver Paşa'nın Hatıraları" *Vatan* (December, 15, 1952).

153 Semiha Ayverdi, *Hey Gidi Günler Hey* (İstanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyat, 2008): 117.

154 Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Dümbüllü İsmail Efendi*.

155 Agavni is, indeed, the only woman represented among all of the musicians in *Nevzad-i Musiki*, a songbook of the musicians in Kemençeci Aleko's social circle. See Kemençeci Aleko, *Nevzad-i Musiki, Mükemmel Şarkı ve Kanto Mecmuası*.

156 "Temâşâhâne-i Osmâni Kumpanyasının Başlığı," 001526609006, Dosya No: 181, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey, 17.

157 Bintülbetül, "Sahnelerimizde Çalışanlardan: Agavni Necib Hanım" *Kadınlar Dünyası,* vol. 10, no. 194 (March 6, 1921): 13-14.

Armenian actors of the early Ottoman dramatic theatre came to be generally forgotten, Agavni too was largely written out of theatre historiography. Her obituary was a single line.[158] Other kantocus made forays in to the comic theatre, to lesser critical renown but to considerable fame in their time; Peruz, Şamram, and Eleni appeared alongside Agavni in plays such as *Şair'in Kızı* (The Poet's Daughter), produced by Şevki's troupe for 1900's Ramazan season,[159] and Peruz herself is credited as the writer (*muharrıre*) of a play entitled *Lezaiz-i Aşk* (The Tastes of Love), which also starred her fellow *kantocu*s.[160]

The 1908 Revolution had a relatively limited impact on *kanto* scene, although the end of Hamidian-era censorship marked a flourishing of sexual discourse in other areas, such as the popular press, pulp fiction, and erotic illustration.[161] According to Ruhi Kalender's survey of Istanbuliote musical culture at the turn of the century, in the aftermath of the Revolution *kanto* was no longer concentrated in Galata and Direklerarası, but was also performed in Bağlarbaşı in Üsküdar, at the Odeon Theatre in Pera, at the Kuşdili Theatre in Kadıköy, and even as far as Sarıyer in the northern surburbs of the city.[162] Kantocus also continued to regularly perform at the Ferah, Şark and Millet Theatres in Şehzadebaşı, which were associated with Muhsin Ertuğrul, Kel Hasan, and Komik Naşit, respectively.[163] The first era of *kanto* was embodied in the figure of Peruz, and it is no coincidence that it came to an end with the end of her career. Peruz left the stage in 1912, performing last at the newly opened Garden Bar in Tepebaşı. This choice of venue was, in a

[158] Hafi Kadri Alpman, "Acı Fakat Gerçek," 001526449006, Dosya No:106, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

[159] See "Şâirin Kızı," Osmanlı Tiyatro Afişleri Sergisi, Information Research Center online archives, Research of the Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

[160] See "Lezâiz-i Aşk," Osmanlı Tiyatro Afişleri Sergisi, Information Research Center online archives, Research of the Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

[161] See İrvin Cemil Schick, "Print Capitalism and Women's Sexual Agency in the Ottoman Empire", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and Middle East*, vol. 31, no: 1, (2011): 196-216; see also Tülay Artan and İrvin Cemil Schick, "Ottomanizing Pornotopia: Changing Visual Codes in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Erotic Miniatures," in *Eros and Sexuality in Islamic Art*, Francesca Leoni, ed. (London: Routledge, 2013): 188.

[162] See Ruhi Kalender, "Yüzyılımızın Başlarında İstanbul'un Müsiki Hayatı," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 23 (1978).

[163] Burhan Arpad, "İstanbul'un Tiyatro Seyircileri," *Cumhüriyet* (March 26, 1964).

way, prophetic for the Garden Bar would in the post-war period form the centre of Istanbul's next youth subculture: that is, jazz.[164] By 1912 Peruz's failing health made it difficult for her to perform the acrobatics that she had when younger; one admittedly biased source gave her weight as over one hundred kilograms.[165] Yet according to Muhtar Alus, Peruz performed for as long as she was physically able, "remaining on the itsy-bitsy stages of the tuluat theatres until her unceasing days ceased."[166] Furthermore, as H.G. Dwight wrote regarding one of the last performances by Peruz,

> "The audience had a frank affection for her, independent of her overripe enchantments, and she danced terrible dances for them, eyes half shut, with a grandmotherly indulgence that entirely took away from the nature of what she was doing."[167]

It is clear that, up until the very end, Peruz remained well-loved by her increasingly broad audience. The war years represented something of an intermezzo for *kanto*, although performances continued during Ramazan and intermittedly at theatres. According to Semiha Ayverdi, during this time Peruz gave away much of her wealth to former lovers and fans left impoverished by the war, although it is not known whether this included dispossessed Armenians or was limited to Turkish Muslims.[168] Ataman claims that, when Peruz died in 1920, she herself had fallen into poverty as a result.[169] S. Vural, although placing Peruz's death in late 1919, corroborates this, noting that she died in an attic with nothing to her name.[170] Peruz was, from the genre's origin to the end of its first, "heroic"

[164] See G. Carole Woodall, ""Awakening a Horrible Monster": Negotiating the Jazz Public in 1920s Istanbul," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2010): 574-582.

[165] It should be noted that by the 1920s, an extremely thin, "boy-like" physique had become fashionable for women, and the fuller figures of the pre-war era were heavily criticized in the press. Fahri Celâl Göktulga, for example, claims that Peruz was morbidly obese, but also remarks that all *kantocu*s were "rather fat" and that "anyways, it was impossible for them to be thin." See Fahri Celâl Göktulga, "Kantolarımız."

[166] Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Kantocuların Kadinnesi Peruz".

[167] H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople: Old and New*, 274.

[168] Semiha Ayverdi, *Hey Gidi Günler Hey,* 117.

[169] Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 193.

[170] S. Vural, "Peruz, Devrinin en Güzel ve en Civelek Artistiydi."

phase, not only the matriarch of *kanto* but also its embodiement.[171] A new era of *kanto* was to evolve after her death, which would reflect not the concerns of the withering Ottoman world, but rather the extensive project of cultural and national redefinition characteristic of the emergent Turkish Republic.

With this history established, we can begin to briefly answer the questions posed in the beginning of this section. How can we understand the emergence and development of *kanto* in relation to the social fracture lines of Hamidian Istanbul? In particular, how did *kantocus* and *kanto* audiences reflect notions of ethnic, gendered, class or age-based identity? It is worthwhile examining each of these in turn. Ethnicity, of course, represents the clearest and most prominent lens through which *kanto* was, and continues to be, analyzed. Though an analysis of ethnic and national representations in *kanto* performance will make up the centerpiece of Chapter 4 of this thesis, it is worthwhile to examine certain trends here. It is clear that the respective ethnicities of the performers were well-known and referenced regularly when *kanto* was mentioned; Ahmet Rasim, for example, invariably mentions whether a particular *kantocu* was Greek or Armenian. In many cases, it was simply enough to state the ethnicity of the performer in order for the reader to identify her; in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's novel *The Time Regulation Institute* (first published in 1954), the narrator refers to Şamram simply as "that Armenian singer at the peak of her career,"[172] while H.G. Dwight likewise referred to Peruz only as an "Armenian sister" to European cabaret singers.[173] In other aspects, however, the "otherness" of the *kantocu*s was somewhat ill-defined and imprecisely imagined. Ahmet Rasim, for example, uses Armenian terms like *hoşor* ("plump woman") to describe the *kantocu* Büyük Amelya, whilst at the same time noting her strong Greek accent; in other contexts we see the reverse.[174] The prohibition on Muslim women performing on-stage meant that the ethnicity of the performers was, to some extent, a given quality – she could be Greek or Armenian, of course, but the fundamental point was that she was not Muslim.

171 Ruhi Ayangıl, "Kanto," 420.
172 Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, 2015): 74.
173 H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople: Old and New,* 273.
174 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Amelya, Büyük," 757.

What is more difficult to discern is how *kantocu*s and *kanto* audiences identified *themselves*. Did Armenian and Greek *kantocu*s define themselves in such terms? As was noted earlier, it is clear that Greek and Armenian *kantocu*s were affected by the political situations of their respective minorities in the Hamidian context, to say nothing of the Republic. As residents of Istanbul, *kantocu*s were, as far as we are aware, spared the immediate effects of the Armenian Genocide or the post-war Greco-Turkish population exchange, but they could hardly have been unaffected by these events. Even comparatively lesser traumas – such as the Hamidian massacres of 1894-96 or the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 – clearly impacted the *kanto* subculture; as we recall, Şamram was pushed into performing on stage in the wake of anti-Armenian violence in Istanbul, which led to her husband's unemployment. In the post-Hamidian era, the early *kantocu*s were claimed by both Turkish and Armenian nationalist theatre historiographies; thus, it is possible to find Şamram described in a Turkish-language article as "one of our *kantocu*s,"[175] whilst articles in the Armenian-language press could clam much the same thing. But within the language of *kanto* itself, ethnic representations were limited to only a few types, generally borrowed from the shadow theatre: mainly, the *Çingene* (Romani) and *Acem* (Iranian), with scattered representations of Laz, Arabs and Jews. This limited vocabulary of types omitted even the seemingly apropos and common Armenian and Greek types, let alone explicit representations of Turkish Muslims. Understanding why this was the case will form a significant portion of Chapter 4 of this thesis. However, for now, it is enough to note the difficulty with which explicit representations of national identity were performed in the Hamidian era, under the pressures of both censorship and an unstable political climate, and *kanto* was hardly different from the dramatic theatre in this regard.

The ethnic identity of the kanto audience is somewhat clearer. As we have seen, it appears that kanto originated and was first popular among the itinerant communities of sailors and stevedores who were based in the Karaköy docks, and who frequented the district's theatres, taverns, and *baloz* (lower-class cabaret, from Italian *ballo*, "dance," via Greek) when in port. This early fanbase was largely multiethnic, and included both Turkish

[175] Fahri Celâl Göktulga, "Kantolarımız."

Muslims, Greeks, Armenians, as well as the various other ethnicities (Italians, Arabs, Maltese, etc.) who were present in this social setting.[176] Peruz's fame was supposed to have spread via Greek social networks; at the same time, she had a Turkish Muslim lover and an Armenian extended family. As *kanto* exploded in popularity, its audience became more typically Turkish and Muslim in character. Sadi Yaver Ataman, for example, gives us a list of the most prominent *forici* (that is, the *kantocu*'s most intensely devoted fans, who were responsible for provoking the audience into furious applause at the end of a performance) and of the eighteen names he provides, only three – a Bulgar, and Arab, and a Laz - are non-Turkish.[177] Unlike the dramatic theatre, which appears to have possessed a rather mixed audience of foreigners, non-Muslim Ottomans and Muslims, the *kanto* audience appears to have been largely dominated by Turkish Muslims. Though *kanto* posters continued to be published in Ottoman Turkish, Armenian and French, and though many *kanto* publications, such *Nubhe-i Elhan*, were bilingual in Turkish and French, generally speaking the audience for *kanto* were native speakers of Turkish.

The city's European inhabitants, in particular, appear to have been largely uninterested in the kanto scene. Istanbul's foreign language press appears to have essentially ignored the scene in favour of the balls and theatrical performances more interesting to their readers. The language of performance represented a major barrier: an article in the Levant Herald, dated February 5, 1872, noted that the audience for a performance of Moliere in Turkish was "crowded with Osmanlis," albeit with "a fair sprinkling of Franks who understood Turkish well enough to take an interest in the performance."[178] Comedy represented a further hurdle for non-Turcophone audiences, and even those who bothered to take an interest were largely dismissive: as an example, Edmondo de Amicis described a burlesque performance at the Fransız Tiyatrosu in Pera by writing:

[176] Forr more information on this port-city underclass, see Malte Fuhrmann, "Down and Out on the Quays of Izmir"; Henk Driessen, "Mediterranean Port Cities: Cosmopolitanism Reconsidered," *History and Anthropology*, vol. 16, no. 1, (2006): 129-141, or Edhem Eldem, "The Undesirables of Smyrna, 1926" *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 24, no. 2 (2010): 223-227.

[177] Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 272.

[178] See, *The Levant Herald* (February 5, 1872): 994.

> "At all the most impudent gestures, or highly spiced jokes, the big Turks, seated in long rows, burst into loud roars of laughter; and the habitual mask of dignity falling from their faces, the depths of their real nature and the secrets of their grossly sensual lives become visible."[179]

By 1915, the situation had not changed dramatically. H.G. Dwight still describes *kanto* as an essentially Turkish predeliction and one of limited appeal to Europeans, with the songs "monotonous" and the *kantocu*s sounding as if suffering from a cruel cold.[180] Even as pashas and the daughters of the Ottoman dynasty came to attend these performances, European audiences largely stayed away, except out of a kind of voyeuristic curiosity. As much as *kanto* was a cosmopolitan art form, it was cosmopolitan within the Ottoman context; unlike the more transnational jazz culture which would supplant it, *kanto* culture was essentially local in character.

Class identity, of course, represents another fundamental aspect of *kanto* culture. As we have seen, *kanto*'s origins lay in the underclasses of Galata, and the genre was in this way rather similar to other underworld genres of performance, such as *rembetiko*, that evolved in an environment of illicit activity and poverty. The world of Peruz was, at this time, the same world as the *tulumbacı*s and sailors who made up her fanbase, or the serial killer Bıçakçı Petri who attacked her on-stage – that is, the world of *kabadayılık* and *külhanbeylik*. As Sadi Yaver Ataman writes, they were "bald, burly, one-eyed, stunted, fat, and hulking types, with nerves of steel, busted lips, and moustaches like scimitars; totally worthless, scruff-of-the-neck sort-of characters."[181] Ahmet Rasim also gives us a colorful depiction of an early *kanto* audience:

> "Among all the people hanging around, there were gunners from the Tersane, female bath attendants wearing jodhpurs and hooded sack coats, male bath

179 Edmondo de Amicis, *Constantinople*, 183.
180 H.G. Dwight, *Constantinople: Old and New,* 273.
181 Original: "Kel, keleş, tek göz, bodur, şişman, iri kıyım, safi sinir, yırtık dudak, pala bıyık, nane çöpü, ense kalıp..." See Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 273.

> attendants, spies from the police, stevedores and barge-men; as to their ages, there were children of about fourteen or fifteen years old."[182]

Ahmet Rasim goes on to describe fights and rivalries among this crowd, which could begin with simple food fights and insults and end in attacks with "straight razors, knives, iron bars, and sometimes pistols."[183] What is often missed in Rasim's depiction is the strikingly young ages of both the *kantocu*s and their fans, especially if we remember that Peruz herself was only fourteen when she took to the stage. Even the most seemingly "respectable" audience members – the artillerymen from the Tersane (Ottoman Arsenal) – are not in fact as they appear, for during the period in which Ahmet Rasim was writing, dissolute street youth and orphans were forcibly conscripted into the artillery corps of Tophane or the Arsenal as a means to keep them from engaging in begging and violent crime.[184] We may thus understand the *kanto* audience, at the genre's emergence, as being essentially youth of the city's underclasses – perhaps, to some extent, the equivalent of the *şehir oğlanları* (city boys) that plagued Ottoman authorities earlier in the city's history. As a student at the Darüşşafaka boarding school, Rasim was strictly warned not to engage with these youth, as well as to avoid Galata altogether; that he and his friends nevertheless became entrenched within the scene demonstrates the attractiveness of this culture, and to a certain extent, we might even consider them to be the late Ottoman equivalent to today's "hipsters." It is probably this early obscurity which encouraged the later association between *kanto* and camp: as *kanto* moved into the realm of mass culture, a devoted core of appreciators developed which included "tasteful" intellectuals like Rasim and Muhtar Alus. It was this urban clique which retained and preserved the memories of *kanto* esoterica; as for the *kabadayı*s, *tulumbacı*s, and Tersane conscripts, who formed the true early core of this subculture, unfortunately little remains for us but their names.

182 Ahmet Rasim, *Fuhş-ı Atik*, 101.
183 Ibid.
184 Nazan Maksudyan, "Orphans, Cities and the State: Vocational Orphanages (Islahhanes) and Reform in the Late Ottoman Urban Space," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 42 (2011): 497.

As *kanto* became popular culture, the class make-up of its audience - and to a lesser extent, the performers - changed significantly. As mentioned earlier, by the time that Peruz left the stage in 1912, her audiences included high officials and the children of the Ottoman dynasty. Muhtar Alus writes, for example, that "the sons of pashas, the playboys, the aides of the sultan, the soldiers, and even the good-looking, smart, married, gentlemen with their own barques, all knew the pain [of infatuation with Peruz]."[185] If the *kanto* audience cut across class lines, so too did *kantocu*s begin to come from a wider class background; Virjin, for instance, came from an artistic family with roots in the theatre,[186] while Mari Ferha also came from an artistic background.[187] *Kantocu*s tended to marry slightly upwards and some, like Şamram and Mari Ferha, were able to leave Galata and buy property in fashionably modern areas of the city such as Şişli and Nişantaşı.[188] Although Peruz likely died in relative poverty, during her lifetime her fame was enough that an Iranian ambassador lent to her a colonnaded Bosphorus *yalı* to dispose of as she saw fit.[189] Nevertheless, there remained something of a cultural stigma around *kanto* performance. As popular as it was, it is clear that - outside of those who appreciated *kanto* for its campy quality - most Ottoman intellectuals and tastemakers considered *kanto* something of an embarassment. Those who only were only interested in *kanto* and other low-culture art forms were seen as rather gauche and symptomatic of a broader lack of taste on the part of Ottoman society. As Burhan Arpad writes, among the Ottoman theatre audience there were two types: those who had an appreciation for serious, dramatic theatre, and those – such as "*esnaf* (shopkeepers), minor officials and housewives" - who went to the theatre for "a good time" and had a "very limited understanding of the theatre and culture in general." Among this class, plays with "bloody, melodromatic and grotesque" subject matter were popular, as were *kantocu*s and acrobats.[190] At best, *kanto* served as a necessary way to financially support serious national theatre: Sadık Albayrak, describing the discourse of the time, writes that "our

185 Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Kantocuların Kadinnesi Peruz".
186 Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 20.
187 Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 39.
188 Hikmet Feridun, "Herdem Taze Bir Sanatkar Kadın."
189 "Kantocu Peruz Hanım."
190 Burhan Arpad, "İstanbul'un Tiyatro Seyircileri".

people's preference was not for true theatre, even in Istanbul," and that "if there had not been Virjins and Şamrams and other *kanto*s, dances, and belly dances, our theatre would have been nipped in the bud and [the buildings] turned back into mills."[191] This lack of cultural prestige would become even more noticeable during the Republic, when the state turned its full discursive power towards the "uplifting" and "purification" of Ottoman heritage in the process of forming a new, modern Turkish identity.

The last aspect of *kanto* identity discussed in this chapter, and perhaps the most woefully understudied aspect it, relates to gender. Certainly kanto was remarkable in terms of its presentation of Ottoma women, on stage, as speaking subjects in a sexualized context; unlike earlier *çengi*s, kantocus were both the objects of the audience's erotic fantasies, and the subjects and authors of their own on-stage narratives. This development is, in itself, rather remarkable, and an analysis of the evolution of this unique element of *kanto* will form the major component of the following chapter. But this does not represent the whole sum of kanto's relationship to changing Ottoman gender norms. As Berna Özbilen notes, "at the same time that the *kanto* genre was becoming popular, within Ottoman society it was still considered extraordinary that a women should take centre-stage and perform in public [...] with *kanto*, women began to take on musical roles beyond those that we can define as closed, interiorized or silent, and they began to take on roles in society at large."[192] *Kantocu*s were not only self-made women in and of themselves, but they were also popular celebrities, and in this manner they offered an exemplar to society-at-large. The foundation of the Sahne-i Alem troupe, as the first theatre company in Istanbul operated and managed entirely by women, stands as a particularly remarkable example in this regard. Women generally were only able to attend the theatres during the day,[193] except on certain occaisons during Ramazan, and the Sahne-i Alem catered to these restrictions by only performing during daylight hours.[194] Though the *kanto* audience has generally been read as male, and although *kanto* performance certainly catered to the heterosexual male gaze, in fact women

[191] Sadik Albayrak, *Meşrutiyet İstanbul'unda Kadın ve Sosyal Değişim,* 36.
[192] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 32.
[193] Cora Skylstad, "Acting the Nation," 47.
[194] Resad Ekrem Koçu, "Amelya, Büyük," 757.

were also noted fans of *kanto* and kept up with the latest developments of the subculture. In Ahmet Mithat Efendi's 1910 novel *Jön Turk*, for instance, we are introduced to a group of upper-middle class Turkish Muslim women who have been educated in playing Western musical instruments, according to the standard practice of *alafranga* Ottomans, and who attempt to play some songs for a wedding party. Unable to properly play Western-style polkas, waltzes or operettas, these women also find Turkish music "old-fashioned" and the rythms awkward to dance to. At last, they settle upon *kanto* music as a common denominator: as Ahmet Mithat writes, the women "proved that night that they could imitate perfectly those actresses, like Peruz and Eleni, that have won more fame among women than men for the *kanto*s they sing in the theatres."[195] As Muhtar Alus has described, *kantocu*s were not just musical stars but were also fashion icons; women copied their distinctive styles of make-up, for example, noting Peruz's thinly-drawn lips, or Virjin's purple lipstick.[196]

Women not only learned *kanto* songs and imitated their dances; they could also sponsor performers. In his 1920 novel *İstanbul'un Bir Yüzü,* Refik Halid notes that the harem ladies of prominent pashas sponsored performances by Peruz and Şamram, alongside Roma dancing girls.[197] Indeed, according to Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Bey, elite Ottoman women during the late Hamidian period regularly sponsored female dancers that they found particularly interesting, "in the same way that rich young men take on wanton, pretty girls as lovers."[198] This was especially true of female dancers who took on male roles; in a somewhat similar fashion, the women in *Jön Türk* are depicted commissioning a female *çengi* to perform, dressed "in a man's suit and with a moustache drawn on the top of her lips."[199] Beyond sponsoring private performances, women also went to the theatres themselves. We have already read of elite young women like Naciye Sultan attending performances, but in fact women constituted a significant portion of the Ottoman theatrical

[195] Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Jön Türk* (İstanbul: Antik Yayınları, 2009): 17.
[196] Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Eski Günlerde Saç ve Yüz Tuvaleti".
[197] Refik Halid Karay, *İstanbul'un Bir Yüzü* (İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, 2011): 45.
[198] Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza, *Eski Zamanlarda İstanbul Hayatı*, 188.
[199] Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Jön Türk*, 18

audience – although the artistic tastes of the "housewives," as mentioned earlier, were generally dismissed as rather jejune by Ottoman intellectuals. Indeed, Ahmet Mithat writes in *Jön Türk* that these women enjoyed *kanto* precisely because of their inability to understand true artistic merit or difficult subject matter.[200] Highly educated women tended to share this view of the genre: Selma Ekrem, the granddaughter of Namık Kemal, recounted a *tuluat* performance by writing:

> "The theater was another dirty hall littered with shells. The same kind of audience, composed solely of women and children, attended it. As for the stage, it was so primitive that even I laughed at the crude attempts at houses and stairs. The plays were not really plays, but who cared? "Bald Hassan" jumped and looked stupid, fooled the other players and got the best of each. The actresses were all Armenian as Turkish women could not act. How could they when they were not even allowed to show their faces to men?"[201]

Even those who took a more active interest in the genre, such as the composer Leyla Saz Hanım, generally considered it a low and somewhat undignified subculture, especially for women; after trying her hand at composing a *kanto*, she wrote beside in her notebook, "I do not know if it is seemly to have written this?" (*bilmem ki bunu yazmış olmak yakışık alır mı?*).[202] The open eroticism and coarse reputation of *kanto* culture made it, to some degree, an anathema for many Ottoman social reformers, who saw in it the degradation of traditional values and the sexualization of women. Though the late Hamidian feminist movement was not as atomized by ethnicity as was previously believed,[203] nevertheless the *kantocu*'s position as Armenian and Greek women performing in Ottoman Turkish for Turkish Muslim audiences made them extremely difficult to place within any paradigm of national women's emancipation. For Turkish Muslim intellectuals like Fatma Aliye Hanım,

[200] Ayşe Melda Üner, "The Theme of Music in the Tanzimat Novel," *Septet* vol. 1, no. 1, (2006): 7.
[201] Selma Ekrem, *Unveiled, the Autobiography of a Turkish Girl* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Pres, 2005): 127.
[202] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi,"16.
[203] Serpil Çakır, "Feminism and Feminist History-Writing in Turkey: The Discovery of Ottoman Feminism." *Aspasia* 1 (2007): 72.

*kantocu*s were already "otherized," both as non-Muslims and as performing women;[204] for Armenian and Greek feminists, *kanto* was likewise too frivolous and low-culture to be of great concern. Only Agavni Necip Hanım, who was able to transition successfully from *kanto* to dramatic theatre, received serious attention from Ottoman feminists during her lifetime. In a profile entitled "Among the Workers on Our Stages: Agavni Necip Hanım," which appeared in the gazette *Kadınlar Dünyası* on March 6, 1921, Agavni is described as "a violet among flowers, a white lamb among animals," who overcame intensive stage fright to become one of the most esteemed actress of her era.[205] Her time as a *kantocu* is rather downplayed, and only towards the end of the article are her experiences in the comic theatre briefly mentioned. It is notable that even this admiring entry largely overlooks her *kanto* period, or her marraige to a *tuluatçı*; even in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, the most radical of Ottoman feminist publications and the only one solely operated by women,[206] theatre women still faced difficulties being accepted as fellow travellers. Indeed, slightly before Agavni's profile was published the magazine also published an editorial criticizing the inclusion of theatre advertisements, on the grounds that actresses were not appropriate feminist role models. In response to this, the Armenian actress Kınar Hanım wrote a scathing letter in which she criticized this attitude as prejudiced and short-sighted.[207] The ambiguous position of *kantocu*s would play a critical role in the genre's development and decline during the Republic.

Lastly, it should be remembered that *kantocu*s were, of course, women themselves, and faced all of the challenges and restrictions which affected women of their class. As the first female popular celebrities, they also faced a number of new difficulties. Violence was extremely common: Peruz was almost stabbed by a notorious serial killer, of course, and her later practice of travelling enclosed in a sedan chair carried by a troupe of *tulumbacı*s is perhaps more understandable in this regard. According to Sadi Yaver Ataman, a *kantocu*

[204] Aynur Demirdirek, "Muslim Ottoman Feminists' Perceptions of Non-Muslim Counterparts," *Fe Dergi* vol. 6, no. 1 (2013): 3.
[205] Bintülbetül, "Sahnelerimizde Çalışanlardan: Agavni Necib Hanım".
[206] Serpil Çakır, "Feminism and Feminist History-Writing in Turkey," 69.
[207] Aynur Demirdirek, "Muslim Ottoman Feminists' Perceptions of Non-Muslim Counterparts," 7.

named Agavni (different from the Agavni Necip mentioned above) was murdered by a jealous fan who shot her as she performed on stage; another later *kantocu*, Rana Dilberyan, was also killed in a similar way.[208] When interviewed Virjin claimed to have never been attacked with "guns, bullets and knives," but she noted that Büyük Amelya and Eleni had indeed been attacked on occaison and had suffered broken noses and other injuries.[209] Eleni's husband was also a noted *kabadayı* and she suffered abuse at his hands.[210] Sexual harrassment and violence was rife, although perhaps not to the extent that European actresses suffered. Whereas in Paris, actresses were regarded as essentially and categorically sexually exploitable – to the point that, "since theater women were uncouth and sexually charged, they were presumed to accept, or even enjoy, the physical mistreatment they received from men,"[211] - in Istanbul theatre owners kept a strict policy of *harem-selamlık* (the separation of the sexes) backstage. This policy was enforced to such an extent by troupe leaders like Abdi – who was known for guarding the doors of the actresses's quarters with a wooden club – that even the sight of a man lending a hand to a *kantocu* was cause for general alarm.[212] What was regarded by writers in the Republic as a sign of Abdi's "particular character," or of general Ottoman backwardness, may be seen in light of the general context as something the *kantocu*s themselves may have requested, whether for security or simply for some relief from pervasive harrasment.

*Kantocu*s, and *kanto* culture in general, were products of a particular time, place, and set of identities. The subculture cannot be analyzed simply within the broader topic of Ottoman Westernization, for this ignores the specificity which gave *kanto* its innovative and remarkable character. Kanto was, above all, a youth culture which bled into popular culture; it was the product of a multicultural space and reflected the heterogenous class, ethnic and age make-up of Hamidian Istanbul. Within *kanto* performance, gender identity played a key role, but this was not as simple as female object/male subject; both the *kanto* audience and

208 Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 16.
209 M. Süleyman Çapan, "Hay, Ermenice Ermeni Demektir, Nar da Arapça Ateş Demektir".
210 Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Karaköyden Tophaneye doğru..."
211 Lenard Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve,* 123.
212 "Kantocu Peruz Hanım," 001525843006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

the *kantocu*s themselves were fundamentally ambiguous, their identitied in the process of definition on stage. It was this very ambiguity that made *kanto* unable to survive intact during era of the Republic, when ethnic, class and gender distinctions came to be more rigidly defined by the modernizing nation-state. Through it all, *kantocu*s like Peruz and Şamram were able to rise from poverty and difficult circumstances to reach the height of fame during this era. It is not for nothing that Muhtar Alus would later write, "tell me if you could call this anything but miraculous."[213]

2.3. Sex and the City: *Kanto* Lyrics as Urban Theatre

Lastly, no overview of *kanto* would be complete without an analysis of the lyrics and subject matter of the songs themselves. As we have seen, *kanto* music and dance was, despite certain European influences, largely a product of the Ottoman theatrical tradition; musically, it was in the modes of classical Ottoman music, and its dance was fundamentally local in character and based off of the traditional Aegean and Romani dances of the region. The *kantocu*s themselves can be situated within a long tradition of non-Muslim – generally Greek, but also Armenian – theatrical performance. But how can the subject matter of *kanto* theatre be contextualized within this culture? As we have seen, there were two primary phases in the evolution of the Hamidian *kanto* subculture: its early period, developing in the rough Greek theatres of Karaköy, and its later, more Direklerarası-centred phase. These phases can, to a certain extent, be correllated to changes in the style and subject matter of *kanto* performance, although early songs that remained popular stayed within the repertoire of famous *kantocu*s, and there was no hard division between these phases. The earlier phase of *kanto* was characterized by songs and lyrics more reminiscient of the earlier *şarkı* genre: that is, melancholic, romantic songs, often referencing the vocabulary of classical Ottoman poetry. By the mid-1890s, the vocabulary of *kanto* had expanded to include much lighter, more satirical content: alongside romantic stories,

213 Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Kantocularin Kadinnesi Peruz."

*kantocu*s began to comment on the society around them. This was accompanied by the rise of "in-character" songs, usually referencing well-known urban stereotypes from the shadow theatre. Finally, the second phase of *kanto* brought more strongly autobiographical material to the stage, particularly through *kantocu*s like Şamram. By the start of the First World War, *kanto* had developed a diverse range of subject matter and styles, each in their own way reflective of aspects of Ottoman urban life. It would be this satirical mode which would continue most prominently in the Republic, when *kanto* began to address topics like women's rights and class difference in a much more explicit fashion-t the earliest full compilation of kantos – that is, the chapbook *Neşe-i Dil,* which was published in 1905 and has been described as the songbook of the Sahne-i Alem troupe[214] - we first notice that "*kanto*s" make up a rather small proportion of the total songs. In fact, most of these songs were traditional *şarkı*, and reflected the lyrical concerns of the genre. Firstly, let us look at one of these more traditional songs. Below is a *şarkı* in the *rast* makam composed by the Armenian Kemani Tatyos Efendi, who remains highly-regarded as a serious composer in Turkish musicology, and was perhaps the most accomplished of all the composers included in *Neşe-i Dil*.[215]

Mey-i la'l ile dil mestane olsun,
Aman Saki, getir bir tane olsun,
Gönül kaşanesi meyhane olsun.

"Let my tongue become drunk on a ruby-red draught,
Mercy, oh cup-bearer, let one more cup be brought,
Let a house of wine become the palace of the heart."[216]

[214] For example, the article on Peruz on the online Istanbul Women's Museum claims that Neşe-i Dil was her personal songbook. It does not, however, provide evidence for this claim. See Meral Akkent, "Peruz Terzakyan," *İstanbul Kadın Müzesi* website, http://www.istanbulkadinmuzesi.org/en/peruz-terzakyan

[215] Indeed, Fahri Celâl Göktulga, who was quite critical of the musical quality of *kanto* in general, wrote that "all of Tatyos's songs are masterpieces." See Fahri Celâl Göktulga, "Kantolarımız."

[216] Translation by author. See Hasan Tahsin, *Neşe-i Dil: Yeni Şarkı ve Kanto Memuası,* 19.

While not a *kanto*, this *şarkı* was written for the 10/16 *curcuna* time signature common to *kanto* dancing and would not have been out-of-place during such a performance. Lyrically, the song stays largely within the conventions of Ottoman lyric poetry and *aşık* songwriting, although the language is quite simple and avoids highly literate vocabulary. When we come to a *kanto* in the same volume, however, certain differences between these earlier *şarkı*s and the new form are apparent:

Bu çimenlik kalbe ferah veriyor, ah veriyor,
Güller açmiş diye bülbül ötuyor, ah ötuyor,
Hazin hazin çağlayanlar ah, ah, ah çağlasın,
Çalgı çalsın şimdi raks uyanılsın, ah, uyanılsın.

"This meadow soothes my heart, oh, it is soothing,
Roses open and the nightingale sings, oh, it is singing,
The melancholy waterfalls, oh, oh, oh, how they flow,
Now play the harp and dance, get up, oh, and go."[217]

The subject matter here still references the tropes of classical Ottoman poetry – the nightingale and the rose, for instance – but it is presented in a slightly less formal fashion, and the language is even more simplified than the previous song: poetic constructions like *mey-i la'l* are abandoned in favour of plain, direct and emotional language. By the early 1880s, *kantocu*s had already simplified the *şarkı* format into a genre suitable for energetic dancing. Here is a notable example, which Ahmet Rasim gives us in his memoir *Fuhş-ı Atik*:

Mısırımı kavururken,
Dumanını savururken,
Usta yapar, çırak satar,
Satamazsa dayak atar!

"While my corn is burning
While the smoke's unfurling

[217] Translation by author. See Hasan Tahsin, *Neşe-i Dil,* 36.

Masters make, pupils sell
If she doesn't, give her hell!"[218]

This *kanto* was sung by Peruz, and was accompanied by the swinging of a basket of corn in the manner of the street-sellers who, to this day, inhabit the area around the Galata Bridge. *Kanto* began to shed some of conventional tropes of Ottoman lyric poetry and instead reflect more explicitly its audience. Among Peruz's most well-known songs from this era was a rather simple call-and-response entitled *Yangın Var!* ("There's a fire!"), which must have been of great appeal for the *tulumbacı*s who constituted a significant portion of her fanbase.[219] Küçük Amelya, for her part, performed songs in a sailor costume, the lyrics of which were on nautical themes and contained sailing slang.[220] Out of these early songs, a whole range of *esnaf kantoları* developed, in which the performer took on the role of a common occupation and sung about them in a farcical manner rich in double-entendres. *Esnaf kanto*s, were, in fact, rarely entirely original: often they were based on earlier *esnaf türküleri*, the folk songs the shopkeepers composed, or commissioned *aşık* bards to sing, in order to draw in customers and keep themselves entertained.[221] The urban sterotypes presented in these *esnaf kanto*s were often types prominent in other theatrical traditions, such as shadow theatre or the *ortaoyunu* tradition. Reşat Ekrem Koçu gives us a variety of examples from this genre, including *dondurmacı* (ice-cream seller), *mısırbuğdaycı* (cornmeal seller), *bozacı* (a seller of *boza*, a fermented millet drink) and *Laz kayıkçı* (a rower, who were stereotyped as being from the Pontic region of Anatolia) *kanto*s.[222] It should be noted that all of these occupations were ones which were generally accompanied by singing, whether as itinerant merchants or while rowing Istanbul's many small ferries. *Esnaf kanto*s were common to the repertoire of all *kantocu*s and over the decades a wide variety of types were presented: Ergun Hiçyılmaz gives us a long list which includes

[218] Translation by author. See Ahmet Rasim, *Fuhş-ı Atik*, 101.
[219] Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 194.
[220] Ahmet Rasim, *Fuhş-ı Atik*, 100.
[221] See Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 223-236.
[222] Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Esnaf Kantolar," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* vol. 10 (İstanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971): 5346-5347.

everything from "roasted chickpea (*lebleb*) sellers" to "cooks, barbers, bath attendants, peddlers, fishermen [and] flower-sellers."[223] Perhaps the most popular of all of these *esnaf kanto*s were the *arabacı kanto*s, in which the performer took on the role of a carraige driver (in the last years of the Empire, this character would be replaced by the *şöför*, who drove an automobile). Carraiges, whether the more staid *araba* or the fancier *fayton*, were must-have accessories for elite of the Tanzimat and Hamidian era, and became prominent additions to Istanbul's streets. Women, in particular, took advantage of *fayton*s to promenade throughout the city.[224] Direklerarası, especially during Ramazan, was known for being extremely crowded with promenading carraiges: Ahmet Rasim, for example, describes a street crowded with "carraiges rubbing side-by-side,"[225] while Başiretçi Ali Efendi likewise complains about "rushing carraiges" in the Şehzadebaşı area running down "helpless pedestrians."[226] *Kantocu*s such as Büyük Amelya reflected these features of urban life in their *kanto*s, as in this *arabacı kantosu*:

Üstü açık faytonda,
Gezerim piyasada,
Harf atarım kızlara,
Bırakırım merakta.

"In an open carriage,
I tour around the passage,
I send a message to the girls,
When they're curious, I vanish."[227]

Here the satirical features of *kanto* are becoming more evident. This song was not only a satire of the *züppe* archetype – that of the libertine elite man flirting with girls from

223 Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 22.
224 Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 287.
225 Ahmet Rasim, *Ramazan Karşılaşması*, 27.
226 Başiretçi Ali Efendi, *İstanbul Mektupları* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2001), 520.
227 Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Amelya, Büyük," 757.

his personal carraige – but was also humorous because of the incongruity of the female *kantocu* performing it. This gendered dimension, in the era of active movements towards the entry of women into the workforce, also naturally carried within it a strong core of social critique. This was all the more so in the case of *bisiklet kanto*s, which Şamram made particularly famous. These songs mocked the young Ottoman men who adopted the bicycle during the mania of the 1890s, and who often promptly crashed their vehicles into telegraph poles and *simit* stalls.[228] Bicycles brought about a revolution in women's freedom of movement in many areas of the world, but in the Ottoman context were often seen as immodest and dangerous devices and solely the plaything of rich young men.[229] Şamram's bicycle kantos were intended to be humorous, of course, but they also contained an implicit criticism: how could women bicyclists cause any more chaos than their male counterparts, who were already tearing up the city's streets? As Özbilen notes, *kanto* "functioned as a sort of musical newspaper, with live caricatures and ridiculous commentaries, in order to reflect on-stage everything that was emerging in Istanbul life at that time."[230]

Kanto was thus a theatre which reflected urban life and contemporary trends; *kanto*s were written not only for new fashions, but also for political events, such as the boycott of Austrian goods that accompanied the Hapsburg annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908.[231] In reflecting these current events, *kanto* had to some extent subsumed the role that the *karagöz* shadow theatre had possessed in traditional Ottoman urban culture. The satirical function of *karagöz* was well established in Ottoman culture and took as its targets not only broader social trends, but current political controversies: as European travellers noted with astonishment, only the Sultan himself was customarily spared ridicule, and karagöz performers mocked everything from the corruption of high officials to the perfidity of foreign ambassadors.[232] Like *kanto*, *karagöz* was a sexually explicit form of popular performance, but by the time *kanto* emerged both the sexual and political elements of the

[228] Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Bisiklet Kantosu," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 5 (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1961): 2821-2822.
[229] Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul,* 288.
[230] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 29.
[231] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 86.
[232] Louis Enault, *Constantinople et la Turquie* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1855): 367.

shadow theatre had largely been suppressed; first sexually explicit depictions were abandoned or censored, during the reign of Abdülmecid I (r. 1839-1861), and political satire was banned slightly later, during the reign of Abdülaziz I (r. 1861-1876).[233] *Kanto* operated within an even heavier climate of censorship, during the reign of Abdülhamid II, and as such it was only after the 1908 Revolution that it adopted more explicit political critiques into its subject matter. What *kanto* did gain from *karagöz* – likely through the genre's close association with *ortaoyunu* and *tuluat* theatre – were two important sets of topics, which would come to take up the vast majority of the *kanto* canon.

The first, as we have seen, were gentle social satires of urban fashions and trends. Just as *karagöz* incorporated contemporary references into its subject matter – among these including new loanwords from French, technological devices such as steam engines, telegraphs, trains and tramways, or new urban spaces like brothels, beerhalls, cinemas, or the Galata Bridge[234] - so too did *kantocu*s reflect these *alafranga* developments in their *kanto*s. Fashionable loanwords like *matmazel* (mademoiselle), *mösyö* (monsieur) and *jardin* (garden) began to make appearances in lyrics.[235] Secondarily, *kanto* also borrowed a whole set of characters and ethnic types from the shadow theatre, and these came to heavily dominate *kanto* repertoire in the years before the First World War. *Karagöz*, as a theatre of urban types, naturally reflected the cosmopolitanism of the imperial capital; the cast of the *karagöz mahalle* included a number of ethnic types characteristic to the city, such as Turks, Arabs, Albanians, Laz, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Franks, Iranians, and Roma.[236] Strangely, *kanto* theatre largely abandoned the ethnic types which would seem to be the most pertinent to its context: that is, the Turkish woman (*zenne*), the Armenian, and the Greek. Instead, there were two characterstic ethnic types which dominated kanto performance: the Roma girl (*Çingene*), and the Iranian youth (*Acem*). Here, for example, is a characteristic *Çingene kanto*:

[233] Metin And, *Karagoz: Turkish Shadow Theatre*, (Istanbul: Dost Yayınları, 1975): 68-69.
[234] Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006): 133.
[235] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 28.
[236] See Metin And, *Karagoz: Turkish Shadow Theatre*, 51-59.

Dudilerde çok dilber var,
Fal bakmakta hüner var,
Kerizi çok, mangizi yok,
Çingenede sefa çok,
Davul, zurna haydi çalarak,
Çalsın davul oynayayım zilleri çarparak!

"There's a girl whose lips are round,
In reading fortunes she'll astound,
Lots of suckers, still she's broke,
But a Gypsy's always rich in jokes,
Come let's play the drum and flute,
Hit the drum, I'll shake the bells too."[237]

This *kanto*, sung by Virjin and composed in the *beyati makam*, is rather typical of *Çingene kanto*s, involving the characteristic occupation of Roma women (fortune-telling) and referencing the musical instruments most commonly associated with Ottoman Romani music. According to Reşat Ekrem Koçu, *Çingene kanto*s were performed while the *kantocu* was dressed in a "Gypsy" costume (see Figures 5, 19) of brightly patterned garments, the color pink (commonly associated with Roma in Balkans culture)[238] and wearing headscarves tied in the characteristic Roma manner.[239] As we have noted earlier in this chapter, many kantos, including *Çingene kanto*s, also borrowed their melodies from Romani folksongs.[240] Lastly, there is also the usage of Romani slang within the lyrics – for example, *mangiz* (possibly from the Sepetçi Romani *mangin*, "treasure") for "money." *Acem kanto*s were similar in certain ways, although these were slightly more flexible in terms of their lyrical form:

[237] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar*, 88. A slightly different version of the same song is found in İstanbul Ansiklopedisi; see Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Çingene Kantoları," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7 (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1963): 4004.

[238] Sonia Tamar Seeman,"'You're Roman!' Music and Identity in Turkish Roman Communities" (Ph.D diss., University of California, Los Angeles: 2002): 182.

[239] Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Çingene Kantoları," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 4002.

[240] Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 271.

İsfahan'da bir kuyu var
İçinde tatlı suyu var
Her güzelin bir huyu var
Ne yaman Acem güzeli!
İsfahandan ben geçerim
Dolu badeyi içerim
Hem içerim hem biçerim
Ne yaman Acem güzeli!

"There is a well in Isfahan
Inside it sweet waters run
Every beauty has its way
How strong's the beauty of Iran!
I leave behind my Isfahan
I drink the wine until I'm done
Everything I drink I reap
How strong's the beauty of Iran!"[241]

This *Acem kanto* in the *hüzzam makam* was called "most famous and most beautiful" of them all by Reşat Ekrem Koçu, and was performed largely by Peruz and Şamram.[242] Similar to how *Çingene kanto*s draw upon Romani slang, *Acem kanto*s prominently utilize loanwords of Persianate origin (here, only *bade,* "wine" is noticeable, but other *Acem kanto*s use terms like *püser*, *dühter*, *mehpare, mahpeyker, feryat,* and *civan* with great regularity). The prominence of these two forms is rather remarkable, considering that the Roma presence in the early *kanto* audience was neglible, and no *kantocu*s were of Roma origin until after the First World War; similarly, though Iranians were present in *kanto* culture – we have already read of the Iranian ambassador who sponsored Peruz, and Iranian merchants were known (and still are known) for spending large sums in Istanbul's entertainment districts[243] - their numbers always remained rather small. Chapter 4 of these thesis will seek to understand why these two particular types came to such prominence, and why representations closer the demographics of the audience and the performers were avoided. For now, it is enough to note that, as mentioned earlier, the censorship of the

[241] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 109.
[242] Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları," 132.
[243] Ibid.

Hamidian era was particularly sensitive to nationalist discourse, and that as such more fantastic or remote representations were considerably safer to perform.

Indeed, when we look at the other urban types prominent in *kanto* theatre, notably village and mountain girls (*köy kantosu* or *çoban kantosu*) and street cats (*kedi kantosu*), we see a certain knowing distance between the audience and the type presented. The former forms, which generally presented an image of naive and sexually-free girls from the villages and mountain settlements of Rumelia and Anatolia, should be understood in light of the processes of urbanization and migration occuring at the time of kanto's emergence. By the 1880s and 1890s, as a consequence of both industrialization and the influx of immigrants and refugees (*muhacir*) from the lost territories of the Empire, Istanbul was undergoing its first major modern demographic transition. While the numbers given to us by Stanford Shaw – a doubling of the city's population between 1882 and 1885[244] – seem incredible, it is indisputable that Istanbul was overwhelmed by an influx of rural migrants during this time, who constructed shanty settlements in the city's open spaces and crowded public areas like the Galata Bridge. Fires left tens of thousands of these migrants homeless.[245] Refugee girls were considered particularly vulnerable to falling into prostitution, and in 1883 the emplacement of these girls into reformatory institutions (*ıslahhane*) became a stated policy of the Ottoman government.[246] *Kantocu*s were often of the same age and class as these migrant girls, and it is not surprising that this prominent addition to the city's population was reflected in *kanto* performance. *Kedi kanto*s also reflected a signature of Istanbuliote urban life – the numerous street cats that call the city their home. In a typical cat kanto, the performer prowled around the stage like a cat, reciting risque lyrics which ended in repeated *miyav*s. *Kedi kanto*s were particularly associated with Büyük Amelya, although Şamram and other *kantocu*s also sang them.[247] We may perhaps understand cat *kanto*s in light of the popularity of *tavşan* performance in the

[244] Stanford J. Shaw, "The Population of Istanbul in the Nineteenth Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10, 2 (May 1979): 266, 276.

[245] Nur Altınyıldız, "The Architectural Heritage of Istanbul and the Ideology of Preservation," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 24, History and Ideology: Architectural Heritage of the "Lands of Rum" (2007): 283.

[246] Nazan Maksudyan, "Orphans, Cities and the State," 498.

[247] Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Amelya, Büyük," 757.

earlier Ottoman tradition, in which male dancers imitated animals like rabbits. Even cat *kanto*s, then, which would appear to be the most frivolous and light-hearted of all *kanto* genres, must in fact be understood within their Ottoman context.

Lastly, aside from *kantos* in which a single performer sang in character, there were also duets (*düetto*) and self-reflective performances, in which the *kantocu* would take on the character of her own admirers and praise her "self." These represent undoubtedly the most conceptually complex *kanto* performances, relying upon the audience's familiarity with the conventions of kanto performance and with the performer's on-stage and off-stage personalities. Duets could be between husband and wife – such as, for example, Küçük Amelya and her husband Todori, or Mari Ferha and her husband Şevki[248] - or between siblings on stage, such as Amelya and her brother Niko.[249] Duets could also be between two female *kantocu*s, such as between Küçük Virjin and Şamram or between Şamram and Peruz. Peruz was particularly valued as a duettist, because her low voice made her able to play both male and female parts.[250] Of course, the audience was aware of the relationships between these figures, and duets involving marital fights (*kavga kantosu*) must have been particularly humourous in this context. Kantos nevertheless always maintained the fourth wall, to certain extent, and this is particularly evident in duets between two female *kantocu*s. In an *Acem düetto*, for instance, in which Peruz plays the pursuer of Şamram, we are presented with somewhat incongrous lyrics like "Men püserim, namım Peruz," (I'm a boy, my name's Peruz...) as Şamram sings "Men dühterim, namım Şamram," (I'm a girl, my name's Şamram...).[251] The humour arises here from the mixing of multiple identities on stage – the stock figures of the *Acem kanto* genre, the stage identities of Peruz and Şamram, and their actual identities as aunt and neice. Similar representations also occured within *Çingene kanto* and *Köy kanto.* In the most complex form of *kanto* performance, the singer takes on the role of a third character – an Iranian youth, for instance, or a naive shepherd –

[248] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 23.
[249] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 34.
[250] Ibid., 30.
[251] Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları" 182.

and sings an ode to her own *kantocu* persona. Küçük Virjin was well known for such performances, and the following *Acem kanto* is one such example:

Sevdi gönlüm bir dilberi
Feda kıldım canü seri
Kim göre olmaz müşteri
Sevdim ise vardır yeri
Mehparedir ol gülcemal
Dili bülbül, kaşı hilal
Tavrı endamı huri misal
Böyle güzel mehpeykeri
Sevdim seni Kuçuk Virjini

"I once loved a beautiful girl
For her I'd give away my life
For who wouldn't be a customer
If they found a place they liked?
Be like a rose, light of the moon
Crescent brows, the nightingale's tune
Just like a *houri* you've been hewn
A face that's like the moon aglow
Little Virgin, I loved you so!"[252]

Kanto was, in essence, performed by characters within characters, masks within masks. To a certain extent, these multiple layers of performance may have helped to dampen the sexuality of the genre in a way to make it more palatable – and, perhaps, more relatable – to an Ottoman society still uncomfortable with open displays of female eroticism. But when we consider this, an essential question remains. We have established that in music, dance, audience and lyrics, *kanto* was fundamentally tied and reflective of its Ottoman context and the Ottoman theatrical tradition. But if this is the case, where did this active female eroticism – so characteristic to *kanto*, but so lacking in *tuluat*, *orta oyunu* and even *karagöz* – arise from? Attempting to uncover the origin of this development in the Ottoman performinga arts will form the centerpiece of the following chapter.

[252] Ibid.

3. *KANTO* AND THE EMERGENCE OF OTTOMAN HETERONORMATIVITY

When we consider *kanto* in the context of the history of the Ottoman performative tradition – a tradition which includes, among other forms, the extensive corpus of *karagöz* shadow theatre, *orta oyunu* improvisational theatre, *meddah* storytelling and *çengi-köçek* dance – *kanto* appears to possess a number of strikingly innovative and unprecedented features. While these earlier forms regularly portrayed female characters, from the *zenne* of *karagöz* and *orta oyunu* to the innumerable female characters present within the Tıfli stories of the *meddah* tradition,[253] in no case had these female characters previously been portrayed by female actors. To a certain extent, even *köçek* dance may be considered as a further example of such, although with a number of caveats that will be detailed below. In any case, *kanto* theatre thus, marked the first time within the Ottoman theatrical tradition that the representations of female characters on-stage corresponded to the off-stage gender of the performers themselves. This is all the more striking to us now because of the open eroticism of the performances: for though both *karagöz* and *orta oyunu* had featured female characters in erotic scenarios, and we find that such situations are ubiquitous within the corpus of surviving *meddah* stories, these had all been portrayed within an exclusively masculine theatrical culture. This is to say, then, that in these forms what was performed was a representation of hetero-eroticism, at one-step's remove; by contrast, in *kanto,* we see

[253] For an in-depth analysis of these stories and the female characters presented in them, see David Selim Sayers, *Tıfli Hikayeleri* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversite Yayınları, 2013) or his article on the same topic, "Sociosexual Roles in Ottoman Pulp Fiction" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2017): 215-232.

the genuine article. In duets between two female *kantocu*s, it is nevertheless clear that what was represented on stage was in fact a heterosexual pairing;[254] even when the *kantocu* steps out of her character in songs in which she praises herself and her own eroticism, the voice which she takes on is gendered male. When we consider the multiplicity of sexual pairings represented in earlier Ottoman theatre, or even the considerably more varied sexual representations extant within English and French music hall and cabaret of the time,[255] such exclusivity is indeed surprising.

In fact, as we shall see, the reality was considerably more complex than this, for *kanto* emerged not wholesale but rather piecemeal, and as part-and-parcel of a transformative shift in Ottoman sexual discourse. Yet the strikingly "new" nature of *kanto'*s hetero-eroticism – and, indeed, the *exclusively* heterosexual nature of its eroticism – has understandably led much of the historiography on the subject to place *kanto* not within the tradition of Ottoman theatre, but rather as a direct import from the West. We read, for example, that *kanto* was a "19th century Turkish appropriation of Western European-derived light strophic songs,"[256] or was simply "low Italian music"[257] transposed into Ottoman Turkish. Kanto is, in this conception, simply an "Ottomanization" of European burlesque. As we have seen, however, this was hardly the case, whether in terms of the genre's musical form, performance style, costuming, language, or lyrical subject matter. Yet if this is not so, how else do we explain the remarkable sexuality of the kanto theatre, especially in comparison to the traditions from which it evolved and continued to borrow from – that is, *karagöz, orta oyunu,* and *tuluat*?

Of course, it was not the case that women had not represented themselves in performance previously in Ottoman culture. Metin And perhaps gives us a way out of this dilemma, in that he classifies *kanto* not as theatrical genre alongside *karagöz* and *orta*

254 For examples of such, see Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*.

255 Consider, for example, the public image of bisexuality cultivated by Sarah Bernhardt and Isadora Duncan. For a further discussion, see Susan A. Glenn, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

256 Sonia Tamar Seeman,"'You're Roman!'," 178.

257 Yılmaz Öztuna, "Kanto," 424, quoted in Türker Erol, "Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatrosunda Müziki Oyunlar, Tiyatro Müziği Besteciliği ve bu Alanın Günümüzdeki Durumu Üzerine Değerlendirmeler," 41.

oyunu, but rather as an evolution of the *çengi* form;[258] that is, as an evolution of the tradition of Ottoman erotic dance. Yet there are prominent differences between the figures of the *çengi* and the *kantocu*. Firstly, and most crucially, the *çengi* could be, and indeed generally was, male; as Mustafa Avcı notes, the distinction between the female *çengi* and the male *köçek* was a development of the late 18th century and did not enter into writing until mid-19th century;[259] and, indeed, sources such as Evliya Çelebi[260] or Enderunlu Fazıl Bey's *Çenginame* (1799) refer to *çengi*s exclusively as male dancers. While female *çengi*s were, of course, extant – consider, for example, the various depictions of female *çengi*s in Levni's portraits of the beauties of Bursa and Iran,[261] or else the troupes of female *çengi*s presented in the shadow theatre[262] - they were not considered the norm. It is for this reason that the Ottomans took care to distinguish female dancers as *zanan çengi*s when necessary.[263] By contrast, *kantocu*s were normalized as female, and male *kantocus* extremely rare – in fact, this term referred mainly to the male singers in duets, upon whom little of the open eroticism of the performance was placed.

Furthermore, when we consult the lyrics of the songs and the context of their performances – remembering that, in large part, they were written and arranged by the *kantocu*s themselves – we are struck by another remarkable development separating the *kantocu*s from their female *çengi* predecessors. The *zanan çengi* comes down to us as, essentially, a silent object of desire; far more so than the male *çengi* or the *köçek*, for whom we are often able to find names, individual characteristics, and even records of their own

[258] Metin And, *Geleneksel Türk Tiyatrosu (Kukla, Karagöz, Ortaoyunu)* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1969): 304.

[259] Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers," 53.

[260] See Evliyâ Çelebi. *Seyahatnamesi: Topkapı Sarayı Bağdat 304 Yazmasının Transkripsiyonu-Dizini*, trans. Orhan Şaik Gökyay, et al. (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006): 329-330.

[261] See Gül İrepoğlu, *Levni: Nakış, Şiir, Renk* (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1999); or, for a broader look, see Nancy Micklewright, "'Musicians and Dancing Girls': Images of Women in Ottoman Miniature Painting." In *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*, Madeline C. Zilfi., ed. (Leiden, New York and Koln: Brill, 1997): 153-68; and Metin And, *A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing: From Folk Dancing to Whirling Dervishes, Belly Dancing to Ballet* (Ankara: Dost Yayınları, 1976).

[262] Hale Babadoğan, "Understanding the Transformations of Karagöz" (Ph.D diss., Middle Eastern Technical University, 2013): 148.

[263] See David Selim Sayers, *Tıfli Hikayeleri*, 271; or Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers," 52.

words and personalities, the *zanan çengi* is represented in the historical record only as an exterior force which evokes sexual desire; at most, she is described in terms of her skills in performance.[264] Of course, this is not surprising - as women of the lower classes, and, often, as members of itinerant groups such as Gypsies, *zanan çengi*s were triply silenced – but it is in stark contrast to the *kantocu*s, who have left us a vast corpus of their own words. This is not simply a matter of sources, however: it is a difference in the *structure* of the performances, for the *kantocu* was not simply animated by the desire of her audience but also spoke back to them, was in dialogue with them, and developed and cultivated her own individuality on the stage. As Carolyn Abbate has written, the female singer is not only the passive object of the audience's gaze, but is at the same time "claiming a place as an active subject who sees and speaks."[265] The *kantocu* was not only an object of desire but also a desirer; she was, indeed, both sexual object and sexual subject. What was the process by which this fundamental change occurred?

The two questions posed here speak to a greater shift which occurred over the course of the Ottoman "long 19th century," to use Anthony Shay's term.[266] *Kanto*, as erotic theatre, naturally reflected developments in Ottoman sexual and erotic practice; its relationship to the earlier forms of performance from which it drew cannot be analyzed without regard to these developments. Fundamentally, the question we are dealing with here is a broader question of the evolution of Ottoman heteronormativity: that is, why was it that male representations of hetero-eroticism gave way to female performances of it, and how did the mute *zanan çengi* become the speaking *kantocu*? More generally, how was the

264 Consider, for example, the description given to us by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu of a performance in 1716: "This dance was very different from what I had seen before. Nothing could be more artful, or more proper to raise certain ideas. The tunes so soft! —— the motions so languishing! — accompanied with pauses and dying eyes! half-falling back, and then recovering themselves in so artful a manner, that I am very positive, the coldest and most rigid pride upon earth, could not have looked upon them without thinking of something not to be spoke of." *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,* James Wharncliffe, ed. (London: Henry G. Bohn: 1861): 319.

265 Carolyn Abbate, "Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women" in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, Ruth A. Solie, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995): 254.

266 Although Shay's discussion of Ottoman dance history is filled with a number of mistakes, omissions and unsupported assertions, I do feel that his periodization is broadly accurate where it comes to the evolution of performance in the Middle East. See Anthony Shay, *The Dangerous Lives of Public Performers: Dancing, Sex, and Entertainment in the Islamic World* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

emergence of *kanto* in the Hamidian period related to the disappearance of the *çengi-köçek* tradition, and how did a theatrical culture which represented a multiplicity of sexual pairings, both homo-social and hetero-social, give way to a theatre which was almost exclusively heterosexual in its eroticism?

In discussing the emergence of heteronormativity in the 19th century Islamic world, we cannot fail but to interact with two of the most prominent works on the subject, both published within a year of each other: Afsaneh Najmabadi's *Women with Moustaches, Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (2005), which traces the evolution of heteronormative discourse in Qajar Iran, and Dror Ze'evi's *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500–1900* (2006), which aims to produce a similar hypothesis for the broader Ottoman Middle East, with a particular focus on the Arab provinces of Syria, Egypt and North Africa. These works, which have contributed greatly towards our understanding of the interactions between Islamicate sexualities and the discourses of modernity, are linked by more than subject matter: by and large they both identify the same agents as the primary cause for these whole-scale transformations in Middle Eastern sexual discourse. For both Najmabadi and Ze'evi, the emergence of heteronormativity in Iran and the Ottoman Empire was, essentially, a reactive phenomenon: a product of "cultural cringe," a profound shame which arose from an increasing awareness on the part of Middle Easterners of how Europeans depicted their sexual practices. As Najmabadi writes,

> "As "another gaze" entered the scene of desire, Iranian men interacting with Europeans in Iran or abroad became highly sensitized to the idea that their desire was now under European scrutiny. Homoerotic desire had to be covered. One marker of modernity became the transformation of homoeroticism into masqueraded heteroeros."[267]

[267] Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005): 4.

Ze'evi goes further, arguing that the result of this awareness was the complete destruction of *all* Islamic sexual discourse; as he writes, "the sense of embarrassment felt toward the old sexual discourse could not, in and of itself, produce a new one. As familiar sexual scripts collapsed... no new ones came to take their place."[268] This interaction between the Middle East and colonial Western powers produced "a dark abyss of sexual silence," in the Ottoman world,[269] which over the course of the 19th century produced only "an idealized parody of bourgeois monogamous heteronormalcy" in response.[270] For both Najmabadi and Ze'evi, the key agent in this process was the travelogue; as Middle Easterners came to read and understand how their sexual practices were depicted in European accounts, they were left "aghast" at how they had been represented.[271] The result of the travelogue's rise was a radical redefinition of Middle Eastern sexual norms, generally along European models; as Ze'evi writes, "their effect on local sexual discourse was devastating." For Najmabadi, referencing the work of Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi on the multiplicity of gazes between East and West,[272] travelogues functioned as a medium through which Europeans and Iranians engaged in a process of mutual sexual alienation and self-reconfiguration; as she writes, "just as this cultural traffic transformed Iranian gender and sexual sensibilities, European gender and sexual mores were also changed through interactions with other societies that Europe "discovered" and, in some cases, colonized."[273] It was through this cultural exchange that the sexual schema of Iranian modernity came to be defined. Furthermore, as the process of heteronormalization progressed, it became discursively aligned not only to the rise of Iranian nationalism (i.e, the nation as male, the motherland as the female beloved) but also to a redefinition of the concept of marriage and to the rise of women as a political class; as Najmabadi writes, the "tragedy" of this alliance

[268] Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006): 165.
[269] Dror Ze'evi, "Hiding Sexuality: The Disappearance of Sexual Discourse in the Late Ottoman Middle East." *Social Analysis*, Vol. 49, No. 2, (Summer 2005): 36.
[270] Ibid., 49.
[271] Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 160.
[272] See in particular Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).
[273] Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards,* 5.

was that “the ideal happy ending,” these reforming women had imagined – a system of monogamous marriage based upon heterosexual romantic love and the legal equality of the sexes – was ultimately blocked by a variety of social, political and cultural forces.[274]

These are both powerful arguments, well-supported by a variety of textual and visual evidence. But they present us with a number of issues if we are to understand the rise of *kanto* in late Ottoman Istanbul. Firstly, how are we to understand the place of *kanto* in Ottoman sexual discourse if, as Ze’evi suggests, there was no such discourse by the late 19th century? Furthermore, does placing the origin of Middle Eastern heteronormativity in the influence of European media not essentially re-ify the earlier conception of *kanto* that we have sought to dismantle – that is, that *kanto* was simply an “Ottomanization” of European hetero-eroticism and not an indigenous development of the Ottoman theatrical tradition?

In fact, while Najmabadi’s and Ze’evi’s books may offer authoritative conceptualizations of the emergence of heteronormativity in Iran and the Arab Middle East, their hypotheses run into considerable problems in the case of Istanbul. In the first place, it must be noted that both Najmabadi’s and Ze’evi’s conceptualizations depend upon a pre-modern discursive distance between Europe and the Middle East; that is, they imagine two separate systems of sexuality, one in the Middle East and one in Europe, which come into sustained contact only at the turn of the 19th century. While this is plausible for Iran, and perhaps even for Egypt and Syria, this can hardly be the case for Istanbul, which was not only intimately connected to European discourse from at least the 17th century onwards, but indeed formed one of its primary intellectual hubs. When we consider the variety of European literati and intellectuals who transited between Istanbul and Europe over the course of the 18th century – from Trumbull to Marsigli, from Cantemir to the Baron de Tott[275] – it is clear that we cannot imagine Istanbul as being so discursively separate from

[274] Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards*, 7.

[275] For a more in-depth discussion on William Trumbull, the English ambassador to the Ottoman court from 1687-1692, and on discursive connectrions between Istanbul and Western European cities in general, see John-Paul Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); see also François Baron de Tott, *Memories of the Baron De Tott, on the Turks and the Tartars, vol. 3* (Dublin: L. White, J. Cash, and R. Marchbank, 1785).

Europe as Ze'evi suggests. Additionally, the long-term presence in the city and various European embassies, with their accompanying diplomats, merchants, artisans, and *dragoman* interlocutors, further enmeshed the city within the European discursive sphere; alongside local Levantine communities, Greek, Armenian, Ragusan and Jewish mercantile and social networks offered innumerable avenues through which European discourses could enter into the Ottoman city's intellectual life.

Secondly, Najmabadi's and Ze'evi's conception of heteronormalization essentially obviates the pressing question: if heteronormativity is a phenomenon originating in Europe – regardless of whether its exact shape remained in flux for some time or not – why did it arise in Europe, and why were the conditions necessary for its emergence absent in the Islamic world? Ze'evi essentially grounds his understanding of this process in Foucault, but argues that in the Islamic world, "the direction of change was almost opposite" to the West;[276] that is, as Western societies, under the demographic pressures of industrialization and the "problem of population," transferred the subject of sex from the domain of religion to the domain of science and the state, in the process creating a *scientia sexualis* and with it an immensely productive machine for the creation of further sexual discourses,[277] Islamic societies, under the existential threat of colonial power, abandoned the production of sexual discourse altogether. But if we cannot disentangle Istanbul from European informational and intellectual flows, how is it that in the sexual realm such a stark dichotomy could exist? Did the conditions necessary for the emergence of a *scientia sexualis* stop at the Danube? At the Bosphorus? As I shall outline below, it is my belief that this can hardly be the case, and that the late 18th century witnessed – contemporaneous to the developments in Europe described by Foucault – the emergence of an indigenous Ottoman heteronormativity.

Finally, Ze'evi's conception of an Ottoman sexual silence has come under considerable criticism from other sources. Firstly, from the perspective of Ottoman material culture, it is clear that the production of the Ottoman erotica – both visual and textual – hardly ceased during the 19th century; as Tülay Artan and Irvin Cemil Schick have written,

[276] Dror Ze'evi, "Hiding Sexuality," 36.
[277] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978): 67-69.

the similarities between 19th century printed erotica and their 18th century illuminated counterparts suggests the continuation of a tradition; furthermore, they note that "the explosion in erotic publication that took place during the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1922) could hardly have occurred ex nihilo."[278] Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how else to describe the vast corpus of *kanto* – not only the songs and performances themselves, but also the prolific writings they inspired – as anything but an expression of late Ottoman sexual discourse. Additionally, I agree strongly with Mustafa Avcı when he writes that "shame is a very significant determinant, but is still only a single component of the hetero-normalizing process."[279] That is to say, shame may indeed have had a silencing effect on the production of Ottoman sexual discourse, but it was far from the only factor present, and it seems unlikely that it had so potent an effect. Indeed, as we shall see, the development of Ottoman heteronormativity – in Istanbul, at the very least – was hardly so different from its European counterparts in its effects on sexual discourse.

In a brief remark in her book on the evolution of Turkish popular theatre, Nurhan Tekerek writes that "the *çengi* and *köçek* were replaced by *kantos* and *duettos*" over the course of the 19th century.[280] In what follows, I intend to explore the reasons behind this development, in part by tracing the development of Ottoman heteronormativity in the performing arts up until the emergence of *kanto* in the 1880s. The formal characteristics of *çengi-köçek* dance will come to be seen as emblematic of the perogatives of desiring subject in pre-modern Ottoman culture – that is, the adult male, for whom both the young woman and the young man represented valid objects of sexual desire. From this base, we shall follow the increasing regulation and obscuration of homoerotic discourse as a result of both contact with Europe, and as the outgrowth of an indigenous Ottoman phenomenon. The exclusive heterosexuality of *kanto,* and its presentation of a unified (i.e, on-stage and

[278] Tülay Artan and Irvin Cemil Schick, "Ottomanizing Pornotopia," 188.
[279] Mustafa Avcı, "Shifts in Sexual Desire: Bans on Dancing Boys (Köçeks) throughout Ottoman Modernity (1800s 1920s)" *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 53, no. 5, 2017: 14.
[280] Nurhan Tekerek, *Popüler Halk Tiyatrosu Geleneğimizden Çağdaş Oyunlarımıza Yansımalar*, 1st ed. (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2001): 184.

off) female sexual subject can thus be seen not as a "break" in Ottoman theatrical tradition, but rather as the culmination of a longer process of Ottoman heteronormative evolution.

3.1. From Çengi to Kantocu: The History of Erotic Dance in Ottoman Culture

At the turn of the 19th century, Istanbul was poised on the brink of a sexual revolution. This is not to reify the notion of an unchanging, timeless "Oriental" sexuality, something which Foucault unfortunately only further propagated with his notion of an undifferentiated and static Oriental "ars erotica."[281] Rather, it is to underline the immensity of the change which would soon occur in the Ottoman sexual system. Though Ottoman sexuality was an evolving discourse, responsive to sociopolitical developments – see, for example, the rise and fall of the "age of beloveds" described by Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı,[282] accompanied by the flourishing of *şehrengiz* literature in the 16th century and onwards,[283] or the rise of a strongly Janissary-affiliated realm of coffeehouse sexual culture in the 17th and 18th centuries (including *karagöz* and *köçek* performance, for example)[284] – these discourses nevertheless shared a fundamentally similar system of gender and sexual norms. As Leslie Peirce notes, this system was, in the early modern period, essentially constituted along two lines: gender and age. As she writes, "gender identity continually transformed itself over the course of one's lifespan by associating different normative behaviours with each phase in the life cycle."[285] Although, outside of

[281] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* 57.

[282] See Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds: Love and the Beloved in Early-Modern Ottoman and European Culture and Society* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).

[283] See Agâh Sırrı Levend, *Türk Edebiyatında Şehr-engizler ve Şehr-engizlerde İstanbul*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti İstanbul Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1958) or James Stewart-Robinson, "A Neglected Ottoman Poem: The Sehrengiz", *Studies in Near Eastern Culture and History: Abdel-Massih Memorial Volume*, James A. Bellamy, ed. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1990): 201-211.

[284] See Ali Çaksu, "Janissary Coffee Houses in Late Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, Dana Sadji, ed. (New York, London: I.B. Tauris, 2007): 117-132.

[285] Leslie Peirce, "Seniority, Sexuality and Social Order: The Vocabulary of Gender in Early Modern Ottoman Society" in *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*,

the medical category of the hermaphrodite, the Ottoman gender system did not generally recognize intermediaries between male and female genders,[286] Peirce reminds us that these male and female life stages were nevertheless interdependent, fluid, and "neither monolithic nor static."[287]

The life stages corresponded not only to physical maturation but also to an individual's social roles; for both men and women, the status of being physically desired and desirable (Ottoman: *müşteha*) also played a key role in one's gender identity. Peirce suggests that female gender identity possessed relatively "less sexual ambiguity" than male.[288] For women, the normal life stages were separated by key events: the *kız çocuk* (girl child), upon reaching the age of majority, came to be referred to simply as *kız* (girl, daughter); after a period of sexual desirabilty she entered into marraige, becoming a *gelin* (bride) and then, after the birth of a child, *avret* (woman) or *hatun* (lady). Due to a variety of reasons, it was generally desirable for women to move as quickly as possible to adulthood; for this reason, the time spent as *kız* or *gelin* was short. For men, by contrast, terms were "imbued with sexual content:"[289] from the *oğlancık* (boy child) a male could, after acquiring the first signs of puberty, become an *emred*; that is to say, a physically desirable youth. We should not assume that all boys became physically desirable *emred*s, of course, but it was common enough that the prospect of a child entering into such a stage was one fraught with anxiety.[290] The transition from *emred*-hood was essentially ambiguous, but the growth and maintenance of a full beard was a common sign which marked the youth's entry into bachelorhood. For this, several terms existed: the more general *mücerred*, and terms loaded with more social connotations, such as *bekar* or *levend*.

Madeline C. Zilfi., ed. (Leiden, New York and Koln: Brill, 1997): 169

286 There was no gender status comparable to the South Asian *hijra* in the Ottoman conception, for example. For a general look at the social and legal status of intersex subjects in the Islamic World, see Paula Sanders, "Gendering the Ungendered Body: Hermaphrodites in Medieval Islamic Law" in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, Nikki R. Keddie & Beth Baron, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991): 74-96.

287 Leslie Peirce, "Seniority, Sexuality and Social Order," 169.

288 Leslie Peirce, "Writing Histories of Sexuality in the Middle East," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 114, no. 5, (December 2009:) 1331.

289 Leslie Peirce, "Seniority, Sexuality and Social Order," 169.

290 Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards*, 24.

As marraige occurred, generally speaking, much later for men than for women, there existed "large numbers of young men who were living unencumbered by family obligations and unattached to any controlling institution and who gathered in public spaces."[291] These bachelors, although considered to possess certain positive qualities, were nevertheless often seen as a threat to public order and morality and were the subject of recurrent periods of social control and regulation throughout the Ottoman period.[292] Following marriage, a man became *er* (man) or *evli er* (married man), and attained full social and sexual status; in this stage, he should not only fulfil his procreative social responsibilities, but could also himself take upon an *emred* as a sexual companion. The beloved of the *er* was thus ambiguous; the object of his desire could be both male (*mahbub*) or female (*mahbube*),[293] but due to the differing progression of Ottoman sociosexual statuses, it was most common that he was male.

As is generally recognized in modern scholarship, following the thought of Foucault and Halperin,[294] we cannot speak of the regulation of *sexualities* in the pre-modern context, for such a concept did not exist in the manner it does today. Regulation and prohibition of sexual practice were instead concerned primarily with sexual acts; behaviour rather than intent. But this should hardly be taken to mean that societies of the pre-modern and early modern periods saw sex simply as a series of disconnected acts. Indeed, as Afsaneh Najmabadi notes, although in the Islamic world "sexual practices were generally not considered fixed into lifelong patterns of sexual orientation [...] individual men were explicitly marked as woman-lovers or amrad-lovers."[295] It was from the perspective of *er* –

291 Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds,* 51.

292 See Leslie Peirce, "Seniority, Sexuality and Social Order," 179-181; see also Betül Başaran, *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Shirine Hamadeh, "Mean Streets: Space and Moral Order in Early Modern Istanbul," *Turcica*, vol. 44 (2012-2013): 249-277; Marinos Sariyannis, ""Mob," "Scamps" and Rebels in Seventeenth Century Istanbul: Some Notes on Ottoman Social Vocabulary," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. 11, no.1-2 (2005): 1-15.

293 Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?,* 87.

294 See, for example, David Halperin, "How to Do The History of Male Homosexuality," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* vol. 6, no. 1 (2000): 87-123, pr, for a study more focused on the Middle Eastern context, see Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

295 Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards*, 20.

both *emred*-lovers and woman-lovers - that the literary culture of the early modern Ottoman Empire was largely produced, and as such its erotica naturally reflects the sexual prerogatives of this class. Though we know, in fact, that some *şehrengiz* literature was commissioned by elite women, and indeed though we even have examples of erotic literature produced by Ottoman women, these works were nevertheless produced within a cultural script that was essentially geared towards the normalized objects of desire for literate adult males.[296] Erotica took as its main object the *emred* and the *kız* (for propriety's sake, often women outside the normative sociosexual progression, such as prostitutes, foreigners, Gypsies, or slaves). In early modern Ottoman poetry and the visual arts, erotic imagery and depictions of the beloved were essentially androgynous,[297] but generally read as male; in dance, this ambiguity was maintained through the traditions of *çengi*, *köçek* and *tavşan* performance.

While the exact origins of both the term *çengi* and the performance form itself are largely unknown (see chapter 7 for a discussion on the oft-theorized connection to Gypsies), we know from textual evidence that *çengi*s were extant and entertaining the court as early as the reign of Murad II (r. 1421-1444).[298] Mustafa Avcı has theorized that aspects of *çengi* performance originated in the Anatolian *deve oyunu* theatrical tradition;[299] in any case, by the Ottoman period it had developed into a courtly art form. Distinctions between *çengi* and *tavşan* were generally based upon the styles of performance, with *tavşan*s performing dances that imitated animals such as rabbits (note the similarity to the *kedi kantosu* of the Hamidian period). Avcı also theorizes that the additional term *rakkas,* derived from Arabic, was used distinguish dancers of janissary or *içoğlan* origin from those who learned to perform as part of itinerant troupes in the city; by the 17th century however, as janissaries entered into the urban life of Istanbul, this distinction would have lost a great deal of meaning.[300] As mentioned previously, *çengi*s were normalized as male, and when

[296] Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds,* 196.
[297] Ibid., 39.
[298] Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers," 34
[299] Ibid., 41.
[300] Ibid., 46.

female were generally given distinguishing adjectives, such as *zanan çengi*. Though slightly later terms – *köçek* and *kız oğlan* – would come to refer to male dancers who "imitated" women, it is clear that for the early modern period, these terms were of limited meaning and usage. To the early modern Ottoman man, the *çengi* was not acting effeminate so much as acting *desirable*; he performed in a way as to invoke desire according to the social norms of the time.[301]

*Çengi*s of the early modern period come down to us largely mute. Though they are not absent from literature, the focus of our primary source from this era – that is, *şehrengiz* literature – was more upon *emred*s from what Kalpaklı and Andrews term the "middle class." It appears that the imagination of the 16th and early 17th century poetic and literary culture was fixated more upon artisan's sons and shop boys than *çengi*s, who perhaps were seen as too readily available and too coarse to invoke the quality of desire wished for by these poets.[302] While we know from the historian Mustafa 'Ali (1541-1600) that Rumelian *çengi*s were considered the most beautiful of all,[303] and we have the names of some dancers from palace records of Süleyman I (r. 1520-1566),[304] ultimately *çengi*s – both male and female – are depicted in early Ottoman literature as silent objects of desire. Of course, this was a function of Ottoman "phallocratic" literary culture, to use the term favoured by Kalpaklı and Andrews, rather than a realistic reflection of the actual contours of *çengi* performance, but what is important here is precisely this point, for it was the literary culture of the elite that set the standards and norms of desire during this era. Nor is it the case that the voices and identities of desirable women were wholly absent from this literature – Sevengil gives us the names of several famous prostitutes of Süleyman I's era,[305] as does the *şehrengiz* of Azizi Mısri (although it is the only example of this which survives, and even its own introduction notes its novelty in this regard).[306] Yet the *kantocu*s of the 19th

[301] In this, I strongly agree with Danielle J. van Dobben, "Dancing Modernity," 52.

[302] Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds,* 40.

[303] Mehmet Şeker, *Gelibolulu Mustafa 'Âlî ve Mevâ'idü'n-Nefâis fi-Kavâ'ıdi'l-Mecâlis* (Ankara: Türk Tarihi Kurumu, 1997): 284.

[304] Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers," 44.

[305] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?,* 20-22.

[306] For a detailed discussion on this particular *şehrengiz*, see Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds*, 43-48.

century were neither prostitutes, nor silent, nor even, after a certain point, *kız*; the majority were married, often multiple times, and several began families while continuing to perform and be objects of desire for a largely male audience. How did this shift occur?

Let us return for now to the evolution of the *çengi*. The latter half of the 16th century brought about two major changes in the role of the *çengi*: the first was the gradual transfer of *çengi* performance to a new venue, the coffeehouse,[307] which brought dance into contact with other theatrical forms associated with this space, such as *karagöz* and *meddahlık*,[308] and the second relates to the gradual entrance of the Janissaries into the broader urban fabric of the capital, over the course of the late 16th and 17th centuries. Indeed, the event which brought about the end of the "Age of Beloveds" in the Ottoman context, according to Kalpaklı and Andrews, was the dethronement of Osman II (r. 1618-1622) by the Janissaries, which, in their terms, violated the discursive script between lover and beloved which underpinned the literary culture (especially in the context of a literature centered around the court).[309] These two shifts are strongly interlinked, for as the Janissaries came to dominate coffeehouse ownership within Istanbul over the course of the 17th century, *çengi* performance itself became more and more intertwined with Janissary culture. It is not for nothing that the Janissaries came to refer to themselves as the "*köçek*s of Haci Bektaş," refering to the semi-mythical founder of the Bektaşi sufi order with which the Janissary corps was strongly affiliated from the 17th century onwards.[310] Reşat Ekrem Koçu connects the Janissary interest in homoeroticism (*mahbubdost*) to the Bektaşi rejection of

[307] The exact date given for the entrance of coffee into Istanbul varies: Katip Çelebi gives us a date of 1543, while the historian Mustafa Ali dates the first coffeehouse in Istanbul to 1552 or 1553 and Peçevi dates it instead to 1554-1555; see Alan Mikhail, "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space and the Ottoman Coffee House" in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, Dana Sadji, ed. (New York, London: I.B. Tauris, 2007): 138.

[308] These forms, while rapidly adapting themselves to an Istanbuliote context, have their likely origins in the coffeehouse culture of Mamluk Cairo; see Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 129; some researchers have instead theorized an earlier point of origin in the Ayyubid period, see Metin And, "Theatre in Turkey," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (September, 1983): 21.

[309] Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds,* 323.

[310] One should note here that erotic language in this context does not necessarily imply carnal desire, but may instead possess esoteric symbolism. For a related discussion on erotic language in Rumi's *Mesnevi*, see Mahdi Tourage: *Rûmî and the Hermeneutics of Eroticism* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007); see also Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers," 97.

conventional social norms;[311] the prohibition on Janissary marraige and the desire to imitate the court also may have played a role in the cultivation of a culture of homoerotic practice related to, but nevertheless distinct from, that of the palace and literati.

Over the course of the 17th century, *çengi*s moved from the palace and the gardens of the literati to the city of the artisans and the paupers; having once been palace *içoğlan*s, *çengi*s of the 17th century were more often *şehir oğlanları,*[312] *levend*s of the urban non-elite with a reputation for flouting the social order and for haunting the capital's coffeehouses and taverns.[313] What is key here is that, although a level of class distinction remained – particularly in the case of janissary *cilveliks*, who entered into relations with higher ranking janissaries on the model of *emred-er* relations - the gap was not as large as that between the literate *şehrengiz* poets and their shop-boy *mahbub*s. Many janissaries were indeed almost paupers themselves.[314] What emerges from this is a sexuality that is not, of course, based on an idea of equal sexual partners, but is significantly more egalitarian in terms of its understanding of the transactions of desire than that of the earlier era. From the nameless *çengi*s of the Age of Beloveds, janissary *cilvelik* dancers were treated almost as brides, carried about in litters and kept in the same status of seclusion as honorable *avret* or *hatun*s.[315] Again, this association was not absolute: *çengi* continued to be patroned by the court, to be written about by court poets such as Nedim (1681-1730),[316] and to perform for sultans. But by the end of the 18th century, the association between Janissaries and *çengi*-

[311] Reşat Ekrem Koçu, "Civelek, Yeniçeri Civeleği." *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*. (İstanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1960).

[312] For example, Evliya Çelebi describes the Kapucuoğlu Osmân dancing troupe as containing 400 *şehir oğlanları* and no Roma, while the 200-strong Baba Nazlı is mixed *şehir oğlanları* and Roma. See Evliya Çelebi. *Seyahatnamesi*, 329.

[313] Marinos Sariyannis, ""Mob," "Scamps" and Rebels in Seventeenth Century Istanbul," 5.

[314] Alongside the debasement of janissary pay, among the janissaries included many "pretenders" who received no official salary but nevertheless enjoyed certain social benefits from their janissary affiliations. See Cemal Kafadar, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?" in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Izkowitz*, Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir, eds. (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007): 113-135; also, see Gülay Yılmaz, "The Economic and Social Roles of Janissaries in a 17th Century Ottoman City: The Case of Istanbul" (Ph.D thesis, McGill University, 2011).

[315] Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *Tarihimizde Garip Vakalar* (İstanbul: Varlik Yayinevi, 1971): 128.

[316] Dorit Klebe, "Effeminate Professional Musicians in Sources of Ottoman-Turkish Court Poetry and Music of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Music in Art*, vol. 30, no. 1/2 (Spring–Fall 2005): 107.

köçek was deeply entrenched, as we understand from both European and Ottoman accounts.[317]

Furthermore, it was within the coffeehouse space that *çengi* dance found a source of support and patronage outside of the court and the literati; it was also here that dance came to be inseperable from theatre. By the 17th century, *çengi* dancing had become attached to *orta oyunu* theatre,[318] and the contours of this relationship – that is, *çengi* performance acting as an interstitial between scenes of comic theatre, or else being used to introduce the play itself – were continued in the 19th century by *kantocu*s. Secondarily, the connection between *çengi* dancing and these theatrical forms, such as *karagöz* and *orta oyunu*, altered the character of its sexuality. Whereas previously the performance of erotic dance and sexual availability had gone hand-in-hand (indeed, it is unlikely there had been much distinction), in these newly emerging theatres there was a separation between performance and reality – what might be termed *suspension of disbelief*. *Orta oyunu* players may have acted as women and performed sexually explicit material, but this was understood as a theatrical performance; a comic guise. Of course, *çengis* and *köçeks* never acquired the same level of distinction on the part of their audiences, but it is clear from several sources that many *köçek*s fully transitioned from *emred* to *er*, but nevertheless retained their appeal among male audiences so long as they kept a youthful appearance.[319]

Thirdly, the coffeehouse played a crucial role in the "opening of the night" as a space of licit (or, at least, semi-licit) recreation; as Cemal Kafadar writes, "the story of coffeehouses is intertwined, to a great extent, with such related phenomena as changing

317 For example, the historian Joseph Von Hammer-Purgstall gives us an account of a *köçek* performance in the early 19th century, in which he states that the audience was composed solely of Janissaries and sailors. See Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben. 1774-1852 Entstanden 1841–1852*. (Erstdruck: Wien und Leipzig (Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1940): 42; for a translated version of this account, see Jan Schmidt, "Fazil Beg Enderuni, Social Historian or Poet?," in Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire, ed. Caesar E. Farah (Kirksville: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1993): 186.

318 Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?,* 64-65.

319 For example, William John Hamilton, who travelled to Istanbul and throughout Anatolia in 1836, noted that among some Anatolian villagers there were *köçek* performers who "all had the appearance of full-grown men." See William John Hamilton, *Researches in Asia Minor, Pontus, and Armenia; with Some Account of Their Antiquities and Geology*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1842): 525.

night-time practices, including the emergence of certain new forms of art and public entertainment."[320] Coffeehouses offered a nocturnal space that was available to all classes of men, and, in certain circumstances, to women and children also;[321] the coffeehouse served as a medium not only by which theatre was enjoyed by the common people, but also by which the theatre was tied to the night.

Lastly, a crucial innovation of this coffeehouse theatre culture was its evocations of female desire. These depictions – in the *meddah* stories, in *karagöz*, and in *orta oyunu*, were, of course, comic representations performed by men, but it is within these theatrical traditions that the full range of female desire and women's sexuality was able to be displayed in performance. The female poets who wrote within the traditions of erotic *gazel* and who comissioned *şehrengiz* literature nevertheless largely conformed to the sexual script set by elite men, but in the popular art of *karagöz* and *meddah* in particular, we are presented with a vast spectrum of female desire: women desirous of men, of *emred*s, and also of other women.[322] In short, within these forms – which, from European accounts, we know were also viewed by mixed audiences[323] - women were first depicted as posessing the same sexual agency and range of objects as men. Of course, these representations were mediated by the male gender of the performers, but what is all the more remarkable about the theatre which evolved around the coffeehouse was its "marginalization of homoerotic

[320] Cemal Kafadar, 'How Dark is the History of the Night, How Black the Story of Coffee, How Bitter the Tale of Love: The Changing Measure of Leisure and Pleasure in Early Modern Istanbul', in *Medieval and Early Modern Performance in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Arzu Öztürkmen & Evelyn Birge Vitz, eds. (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2014): 244.

[321] See, for example, the description given to us by G. A. Olivier of a *karagöz* performance, who travelled to Istanbul in the late 18th-century: "We had every evening, in a coffee-house open to all the curious and all the amateurs a sight much relished by the Turks, and frequented even by the most decent women, although it most frequently represented scenes at which European families, the most shameless, would have blushed to be present." It should be noted that even during mixed performances, the genders were usually separated by a curtain. G. A. Olivier, *Travels in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Persia undertaken by order of the government of France during the first six years of the Republic,* vol 1. (London: T. N. Longman and O. Rees, 1801): 137.

[322] For *meddahlık* stories, see David Selim Sayers, "Sociosexual Roles in Ottoman Pulp Fiction," 226; for *karagöz*, see Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire,* 126.

[323] In addition to the account relayed in the preceding footnotes, Gérard de Nerval describes a mixed-gender audience for a *karagöz* performance in the 19th century; see Gérard de Nerval, *Voyage en Orient* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1884): 194.

sex,' to use Ze'evi's phrase, in favour of hetero-eroticism.[324] As Ze'evi notes, within a social system in which homoeroticism is the norm, open depictions of hetero-eroticism may have been all the more potent comic and satirical fodder.[325] Yet it should also be noted that, as Alan Mikhail writes, "the association between coffee and the poor and destitute is repeated over and over again by chroniclers and contemporary observers alike,"[326] and that coffeehouse theatre reflected the experiences and daily life of the urban poor. The heteroeroticism of coffeehouse theatre, then, may have reflected the sexual practices more commonplace among Istanbul's lower classes. It should be remembered that practices such as the keeping of an *emred*, or the practice of female seclusion, were highly class-bound activities largely restricted to those who could afford it. It was within this context, then, that hetero-eroticism first became normalized in the Ottoman performing arts[327] – and it is no surprise that, when *kanto* emerged, it did so intimately connected to the coffeehouse-centred theatrical tradition.

Over the course of the 18th century, these trends – the association of erotic dancing with Janissary culture and the emergence of hetero-erotism in comic theatre - continued apace. The 18th century is characterized by the greater prevalence of women in erotic imagery and literature, including that produced for the court. We should be wary of attributing this to Tulip Era "liberalism" or to an oft-theorized rise in gender mixing within urban life; both of these notions have come under heavy criticism in recent years.[328] But from both visual and textual evidence, it is clear that, in contrast to the 16th century "Age of Beloveds," eroticism in the 18th century was considerably less ambiguous in terms of gender, with a focus more on relationships with individuals of a specific gender: men or

[324] Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire,* 141.
[325] Ibid., 143.
[326] Alan Mikhail, "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space and the Ottoman Coffee House," 142.
[327] Cemal Kafadar, 'How Dark is the History of the Night," 25.
[328] The notion of increased gender-mixing in public has largely drawn upon visual evidence such as miniatures and paintings by Europeans such as Van Mour; however, these depictions are generally of upper-class women in semi-private locations, such as walled gardens. As Tülay Artan has written, "the increased and apparently unconventional representation of Istanbul women may well be explained not by the liberation of women themselves, but by the gradual liberation of local artists from court patronage." See Tülay Artan, "Forms and Forums of Expression : İstanbul and Beyond, 1600-1800", *The Ottoman World*, Christine Woodhead, ed. (London : Routledge, 2011): 400.

women. The 18th century, then, may have been marked by the emergence of an incipient system of *sexualities* – that is, desire had become distinguished by the gender of the object of desire.

Let us look at two characteristic examples, albeit from the last decade of the century: the *Hubanname* (1792-1793) and *Zennanname* of Enderunlu Fazıl Bey (d. 1808-1809), which focus on the qualities of boys and women, respectively, and his book exclusively upon dancers, *Çenginame*, dating to 1799. Here we see the separation of male and female objects of desire, although both are treated as equally valid and normal. Furthermore, in *Zennanname*, we see represented in literature the same innovations which had appeared in the popular theatre; that is, the explicit depiction of female sexual agency and desire. Alongside descriptions of the women of various parts of the world, Fazıl Bey provides us with a fourfold categorization of the women of Istanbul; paraphrased, they are women who love women, prostitutes, women out of seclusion, and women in seclusion, the latter of whom are the most dangerous for men.[329] Though Fazıl Bey was regarded as something of an eccentric in his time,[330] and his works should not be seen as wholly representative of the late 18th century Ottoman world, a number of elements in his works appear in similar forms elsewhere. The categories of women listed above, for example, find their counterparts in the Tıfli stories of the *meddah* tradition which, while set during the reign of Murad IV (r. 1623-1640), first appear in writing in the 18th century. In these stories, *avret* join *er* as explicit pursuers of young *emred* for the first time; furthermore, the sexuality and sexual agency of young women is also explored though characters such as Rükiye, who competes with an older man for an *emred*'s affection. As David Selim Sayers writes, "she repositions the female adolescent as a player who, like the influential lady, has a choice of roles: the passive virgin awaiting male activation of her sexuality, or the sexually self-awakened virgin who desires, competes with, and opposes a range of male

[329] See Murat Bardakçı, *Osmanlı'da Seks* (İstanbul: İnkılap, 2005)*:* 58-59.

[330] According to Tülay Artan, his contemporary Şanizâde, for instance, found the content of hıs poetry "unacceptable." See Tülay Artan, "A Composite Universe : Arts and Society in Istanbul at the End of the 18th Century", in *The Ottoman Empire and European Theater. Vol. I. Sultan Selim III and Mozart (1756-1808)*, Michael Hüttler and Hans Ernst Weidinger, eds. (Vienna : Don Juan Archiv /Lit-Verlag, 2013): 769.

players in charting her own transition to womanhood."[331] Finally, this variety of female desire was also reflected in erotic miniatures of the 18th century, which depict all varieties of female sexuality, including female homoeroticism, in forms considerably more explicit and more realistic than earlier miniatures.[332]

Fazıl Bey's *Çenginame* also speaks to the character of 18th century Ottoman sexuality. His *çengi*s are not simply objects of desire, but real personages, with both qualities and flaws. Indeed, he even records fragments of their speech.[333] Though the *çengi*s of Fazıl Bey's erotic world are exclusively male, it is during the 18th century that the terms *çengi* and *köçek* first come into common usage to refer to dancers performing as men or as women.[334] This is to say, then, that as in erotic literature and erotic illustration, erotic dance had likewise become distinguished into two categories of gender; although, in this case, gender was a function of performance (see Figure 8 for an Ottoman depictions of a *köçek* performance during the reign of Ahmet III, or Figures 9 and 10 for the artist Istanbul-based Flemish artist Vanmour's engravings of dual çengi-köçek dancers from the same era). To a certain extent, the dichotomy of *çengi-köçek* could be seen as a performative counterpart to the dual portraits of "amorous couples" produced in Qajar Iran, which Afsaneh Najmabadi has identified as representing two distinct objects of desire in a tripartite arrangement with the viewer.[335] In both cases, gender ambiguity had largely disappeared, in favour of a dual-gendered system of desire. Thomas Lacqueur, in his 1990 book *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud*, identifies the 18th century as the point at which a previous "one-gender" system that had been carried forth from the classical and medieval worlds – a system in which women were seen essentially as "imperfect" versions of men in physiology and nature – became replaced by a "two-gender" system no less misogynist in practice, but fundamentally quite different in conceptualization.[336] Although Laqueur's

[331] David Selim Sayers, "Sociosexual Roles in Ottoman Pulp Fiction," 228.

[332] Tülay Artan and Irvin Cemil Schick, "Ottomanizing Pornotopia: Changing Visual Codes in Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Erotic Miniatures," 180.

[333] Jan Schmidt, "Fazil Beg Enderuni, Social Historian or Poet?," 187-188.

[334] Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers," 53.

[335] Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards,* 32.

[336] See Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990): 8.

theory has come under a degree of criticism, especially from classical scholars, and the transition he describes should not be taken as a wholescale epistemological shift, it seems nevertheless clear that – within European medical and scientific discourse, at least – such a shift did indeed occur. Dror Ze'evi, following Laqueur's thought, traces analogous developments in Islamic medical and erotic texts; while early texts propose to understand the physiology and sexuality of a universal human figure (albeit in its most "complete" form, understood as male), this is lost over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries with the influx of medical theories rooted in the European two-gender concept.[337] This subtle shift was in fact effectively an erasure of women from medical discourse, and this erasure would ultimately lead to the basic anatomical errors and misunderstandings that would underpin the discourse on women's sexuality well into the 1960s and 1970s. It is possible that the emergence of heteronormativity in the 18th century can be traced to the emergence of a two-gender system in the scientific field, or perhaps vice-versa; a study of the cultural and social implications of this development in the Ottoman world remains an area for future research.

We may, at this point, seem far away from sexual revolution mentioned at the beginning of this section. Yet within fifty years, the sexual system of Fazıl Bey and the 18th century popular theatre would be turned upside-down, and a new heteronormative sexuality – supported and regulated by an ascendant bureaucratic state – would supplant the dual sexualities of the *çengi-köçek* era. Within fifty years, the corpus of *karagöz* theatre would be bowdlerized and purged of explicit sexual content; homoerotic illustrations destroyed or suppressed, and *çengi-köçek* dance pushed onto the margins of licit performance. In turn, new systems of sexual regulation and new venues of sexual expression would arise; bans on contraception and abortion, the medical regulation of prostitution, the condemnation of homosexuality and homoerotic practice, and the rise of the staged theatre and the *baloz* as sexual spaces. What was the cause of this transition? And from where, then, did heteronormativity in the Ottoman performing arts emerge? These are large questions, and a full reckoning is far beyond the scope of this thesis. Although the European contact described by Najmabadi and Ze'evi undoubtedly played a role in this process – particularly

[337] Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire,* 45-47.

as literacy in French spread among the Ottoman bureacracy and among urban merchant classes in the mid-19th century - as we have seen, the Ottoman sexual system had already undergone significant shifts from the 16th to the 18th centuries. In any case, as was established in the introduction to this chapter, the application of this theory to Istanbul is fraught with a number of problems. The sexual culture of Istanbul was never separate from that of Europe: indeed, as Kalpaklı and Andrews have convincingly argued, Istanbulite and Western European sexual cultures shared a number of common features and can even be given similar periodizations.[338] Is it possible to situate the development of heteronormativity in the Ottoman Empire, or at least in Istanbul, in the theories that have emerged surrounding this development in Western Europe?

To a certain extent, I believe so – for instance, though there is no direct Ottoman or Islamic counterpart to the practice of confession in which Foucault locates the origin of the Western European *scientia sexualis*,[339] the 18th century Ottoman system of urban surveillance, which extended to include both men and women's spaces (including the coffeehouse and the hammam) and was concerned with both seditious and morally improper conversation and thought,[340] may constitute a kind of analogue. So too could the rise of a conservative Nakşi-Müceddidi and Mevlevi affiliated court and bureaucracy in 18th century Istanbul[341] be compared to the contemporaneous Protestant Revival in England and Germany, which George Mosse has connected to development of a bourgeois politics of sexual respectability and the eventual production of heteronormativity.[342] Indeed, the Puritan movements of 17th century Europe and their supposed Ottoman equivalents, the Kadızadelis, have in several sources been regarded as local manifestations of a common backlash against the values of the 16th century "Age of Beloveds," or else as an outcome of

[338] Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds,* 27.
[339] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* 67.
[340] See, for example, Cengiz Kırlı, "The Struggle over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman İstanbul, 1780-1845" (Ph.D diss., SUNY Binghampton, 2000); or his article "Surveillance and Constituting the Public in the Ottoman Empire" *Publics, Politics and Participation: Locating the Public Sphere in the Middle East and North Africa*, Seteney Shami, ed. (New York: SSRC, 2009): 177-203.
[341] See Butros Abu-Manneh, "Sheikh Murād al-Bukhārī and the Expansion of the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī Order in Istanbul", *Die Welt des Islams,* vol. 53, no. 1, (2013): 1 –25.
[342] See George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1985).

common economic factors (the effects of monetization, the growth of a mercantile bourgeois, economic distress due to climactic changes, etc.).[343] As such, it is not a massive strain on the imagination to theorize a similar correspondance between the bureaucratic classes of 18th century Istanbul and their European discursive and mercantile partners. Perhaps we might also relate the emergence of a class of "ill-educated, perpetual students" in 18th century Istanbul, as a result of the entrenchment of family dynasties among the *ulema*,[344] to the literate do-nothings of the lower European aristocracy (the fops and the macaronis) who were essential in introducing heterosexual sexual relationships outside of marraige or prostitution into the literary culture of the elite.[345] But, in any case, these all remain relatively unsupported notions which demand a great deal of further research. What is more evident, and more pertinent to our purposes, is the point at which this incipient Ottoman heteronormativity entered into the legal and regulatory realm: that is, the point at which heteronormativity became enforced by the power of the state and its attendant institutions.

At the same time that Enderunlu Fazıl Bey was composing works emblematic of late 18th century Ottoman sexual discourse, a program of social, political and cultural reform was already underway which would rapidly alter the established sexual script. I am speaking here of the Nizam-ı Cedid ("New Order") reforms of Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1806), which, in the face of increasing Ottoman military incapacity against the forces of the Hapsburgs and Russia, sought to radically restructure the Ottoman armed forces along a more European model. Though the military aspects of the New Order reforms have been

343 See Walter G. Andrews and Mustafa Kalpaklı, *The Age of Beloveds,* 320; Marinos Sariyannis, The Kadızadeli Movement As A Social And Political Phenomenon: The Rise Of A 'Mercantile Ethic'?", in P*olitical Initiatives 'From the Bottom Up' in the Ottoman Empire, Halcyon Days in Crete VII. A Symposium Held in Rethymnon 9-11 January 2009*, Antonis Anastasopoulos, ed. (2009): 263-290; and Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), respectively.

344 Virgina Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi 1700-1783* (Leiden: Brill, 1995): xv; see also Madeline C. Zilfi, *The Politics of Piety: The Ottoman Ulema in the Post-Classical Age (1600–1800)* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1988).

345 For a broad overview of literature on this topic, see Karen Harvey, "The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century," *The Historical Journal*, vol. 45, no. 4 (Dec., 2002): 899-916.

discussed at length,[346] as have the political and economic changes which accompanied it and its collapse,[347] the disruptions that they brought about to Ottoman sexual culture have been less extensively investigated. As Ali Yaycıoğlu has written, the reform agenda of the New Order focused "on top-down reorganization through bureaucratic and military centralization and disciplining the military, and gradually society."[348] This process of disciplining had one primary object – the Janissaries - as a natural result of the Empire's deterorating military situation, but we must remember that the Janissaries were by this time entrenched not only in the economic life of Istanbul (and other Ottoman cities), but also in urban cultural and sexual activity. This is to say that any attempt at regulating and modernizing the Janissaries necessarily implied a broader regularization and disciplining of urban social life. The creation of a separate New Order army should not be seen as a kind of isolated experiment, even though the location of their barracks was carefully chosen to be far away from the temptations of the city; in every way the New Order army represented a challenge to the traditional urban social and sexual structure. Unlike the Janissaries, who could be found congregating in dervish *tekke*s and coffeehouses, rioting over their *köçek* beloveds, the New Order army was to pray in open mosques, under the eyes of their officers and imams; furthermore, they were to be trained in moral and religious discipline, learning from the highly conservative works of the Kadizadeli's inspiration, Birgivi Mehmed Efendi (d. 1573).[349] Birgivi's work was also reproduced in printed editions during this time.[350] Alongside learning the arts of modern warfare, the New Order soldiers were expected to discipline and reform their inner selves (*ıslah-ı nafs*); part of this was the suppression of wanton desires.[351] The construction of their barracks was designed – in a way not unlike the prisons, asylums, *hopitaux généreaux* and, indeed, the barracks of

346 See Stanford J. Shaw, "The Origins of Ottoman Military Reform: The Nizam-ı Cedid Army of Sultan Selim III." T*he Journal of Modern History*, vol. 37, no. 3 (1965): 291-306.

347 For a very recent take on the subject, see Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

348 Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire,* 14.

349 Kemal Beydilli, *Türk Bilim ve Matbaacılık Tarihinde Mühendishâne, Mühendishâne Matbaası ve Kütüphânesi, 1776-1826,* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık ve Kitapçılık, 1995): 143.

350 Tülay Artan, "Forms and Forums of Expression : İstanbul and Beyond, 1600-1800", *The Ottoman World*, Christine Woodhead, ed. (London: Routledge, 2011): 379.

351 Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire,* 50.

Western Europe – to suppress and disrupt surreptitious sexual relations: consider, for example, the regular plan and open sight-lines of the Selimiye barracks in Üsküdar, as well as the usage of regular nightime illumination.

It should be noted that the ideal sought by the New Order clique in Selim III's court in the construction of this new army was not "heteronormativity" as such, but *chastity*; that is, they sought an army that would not be distracted by sexual temptations, but would instead commit itself wholly to the state. The New Order ideal of societal chastity was also not solely concerned with homoerotic behaviour, for it included heavy restrictions upon women's movement, the execution of prostitutes and other "immoral" women, the criminalization of abortion and contraception, and strict sartorial reform.[352] But the association between the Janissaries and visible homoerotic practices – in particular, *köçek* dance – meant that the homoerotic practices of the lower classes came under particular suspicion. The coffeehouses frequented by the Janissaries came under increasingly heavy surveillance, as did unattached young men and members of itinerant minorities, such as Roma and Albanians, who were especially common in professions associated with homoerotic behavior (dancers and bathhouse attendants, for example).[353] This process was only intensified by the presence of officers, trainers and doctors enlisted from Europe to guide the New Order army, and who brought with them the value system of European heteronormativity, which – while still rather new in Europe itself – was nevertheless considerably more developed than that of the Ottomans. Even before the New Order, European advisors such as the Baron de Tott had noted the homoerotic practices of the Janisaries and related them to the Empire's military decline. These attitudes were mirrored by the reformist bureaucracy. A comment by the Grand Vizier (perhaps Silahdar Mehmet, who held the office from 1771 to 1774) that the Baron de Tott records in his memoirs is illustrative: having witnessed a three-day Janissary riot over posession of an unusually

[352] Tülay Artan, "Forms and Forums of Expression," 400.

[353] For further information on public surveillance during the reign of Selim III, including surveillance on coffehouse activites, see Betül Başaran, "Remaking the Gate of Felicity: Policing, Social Control and Migration in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century, 1789-1793" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2006).

beautiful *köçek*, the vizier sarcastically remarks that there has been "so much bravery at Galata, and such cowardice on the Danube," before adding that "we shall never put an end to this affair [...] unless Tott, with a few Frenchmen, goes and brings them to reason."[354]

As the New Order sought to defend itself from increasing public suspicion (both instigated by the Janissaries, and because of the rampant and rather obvious hypocrisy and venality of many of the New Order elite), it is noteworthy that it took increasingly to attacking the Janissaries, not on military grounds, but on moral ones. While the recommendations regarding reform of the Janissaries collected by Selim III at his assession to the throne concerned themselves primarily with changes in the army's structural organization and the removal of foreign "imposters,"[355] the Koca Sekbanbaşı Risalesi of 1805-1806 (in Ottoman, *Hülasat ül-Kelam fi Redd il-A'vam,* or *"*Concise Statement to Refute the Populace") took a considerably different approach. Ostensibly written by a Janissary elder disgusted by the corruption of the order, the treatise was actually likely written by a member of the New Order bureacratic elite as a kind of propaganda. To that end, it was written in simple language to appeal to the common people, and copies of it were posted around the city and read aloud in public.[356] Within the treatise, the Janissaries are described as "a company of hogs, corrupt and degraded;" they are "outwardly Mussulmans, yet have they not the least idea of religious purity."[357] The author ends by hoping that this "rabble of men, ignorant of the world, who pass their whole time in festivity and play" will come to "learn thoroughly the things which belong to purity."[358] Of course, the older criticisms are revived as well – that the Janissaries have been infiltrated by foreign spies, or that they are militarily inept – but the key thrust to Koca Sekbanbaşı's argument lies in the Janissaries moral failures.

354 François Baron de Tott, *Memories of the Baron De Tott,* 133.
355 For numerous examples of such, see Ergin Çağman, *III. Selim'e Sunulan Islahat Layihaları*, (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2010).
356 Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire,* 58; the usage of coffeehouse *meddahs* to read aloud political treatises and state propaganda to the lower classes was common during the New Order period, and earlier. See, for example, James Dallaway, *Constantinople Ancient and Modern* (London: 1797): 82.
357 The quotes I have used here come from an English translation of the Koca Sekbanbaşı Risalesi, made by William Wilkinson, and published in 1820. See William Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia,* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820): 224-225.
358 Ibid., 289-290.

It did not take long for this moral corruption to be located in the sexual practices common to the Janissaries. That these practices – for example, keeping a *köçek* beloved – were common to the New Order elite as well was hardly the point; all practices were open to attack. This is most evident in the treatises produced amidst the collapse of the New Order regime. Among the writings of Ebubekir Efendi and Ubeydullah Kuşmani, for example, are two strongly anti-Janissary treatises regarding the 1807 coup d'etat which brought about Selim III's abdication and ended of the first stage of the New Order.[359] In these, we see a shift towards the direct criticism of the sexual behviour of Janissaries, and towards placing sexual indiscipline as the cause of their military weakness and moral depravity. Key among the symbols of this immorality were the *köçeks*. Early in the narrative, as the British fleet under Admiral Duckworth sails past the Ottoman defenses at Çanakkale to threaten Istanbul, the Janissaries are depicted as too entranced by their *köçek* beloveds to stage a proper defence. The *köçek*s are described as making lewd and sarcastic remarks, even as Ottoman forces take casualties from British cannonfire.[360] The Janissary self-identification as the "willing *köçek*s" (*bi't-tav' ve'l-rıza köçeği olub yeniçeri*)[361] of Haci Bektaş is turned around by the authors, who refer to the janissaries and their *yamak* allies as "in large part catamites" (*puşt kısmında ekser*)[362] and who are declared as being even worse than the "tribe of Lot" (*Kavm-ı Lut'dan daha esfel olan pür-şenaatler*).[363] Though the terms "*ehl-i Levat*" and "*Luti*" had been in use earlier to describe what we would call homosexuals in the Ottoman discourse – in Fazıl Bey's *Çenginame*, for instance – it is here that the practicioners of same-sex relations become strongly tied, not only to moral corruption, but also to national backwardness and weakness.[364]

Despite the victory of the anti-New Order forces over the course of the 1807-1808 Kabakçı Mustafa crisis, this association would nevertheless remain and even be

[359] See Aysel Danacı Yıldız, *Asiler ve Gaziler: Kabakçı Mustafa Risalesi* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007).

[360] According to Ebubekir Efendi, the exact words of the *köçek* were, in the Aegean dialect, "*aman gardaş gavurun gulumparesine göt dayanmıyor*," or "oh, brother, his ass can't withstand the infidel's friends (the British cannonfire)." See Ibid., 40.

[361] Ibid., 122.

[362] Ibid., 114.

[363] Ibid., 136.

[364] Jan Schmidt, "Fazil Beg Enderuni, Social Historian or Poet?," 188.

strengthened during the reign of Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) as the Empire continued to suffer military and ideological challenges from separatist movements and local power brokers in the Balkans, Arabia, and Egypt. It was the Greek challenge, which began with a small revolt in Morea in 1821 but rapidly expanded into a major war involving the European great powers and an ascendant Egypt, which provoked the most intensive efforts at Ottoman societal reform. Mahmud II blamed the outbreak of the revolt on the decadence and debauchery of Ottoman culture; as the Sultan himself wrote, "Our great enemy is our own desires, which we still cannot defeat. Whenever we defeat our desires, we can defeat the enemies of religion as well."[365] The desires he spoke of were not purely sexual, and included a taste for luxurious clothing and the usage of opium; nevetheless it is clear that open public sexuality, and the homoerotic sexuality associated with the Janissaries in particular, constituted a major facet of the decadence that Mahmud II sought to reform. Akin to the New Order era, taverns were closed down, and women's movement was restricted.[366] In 1822, a year after the outbreak of the revolt, Mahmud II formally banned *çengi* and *tavşan* dancers around Istanbul. Mustafa Avcı records the edict as follows:

> "It is a custom for people to invite çengis and tavşans to perform in entertainments like weddings. This is a mischief and disturbance-creating thing, which is also not licit in religion. That group of performers were wandering around villages and towns on Çekmece-Çatalca-Terkos and putting miserable and poor people into misery and anxiety. Because of this the imperial order banning and abolishing the performance was issued; and read in the court of Çatalca in which the authorities pronounced their loyalty."[367]

While itinerant dancing troupes had come under regulation in earlier epochs, such as during the reign of Murad IV (r. 1623-1640), what was new was the broader context. Homoeroticism was now associated with national weakness and the prospect of insurrection; the domination of the dancing profession by Greeks may have played a further

365 Huseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, "A Radical Rethinking of the Ottoman Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence 1821-1826," (Ph.D diss., Harvard University, 2011): 117.
366 Ibid., 155-156.
367 Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers," 113.

role in this association.[368] Mahmud II is known to have criticized the same-sex affairs of his courtiers[369] and to have crafted a program of "masculinization" in his court, though the revival of sports like archery and wrestling.[370] Of course, this transformation was not total. Homoeroticism continued both among the Ottoman populace-at-large and among the literate elite,[371] and even Mahmud II himself still kept a *köçek* named Ahu as his beloved, and wrote poems in his honour.[372] But the tone had been set: the Janissaries, and the forms of sexual performance associated with them, came to be seen as obstacles in the way of the modernization of the state, and the open practice of such forms was now a sign of both societal immorality and national weakness.

The ultimate culmination of this process was, of course, the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826, which has come to us as the *Vaka-ı Hayriye*, "the Auspicious Incident." This event, a pre-meditated massacre of the Janissary battalions in Istanbul, was accompanied by much of the same rhetoric that had appeared during the New Order. In starkingly biopolitical terms, the Janissaries are labelled as a "dangerous disease," a "disorder of corrupted blood" that has infected the "social body."[373] Among their corruptions include kidnapping attractive passers-by and forcing these "grotesque personnages" to dance for their gratification.[374] The abolition the Janissaries is presented in propagandistic sources, such as Esat Efendi's 1827 *Üss-i Zafer* ("The Basis of Victory"), as a cleansing of the Empire of its immoral elements; alongside the Janissaries and the dervishes and *hoca*s of the Bektaşi order, a more general purging of the "unruly classes"

368 Baron John Cam Hobhouse Broughton, *A Journey Through Albania, and Other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia, to Constantinople*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: M. Carey and Son, 1817), 279.

369 Cuhadar İlyas Aga, *Tarih-i Enderun,* Cahit Kayra, ed. (Istanbul: Gunes Yayinlan, 1987): 196.

370 Huseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, "A Radical Rethinking of the Ottoman Empire," 155.

371 For example, Fazıl Bey's work was first printed and popularized during this time, although it was regularly suppressed. See Mustafa Bardakçı, *Osmanlı'da Seks*, 46.

372 Dorit Klebe, "Effeminate Professional Musicians," 109.

373 These quotes come from the French translation of *Üss-i Zafer*, produced by P. Caussin de Perceval shortly after the event. See P. Caussin de Perceval, *Précis Historique de la Destruction du Corps des Janissaires par le Sultan Mahmoud, en 1826* (Paris: Didot Freres, 1833): 38-39. For more information on the notion of biopolitics, see Michel Foucault, *Society Must De Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, François Ewald & David Macey, eds. (New York: Picador, 2003).

374 Ibid., 343.

took place.[375] According to Metin And, Janissary-affiliated *köçek*s were among the population that was expelled or forced to flee.[376] The tide had clearly turned against all sexual practice associated with the Janissaries. The biopolitical language of *Üss-i Zafer* was reflected in Ottoman law following the abolition of the Janissaries. In common with European states, the government of Mahmud II quickly began to implement pro-natalist and heteronormative policies. Already during the reign of Selim III, policies had been put in place to prohibit the sale of abortifacents and contraceptives, and during the reign of Mahmud II, these policies took a sharply disciplinary turn. In 1827 some of the more notorious midwives were exiled from the capital.[377] About ten years later, in 1838, all midwives, physicians and apothecaries in Istanbul were forced to swear not to provide abortifacents and to report suspected abortions to the authorities. Women who sought abortions and their husbands could be criminally penalized. As Tuba Demirci and Akşin Somel have theorized, "the new population records collected in the 1830s [may have] revealed the extent of the practice of abortion, and that is what led the central administration and the sultan to take the disciplinary measures they did."[378] The full range of biopolitical institutions were established. Hospitals along European lines were constructed, as were schools espousing the latest developments of French medical theory. Discourse of the earlier period came under heavy suspicion; in 1837, for example, the publication of Enderunlu Fazıl Bey's *Zennanname* was banned.[379] It is clear: long before the depictions of *köçek*s and *çengi*s in European travelogue had entered into the Ottoman popular consciousness,[380] the Ottoman state was already well on the way towards the

375 Ibid., 283.
376 Metin And, *Dances of Anatolian Turkey* (New York: Dance Perspectives, 1959): 31.
377 Tuba Demirci and Akşin Somel, "Women's Bodies, Demography, and Public Health: Abortion Policy and Perspectives in the Ottoman Empire of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 17, no. 3, (February, 2008): 386.
378 Ibid., 388.
379 Mustafa Bardakçı, *Osmanlı'da Seks*, 122.
380 For example, M. Şükrü Hanioğlu provides us with a list of books owned by prominent literati in 1750 and 1800; even at this latter date, the near entirety of reading material consumed by the Ottomans was in Arabic, Turkish, or Persian, and amongst these were few translations of foreign works. It was only during the reign of Mahmud II that French-language media and translated works became common among Ottoman literati. See M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008): 38-40.

demonization of homoerotic conduct and promotion of "productive" heterosexuality as the only moral form of sexual practice.

The *Tanzimat* period (1839-1876), commencing with the accession of Abdulmecid I (r. 1839-1861) and the promulgation of the 1839 *Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif*, continued and intensified trends present during the reign of Mahmud II. Yet the rise of a Francophone Ottoman bureaucracy during this period, as well as the broadening connections to Europe among Ottoman merchants (both Muslim and non-Muslim), added a new dimension to this process.[381] As latest discourse of Western Europe, through media such as scientific literature, popular novels, music, theatre, and travelogues, came to be consumed by the Ottoman elite, bureacratic and bourgeois classes, the sexual practices of these classes increasingly came to be defined in relation to European models. This was particularly true in areas such as Galata, which had always maintained a significant European presence, but which from the 18th century onwards became increasingy dominated by a European and Levantine community wielding significant economic and civic clout.[382] The introduction of French discourse, and the development of venues such as the staged theatre, the *cafe-chantant* and the *baloz* during the Tanzimat era, brought the sexual system of the Ottoman bourgeois ever closer to that of Europe. But we should not overstate the case: literacy during this period remained extremely low,[383] and the influence of European media was accordingly limited to a small subset of the population.[384] Of course, the discourse of shame and awareness of European condemnation played a large role in the legal formalization of Ottoman heteronormalization, but we should not extrapolate thusly that all Ottoman society was ashamed. Even more than the 16th century "Age of Beloveds," the 19th century was marked by a major dichotomy between the sexuality of the upper and middle literate classes of Istanbul, and that of the greater population. Among the literate classes the process of heteronormalization continued apace, with new sexual spaces offering venues through

381 See Carter V. Findley, "The Foundation of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry," *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* vol. 3 (1972): 388-416.

382 See Edhem Eldem, "The Ethnic Structure of Galata", *Biannual Istanbul*, 1 (1993): 28-33.

383 François Georgeon, "Lire et écrire à la fin de l'Empire ottoman: quelques remarques introductives," in *Oral et écrit dans le monde turc-ottoman*, Nicolas Vatin, ed., REMMM 75-76 (1995): 170-173.

384 M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire,* 105.

which the heterosexual sociability could be performed publicly. The importance of the staged theatre in this regard is crucial, and will form the basis of the following chapter. This bourgeois heteronormalization was promulgated not only through embodied practice, but also through regulation, medicalization, and the construction of new institutional frameworks (workhouses, public schools, registered brothels) which enforced certain norms of sexual behaviour. By contrast, among the "unruly classes" - which included, naturally, the remnants of the Janissaries – the older sexual order was continued, albeit under significant legal pressure. What was different in the 19th century was that the state now had the institutional and discursive means, as well as the will, to impose its preferred sexuality on the greater population. Nationalism played a key role in this process. It is worth examining the sexual development of the Ottoman bourgeois and the sexuality of the lower classes in turn, for it was in *kanto* that this dichotomy would, to some extent, be resolved.

It was during the 1850s that the most comprehensive legal steps were taken to forge what Ze'evi has called "an idealized parody of bourgeois monogamous heteronormalcy" in Istanbul.[385] In the first place, the most obvious forms of homosexual performance were formally banned. According to Mustafa Avcı, in 1854 *köçek*s were banned from performing in promenade areas open to the public; the justification for this was that the practice was offensive to the soldiers of the Empire's Crimean War allies, Britain and France.[386] By way of contrast, during this period the practice of mixed-gender promenading in public became increasingly popular and accepted.[387] In 1856, as recorded by Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza, this was followed by a total ban on *köçek* performance in the capital.[388] In 1858, with the adoption of the Napoleonic Code as the penal code of the Empire, a whole host of regulatory controls on sexuality were established. Though the 1858 code does not specifically ban homosexual behaviour, it contains several other provisions that suppressed illicit sexual practices; publishing or performing material "contrary to public morals"

385 Dror Ze'evi, "Hiding Sexuality," 49.
386 Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers," 115.
387 Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?*, 133.
388 Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza, *Eski Zamanlarda İstanbul Hayatı,* Ali Şükrü Çoruk, ed. (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2001): 29.

became punishable by fine or imprisonment,[389] as did assisting or performing abortions.[390] In 1860, an addendum criminalized the impersonation of women in domestic spaces.[391] In accordance with these laws, the open sexuality of the Ottoman theatre was censored; in *karagöz*, for instance, the homoerotic elements were removed almost in their entirety and its earlier Rabelaisian hetero-eroticism bowdlerized into inoffensive slapstick comedy.[392] *Köçek*s in the shadow theatre were replaced by dancing girls, or else by European singers.[393] Indeed, the targeted nature of these prohibitions is evident in the fact that female *çengi*s generally were allowed to continue performing,[394] although now they were forced to compete with theatre actresses and female singers from Europe.[395] We know from the palace memoirs of Leyla Saz that *köçek*s continued to perform for the palace well into the second half of the 19th century, although these "*köçek*s" were in fact teenage girls in the traditional costume.[396] Female performers also dressed as *tavşan*s in male costume; according to Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Bey, these performances were particularly popular with rich women.[397] Clearly the symbolism of the male dancer in feminine costume had become untenable, even as the reverse remained uncontroversial: the palace harem orchestra, for example, consisted of women dressed in male military costume,[398] and both in novels,[399] on

[389] John A. Strachey Bucknill and Haig Apisoghom S. Utidjian, *The Imperial Ottoman Penal Code*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), Article 139.J.

[390] Ibid., Article 193.

[391] Ibid., Article 202.

[392] Theophile Gautier, *Constantinople*, Robert Howe Gould, trans. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1875): 172; see also Gérard de Nerval, *Voyage en Orient*, 201.

[393] Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire,* 134.

[394] Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza, *Eski Zamanlarda İstanbul Hayatı,* 29

[395] See Malte Fuhrmann, "Down and Out on the Quays of Izmir: 'European' Musicians, Innkeepers, and Prostitutes in the Ottoman Port-Cities." *Mediterranean Historical Review, v*ol. 24, no. 2 (December 2009): 169–185.

[396] See Leyla Saz, *Haremin İçyüzü*, (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1974).

[397] According to Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Bey, "Açık-meşrep güzel kadınlara zengin erkek aşıklar lazım olduğu gibi zurafalık aleminde de çengilere zengin hanımlardan sevdalılar lazımdır." See, Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza, *Eski Zamanlarda İstanbul Hayatı*, 188.

[398] Şefika Şehvar Beşiroğlu, "İstanbul'un Kadınları ve Müzikal Kimlikleri," 13.

[399] The theme of cross-dressing as a means to enter to social world of the other gender was common to both traditional Ottoman theatre and the Tanzimat novel; see, for example, Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Dürdâne Hanım* (İstanbul: İskele Yayıncılık, 2005).

the theatre stage[400] and in *kanto* performance there appears to have been no prohibition on young women taking on male personas. Perhaps it is possible to connect this to Mosse's observation that women taking on male roles, so long as they return to the "proper order" afterwards, has been a common motif of art in periods of national crisis.[401] Though *çengi*s were not explicitly prohibited, however, they still on occaison came under official suspicion; police records show that on March 20, 1887, for example, the Gedikpaşa Theatre faced legal sanctions and closure for allowing "illegal performances by a troupe called Çengi," (*Çengi nâmlarıyla bir takım münâsebetsiz oyunlar*) although in this case the *çengi* performance was as part of a stage play and the reaction was largely due to fears of nationalist provocation.[402] It was in the area of prostitution, however, that the enforcement of heteronormativity took on its most stark aspect. In 1878, only a few years before the emergence of *kanto*, the municipality of Galata and Beyoğlu began to draft a medical commission to oversee the registration of prostitutes on hygienic grounds.[403] Though these regulations will be discussed further in the following chapter, it is enough here to note that only female prostitutes were included in this system. Male prostitution, which had existed on a large-scale in 19th century Istanbul,[404] was pushed ever further towards the margin of society.

These legal efforts were of course spurred on by social developments. The emergence of "modern" spaces for the performance of heterosexual desire in Istanbul were key to these transformations, and also offered a further means by which the discourses emergent in Europe could be witnessed by the Ottoman populace. As Malte Fuhrmann has

[400] Of these, the character of cross-dressing girl Zekiye in Namık Kemal's *Vatan yahut Silistre* is the most prominent. Namık Kemal's play incorporates purposefully a number of tropes of nationalist literature, of which the "Joan-of-Arc" archetype is particularly common. See Namık Kemal, *Vatan yahut Silistre,* (İstanbul: Bordo-Siyah Klasik Yayınları, 2004).

[401] George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality,* 101.

[402] See BOA. DH. MKT. 1406-49.

[403] Müge Özbek, "The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu (1875–1915)" *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2010): 557.

[404] Charles MacFarlane, who travelled to Istanbul in the 1820s, noted that during Ramazan, when open female prostitution was suppressed, male prostitutes took their places in coffeehouses and brothels across the city. See Charles MacFarlane, *Turkey and Its Destiny: The Result of Journeys Made in 1847 and 1848 to Examine into the State of That Country*, vol. 2 (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1850): 107.

written, “the music halls, birahanes, cafes, and also the brothels, were among the first institutions where, potentially, a considerable proportion of the city public were confronted with ‘Europe’, not in its abstract form as principles of governance and politics, but as an everyday culture that the population could personally experience and consume.”[405] The next chapter will focus more specifically on the emergence of the Ottoman theatre as a space of sexual and national self-definition, but it is enough to say here that the rise of the staged theatre in Istanbul was, from its start, inxorably intertwined with processes of heteronormalization and the cultivation of national identities amongst its audience. Alongside these exterior spaces, the Tanzimat period was marked by a clear shift in the domestic material culture of Istanbul’s upper and middle classes, as well as a move away from extended households towards nuclear families on the model of the European bourgeois.[406] The effects of all of these changes was that, for the Ottoman elite, homo-eroticism – now identified as rooted in an abstract sexuality (*Lutilik*) – became seen as utterly incompatible with their sociocultural and, indeed, national aspirations. The result of this was that by the accession of Abdülhamid II in 1876, homoeroticism had largely been disavowed by these classes; as the historian Ahmet Cevdet wrote in his treatise *Ma’ruzat* (“Petition”), “the lovers of women have proliferated and the lovers of boys have diminished. It is as if the tribe of Lot has disappeared. In Istanbul, the love and concern for young men that was [once] known and usual, has [since] moved over to girls.” (*Zen-dostlar çoğalup mahbublar azaldı. Kavm-ı Lut sanki yere batdı. İstanbul'da öteden berü delikanlılar içün mar'uf u mu'tad olan aşk u alaka, hal-ı tabi'isi üzre kızlara müntakil oldu*.)[407] He goes on to state that, among the elite, no famous boy-lovers (*gulamparelik*) remained; those that did continued only in hiding, due to “foreigner’s objections” (*ecanibin i'tirazatından ihtiraz ile gulampareliğini ihfaya çalışurdu*).[408] We should not take Ahmet

[405] Malte Fuhrmann, “Down and Out on the Quays of Izmir,” 171.

[406] For the attitudes of Ottoman youth regarding the traditional Ottoman family during the Tanzimat period, see, for example, Osman Hamdi’s comments to his father in letters dating to 1870. From Edhem Eldem,“An Ottoman Traveler to the Orient: Osman Hamdi Bey,” in *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism*, Zeynep Inankur, Reina Lewis, and Mary Roberts, eds. (Istanbul: Suna and Inan Kiraç Foundation, Pera Museum, 2011): 184.

[407] Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Ma‘rûzât,* Yusuf Halaçoğlu, ed. (İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1980): 9.

[408] Ibid.

Cevdet's statement to mean that the Ottoman elite was wholly heteronormalized, or that homosexual practices entirely ceased. Indeed, it may be worthwhile to translate his words literally, in this instance: as he writes, homosexuals *yere batdı*, or "went underground." This process of concealment, suppression and erasure would only continue during the Hamidian period, as a program of intensive censorship clamped down upon all illicit discourse.

But it was not the case that the sexual practices of the 18th century Ottoman culture simply disappeared. As Hanıoğlu writes, "Tanzimat culture (as opposed to the more structural aspects of reform) did not penetrate very deeply. The differential pace of modernization broadened the gap between the elite and mass cultures immeasurably."[409] Among the broader population of Istanbul – not only Muslims, but also among the lower-classes of Non-Muslims and itinerant groups like migrants, sailors, and Gypsies, the older practices of Ottoman sexuality continued. Former Janissaries played a key role in the preservation of these customs. Of course it was not the case that the Janissaries were entirely eliminated in 1826 – Janissaries were deeply interwoven into all facets of Ottoman urban life, and many simply returned to the commercial occupations in which they had already established themselves. Although the *Vaka-ı Hayriye* was accompanied by the closure of many of the city's coffehouses – in effect, cutting off the Janissaries economic lifeline and their main gathering space in one action – the number of coffeehouses in the city soon returned to its former number.[410] Within these spaces, uncensored *karagöz* and *köçek* performances continued, albeit now illicitly and largely under the cover of darkness.[411] Janissaries also entered into a number of new professions: in particular, the city's neighborhood firefighter brigades, the *tulumbacı*s absorbed not only the Janissaries but also preserved their former *orta* affiliations.[412] According to Sadi Yaver Ataman,

409 M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire,* 105.

410 For example, Ottoman spy reports record at least 235 coffeehouses operating in Istanbul between 1840 and 1845. This is significantly less than the numbers recorded for earlier periods, but still substantial, and not all coffeehouses were surveilled. See, Cengiz Kırlı, "The Struggle over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman İstanbul, 1780-1845," 140.

411 Theophile Gautier, for example, was able to witness an illicit performance of uncensored *karagöz* in the back garden of a coffeehouse in Tophane. See Theophile Gautier, *Constantinople*, 172.

412 See Reşad Ekrem Koçu, *İstanbul Tulumbacılar,* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2016).

Janissary coffeehouses simply became *tulumbacı* coffeehouses,[413] and that well into the late 19th century *tulumbacı*s continued to possess *köçek* beloveds.[414] Başiretçi Ali Efendi, for example, describes witnessing a "very shameful" (*pek ayıp*) *köçek* performance in a *tulumbacı* coffeehouse, the subject matter of which "perverted morality" (*maddesi ahlaki ifsat eder*).[415] Around the city's bathhouses Janissaries also found work as attendants or owners, or they blended into the rough *külhanbeyi* subculture centered around the bathhouse stoke-holes.[416] Among these urban subcultures the full range of earlier Ottoman sociosexual practices continued, albeit now under the discouse of criminal conduct.

In fact, it is in the popular crime literature of the late Tanzimat period that we see the full range of illicit sexualities represented. In age of press censorship and widespread illiteracy, sensationalized crime ballads (*cinayet destanları*) became extraordinarily popular among Istanbul's urban poor; these ballads, both written and performed by itinerant musicians (*aşık*), had an even greater reach than the newspapers of the time.[417] Among these ballads, which were generally based upon recently occurred and well-known events, we read of *tulumbacı*s murdering their unrequited male beloveds (*şabb-ı emred*),[418] alongside depictions of sadomasochism, sexual murder, and incest[419] – that is, the whole spectrum of criminalized and pathologized sexual practices. The murders of desirable young men by jealous lovers was a common motif; in one *destan*, from 1889, a young soldier renowned among the *tulumbacı*s for his beauty is killed by his male beloved in a drunken argument.[420] Though only the most dramatic and provocative tales were recorded into these ballads, their importance as a source for daily practice should not be understated: after all, this was an art form that was produced and consumed by its subjects, and as such clearly reflects the

413 Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul,* 450.
414 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Boğazkesen Tulumba Sandığı, Boğazkesenliler," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* 2935–36.
415 Basiretçi Ali Efendi. *İstanbul Mektupları*. (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2001): 337.
416 Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 309.
417 See Özkul Çobanoğlu, "Street-Destans in the Turkish Minstrel Tradition." T*urkish Studies Association Bulletin*, vol. 25, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 11.
418 Nurçin İleri, "A Nocturnal History of Fin-de-Siecle Istanbul" (Ph.D diss., SUNY Binghampton, 2015): 84.
419 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Cinayet Destanları," *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* 3575-3577*;* see also Özkul Çobanoğlu, "Street-Destans in the Turkish Minstrel Tradition," 12-13.
420 Nurçin İleri, "A Nocturnal History of Fin-de-Siecle Istanbul," 84.

preoccupations and lived experiences of their class. What is remarkable in these songs is not so much their lurid content (although this too is telling) as the literary form in which they were presented: as Özkul Çobanoğlu writes, the genre's "formal characteristics, motifs, formulas, and style remained remarkably consistent" with its pre-19th century precursors.[421] The proliferation of *cinayet destanları* form in the second half of the 19th century naturally had an effect on the other performing arts in development at the time – for example, the Ottoman novel, which took as among its most central motifs lurid stories of sex and crime in Galata, or the emergent subcultures of Greek *mangas* and *rembetiko* culture[422] and *kanto*. The criminalized sexualities of the lower classes was not just regulated through legal penalties: institutions, too, were established to suppress and reform sexuality, particularly among the youth. Not only prostitutes but all unattended young women of the lower classes came under official suspicion; articles in the press claimed that young beggar girls were largely secret prostitutes and that they represented a grave danger to public health and national morality.[423] Police gained the authority to remove childen from the streets and place them into institutions such as boarding schools or military facilities. To reform dissolute youth and prevent them from falling into violent crime and prostitution, beginning in 1867 workhouses (*ıslahhane*) were constructed to clear the streets of vagrant children and orphans.[424] These spaces, which were in theory vocational schools but were in practice often sweatshops providing free labor for local enterprises, were justified on the grounds that unattended children were both sexually vulnerable and a sexual menace. As Nazan Maksudyan has written, roaming young men of the lower classes – that is, *emred* – were represented as loci of violent behavior and social disorder; girls, by contrast, "were in danger because of their sexuality, while that same sexuality posed a corrupting threat to society in general."[425] The gap between the sexuality of Istanbul's bourgeois classes and

421 Özkul Çobanoğlu, "Street-Destans in the Turkish Minstrel Tradition," 11.
422 Some researchers have, for instance, placed the origins of *rembetiko* to the destans and Greek taverna performers of the mid-Tanzimat period. See Güngor Fırat, "Ulus-Devlet Anlayışı Karşısında Toplumsal Hafızanın Direnişi: Rembetiko Örnek Olayı," (M.A. thesis, Gazi Universitesi, 2014): 106.
423 Müge Özbek, "The Regulation of Prostitution in Beyoğlu (1875–1915)," 556.
424 See Nazan Maksudyan, "Orphans, Cities, and the State," 493-511.
425 Ibid., 498

that of the city's underclasses was not as wide or as strictly defined as may appear here; lower classes aspired towards bourgeois modes of conduct and adapted to them as much as was financially possible, and – from the other direction – upper class youth sought the thrills and authenticity that only life in Istanbul's rougher neighborhoods could provide. As we have seen in the case of Ahmet Rasim and his friends, even students at the prestigious Daruşşafaka school still managed to find themselves in the brothels of Karaköy after hours. These sexual practices, although intrinsically tied to class, were nevertheless porous and malleable.

Kanto evolved in this milleu. As established in the previous chapter, the *kanto* audience, while originating in the underworld culture of the theatres in Karaköy and Galata and spreading from there to the aspirational lower classes receptive to *tuluat* theatre, nevertheless quickly gained a wide appreciation among Muslims Turks of all classes. *Kanto* appealed to sexualities of both the upper and lower classes; its hetero-eroticism appealed to upper-class and bourgeois audiences that found *köçek* performance and homoeroticism increasingly deviant and distasteful, whilst at the same time it existed within a tradition that was familiar and relevant to the experiences of Muslim residents of lower-class neighborhoods in Istanbul. We can perhaps read *kanto*'s shift from a Galata-centered theatre towards Şehzadebaşı and Gedikpaşa as emblematic of this mixed appeal, although this transition was never total and occured quite quickly after the genre's emergence. Just as the *cinayet destanı* adapted the older form of the *aşık* ballad to the discursive circumstances of its era, so too did *kanto* offer, not a Westernization, but rather a heteronormalization of the *çengi-köçek* tradition. Even before *kanto* emerged, the upper classes had largely redefined the roles of the male *çengi-köçek,* turning them into representations of masculinity performed by female dancers. But this was a fundamentally rather awkward construct, because the sexual system for which these roles had evolved – that of a male desirer who could take both men and women as beloveds – no longer existed. It is not for nothing that these latter performances were largely patronized by elite women, thus making the female *köçek* legible as a performance of acceptable heterosexual desire. *Kanto* was, to some extent, a response to this ambiguity: now the representation of the female object of desire, and the presence of the genuine female subject, were united in one performative

setting. Although this sexuality was still modulated – as we shall see, not only by the *kantocu*'s various characters and personae but also by their actual and performed ethnic and national identities – it was nevertheless considerably more reflective of its cultural context than that of *çengi-köçek* dance.

It seems clear that Ze'evi's suggestion of a late-19th century sexual silence in the Ottoman Empire is problematic, at the very least for Istanbul. Ze'evi proposes a early modern Ottoman sexuality that "collapsed under the onslaught of the travelogue" in the 19th century, with "almost no alternative" sexual scripts arising in its stead.[426] Rather, I believe that the dichotomous sexual culture of early modern Istanbul was only widened as a result of the Ottoman project of national development and sexual disciplining, which began in earnest in the mid-18th century and entered into the legal realm with the New Order of Selim III. As a result of both European influence and an indigenous process related to the elimination of heterodox forces such as the Janissaries and the Bektaşi orders, the Ottoman state became increasingly heteronormative; this was joined by the implementation of biopolitical policies in common with other European states. Among the Ottoman literate elite (both Muslim and non-Muslim) the influence of French-language media and discourse led to, by the Tanzimat period, a general merging of Ottoman and Western European heteronormative practices, at least in public. Rather than being silenced, these Ottomans simply entered into the discursive sphere of European – or else, "modern" - sexuality. Among the broader populace, however, earlier Ottoman sexual practices and discourse remained largely intact and productive, albeit often illicitly. The emergence of *kanto* represented a product of these two modes of conduct - and the *kantocu*s, it must be said, were anything but silent.

[426] Dror Ze'evi, "Hiding Sexuality," 50.

4. NATIONALISM AND EROTICISM IN THE HAMIDIAN-ERA THEATRE

No study of the Ottoman theatre space can avoid the question of nationalism, for, as in all areas of Ottoman society, the discourses of nationalism played key roles in the evolution of the performing arts. To a certain extent, language was the primary battleground for these competing national ideologies. As we have seen, the musical and theatrical culture of the early modern Ottoman state was largely multilingual, albeit at times dominated by different communitarian groups, and even well into the late 18th century musical motifs and styles were exchanged between Muslim, Jewish, Greek and Armenian performers regardless of primary language. As language rights became a defining aspect of national identity formation in the 19th century, beginning with Greek in the early part of the century and expanding to encompass Arabic, Armenian, Albanian, Bulgarian, Kurdish, Ladino, and Turkish by the century's end,[427] so too did the Ottoman theatre space come to be divided along linguistic lines. Broadly speaking, the Ottoman theatre became a victim of the increasing "structural polarization of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities," a consequence of what Fatma Müge Göçek has called the deepening "ethnic segmentation" of the 19th century Ottoman Empire.[428]

Yet it must be noted that this increasing ethnic segmentation of the theatre audience was never accompanied by a corresponding segmentation of the theatre performers or the theatre space. An examination of the roster of Güllü Agop's Ottoman Theatre troupe from

[427] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 99.
[428] Fatma Müge Göçek, "Ethnic Segmentation, Western Education, and Political Outcomes: Nineteenth-CenturyOttoman Society," *Poetics Today,* vol. 14, no. 3, Cultural Processes in Muslim and Arab Societies: Modern Period I (Autumn, 1993): 517.

1873-74, for example, showcases the diversity of the Ottoman theatrical scene, even as the troupe was performing the explicitly Ottoman nationalist play *Vatan yahut Silistre* ("The Fatherland or Silistra") by the Turkish Muslim playwright Namık Kemal. Among the company's actors included a number of Armenians, Muslims, Greeks and Levantines; only the troupe's actresses are uniformly Armenian. Güllü Agop himself, as an Armenian convert to Islam whose troupe performed both Turkish, Armenian and French-language plays, is emblematic of the cosmopolitanism of the Ottoman theatre at this time.[429] Furthermore, many figures prominent in the creation of these national theatres – the aforementioned Şemseddin Sami in the case of the Albanian theatre, for example – remained highly committed to the Ottoman project, and aimed to develop their national literatures within the framework of a broader Ottoman culture.[430] Lastly, the theatre spaces, such as the Naum Theatre or the Gedikpaşa Theatre, were shared between Armenian, Turkish, French and Italian language performances, although generally on different days.

Beyond linguistic issues, national representations *within* the theatre itself were also important: how ethnicities were depicted, how national discourses was constructed on stage. Explicitly nationalist theatre and music existed throughout theTanzimat and Hamidian periods, albeit under considerable pressure from state censorship and surveillance. Although censorship of the theatre is most closely associated with the reign of Abdülhamid II, and many of the most famous and ludicrous examples of censorship date to this era – from the prohibition of the word *yıldız,* "star," on account of the Sultan's residence in Yıldız Palace, or the banning of the word *burun,* "nose," to avoid offending Abdülhamid II personally[431] – in fact, censorship had been just as heavy, if less capricious, under the reign of his predecessor Abdülaziz.[432] Indeed, perhaps the most impactful single instance of censorship in the Ottoman era occured during this period: the *Vatan* incident, in

[429] "Güllü Agop" *Yedigün*, no. 376 (May 21, 1955): 12.

[430] For example, though Şemseddin Sami was interested in the promotion and standardization of the Albanian language, he also intellectually invested in the project of Ottoman social and linguistic reform. See Jane C. Sugarman, "Imagining the Homeland: Poetry, Songs, and the Discourses of Albanian Nationalism," *Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999): 428.

[431] Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839-1923," 55.

[432] Mecih Erol, "Surveillance, urban governance and legitimacy in late Ottoman Istanbul: spying on music and entertainment during the Hamidian regime (1876–1909)" *Urban History*, 40, 4 (2013): 714.

which – following the premiere of *Vatan yahut Silistre* at the Gedikpaşa Theatre on April 1, 1873 – a crowd of enthusiastic spectators led a march to the offices of Namık Kemal while chanting nationalist slogans and barely-veiled calls for the dethronement of Abdülaziz.[433] The following day, the newspaper that Namık Kemal managed, *İbret*, was closed down, and soon after Namık Kemal himself, alongside a number of other reformist literary figures like Ahmet Mithat, was sent into exile. Güllü Agop was also arrested, although he was released shortly afterwards. Aside from effecting a "political cleansing" of the theatre, dampening the enthusiam for nationalist plays on the part of theatre owners, this act also made literary martyrs out of Namık Kemal and Ahmet Mithat.[434] Indeed, audience interest in these plays soared soon afterwards, and when *Vatan* was performed again after the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, tens of thousands came out to see the play's revival matinées, and many audience member had memorized the script word-for-word.[435] Nevertheless, as a consequence of the *Vatan* incident, representations of explicit nationalism were replaced in the late Tanzimat and Hamidian-era theatres by more allusive or oblique references. Greek theatre and music came under especially heavy suspicion, in part due to the hostile relations between Greece and the Ottoman Empire; spies surveilled performances of the Greek national anthem, keeping track of who took of their hats, and Greek operas were suppressed based upon supposed political messages in the text.[436] Even mention of Ancient Greece could fall under the censor's eye: according to the American writer Jerome Alfred Hart, a proposed performance of Racine's *Phedre* by Sarah Bernhardt in 1905 was suppressed for the reason that "the Greeks are notoriously the most rebellious subjects of the Sultan," and as such they were not fit subjects for a play.[437]

But just as the theatre was a nationalist space, contested over by competing national ideologies, symbols and representations, so too was it an eroticized and sexual space. Indeed, as George Mosse notes, these two aspects of the space were "enmeshed," writing

433 Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839-1923," 53.
434 Melis Süloş, "Between Theatrical Politics and Political Theatre: Late Ottoman Theatrical Spheres," (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010): 86.
435 Ibid., 130-131.
436 Mecih Erol, "Surveillance, urban governance and legitimacy in late Ottoman Istanbul," 722.
437 Jerome Alfred Hart, *A Levantine Log-Book* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1905): 114.

that "nationalism helped control sexuality, yet also provided the means through which changing sexual attitudes could be absorbed and tamed into respectability. In addition, it assumed a sexual dimension of its own, coming to advocate a stereotype of supposedly "passionless" beauty for both men and women."[438] This process is, of course, clear enough in a play like *Vatan yahut Silistre*, which includes in almost rote form all of the characteristics of the archetypical nationalist play – including the woman soldier in male clothing, Zekiye, whose transgression is allowed on the basis of national crisis (but who, of course, immediately returns to domesticity following the nation's victory).[439] But in a deeper sense, the staged theatre was in itself fundamentally eroticized, with actresses regarded as, if not sexually available, then at least appropriate objects of sexual fantasy. It was for this reason that Muslim women were, until the 1920s, legally prohibited from performing on stage. An essential paradox existed: the theatre was the place for the evocation of national pride, but this same pride, associated with the sexual respectability of the nation's women, prevented women of the nation from performing as themselves on stage. As an example, though the role of the main male character in *Vatan*, İslam Bey, was played by a Muslim man, Zekiye was instead portrayed by Armenian women even into the era of the Republic.[440]

In *kanto* we see both of these phenomena intertwined. *Kanto* was not an explicitly nationalist theatre, but it could not avoid nationalist or patriotic discourse; furthermore, as we have briefly discussed in Chapter 2, ethnicity was a key component of the identities of both *kantocu*s and their audience, and as such was a clear element of the performance whether stated explicitly or not. As was noted in that chapter, however, despite largely borrowing its roster of ethnic types from the *karagöz* shadow theatre, *kanto* abandoned those types most closely reflective of the subculture's performers and audience: that is, the Turkish, Armenian, Greek, and Frankish ethnic stereotypes. Instead, ethnic and national representations in *kanto* were heavily dominated by two, somewhat more obscure ethnic

[438] George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality,* 10.
[439] This was a common theme in French and German patriotic plays of the same era. See Ibid., 101.
[440] Cora Skylstad, "Acting the Nation," 74.

types: *Çingene*, or Romani, and *Acem*, or Iranian. To a lesser extent, Jewish, Arab and Laz stereotypes were also performed, but the disproportionate prevalence of the former two types warrants further explanation. This chapter aims to examine two central questions: in the first place, why were Armenian and Greek representations largely absent from *kanto*, despite its status as a comic, openly erotic theatre? Secondly, why was it that these two particular types so dominated, not just the genre of ethnic *kanto*s, but *kanto* performance in general?

To start with, it is necessary to look at how, precisely, the Ottoman theatre space became situated as a zone of nationalist discourse and sexualized interaction. As we have seen in the previous chapter, certain performers, such as *çengi*s and *köçek*s, had always been understood in sexual terms, and traditional Ottomant theatre – whether the shadow theatre or *orta oyunu* – always contained elements of sexual burlesque. Yet though these were theatres of ethnic types, ethnicity was not necessarily a defining feature of sexualization: as we have read in the last chapter, in the 16th century professions such as *çengi*s and *köçeks* were relatively mixed in terms of their ethnic backgrounds, although Roma and Greeks made up a major component of any troupe. By the early 19th century this situation had not changed dramatically, although the process of heteronormalization and the profession's affiliation with Janissary identity had somewhat altered its context. The introduction of the staged theatre, however, represented something considerably different. In the first place, the staged theatre was associated rather specifically with the city's European population, with performances enjoyed largely by "ambassadors in Istanbul and other foreigners," alongside some "Turks who had seen Europe."[441] Secondly, from the start it was promoted largely under the aegis of the Ottoman state. Even before the Tanzimat period, French and Italian, dancers, opera troupes, and circuses had performed for the courts of Selim III and Mahmud II.[442] The imperial court made sure to co-opt famous travelling performers into the Ottoman system of court patronage, through the employment of imperial honours or financial rewards: the performers at the circus of M. Soulié, for

441 Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?*, 139.
442 Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839-1923," 50.

example, were placed on the palace payroll by Mahmud II, while the Italian maestro Gaetano Donizetti was given a medallion and an honorary commission by Abdülmecid in return for restructuring the palace band along European lines.[443]

This continued throughout the Tanzimat era; the pianist Franz Liszt, for instance, was given a sultanic honor upon visiting the Ottoman court in 1847, while other famous European musicians were commissioned with producing marches and anthems for the Ottoman state.[444] The establishment of the Naum Theatre by the Armenian brothers Michel Naum and Joseph Naum in 1844, on the site of an older stage operated by the Italian illusionist Bartolomeo Bosco, was a pivotal event in the history of the Istanbul theatrical scene (see Figure 14). Though the theatre was, in its first form, largely sponsored by the European community of Istanbul, it quickly became the venue through which European theatrical tastes and those of the Ottoman court converged. The theatre's prominent location, on the Grande Rue of Pera opposite the newly established Ottoman Medical School (the modern Galatasaray Lisesi), marked it as one of the cultural institutions of the Tanzimat state, and it quickly was adopted by Sultan Abdülmecid as his personal theatre of choice. After a fire in 1846 destroyed the previous wooden building, Abdülmecid sponsored the reconstruction of the theatre in brick; as Refik Ahmet Sevengil noted, this was in large part a political act designed to showcase the beneficence of the Sultan towards the city's European community, as well as to preempt any donation by the area's European consulates.[445] Under this patronage the Naum Theatre acquired a number of imperial trappings, including a special latticed box for the Sultan's private usage, and attracted a new audience of palace bureaucrats and attendent hangers-on.[446] By the 1860s, the Naum Theatre had become the epicenter for Istanbul's new theatrical culture, and this brought with it a venue for the performance of new modes of social conduct. As we have seen in the previous chapter, by the 1850s the Ottoman elite classes had come increasingly to abandon

443 Melis Süloş, "Between Theatrical Politics and Political Theatre," (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010): 62-63.
444 Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Saray Tiyatrosu* (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1962): 27-28.
445 Ibid., 18.
446 Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *İstanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?,* 139.

the open homoeroticism that had characterized palace culture even as late as the reign of Mahmud II; instead displays of hetero-eroticism and explicitly heterosexual conduct had become increasingly normalized. The Naum Theatre offered a prominent and glamorous venue for the performance of heterosexual sociability. In Ahmet Midhat Efendi's 1876 novel *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, for example, the French-language theatre is described as a zone of open flirtation between men and women, especially on the part of the overly-Westernized upper class scion Felatun Bey. As Ahmet Midhat writes,

> "It is often said that the theatre is the best place to discover the true personality of a young man. Those who saw Felatun Bey at a theatre never noticed him entering the married ladies' box to greet them. He was always busy laughing in the boxes of unattended women or those who treated every man as their owner."[447]

The more traditionally-valued Rakım Efendi, by contrast, acts in a more reserved manner in the theatre, albeit still aware of its social role. As the novel progresses, Felatun Bey enters into a relationship with a French actress of Italian extraction, Mme. Polini, upon whom he lavishes attention and money until she leaves him financially ruined. Polini's type – described in the novel somewhat baldly as a "theatre whore" - is given as a kind of warning to the reader by Ahmet Midhat: she is the sort of women who "has no heart." Though the novel is set after the Naum Theatre's destruction in the Great Fire of Pera in 1870, it is noted in the book that the Naum Theatre held the same social role for the generation of Felatun's father – that is to say, during the 1850s and 1860s.[448] In fact, the open sexuality of the theatre – particularly during intermissions, when audience members would exchange flirtatious greetings or visit the actors and actresses backstage -was not so much a side-effect of the theatre space as it was an intrinsic and expected aspect of it. As Berlainstain has noted in regards to the French theatre space of the 19th century, "the theatrical establishment understood the eroticism [of the theatre] to be a component of a

[447] Ahmet Midhat Efendi, *Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi: An Ottoman Novel,* trans. Melih Levi, Monica M. Ringer (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016): 52-53.
[448] Ibid., 3.

fashionable lifestyle for the upper classes. Theater columnists explored the stage as a male, heterosexual experience."[449] The theatre offered a zone for respectable flirtation between men and women, although the presence of courtesans and mistresses also added to the theatre's sexual allure. Far more impressive than these courtesans, however, were the theatre's actresses. As Berlainstain writes,"actresses were uniquely desired women," and over time they "became the preeminent consorts of men at the top of the social hierarchy and remained so at least up to the First World War. The pursuit of theater women as mistresses was something of an obligation among elite men of France."[450] As we have seen in the case of Felatun Bey and his consort Mme. Polini, this was no less true in Istanbul as it was in Paris. In fact, the European actress consort was something of a trope in late Ottoman literature; İbnülhakkı Mehmed Tahir's 1912 book *Müteehhil ve Gayr-ı Müteehhillere: Sefâlethâneler*, for example, tells a similar story of an upstanding Muslim gentleman ruined by a French actress/prostitute.[451]

Yet did these depictions reflect reality? In fact, we know that the vast majority of actresses in Istanbul were Armenian or Greek; in the music halls, most female singers were Bohemian or German.[452] As Rifat Balı has demonstrated, even in the world of prostitution the French and Italian prescence was negligible; the vast majority of prostitutes in Istanbul were Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, with Austro-Hungarian and Romanian citizens making up the largest foreign component.[453] To a certain extent, this trope may have simply been a reflection on the French media consumed in the Ottoman capital at the time, which often took the topic of the Parisian demimonde as a provocative and lurid setting: Halide Edip records the impression that Emile Zola's *Nana* made upon her and her contemporaries,[454]

449 Lenard Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve,* 106.
450 Ibid., 2.
451 İrvin Cemil Schick, "Nationalism Meets the Sex Trade," 4.
452 See Malte Fuhrmann, "Down and Out on the Quays of Izmir: 'European' Musicians, Innkeepers, and Prostitutes in the Ottoman Port-Cities." Also, Theophile Gautier, in describing Istanbul's musical scene, also notes the prevalence of Bohemian orchestras playing "playing German waltzes and overtures of Italian operas." See Theophile Gautier, *Constantinople,* 94.
453 Rifat Balı, "Yirminci Yüzyılın Başlarında İstanbul'un Fuhuş Aleminde Yahudilerin Yeri," *Devlet'in Yahudileri ve "Öteki" Yahudi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004): 14.
454 Halide Edip Adıvar, *Mor Salkımlı Ev*, 129.

and Alexandre Dumas's *La Dame aux Camelias* was a staple of the Ottoman theatre circuit,[455] in part because its apolitical subject allowed it to escape censorship.[456] But when we consider a novel like *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, in which the Ottoman gentleman who stays true to traditional values, Rakım Efendi, is able to win the heart of not only his Circassian slave, but also that of the Levantine piano teacher he befriends and the English girl that he tutors, we may strike at a second possibility. It is not hard to see in this novel a kind of late Ottoman male sexual fantasy, in which the increasing political humiliation of the Ottoman Empire at the hands of the European states is redressed in the sexual conquest of European women. Unlike Felatun Bey, who – in the *alafranga* fashion – becomes enthralled to a Europe that robs him of his values and his wealth, Rakım Efendi causes Europe to fall at his feet as a consequence of his superior morals and faith in Ottoman custom. When Rakım Efendi ultimately chooses the traditional Ottoman consort, the Circassian slavegirl, whom he marries and frees, the victory of the Ottoman way of life is complete: Europe is subdued and satiated, inspired by Rakım Efendi's moral example, and the Ottoman husband and wife live together in in bliss.

By the era of *kanto*, however, this fantasy could no longer be reliably sustained. European economic domination of the Ottoman Empire, particularly after the Ottoman bankruptcy in 1876 and the establishment of the Public Debt Administration in 1881, became increasingly explicit; as Edhem Eldem has written, "a steady flow of western capital started to penetrate the Ottoman market at an increasing rate, and most of all, in ways that entailed a greater control over some of the most crucial sectors of the economy. In short, from the 1890s on, Ottoman integration with Europe had started to take a substantially different course, much akin to imperialism."[457] The adoption of expensive *alafranga* fashions in such a context increasingly came to be seen as something unpatriotic and dangerous;[458] this was particularly true after the great Ottoman boycott of Austro-

[455] Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet, *A Social History of Ottoman Istanbul,* 282.
[456] Cora Skylstad, "Acting the Nation," 39.
[457] Edhem Eldem, "Ottoman financial integration with Europe: foreign loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman public debt," *European Review*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2005): 443.
[458] Elif Kiraz, "Ottoman Spectators: Morality and Conservatism in 19th Century Ottoman Humor Magazines, a Case Study of Latife and Tiyatro," (M.A. Thesis, İstanbul Bilgi University, 2012): 78.

Hungarian goods in 1908. European military interventions, from those which excised large portions of the Ottoman borderlands at the start of Abdülhamid II's reign to the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 and the forced autonomy of Crete in 1898. The heady enthusiasm and optimism of the Tanzimat period vis-a-vis the West, and belief in the possibility of the Ottoman Empire becoming a normalized member of the Congress of Europe, could not in any realistic sense be held into the 1890s, when *kanto* was rapidly becoming popular in Istanbul. Of course, as we have seen, *kanto* did satirize the uncritical adoption of European novelties, such as the bicycle, but in a comic theatre the type of the European woman was perhaps too loaded a character to successfully integrate into the performance.

But what of the Greek and Armenian types? As we have seen, nationalist theatre was under strict surveillance and censorship during the reigns of Abdülaziz and Abdülhamid II, in particular. Even nominally pro-Ottoman nationalist theatre, like the plays of Namık Kemal or Ahmet Midhat, came under heavy suspicion of advocating for political change within the Empire. In such an environment all theatre necessarily operated under a climate of caution, especially as the regulatory bodies responsible for the theatre were somewhat overlapping and capricious in nature and their jurisdictions rather unclear. Beginning as early as 1860, the theatres of Istanbul – in particular the Gedikpaşa Theatre, which performed largely in Turkish – were placed under municipal control and assigned a police officer responsible for censoring theatrical content.[459] In 1877, the 14 municipalities of Istanbul – which had increasingly gained in responsibilities following their creation in 1857[460] - became "responsible for inspecting the order and the cleanliness of the restaurants, coffeehouses, casinos, theatres, places where acrobats performed, street fairs and other places where crowds of people gathered," while the Police Ministry attained jurisdiction over the security of these spaces.[461] While in the early stages of this development theatre owners had substantial say in the management of these directorates – Michel Naum, for

459 Mecih Erol, "Surveillance, urban governance and legitimacy in late Ottoman Istanbul," 713.

460 Steven Rosenthal, "Foreigners and Municipal Reform in Istanbul: 1855-1865," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Apr., 1980): 233.

461 Mecih Erol, "Surveillance, urban governance and legitimacy in late Ottoman Istanbul," 714

instance, sat on the board of the 6th Municipality, governing Pera and Galata[462] – by the Hamidian period these boards began to operate in a considerably more top-down manner and were consequently more opaque in their decisions. Prior to the 1880s, numerous government officials had been prominent in the promotion of the theatre: Ziya Pasha, in Adana, promoted the performance of plays in the city's theatre, while Ahmet Vefik Pasha, the reformist governor of Bursa, even sponsored out-of-favour playwrights fleeing the oppressive climate in Istanbul.[463] Contemporaneous with the emergence of *kanto*, however, a major crackdown was begun on the Ottoman theatre space. In 1882, Ahmet Vefik was removed from office, and Bursa lost its status as a safe haven.[464] In 1883, this crackdown was consolidated with the formation of the Tiyatrolar Müfettişliği, the Theatre Inspectorate, which assumed complete control over the staging and content of performances.[465] The archives of the Tiyatrolar Müfettişliği represent a rich source for understanding state involvement in the Ottoman theatre. As we shall see, it was not only the dramatic theatre which came under suspicion, but the comic theatre as well.

Within one year of the establishment of the Inspectorate, perhaps the most monumental act of Hamidian-era censorship took place: the destruction of the historic Gedikpaşa Theatre in a single night by municipal workmen after the performance of two of Ahmet Midhat's plays *Çerkes Özdenleri* (The Circassians) and *Çengi.* Whether due to fears that the play was inciting Circassian nationalism,[466] or that the theatre had become a haven for the Young Turk opposition to Abdülhamid's regime,[467] the end result was the loss of the "first temple of Turkish theatre" and an understandable silencing of theatrical discourse in the city.[468] In such an environment, even loose allusions to Ottoman ethnonational communities were suspect. As İpek Yosmaoğlu has noted, "The suffocating atmosphere in which the press was forced to function owed its existence not so much to draconian rules

[462] Steven Rosenthal, "Foreigners and Municipal Reform in Istanbul," 235.
[463] Melis Süloş, "Between Theatrical Politics and Political Theatre," 97.
[464] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Tanzimat Tiyatrosu*, (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basım Evi, 1961): 132.
[465] Mecih Erol, "Surveillance, urban governance and legitimacy in late Ottoman Istanbul," 714.
[466] Ahmet Fehim, *Sahnede Elli Sene* (Istanbul: Mitos Boyut Yayınları, 2002): 21.
[467] Melis Süloş, "Between Theatrical Politics and Political Theatre," 93.
[468] Ahmet Fehim, *Sahnede Elli Sene,* 21.

and regulations as to the creation of a hierarchical system that rewarded only personal loyalty to the Sultan, generating self-censorship as a form of control with an independent dynamic of its own. [...] In this respect, it was the threat of censorship, rather than the censorship itself, that ensured the perpetuation of this unique political culture."[469] We may say that much the same was true for the theatre. Despite this practice of self-censorship, theatres, actors and actresses were essentially at the whim of the state, and often the caprices of low-level employees of the Police Ministry or the Theatre Inspectorate. At the height of this crackdown, in 1904, the performance of plays in Istanbul was banned altogether. It was only after the assasination of the architect of this policy, Şehremini Rıdvan Pasha, in 1906, that performances were able to resume.[470]

One might expect that the comic theatre would escape such heavy attention, but in fact this was hardly the case. *Kanto* and *tuluat*, from the start, were under state surveillance; as we recall, Ahmet Rasim noted the presence of police spies among the disreputable characters of the early *kanto* audience in 1880,[471] and as *kanto* gained in popularity, it became the subject of considerable police attention. Even as Fehim Pasha, the chief of the hated *jurnalcı*s (secret police), became a prominent attendee of performance by Peruz and other *kanto* stars,[472] *kanto* remained the object of official suspicion. A police report from August 12, 1903, for instance, records a *kanto* performance and duet in the Zambaoğlu garden in Kadıköy by a kantocu in the troupe of the *tuluatçı* Şevki (the *kantocu* is unnamed), which was supposedly "outside the bounds of morality and propriety" (*mugâyir-i ahlâk ve âdâb*) and "very ugly" to witness (*pek çirkin olduğu*). The report notes with some satisfaction that performances of the song have ceased following the inspector's expression of disapproval, while recommending that Şevki and his troupe be kept under closer

[469] İpek Yosmaoğlu, "Chasing the Printed Word: Press Censorship in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1913." T*urkish Studies Association Journal* 27 (2003): 47.

[470] See Metin And, *Türk Tiyatro Tarihi: Başlangıcından 1983'e* (İstanbul: İletişm Yayınları, 2017). It should also be noted that this policy was rather hypocritical of Rıdvan Pasha, as he had been noted regularly attending *kanto* performances by Peruz before the ban was instated. See, "Kantocu Peruz Hanım," 001525843006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

[471] Ahmet Rasim, *Fuhş-ı Atik*, 101.

[472] "Kantocu Peruz Hanım," 001525843006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

supervision in the future.[473] Another report, from July 4, 1904, records the performance of suspicious *kanto*s in Turkish and Arabic by a member of Kel Hasan's troupe in a garden theatre near Küçük Çamlıca. Beyond the "irrereverent" (*münâsebetsiz*) content of the songs, the "wierd form and costume" (*'acîb bir şekl ve kıyâfet*) of the singers was cause for alarm. The report warns that "new *kanto* magazines and theatre plays must be shown the rules and straightened out," and that *kanto* compilations (*kanto mecmuası*) and sheet music should be approved by the Ministry of Publications (*İdare-i Matbû'ât*) and free of illegible handwriting that might obscure obscene or subversive content.[474] Two days later, Şevki's troupe again found themselves in hot water, with a police report noting that performances of irreverent plays had continued.[475]

Police records also show that, even under such police pressure, performances of subversive or uncensored *kanto*s continued. A record dated to February 23, 1905, notes that at the Tepebaşı Theatre in Beyoğlu several "uncensored" (*sansür edilmemiş*) *kanto*s were sung containing "some harmful words" (*ba'zı muzırr kelimeleri*).[476] As can be seen above, the brunt of suspicion was placed upon male *tuluatçı*s and theatre operators rather than the *kantocu*s themselves, but it were these *kanto*s, rather than the slapstick comedy of the *tuluat* theatre, that aroused the most condemnation on the part of the theatre inspectors. Nevertheless, *tuluatçı*s could suffer at the hands of the state: the *tuluatçı* Abdi, for instance, was brought onto the payroll of the state by Abdülhamid II and given a residency at the Yıldız Palace Theatre, in a move widely considered at the time to be an attempt by the Sultan to dampen Abdi's popularity among the people.[477] Where *kantocu*s were explicitly targeted, however, was when they came under suspicion of promoting ethnic nationalism. In a revealing interview with the *kantocu* Küçük Virjin, entitled "How was a *Kantocu* Girl Carried Away to the Police During the Days of Tyranny?" the *kantocu* describes a fateful

473 BOA. DH. MKT. 756-21.
474 BOA. DH. MKT. 868-58.
475 Ibid.
476 BOA. DH. MKT. 934-33.
477 Muharram Varol, "İstanbul Şehri'nin "Udhûke-Perdâzı": Meşhur Komik Abdürrezzak (Abdi, ö. 1914)- The Famous Comedian Abdurrezzak Efendi (Abdi, d. 1914)" *Osmanlı Istanbullu*, Feridun M. Emecen, Ali Akyıldız and Emrah Safa Gürkan, eds. (İstanbul: İstanbul Mayıs Üniverstesi; İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2016): 871.

encounter with the Hamidian-era censors.[478] Her transgression, as she recounts, was to sing a *kanto* containing the words "hay," a rather common *kanto* refrain equivalent to "oh," and "nar," an Arabic loanword meaning "fire." Contextually, it is clear that this song refers to the fires of love, but the spies in the audience instead understood the Armenian *kantocu* to be singing the word *"Hay*", meaning Armenian, and advocating for Armenian revolution against the Empire. Believing her to be a member of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, commonly known as the Dashnaks, the spies arranged for her to be arrested by the police and interrogated. Upon an intervention by a Turkish friend named Ali Bey, Küçük Virjin was freed after spending only a night in custody. While this is clearly an extreme and rather ridiculous example, the message here nevertheless was clear. The kanto scene was under constant surveillance, even as a comic and largely apolitical theatre, and any hint of ethnic or national rabble-rousing or political commentary, no matter how slight, was liable to result in arrest and persecution. When we consider the political climate of the era, particularly following the highly-publicized Hamidian massacres of Armenians and the retaliatory seizure of the Ottoman Bank by the Dashnaks on August 26, 1896 (an act which itself provoked further massacres), it is clear that any depiction of Armenian ethnic types on stage was difficult, and almost impossible in a comic, burlesque context. Greek representations faces similar difficulties, particularly following the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 and the subsequent Ottoman loss of Crete. The performance of explicit Armenian and Greek ethnic types, in an era of political tension regarding these communities in Istanbul, was simply too risky to contemplate, even in the comic theatre. While available evidence suggests that few members of the *kanto* audience cared particularly about the ethnic identities of the *kantocu*s, beyond noting their distinctive accents, facial features and body types, it was clear that the state found it to be a matter of utmost importance. For this reason, the *kanto* theatre instead turned towards more distant, acceptable types.

[478] M. Süleyman Çapan, "Hay, Ermenice Ermeni Demektir, Nar da Arapça Ateş Demektir" 001525833006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

4.1. Ethnic Types in *Kanto* Performance: *Çingene Kantosu*

The most common ethnic type explicitly portrayed within the corpus of Hamidian-era *kanto* was that of the *Çingene* (Ottoman: *Çingâne*), or "Gypsy." Extant within all surviving *kanto* compilations, including both *Neşe-i Dil* and *Nubhe-i Elhan, Çingene kanto*s comprise a significant portion of the late Ottoman *kanto* canon, and were performed by all of the notable early *kanto* singers.[479] According to Ergun Hiçyılmaz, the performers most prominently associated with this form included Armenian *kantocu*s such as the famed Peruz, Şamram, and Büyük Amelya, as well as Rum *kantocu*s like Küçük Amelya, Virjin and Eleni;[480] this is to say, then, that the performance of this form was not limited by the performer's actual ethnic origin. Indeed, although *kantocu*s of Romani origin do appear in later contexts – most notable among these being a performer named Gülistan Hanım[481] - within the theatrical context of Hamidian-era *kanto* in Istanbul, the role of the Roma was portrayed exclusively by Armenian and Greek actresses. For the most part, these songs appear under the general title of "Çingene" or "Çingene kantosu" in the indexes of *kanto*s from this period, but especially notable songs, or ones associated with a particular artist, were often given specific titles. These included, for example, "Çingeneyiz Cilvekârız," sung by Eleni;[482] "Çingene Gibi Sefakar," sung by Tereza;[483] "Çingeneyiz Biz" and "Çalışkandır Çingeneler," both sung by Şamram;[484] and "Çingene Derler Bize," sung by Büyük Amelya.[485] Sonia Tamar Seeman, in her 2002 Ph.D. Thesis on representations of Roma in Turkish music, notes that it was not necessary for *kantocu*s to explicitly call themselves "Çingene;" as she writes, "the references between "Çingene" identity, singing,

[479] As an example, in the *kanto* compilation *Nubhe-i Elhan*, there are 89 *kanto*s recorded; of these, 13 are *Çingene kantosu*. For the full list, see Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 95-102.

[480] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 20.

[481] Risto Pekka Pennanen, "The Nationalization of Ottoman Popular Music in Greece," 7.

[482] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi," 98.

[483] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi," 99.

[484] Ruhi Ayangil, "Kanto", 420.

[485] Ibid.

dancing, drinking, and flirtatious behavior were so thoroughly interlinked that several "dark girl" *("kara kiz")* songs play on "Çingene" references without specifically naming the ethnic identity assumed by the performer."[486] Instead, other references were sufficient: for example, allusions to nomadic ways of life, to common "Gypsy" occupations like fortune-telling, metalworking, or to musical instruments associated with Ottoman Roma, such as *zurna* (flutes) or *zil* (handheld chimes or bells). It appears as though *Çingene kanto*s were an expected and regular part of each performer's repertoire, and we may thus assume that the form found some particular favour with the late Ottoman *kanto* audience.

Unlike *Acem kantosu*, described in the following section, *Çingene kanto*s did not rely upon a specialized exotic vocabulary in order to convey the *Çingene* ethnic type; that is, aside from the general usage of common Ottoman theatrical slang of Romani origin.[487] Rather, the signifiers of Roma identity were conveyed either through the subject matter of the songs, or were embodied by the performers themselves, via costume choice and dancing style.[488] According to Sadi Yaver Ataman, the musical accompaniment for these *Çingene kanto*s was also borrowed, to some extent, from the rhythms and melodic motifs of Istanbuliote Roma folk music (*Çingene türküleri*). As he writes, "...*kanto* singers like Peruz Hanım, like Şamram Hanım, achieved great success by composing *kantos* in accordance with these folk songs."[489] Though we may regard this as a rather blatant example of cultural appropriation, it should be remembered that Ottoman, Turkish, and Roma popular music have historically shared a wide variety of musical motifs and structures, and that by the late 19th century Roma music in the Balkans had already come under heavy Turkish influence in terms of rhythm, structure and melody.[490] The portrayal of Roma identity in the late Ottoman theatrical space, however, deserves further attention, and especially as embodied by non-Roma women within the sexually-charged context of *kanto* performance. How did these portrayals relate to the established portrayals of Roma in *karagöz* and *orta oyunu*

[486] Sonia Tamar Seeman,"'You're Roman!,'" 185.
[487] See, Metin And, "Tuluatçılar ve Kantocular Üzerine Notlar II" *Devlet Tiyatroları Dergisi*, (1966): 31-36.
[488] Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 21.
[489] Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 437.
[490] Robert Garfias, "Dance among the Urban Gypsies of Romania," *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, vol. 16 (1984): 87.

theatre, and how did they reflect the Ottoman conceptions of Roma within the late Ottoman ethnic and communal schema? Furthermore, why was the performance of Roma identity so widespread and popular among Ottoman audiences, and what connected the performance of Roma identity to the other roles that the *kantocu*s assumed?

To begin to answer the first question, it is worthwhile to examine how Roma women were represented in earlier Ottoman theatrical genres, and particularly within the popular theatres of urban ethnic and social types: that is to say, within the shared vocabularies of the *karagöz*, *orta oyunu,* and *meddah* traditions. Roma characters are prolific throughout these theatrical genres, albeit considerably more so within *karagöz* theatre: indeed, the protagonist Karagöz himself is often described as being of Roma ethnic background,[491] and one of Karagöz's many forms is referred to as "Çingene Karagöz," who, carrying the tools of a blacksmith and working as a scrap peddler, reflects some of the stereotypical professions of Ottoman Roma.[492] Emphasizing his status both as an outsider and underdog, this version of Karagöz introduces himself as being "from the poorest of the poor, a band of Gypsies."[493] Karagöz's Gypsy background may have further emphasized his nature as a liminal character, operating between social classes and outside of the regular norms of social expectations. In this, he mirrored the rather ambiguous status of the Roma within the Ottoman communitarian system, as a population who, in the words of Evliya Çelebi, "pretend to be Muslims, but are not even infidels."[494] Other male Roma characters included drunks (Matiz, likely from the Romani *matibe,* "drunkenness") and fools (Denyo, from the Romani *dilino*, "madman"), further typifying the image of Ottoman Roma as social outsiders. As Refik Ahmet Sevengil describes, Roma were also commonly associated with magicians and street hustlers (*hokkabaz*).[495]

491 Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire,* 135.
492 Uğur Göktaş, "Türk Gölge Oyunu Tasvirleri, Kişileri: Asıl Kişiler ve Kadınlar" in *Karagöz Kitabı*, ed. Sevengül Sönmez. (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2000): 70.
493 The original Ottoman text is as follows: "Efkar-ı fukaradan ve güruh-i kıptiyandanım." Ibid.
494 Ömer Ulusoy, "An Inquiry into the Ottomans' Knowledge and Perception of the Gypsies in the late 19th Century." *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi,* vol. 34 (2013): 248.
495 Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Istanbul Nasıl Eğleniyordu?,* 52-53.

Roma characters also included female liminal characters, such witches (*cazu*), who served as vehicles for absurd and scatological humour; notable among these is a character named Bok-Ana, or "Shit-Mother."[496] Alongside these characters, within the Ottoman theatrical space Roma were commonly portrayed as entertainers, either as female dancers, *çengi,* male dancers, *köçek*, or acrobats, *cambaz.* These characters reflected the strong Ottoman cultural associations between Roma and these particular professions. Indeed, the popular association between Roma women and dancing is close enough that the Turkish word for female dancer, *çengi*, has commonly been described as a derivation of *Çingene,* in both modern Turkish and Ottoman sources.[497] Metin And, in tracing the history of the word *çengi*, offers multiple possible etymologies; among these include the aforementioned relationship to *Çingene,* or, in another case, a derivation from *čang,* the Romani word for "leg."[498] As Mustafa Avcı notes, however, both of these etymologies are problematic: though the word *çengi* connotes a female dancer in modern Turkish, it was used to refer to dancers of any gender in earlier periods, and, as he writes, "although with female dancers the number of Roma dancers may outnumber any other ethnicities, this is hardly the case with the male çengis."[499] Nevertheless, it is clear that Roma comprised a significant portion of the population of dancers within Istanbul, both male and female, for several centuries. Evliya Çelebi, for example, gives us a list of the various itinerant dancing and acrobatic troupes extant in the Istanbul area in the mid-17th century: the first two, the Parpul troupe and the Ahmed troupe, consisted exclusively of several hundred gypsies each, while in the other troupes the proportions of Gypsies to Rum, Armenians, Jews, and (presumably Muslim) *şehir oğlanları* ("city boys") was more mixed, or else Roma were entirely

[496] Hale Babadoğan, "Understanding the Transformations of Karagöz," 102.
[497] See, for example, Sadi Yaver Ataman, *Türk İstanbul*, 269; or, for an earlier attribution, Şemseddin Sami, "Çengi," *Kamus-ı Türki* (Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1978), 517.
[498] Metin And, *A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing: From Folk Dancing to Whirling Dervishes, Belly Dancing to Ballet* (Istanbul: Dost Yayınları, 1976): 139.
[499] Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek: A Genealogy of Cross-dressed Male Belly Dancers (Dancing Boys) from Ottoman Empire to Contemporary Turkey," 31.

absent.[500] It must be noted, however, that in the latter cases Evliya Çelebi makes sure to explicitly note the lack of Roma in the text.

By middle of the 19th century, it seems as though Rum performers had largely replaced Gypsies as male dancers, or *köçek*s,[501] perhaps following a clampdown upon itinerant bands of dancers in 1822, during the reign of Mahmud II.[502] While the situation may not have been the same for female dancers, it seems clear nevertheless that by this time Roma were no longer dominant in the performance of popular dance; nevertheless, it is possible that in performing *Çingene kanto*s, Rum and Armenian *kanto* singers were drawing upon popular associations between female dance performance and Roma identity. The Roma characters portrayed within *Çingene kanto*s generally fell into the stereotypical occupations of fortune-teller, blacksmith or flower-seller, and they usually came with the stock names of "Çolak" or "Todi," for male characters (often performed, it should be noted, by female actresses) and "Penbe" or "Naile" for female characters.[503] Interestingly, "Naile" is also given as the proper name for Roma witch characters in the *karagöz* tradition.[504]

This background may help to explain why, alongside the other social and ethnic stereotypes present in the older *karagöz* and *orta oyunu* traditions, Roma characters continued to be represented in *kanto* performance. But it does not explain the sheer prevalence of these portrayals, or why the Roma character in particular was so associated with the *kanto* form. In this chapter I posit that, alongside these associations, it was the late Ottoman image of Roma women as a sexually-available exemplar of the semi-savage other which contributed to their popularity as *kanto* personae. This image was a product not only of Ottoman discourse regarding the Empire's own Roma population, but also of Western European depictions of Roma. Theses included, most notably, Prosper Mérimée's 1845 French-language novella *Carmen*, and Georges Bizet's 1875 operatic rendition of the same title.

500 Evliya Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnamesi, Topkapı Sarayı Bağdat 304 Yazmasının Transkripsiyonu-Dizini*, 329-330.
501 Balıkhane Nazırı Ali Rıza, *Eski Zamanlarda İstanbul Hayatı*, 29.
502 Mustafa Avcı, "Kocek," 113.
503 Ergun Hiçyılmaz, *İstanbul Geceleri ve Kantolar,* 21.
504 Hale Babadoğan, "Understanding the Transformations of Karagöz," 103.

The association of Roma with a deviant or otherwise wild sexuality in the Ottoman context can be traced even to folk stories regarding their origin, which was commonly believed to be the result of an incestuous marriage between their supposed ethnic progenitors, the siblings "Çin" and "Gân" (according to this belief, this is the origin of the term *Çingene*).[505] Yet in the 19th century, Ottoman discourse surrounding the Gypsies took on a markedly more civilizational and racialist character, and this was likewise displayed in Ottoman attitudes towards Roma women and their sexuality. We should not look at this development in isolation; indeed, during the Hamidian period other itinerant or nomadic groups within the Empire, including most notably Bedouin Arabs, came to be the focus of similar discourse.[506] This will be discussed further in the conclusion to this chapter. For now, it is enough to say that, while in earlier Ottoman texts Roma "immorality" had largely been ascribed to their heterodox religiosity,[507] in the 19th century this instead came to be attributed more and more to an innate ethnic or culturally-bound "savagery."

In the Hamidian context, this discourse is best exemplified by the depictions of Roma in the works of two notable late Ottoman writers, the aforemented Ahmet Mithat Efendi, and his colleague Şemseddin Sami (Frashëri). As discussed in the previous chapters, both of these figures were not only novelists and playwrights, but were also active and prominent journalists and ideologues within the Ottoman reform and modernization movements. Furthermore, within this discourse, they took particular interest in the reform of the status of Muslim women in Ottoman society: Ahmet Mithat, through his novels, his patronage of women authors such as Fatma Aliye, and his journalistic writings;[508] and Şemseddin Sami through his own works of fiction, his treatise *Kadınlar*, published as part of a set of "pocket libraries" in 1879, and through dictionary and encyclopaedic projects

505 Ömer Ulusoy, "An Inquiry into the Ottomans' Knowledge and Perception of the Gypsies," 254.

506 See, for example, Selim Deringil, ""They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2003): 311-342.

507 Of course, in this aspect it was similar to the development of Ottoman discourse regarding other religious others, such as Iraqi Yazidis or Shi'ite Iran; see the following section for more information.

508 See, for example, the article series written for the dual-language paper *L'Osmanli* in 1880, entitled "L'Islame et les femmes en Orient/İslamiyet ve Nisvan-ı Şarkiyye," which aimed to present Islamic law as essentially feminist in intention. *L'Osmanli*, 1880. SALT Research Online Archives.

that aimed to highlight the contributions of women in Ottoman, Islamic and world history.[509] Both of these figures also wrote on the subject of Ottoman Gypsies, and Roma women in particular: Ahmet Mithat, in his 1887 novella *Çingene*, and Şemseddin Sami in his *Dictionnaire Universel d'Histoire et de Géographie*, published in 1891. As Ömer Ulusoy has described, both of these sources highlight that, in as much as these authors advocated for the status of women generally and of Muslim women in particular, when it came to the case of Roma women they tended instead towards "legitimizing and justifying the prejudices present among the Ottoman society."[510] Roma women are discussed fundamentally in terms of their sexual desirability, and are depicted as beings stuck between "savagery and civilization" (*yabanilikle medenilik arasında*),[511] for whom domestication through sexual conquest is seen as both an aspect of the Ottoman civilizing mission, and as a prospect fraught with danger. In Ahmet Mithat's *Çingene*, the titular Roma is a woman named Ziba, who is taken in by a young, well-educated Ottoman gentlemen in an attempt to "civilize" her. Much the novel is dedicated towards the narrator's defence of the rights of Ottoman Roma, yet this defence is predicated upon the narrator's sexual interest in Ziba – notably, a discussion of the status of Roma within the Ottoman Empire focuses initially upon whether sexual intercourse with Roma women is permissible in Islam.[512] The Ottoman stereotype of Roma women as naturally musical is also regularly mentioned throughout the text, and indeed the narrator is initially drawn to the woman after hearing the sound of her singing.[513] We see similar imagery in the entry on "Gypsies" in Şemseddin Sami's 1891 encyclopaedic dictionary. Şemseddin Sami extends Ahmet Mithat's characterizations of Roma women, describing their musical talents and writing that "the women are generally beautiful but become ugly as soon as they give birth."[514] These statements are given added validity in Şemseddin Sami's work by his

[509] See George W. Gawrych, "Şemseddin Sami, Women, and Social Conscience in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1 (2010): 97-115.
[510] Ömer Ulusoy, "An Inquiry into the Ottomans' Knowledge and Perception of the Gypsies," 252.
[511] Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Çingene*, trans. S. Emrah Arlıhan. (Istanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2009): 29.
[512] Ibid.
[513] Ibid.*,*18.
[514] Ömer Ulusoy, "An Inquiry into the Ottomans' Knowledge and Perception of the Gypsies," 252.

avowedly scientific purpose and methodology. The influence of orientalist discourse here, is, of course, unmistakable, yet the image of Roma women as sexually-irresistible seductresses, who additionally possessed unique musical talents, must have had clear attractions for both Greek and Armenian *kantocu*s and their male audiences. This image was only strengthened by the increasing popularity of the Roma image in the Western European media, especially following the Parisian debut of Bizet's opera *Carmen* in 1875. Though the opera's source material, Prosper Mérimée's 1845 novel, had in itself spurred a variety of depictions of sexualized, libertine Roma women,[515] and indeed was likely one of Ahmet Mithat's inspirations in writing *Çingene*,[516] it was the opera's rapid rise to popularity throughout Europe in the 1880s (following an unsuccessful launch) that likely had the most influence on *kanto* performance. In the years following *Carmen*, French dancers came to increasingly adopt Roma personae similar to those of the Ottoman *kantocu*s; often, this acted as a cover for a less "exotic" Slavic background.[517] As French media became increasingly prevalent throughout the Ottoman media space, it seems likely that *kanto* performers and their audiences would have been aware of these associations. As José F. Colmeiro has written, "the cultural construction of the Gypsy in the modern European imagination is intimately linked to the orientalist discourses of Romanticism as a projection of its ambivalent feelings of fear and desire towards the other [...] this ambiguity conforms to the romantic fascination with the marginal, bohemian, exotic, and premodern, but also reveals the need to tame it, to control it, and ultimately to neutralize and destroy it."[518] We may say that the same is true of the Roma archetype in the Ottoman theatrical space. But is the same true for the other ethnic types portrayed by Ottoman *kanto* performers?

[515] José F. Colmeiro, "Exorcising Exoticism: "Carmen" and the Construction of Oriental Spain,"*Comparative Literature*, vol. 54, no. 2 (2002): 132.
[516] Ömer Ulusoy, "An Inquiry into the Ottomans' Knowledge and Perception of the Gypsies," 250.
[517] Lenard R. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve,* 116.
[518] José F. Colmeiro, "Exorcising Exoticism," 132.

4.2. Ethnic Types in *Kanto* Performance: *Acem Kantosu*

Following *Çingene kantosu*, the most common ethnic type explicitly portrayed within the corpus of surviving Hamidian-era *kanto* is that of the *Acem*, or Iranian. *Acem kanto*s differ from *Çingene kanto*s in several key respects, yet they are similarly prevalent: they are present in both *Neşe-i Dil* and *Nubhe-i Elhan*, as well as in the various *kanto* publications. Furthermore, Reşat Ekrem Koçu dedicates a specific entry to the form in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, highlighting the genre's significance within the canon of *kanto* performance.[519] According to Koçu, the Armenian *kantocu* Şamram was the performer most associated with A*cem kantosu*, although she also sang in duets with her elder and more famous relative, Peruz. According to Özbilen, in these performances, Peruz would take on the role of the male partner due to her huskier voice.[520] This is confirmed by the *Acem düetto*s recorded in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi.*[521] In general, the portrayal of Iranian women within the *Acem kantosu* corpus owed much more the conventions of *karagöz* theatre than the portrayal of Gypsies in *Çingene kantosu*. This may, in part, be due to the relatively more prominent role that the *karagöz* character Acem played within the canon of *karagöz* plotlines. Unlike the relatively infrequent and often mute Roma characters (excepting, of course, Karagöz himself), the character of Acem and his daughter, Acemikız, are considerably more central to the plot of several traditional *karagöz* storylines, such as *Ağalık* and *Bahçe*, and often possess long speaking parts.[522] The Iranian characters of *karagöz* theatre speak in a stereotyped and somewhat exaggerated Azeri accent, and utilize a set vocabulary of Persian terms in the place of common Turkish expressions.[523] As Metin And writes, "Acem is a trader of shawls, carpets and women's dresses, and depicted as a

519 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları," 132-134.
520 Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi," 30.
521 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları," 133.
522 See Cevdet Kudret, *Karagöz* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), which has transcriptions of both plays.
523 Examples include "men" (Persian: *man*) in the place of the Turkish "ben," "beli" (Persian: *bale*) in the place of "evet," "midânem" (Persian: *midânam*) in the place of "biliyorum," as well as the frequent use of "pes" (Persian: *pas*) as a filler word.

cultivated figure. He sometimes enters by riding a horse, and continually recites poetry, which he delivers with a different enunciation."[524] Hale Babadoğan describes this latter characteristic as a satire of the Ottoman fascination with Persian-language poetry, and its status as a marker of intellectualism and education amongst the Ottoman elite.[525] *Acem kantosu* is in large part based upon these stereotypes borrowed from the shadow theatre; the *kantocus* sing using the same stylized vocabulary, and utilize similar tropes and symbolism in their performances. The bonds between *karagöz* theatre and *kanto* performance in this regard were close enough that *kantocus* often introduced their *Acem kantosu* performances using the stock introduction of the shadow puppet named Acem,[526] and, vice versa, the female Acemikız puppet was on occasion introduced in *karagöz* theatre using the melodies and choruses of popular *kanto*s.[527] *Acem düetto*s also borrowed their characters from the shadow theatre: as with the Roma characters mentioned previously, these had stock names, such as "Nöker" (Farsi: *nokâr*, "servant") for male characters and "Leylâ" for female types,[528] but more common were the general terms "püser" (Persian: *pesâr*, "boy, son") and "dühter" (Persian: *dokhtâr*, "girl, daughter"). These terms were used to refer to the characters in duets regardless of the actual gender of the performers; as an example, in an *Acem düetto* recorded by Reşad Ekrem Koçu in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* for Şamram and Peruz, the latter introduces herself with the lyric "Men püserim, namım Peruz," ("I'm a boy, my name's Peruz").[529] As noted in Chapter 2, Koçu also records a specific form of *Acem kantosu* associated most with the performer Küçük Virjin, in which the singer takes on the role of an Iranian male youth, and sings an ode to her own *kantocu* persona. Within this rather complex performance, the only identifier of Küçük Virjin's Iranian identity is her

524 Metin And, *Karagoz: Turkish Shadow Theatre*, 58.
525 Hale Babadoğan, "Understanding the Transformations of Karagöz," 103.
526 According to Uğur Göktaş, Acem characters entered the stage with the lyric "İsfahan'da bir kuyu var / İçinde tatlı suyu var / Her güzelin bir huyu var / Ne yaman acem güzeli!" This lyric was borrowed almost wholesale for the first verse of "Yeni Acem Kantosu," one of the "most famous and most beautiful" of *acem kanto*s according to R.E. Koçu, with the exception that "tatlı suyu" was replaced with "nane suyu." Uğur Göktaş, "Türk Gölge Oyunu Tasvirleri, Kişileri," 78 and Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları," 132.
527 Cevdet Kudret, *Karagöz,* 147.
528 Hale Babadoğan, "Understanding the Transformations of Karagöz," 103.
529 Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları," 133.

usage of the aforementioned "theatrical Persian" vocabulary within the song's lyrics, for she neither gives any of the stock character names detailed above, nor does she mention Iran, Isfahan, Azerbaijan, or any of the other place names particular to *Acem kantosu.*[530]

In other cases, the Iranian connection was made much more explicit. Included within the songbook *Neşe-i Dil* is are *kanto*s, left uncredited, in which the choruses are in Persian and the verses in Ottoman Turkish.[531] We may wonder who the performers of such songs were, as well as the identity of the audience; while we know of some performers in late Ottoman Istanbul of Iranian Armenian origin – the most notable among these being Armen Ohanian, who wrote a memoir in French regarding her travels between the theatres of Tehran, Istanbul, and Paris[532] - *Neşe-i Dil* is generally credited as the songbook of Peruz, who, although Armenian, had familial origins in Anatolia.[533] Nevertheless, there were strong connections between the Armenian community in Istanbul and their counterparts in Iran, and particularly with the Armenian community of the New Julfa district of Isfahan; these were commercial ties, based upon the silk trade.[534] Reşad Ekrem Koçu describes the possible audience for these Persian-language *kanto*s in *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, writing that during the reigns of Abdülaziz and Abdülhamid II Iranian merchants became well-known for spending immense sums in the theatres and vice dens (*batakhane*) of Istanbul, and that this was the motivation for the proliferation of *Acem kanto*s.[535] While this is possible, and the Iranian community within Istanbul during the Hamidian period was quite large – up to 16,000 people[536] – it seems unlikely that an entire genre, and particularly one sung mostly in Ottoman Turkish, was created for the benefit of such a particular set of customers. Instead, it is more likely that the *Acem* type, like the *Çingene* type discussed earlier,

[530] Ibid.,

[531] See, for example, the chorus of a *kanto* from *Neşe-i Dil*: "Baske bi-kes bud mahzun / vaght-e mordan dudmuş (?) / Yek seri tâbun-e bolbol / yek seri parvâne dâsht." Hasan Tahsin, *Neşe-i Dil: Yeni Şarkı ve Kanto Memuası,* 22-23.

[532] See Armen Ohanian, *La Danseuse de Shamakha* (London: J. Cape, 1922).

[533] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi," 18.

[534] For more information on this community, see Thierry Zarcone and Fariba Zarinebaf, *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993).

[535] Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Acem Düetto ve Kantoları," 132.

[536] Tanya Elal Lawrence, "Akhtar: A Discussion on a Persian-language Paper Published in the Ottoman Capital (1876-1896)," (M.A. Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2012): 9.

possessed a certain attraction to a wider Ottoman audience. Indeed, lyrically, most *Acem kanto*s utilize earlier Ottoman tropes regarding the beauty and desirability of Iranian women; these lyrics also, in the tradition of *divan* poetry, also tend to emphasize the beauty of certain characteristic cities, such as Isfahan and Tabriz. The common idealized features for Iranian women included thin waists (*ince belli*) and large, beautiful eyes (*ahu gözlü*, "gazelle-eyed") with long, needle-like eyelashes (*tigi müjgan*), and these tropes make regular, almost ubiquitous appearances within the *Acem kantosu* canon. Furthermore, we have evidence from earlier Ottoman sources that Iranian women were, like Roma, considered particularly notable dancers and performers. The famous early 18th century miniature artist Abdülcelil Levni, for instance, gives us several depictions of Iranian dancing women, under titles such as "Acem Çengi" and "Acem'de Meşhur Perendebaz Kız" ("A Famous Somersaulting Girl in Iran"), in the portrait album of the various beauties of Bursa and Iran that he completed in 1720.[537]

Is it the case, then, that the popularity and prevalence of *Acem kantosu* – second only to *Çingene kantosu* – was due solely to the historical attributes given to Iranian women in Ottoman culture? I do not believe that this is the case. Firstly, as was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, we must explain why, out of the various ethnic types that were present in *karagöz* shadow theatre and the other Ottoman theatrical traditions, it was the Roma and Iranian types that so dominated *kanto* performance. As we have seen in the case of the Roma type, *kanto* portrayals – as much as they were rooted in older traditions – must be placed in the context of late Ottoman civilizational and orientalist discourse. In fact, over the course of the 19th century, Ottoman depictions of Iran and Iranians become increasingly orientalist in form, in a manner strikingly similar to the depictions of Ottoman Gypsies. While earlier Ottoman depictions had regularly depicted Iranians as immoral, this discourse was fundamentally sectarian in nature, and not based upon a notion of Iranian civilizational inferiority. Evliya Çelebi, for instance, criticizes the Iranian authorities in Tabriz and Ardabil for their usage of torture and allowance of wine, and Iranian Shiites for their practice of cursing the caliphs Abu Bakr and Omar, but he otherwise describes these

537 Gül İrepoğlu, *Levni: Nakış, Şiir, Renk*, (Istanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1999): 180-185.

cities as well-run, civilized, and populated by hospitable and rule-abiding people.[538] Yet though these sectarian differences continued into the late 19th century – Selim Deringil, for instance, has written extensively on Hamidian efforts to counter the spread of Shi'ism in Ottoman Iraq[539] - this was joined by a new Ottoman conceptualization of Iranian society that traced its supposed immorality to the backwardness of its civilization, and attributed aspects of Ottoman culture antithetical to "progress" to a supposed Iranian origin. As Christoph Herzog and Raoul Motika have detailed in their article on what was, at that time, termed "Orientalism *alla Turca*," it was in the genre of travel literature that this discourse was most explicitly expressed.[540] Ottoman travel accounts of Iran during the Hamidian and Second Constitutional periods, such as the letters of Osman Hamdi Bey (1869-1871),[541] Mehmed Emin Efendi's *Istanbul'dan Asya-yı Vusta ya Seyahat* (first published in Ahmet Mithat Efendi's gazette *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* in 1878), Süleyman Şükrü Karçınzade's *Seyahat-ül Kübra* (1907), and Mehmed Fazlı's *Resimli Afgan Seyahatnamesi* (1909), all contributed greatly towards the Ottoman understanding of Iran as a backwards, savage (*vahşi*) nation.[542] Images of Iran in the Ottoman satirical press also depicted it as "a more primitive version of the Ottoman Empire."[543] These accounts often spoke particularly about the backwardness of Iranian gendered social practices, such as the seclusion of women, veiling, and the practice of temporary marriage; furthermore, they were replete with scandalizing images of the degradation of Iranian women, such as in Karçınzade's

[538] See Evliya Çelebi, *Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa, in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 2. trans. by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall. (London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1834): 133-143.

[539] See Selim Deringil, "The Struggle against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda," *Die Welt des Islams, New Series*, vol. 30, no. 1. (1990): 45-62.

[540] See Christoph Herzog and Raoul Motika, "Orientalism "alla turca": Late 19th / Early 20th Century Ottoman Voyages into the Muslim 'Outback'" *Die Welt des Islams, New Series,* vol. 40, no. 2, Ottoman Travels and Travel Accounts from an Earlier Age of Globalization (2000): 139-195.

[541] Edhem Eldem, "An Ottoman Traveler to the Orient: Osman Hamdi Bey," in *The Poetics and Politics of Place: Ottoman Istanbul and British Orientalism,* eds. Zeynep Inankur, Reina Lewis, and Mary Roberts. (Istanbul: Suna and Inan Kiraç Foundation, Pera Museum, 2011): 184-185.

[542] In one particular instance, recounted in Mehmet Fazli's travel account to Afghanistan, the Ottomans are attacked for entering a shrine in European dress. When they express their shock, their host admonishes them: "Burada sokağa çıkılmaz! Ahali vahşidir." ("One mustn't go out on the streets here! [These] people are savages.") Kenan Karabalut, *Afganistan'da Bir Jöntürk: Mısır Sürgününden Afgan Reformuna* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007): 30.

[543] Palmira Johnson Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911.* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000): 91.

depictions of impoverished women bathing in dirty water and scavenging through piles of feces.[544] Writers such as Mehmed Emin began to claim that Ottoman practices such as veiling were fundamentally Iranian in origin, distinguishing between the "civilized" gender relations in Europe and the other "Islamic countries," where women are integrated into public life, and the situation in Iran, where "not even the fingertips of women are visible."[545] By the Second Constitutional period, reformers such as Ömer Şeyfettin and the *Genç Kalemlar* ("Young Pens") group began to advocate for the removal of Arabic and Persian vocabulary and grammatical structures from Turkish, as part of a program of linguistic "purification." In Ömer Şeyfettin's article "Yeni Lisan" ("New Literature"), published in 1911, he links the presence of Persian vocabulary in Turkish to the practice of the separation of the sexes and to homoeroticism in general, using examples of notable Ottoman homoerotic literature in the Persian mode to claim that such vocabulary, in and of itself, represented an obstacle to the modernization of Ottoman gender and sexual norms.[546] Even as such images entered into the popular discourse, however, the earlier image of Iranian women derived from *divan* poetry continued to exist, often as an accessory to the praise of the sensuality and imagery of Persian-language poetry. Ottoman travellers often expressed their shock at the discrepancy between their cultural image of Iran and their actual experiences; Osman Hamdi Bey, writing back to his father from the Iranian border in 1869, complained that "you have no idea what a Persian really is like," before criticizing their late entry into "civilization."[547] Nevertheless, the image of the Persian language as an especially elegant and sexually-potent medium remained intact during this period. In Ahmet Mithat Efendi's 1875 novel *Felâtun Bey ile Râkım Efendi*, for example, one scene depicts two English girls who, upon being introduced to the poetry of Hafez, are described as

[544] Can Veysegil, "The Ottoman Empire and "the Rest of the World": Late Ottoman First Person Narratives Regarding Ottoman Perceptions on the Non-European World and the Ottoman Periphery." (M.A. Thesis, Sabancı University, 2011): 182.
[545] Christoph Herzog and Raoul Motika, "Orientalism "alla turca," 184.
[546] For more information, see Ayşe Demir, "An Important Breakthrough in Construction of National Identity: Yeni Lisan," *Turkish Studies*, vol.7, no. 4 (2012): 1395-1403.
[547] Edhem Eldem, "An Ottoman Traveler to the Orient," 184.

undergoing something rather akin to a sexual experience merely from the sensuality of the language itself.[548]

It is clear then that, as with Ottoman depictions of Roma in the late 19th century, Ottoman depictions of Iranians also possessed a fundamental ambiguity. As with the Roma, Iranians came to be seen as representatives of a lower level of civilization, for whom the Ottomans possessed a certain *mission civilisatrice*; on the other hand, the images of Roma and Iranian women as sexually-desirable and sexually-available were retained and even extended. These twin phenomenon are, of course, characteristic of the orientalist discourse described by Said, and the strongly gendered nature of such discourse is evident in both cases. Iranian men were depicted primarily as listless, brutish, opium-addicted, and religiously fanatical in Ottoman accounts, and Roma men were elided all together, except as stock thieves, vagabonds, or other criminal characters. Women alone carried the dual connotations of savagery and sexual desirability; men, by contrast, were simply savage. As much as *kanto* drew upon the considerably broader vocabulary of ethnic types characteristic to *karagöz* theatre, the specific prominence of these two identities in this genre of performance – that is, a sexually-explicit genre of burlesque embodied by female performers – suggests that late Ottoman civilizational and orientalist discourse played a significant role.

4.3. Ethnic Types in *Kanto* Performance: Other Ethnic Types

Though the *Çingene* and *Acem* ethnic types were by far the most common within the canon of *kanto* performance, we do have examples of other ethnicities represented. The three which appear with the most regularity in the *kanto* songbooks – albeit, again, in

548 See Ahmet Mithat Efendi, *Felâtun Bey ile Râkım Efendi,* trans. Engin Kılıç (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2005): 88-89.“...kızlarda gözlerin bütün bütün süzülüp gittiğini, göğüşleri şişip, nefeslerinin göğüşlerine sığmayarak birbirini takip etmekte olduklarını görmüştü.”

considerably smaller numbers[549] – are *Arap kantosu*, in which an Arab type is portrayed; *Laz kantosu*, which depict an ethnic type from the Black Sea region of Anatolia and are characterized by references to the city of Trabzon and to distinctive products associated with the area, such as hazelnuts and fish (see Figure 26); and *Yahudi kantosu*, in which the character of a Jewish woman is performed onstage. Of these, *Arap kantosu* was by far the most common, and by the Second Constitutional period appears to have been regularly performed in several theatres in Istanbul.[550] As with the Roma and Iranian types above, these types were generally performed by Rum and Armenian actresses, and in fact it was the Rum performer Viktorya Hanim who was most renowned for her *Arap kanto*s, in part because she had learned some Arabic.[551] These types were also borrowed from the stock characters of the *karagöz* tradition, and similar characteristics were exhibited in both genres. Does the existence of these other ethnic types in *kanto* performance complicate the discussion in the previous section? To a certain extent, perhaps, although the proliferation of *Arap kanto*s in the last decade of the Empire is telling, for it was during this period that the Arab provinces came to constitute the last major Ottoman holding outside of Anatolia, and subsequently became (to use Ussama Makdisi's term) the "laboratory" for the Ottoman civilizing mission.[552]

The absence of Turkish female characters in early *kanto* deserves further consideration within the context of Ottoman orientalist discourse. We cannot ascribe this absence simply to the Ottoman cultural aversion towards Muslim women appearing on stage, for as we have seen, until the 1920s the vast majority of roles written for female Turkish characters were in fact played by Armenian actresses.[553] Indeed, even the lead female role in Namik Kemal's patriotic play *Vatan yahut Silistre* was performed by an Armenian actress, both in its 1872 original run and in its revival following the Young Turk

[549] For example, in *Nubhe-i Elhan* there are 3 *Arap kanto*s and only 1 *Yahudı kanto*, compared to 13 *Çingene kanto*s and 10 *Acem kanto*s. See Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi," 95-102.

[550] See Ruhi Kalender, "Yüzyılımızın Başlarında İstanbul'un Musiki Hayatı" *İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 23 (1978).

[551] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi," 22.

[552] Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism" *The American Historical Review,* vol. 107, no. 3 (2002): 783.

[553] See Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839-1923," 48-58.

Revolution in 1908.[554] Armenian and Greek actresses also portrayed Turkish women in comedies, such as in the popular Turkish-language comic operetta *Leblebci Horhor Ağa* (first performed in 1876).[555] Instead, I believe that the lack of a *Zenne* type on the *kanto* stage was fundamentally due to the genre's explicitly sexual nature. Although *Zenne* characters in *karagöz* theatre, as well their counterparts in live *orta oyunu* theatre, were commonly depicted as flirtatious and sexually promiscuous,[556] by the late Ottoman period most of these explicit sexual references had been excised from *karagöz* performance, as well as from *orta oyunu*'s successor genre, *tuluat* theatre. In its place, the Ottomans – and here, I refer to both the policies of the Hamidian state as well as to a general trend within Ottoman media and public discourse – came to invest heavily in the "defence" of Ottoman Muslim women, in large part from the sexualized orientalist conceptions prevalent in European media. In this context, the depiction of Turkish women in the sexually-charged atmosphere of *kanto* performance by non-Muslim actresses was clearly unwelcome. Unwilling to portray their own ethnic identities on stage, and unable to assume that of their audience, *kantocus* instead utilized ethnic types that were already sexualized and connected symbolically with the notion of female dancing; were distant enough from daily Istanbulite life to still be exotic, while nevertheless possessing a familiar symbolic vocabulary; and were acceptable subjects for objectification as a result of the discourse of Ottoman civilizational difference. As was the case in Paris of the same era, actresses found that "appropriat[ing] the mystique of the primitive" was a fruitful strategy for appealing to male audiences.[557] One last, ironic example should highlight the complexity of this situation. As Selim Deringil and Zeynep Çelik have detailed, world's exhibitions and fairs were regular venues for Ottoman attempts to counter European criticism and promote Ottoman modernization efforts.[558] Among the projects most important to this effort was the

[554] Cora Skylstad, "Acting the Nation," 74.
[555] Nermin Menemencioğlu, "The Ottoman Theatre 1839-1923," 54.
[556] Hale Babadoğan, "Understanding the Transformations of Karagöz," 106.
[557] Lenard R. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve,* 116.
[558] See Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) and Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1998).

prevention of any displays "injurious to the honour and modesty of Muslim women,"[559] which included the blocking of any exhibits featuring "Turkish" or "Oriental" dancing girls. At the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exhibition, however, Ottoman efforts were frustrated by the presence of a privately-operated "Persian" pavilion, which featured scantily-clad French dancing girls in Iranian costume.[560] Ubeydullah Efendi, a journalist and member of the Ottoman delegation, wrote in condemnation that, "even a man, let alone a woman, [could not] dare to watch without wearing dark glasses."[561] Yet, even as he wrote these words, Ottoman gentlemen very much like himself were watching almost exactly the same spectacle in the theatres and nightclubs of Galata and Direklerarası. From the visual depictions of these theatres, it seems certain that the majority of these men left their "dark glasses" at home.

[559] Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, p. 155.
[560] Halsey C. Ives, *The Dream City* (St. Louis: N.D. Thompson Publishing Co., 1893-1894): 181.
[561] Ubeydullah Efendi, "Sergi Nasıl Gidiyor?" *The Chicago Fair Illustrated*, no. 2 (1893), p. 18.

5. CONCLUSION

As noted in the first pages of this thesis, Peruz's final performances at the newly-established Garden Bar in Pera were, in a certain sense, prophetic: a handing-off of the baton. In the months following Peruz's death in late 1919 or early 1920, Istanbul's cultural scene would be transformed: first, by arrival of Allied occupational forces and American relief workers following Ottoman defeat in the First World War, who brought with them a taste for the latest American jazz records and who patronized the city's incipient jazz scene;[562] and secondly, by the arrival of White Russian emigrés in the city in 1920, who brought with them a whole range of new fashions, slang, cultural activities and social norms.[563] The Garden Bar would constitute one of the most important spaces for this new urban culture, hosting jazz and swing bands throughout the 1920s and 1930s and becoming famous for employing Russian exile women as waitresses and barmaids, a popular and rare sight in Istanbul at the time.[564] As we have seen, it was hardly the case that Istanbul's musical culture was ever parochial or provincial in character; Istanbul, from the early Ottoman period until well into the 1920s and 1930s was instead a productive cultural hub, a zone of transit which produced innumerable new cosmopolitan musical forms. Yet *kanto*, unlike jazz, was fundamentally rooted in the Ottoman context, and even more so than other

[562] G. Carole Woodall, " Listening for Jazz in Post-Armistice Istanbul," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Volume 48, Issue 1, (February 2016): 138.

[563] See Svetlana Uturgauri, *Boğaz'daki Beyaz Ruslar 1919 – 1929* (Istanbul: Tarihçi Kitabevi, 2015); or, for a broader look at Istanbul during this period, see Nuri Bilge Criss, *Istanbul during Allied Occupation, 1918-1923* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[564] See G. Carole Woodall, "Sensing the City: Sound, Movement and the Night in 1920s Istanbul" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2008): 126-127; see also John Freely and Brendan Freely, *Galata, Pera, Beyoğlu: A Biography* (Istanbul, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2016): 156.

alafranga cultural forms present in Istanbul jazz maintained a strongly international and emigré character. As G. Carole Woodall notes, for Turkish writers of the 1920s, "the Garden Bar represented a site of the nonnational, that is, the non-Turkish."[565] Jazz was mocked in the press as a foreigner's affectation, or as a dangerous example of cultural decline and decadence. Istanbul itself, both in the press of the time and in later Republican literature,[566] came to be seen as the site of a national betrayal, with the dance culture and the musical scene of the city a prominent symbol of the city's abandonment of the homeland and its values. The popularity of jazz in the city was but one symptom of this.

To a certain extent, the musical flexibility of *kanto* made it able to absorb the influences of new, foreign musical genres relatively seamlessly. As Istanbuliote youth began to learn and enjoy rythms and dances such the charleston, foxtrot, and tango, *kantocu*s began to incorporate these rythms into their own compositions.[567] Composers trained in traditional *makam* music began to create new, synthetic forms to appeal to new tastes; notable among these included the "Nihavent-Tango" *makam*, which married an Ottoman musical mode with tango rythms, or the "Oryantal-Fokstrot" which did much the same for the foxstrot.[568] The same was, to a lesser extent, true for melodies as well. Kanto became a considerably looser category, referring broadly to "light songs" in a variety of modes, both Ottoman and Western;[569] the term *kanto* came to accompanied by a new term, *fantezi*, which referred to Turkish-language songs that abandoned most of the rule of classical Turkish composition.[570] As *kanto* came to enjoyed more and more through recorded media, the importance of the performative aspect of the genre gradually decreased, with *kanto* dancing – which, as we have read, was originally based largely on traditional Aegean and Romani dances like the *çiftetelli* or *kasap havası* – over time largely abandoning these Ottoman vestiges in favour of forms borrowed from less-structured

565 G. Carole Woodall, “"Awakening a Horrible Monster," 580.
566 See Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Sodom ve Gomore* (Istanbul: İletişm Yayıncılık, 2004).
567 Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 23.
568 Orhan Tekelioğlu, "Modernizing Reforms and Turkish Music in the 1930s," *Turkish Studies,* Vo1.2. No.1 (Spring 2001): 101.
569 Cemal Ünlü, *Geçmişten Günümüze Türk Müziği* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 1998): 7
570 Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 7.

Western dances such as the charleston. *Kantocu*s were also largely displaced as arbiters of fashion; an illustration in the satirical magazine *Akbaba*, for instance, shows a Turkish woman dressed in the flapper style, with dark, powdered eyes, and the caption: "Among the Ramazan Entertainments: *Kara Kız*!"[571] *Kara Kız* was the name of one of the most popular *kanto* standards, and in its original form was a *Çingene kantosu*;[572] here, now, the term had come to refer to girls dressed in the latest, most modern styles (see Figure 31). By the mid-1920s, kanto had lost a great deal of its original specificity and had become a general term, and broad category for all kinds of music and dance. Why, then, did it disappear in such a complete fashion? Of course, this internationalization of *kanto* necessarily put it into competition with newer, fresher cultural forms, but it also gave *kanto* a broader formalistic and musical vocabulary from which to draw upon. If this was the case, however, why did kanto go the way of *karagöz*, *orta oyunu*, and *tuluat*, the other Ottoman forms which had already begun to disappear by 1908 and were almost entirely moribund by the 1930s? I believe that this opening of *kanto* to influences from jazz, tango, and other new styles could not compensate for the ethnic and communitarian associations that kanto had already acquired, and that – caught between the competing impulses of adapting to "modern" music dance whilst at the same time becoming localized as "Turkish" - *kanto* could not survive as a coherent genre. From its roots in Ottoman Istanbul's low culture, *kanto* attempted to be everything to everyone in the Republic. Ultimately, this proved to difficult to manage, and the genre was abandoned in favour of forms that were either explicitly modern, international and fashionable, like jazz and swing dance, or music with a direct and officially-sanctioned connection to old Turkish culture, like the Anatolian *türkü*.

In her conversation with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak entitled "Who Sings the Nation-State?", Judith Butler notes that, to forge the "nation" by which nation-state justifies itself, "the nation must be purified of its heterogeneity except in those cases where a certain pluralism allows for the reproduction of homogeneity on another basis."[573]As the Ottoman

[571] See *Akbaba,* no. 141 (April 11, 1924).
[572] Sonia Tamar Seeman,"'You're Roman!' Music and Identity in Turkish Roman Communities," 185.
[573] Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2007): 32.

Empire was succeeded by the Turkish Republic, *kanto* was among the Ottoman cultural forms that the new government in Ankara sought to reform and incorporate into a national cultural synthesis. As we saw in the last chapter, *kanto* sought generally to avoid ethnic depictions representative of the performers and their audiences, in favour of more distant ethnic types. In doing so, *kanto* was able to remain largely innocuous in an era of high tension between Ottoman ethnic communities, and Greek and Armenian *kantocu*s were adopted by Turkish Muslim audiences as popular celebrities and cultural icons. Into the Republic, *kantocu*s remained well known and, at least initially, well-regarded, despite their communitarian background. Yet the discrepancy between the adoption of minority *kantocu*s as national celebrities and the policies of a homogenizing state, already present in the late Ottoman context, became increasingly difficult to manage in the era of the Republic. *Kanto* reacted to the destruction of the traditional Ottoman world and the loss of its main reference points by exploring ever more topical and current subject matter. Songs such as "Daktilo" (Typist), first sung by the *kantocu* Seyyan Hanım in 1937, satirized the new fashion for female secretaries at major offices, while other songs, such as "Kadın Şoför" (Woman Driver), mocked double standards against female drivers in a country which is, to this day, not very well-known for careful driving in general.[574] As can be seen, the topics of later *kanto* were largely satirical in nature and, having abandoned the ethnic types characteristic to late Ottoman *kanto*, instead found a new subject well within the Republican paradigm: the modern Turkish woman. Some songs of the 1930s were even more subversive, with *kanto*s like "Bereli Kız" (The Girl with the Beret) and "Kadın Asker Olursa" (If Women Were Soldiers) criticizing the cult of military masculinity in an era in which fascism was in ascendance, both in Europe and, to a certain degree, in Turkey as well. This extension of the political aspect of *kanto* gave it new life in the Republic, but meant that its character was rather different than Ottoman *kanto*, which was satirical more in regards to aspects of daily urban life, Ottoman communal types, and relationships between men and women.

At the same time as its structure was becoming increasingly "Western," *kanto* performers and musicians were becoming increasingly "nationalized." As we have seen

[574] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 29.

until the 1920s, with rare exceptions, *kantocu*s were largely Greek or Armenians, with smaller proportions of Jews and Roma during the later period. Turkish women were, throughout the Ottoman period, forbidden from performing on stage. In 1918, five Turkish women were accepted for the first time into the national theatre company, the Darülbedai, with Afife Jale becoming the first to perform on stage in April 1919. Despite the controversy that this provoked, including official condemnation on the part of the Istanbul municipality and a short-lived ban on Muslim actresses on stage,[575] a certain precedent had been set. Influential figures in the nationalist movement, including the director of the Darülbedai, Muhsin Ertuğrul, and the prominent writer, Halide Edip, promoted Muslim Turkish actresses as the embodiement of the spirit of the new Republic. Following the 1923 film production of Halide Edip's nationalist novel *Ateşten Gömlek* (The Shirt of Flame), in which she had insisted upon the casting of the Muslim Turkish actress Bedia Muvahhit in the lead, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was convinced to give Turkish actresses state sanction and official support.[576] While Greek and Armenian actresses such as Kınar Hanım and Eliza Binemeciyan remained as popular celebrities, with caricatures and profiles of them printed regularly in the popular press,[577] the addition of Turkish actresses to the scene, with ideological support from the Darulbedai and the national government, naturally led to a displacement of the former in favor of the latter; as Refik Ahmet Sevengil writes,"when Turkish women found the opportunity to go on stage, shortly afterwards Eliza Binemeciyan left the stage and went away to Belgium."[578] Many other actresses and musicians went on to cities in Europe, America, or to Soviet Armenia. The *kanto* space was hardly immune from this, and over the course of the 1920s and 1930s Muslim Turkish *kantocu*s increasingly came to dominate the stage.[579] Nevertheless, non-Muslim *kantocu*s remained prominent well into the 1930s, and older *kantocu*s and *tuluatçı*s like Zarife Hanım or Şevki and his wife Mari Ferha continued to be successful for a considerable length of time. Handbills and

[575] Cora Skylstad, "Acting the Nation," 69.
[576] Ibid., 71.
[577] See *Akbaba*, no. 43 (April 30, 1923).
[578] Refik Ahmet Sevengil, *Meşrutiyet Tiyatrosu* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1968): 340.
[579] John M. O'Connell, "A Resounding Issue," 202.

posters from these performances show that *kanto* continued to appeal to a broad spectrum of the city's population. Posters, for example, continued to be multilingual, printed in Turkish, French and Armenian (see Figure 29).[580] Newer kantocus also attained fame during this era, such as Deniz Kızı Eftalya, who performed for Atatürk and was featured on numerous popular recordings during this period.[581] In Greece, *kanto* songs also continued to be performed, although the *kanto* style largely blended into the more popular – and more explicitly Greek – *rembetiko* tradition.[582] By the late 1930s, however, especially after a brief revival of the genre following the disappearance of old Turkish music from the radio from 1936-1938,[583] *kanto* had become largely a genre performed by Turkish Muslims.

There are multiple reasons for this shift. While the Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities of Istanbul were not destroyed or removed to the same extent that they were in Anatolia, ethnic tensions nevertheless precipitated a flight from the city which continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and which would culminate in the near abandonment of the city by its minority population following the liberalization of Armenian immigration to the Soviet Union in 1946-1948, the establishment of Israel in the same year, and the anti-Greek pogroms of September 6-7, 1955. In essence, Muslim *kantocu*s became dominant in part because Istanbuliote minority communities collapsed in numbers and could no longer support the emergence of comparable numbers of performers. But the "Turkicization" of *kanto* was also a matter of state policy. In 1923, the great ur-theorist of Kemalist ideology, Ziya Gökalp, produced a kind of guidebook for the new state entitled *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (The Principles of Turkism) which outlined "how Turkish music could become national and outlined a program for its future development."[584] The basis for the music of the Turkish Republic was to be the Anatolian folk song, the *türkü*, albeit made polyphonic and "modernized" for contemporary consumption. As Ali Ergur and Yiğit Aydin have written,

[580] "Komik Şevki Bey, Adile Hanım ve Şehire Mari Hanım'ın Tiyatro İlanları," 001508468006, Dosya No: 170, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

[581] See John M. O'Connell, "The Mermaid of the Meyhane: The Legend of a Greek Singer in a Turkish Tavern," in *Music of the Sirens*, Linda Austern and Inna Naroditskaya, eds. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006): 273-293.

[582] See Risto Pekka Pennanen, "The Nationalization of Ottoman Popular Music in Greece."

[583] Berna Özbilen, "Kanto'nun Değişim Süreçi ve Yakın Dönem İcralarının Değerlendirilmesi," 23.

[584] Orhan Tekelioğlu, "Modernizing Reforms and Turkish Music in the 1930s," 94

"Turkish folk culture was to be discovered, or better said, invented."[585] The patronage of Ottoman classical music was largely abandoned by urban professional musicians, who found that their music could no longer find a receptive audience in the conservatories or radio channels of Istanbul and Ankara. Ottoman classical music conservatories were closed down in 1926, alongside the closure of the *tekke* lodges that had sponsored Sufi classical music, and in 1927 all monophonic Ottoman music was banned from being taught in public and private schools.[586]

Kanto, of course, had clearly fallen out of official favor; yet these regulation had a surprising effect on the genre. *Kanto* remained popular on record, and unemployed *tekke* musicians soon found work in the music industry producing and recording secular *kanto* songs. By the 1930s, a remarkable shift had occurred: *kanto* had, in its original Hamidian form, been played on Western instruments (such as trumpets and violins) but in the traditional Ottoman *makam* system. By the 1930s, however, when *kanto* had largely abandoned the modes and structures of traditional Ottoman music in favour of free borrowings from Western rythms and melodies, kanto instrumentation became dominated by Turkish instruments such as the *ut*, *kemençe*, and *bağlama*. As Koray Değirmenci has written, "the *tekke* musicians, after the abolishment of *tekkes*, played the leading role in creating popular music forms in urban spaces," of which 1930s *kanto* was but one example.[587] A similar process occurred in regards to *kanto* dance. In attempting to remain modern, *kanto* jettisoned some of its earlier references to traditional *çiftetelli* and Romani dance, but the genre soon found itself caught between the official promotion of Western dances, of which *kanto* would never be seen as more than a poor copy, and the nationalization of Ottoman folk dances, of which *kanto* was seen as cosmopolitan, urban corruption.[588] For dance theorists of the new Republic like Selim Sırrı Tarcan, masculine

585 Ali Ergur and Yiğit Aydın, "Patterns of Modernization in Turkish music as Indicators of a Changing Society," 100.

586 Orhan Tekelioğlu, "Modernizing Reforms and Turkish Music in the 1930s," 95.

587 Koray Değirmenci, "On the Pursuit of a Nation: The Construction of Folk and Folk Music in the Founding Decades of the Turkish Republic," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music,* Vol. 37, No. 1(Jun., 2006): 62.

588 For a more detailed discussion, see Arzü Öztürkmen, "Modern Dance "Alla Turca:" Transforming Ottoman Dance in Early Republican Turkey," *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Summer, 2003).

Anatolian dances, such as the *zeybek*, "modernized" along the lines of militaristic Swedish gymnastics, could form the foundation of a Turkish "national dance" (*milli raks*).[589] *Kanto*, of course, was not even under consideration, even as the genre became dominated by ethnic Turks.

Thus, a paradox had emerged within *kanto* of the Republic: it was at once abandoning its local specificity in terms of subject, musical style and manner of performance in favour of foreign influences, whilst at the same time becoming increasingly nationalized as the domain of ethnic Turkish musicians and performers. This paradox was ultimately never resolved during the early Republic, and it would not be until the 1960s that *kanto* revivalists like Nurhan Damcıoğlu would find a balance between respecting the Ottoman *kanto* tradition and incorporating contemporary musical forms – although by that time, jazz and swing had been replaced by disco and electronic music as the main influences on *kanto* music and dance.

The study of Republican era *kanto*, as well as the lyrical content and social context of the *kanto* revival of the 1960s, remains an open area for further intensive research. Indeed, even in regards to the focus of this thesis – the formative period of *kanto*, during the reign of Abülhamid II – there remain many gaps in our understanding. Of course, any study necessarily cannot cover all aspects of a subculture, particularly one with relatively limited primary sources available. A total, comprehensive analysis of *kanto*, including not only a social and historical analysis of the audience and performers but also a thorough lyrical and musicological analysis of the genre, awaits another intrepid researcher. In particular, this thesis has been forced to work within the limits of certain linguistic restraints, thereby limiting the available range of evidence. No sources in Greek or Armenian have been consulted, limiting this thesis's scope to material produced in English, French, modern Turkish and Ottoman. This is of course problematic, as it is entirely possible that any autobiographical material produced by Greek or Armenian *kantocu*s would be in their own respective languages. Furthermore, this thesis has only examined

[589] Arzu Öztürkmen, "'I Dance Folklore'" in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayse Saktanber (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002): 129.

material available generally, or in archival sources in Istanbul. Any archival material in other locations, such as in Athens, Yerevan, or in diaspora collections elsewhere in Europe or North America, has not been consulted in the creation of this thesis, and as such represents fertile ground for further study. The limitation of this thesis's scope to Istanbul, of course, also substantially restricts its breadth, and various other centres of *kanto* and *gazino* music, such as İzmir, Ankara, Thessaloniki, Athens, and to a certain extent Alexandria, have been left largely unexplored.

Nevertheless, it is my hope that this thesis has offered a relatively comprehensive and detailed study of the social, political, cultural, sexual, and economic background to the phenomenon of *kanto*'s emergence. It has aimed to analyze the characteristics of the genre as reflective of its Hamidian-era context, and to understand precisely how *kanto* was situated between traditional Ottoman theatre and newer, *alafranga* modes of conduct and recreation. In looking at *kanto* not as a simple fusion of European and Ottoman musical and performative styles, but rather as the product of a cosmopolitan and multi-communal youth subculture, this thesis has attempted to explore the emergence of *kanto* from a fresh and understudied perspective, bottom-up rather than top-down. However, I have also tried to contextualize *kanto* performance within the history of Ottoman erotic dance, and to use the evolution of this performative genre as a proxy for understanding broader trends in the development of Ottoman sexual norms. *Kanto* was, in essence, a heteronormalized development of the Ottoman performative tradition; in this merging of old content to new context, it was able to appeal to a wide audience that cut across class and social lines. *Kanto*, like the staged theatre before it, offered the Ottoman public a means to explore and confront new social realities, and made popular celebrities of those who found success within the genre. For the Armenian and Greek women who comprised the vast majority of *kantocu*s during the Hamidian era, *kanto* offered not only a path to fame and fortune, but a vehicle of self-expression and political critique. Unlike the dramatic theatre, which frequently faced censorship, closure, and the exile of its practicioners, the light and frivolous reputation of the genre meant that it was a considerably safer means to make a living, although even *kanto* nevertheless at times came under official suspicion. *Kanto*, as a genre, strenously sought to avoid representations that could provoke official censure or

audience reaction; as such, it often depicted types, like Iranians or Roma, which were safer to perform and possessed erotic connotations in Ottoman culture. Like other aspects of the genre, these depictions recalled Ottoman tradition whilst placing these motifs into a new context. *Kanto* was thus both a continuation of a centuries-old Ottoman tradition, and a particular manifestation of circumstances during the Hamidian-era. In our time, in which the public reputation of Abdülhamid II has undergone significant shifts in character and in which the Hamidian period has become a central focus of academic interest, it is my hope that "Peruz's sultanate" may one day, too, get its due.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Peruz Terzakyan. Sourced from Orhan Tahsin, "Eski Ramazanlardan Hatıralar: Fasıl Okuyucuları ve Kantocular," *Hayat Mecmuası*, Vol. 1, No. 10, (1961): 9.

Figure 2: Another photograph of Peruz. Sourced from *Yedigün*, no. 70 (August 11, 1935): 15.

Figure 3: Caricature of Peruz, originally printed in *Karagöz,* no. 128, (24 September 1909). The headline reads “An example of our *kantocu*s,” (*Kantocularımızdan bir numune*), and the joke below plays on her advanced age. Sourced from Nurçin İleri, “A Nocturnal History of Fin-de-Siecle Istanbul” (Ph.D diss., SUNY Binghampton, 2015): 215.

Figure 4: A further caricature of Peruz in costume, drawn by Sermet Muhtar Alus. Sourced from Sermet Muhtar Alus, “Kantocuların Kadınnesi Peruz,” *Yedigün*, no. 70 (August 11, 1935): 10.

Figure 5: Peruz in "Çingene" costume. Sourced from Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Çingene Kantoları." In *İstanbul Ansiklopedisi,* vol. 7 (Istanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Neşriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1963): 4004.

Figure 6: Şehzadebaşı area during the Hamidian period. Sourced from *Yedigün*, no. 182 (September 2, 1936): 7.

Figure 7: An example of a Direklerarası *tuluat* theatre, with Kel Hasan featured. Sourced from *Yedigün*, no. 373 (May 30, 1940).

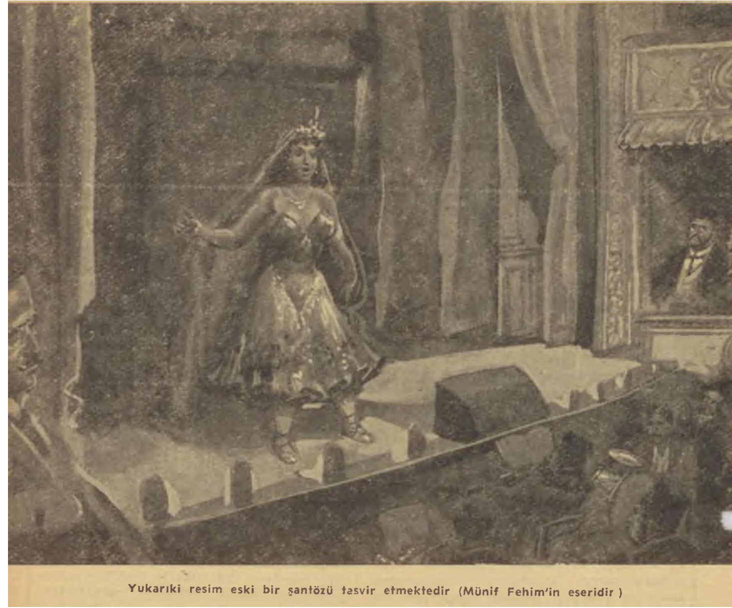

Figure 7: A *kantocu* performing on-stage. Sourced from Ahmet Rasim, "Altmış sene evvelki tulûat tiyatrolarında kanto ve kantocular," 001525832006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

Figure 8: *Köçek*s performing for Sultan Ahmet III. Sourced from Metin And, *A Pictorial History of Turkish Dancing: From Folk Dancing to Whirling Dervishes, Belly Dancing to Ballet* (Istanbul: Dost Yayınları, 1976): 92.

Figure 9: Engraving of an 18th century *köçek* by Jean Baptiste Vanmour. Sourced from *Recueil de cent estampes representant differentes nations du Levant tirées sur les tableaux peints d'après Nature en 1707, et 1708 par les Ordres de Mr. de Ferriol ambassadeur du Roi a la Porte*… (Paris, 1714).

Figure 10: A female *çengi* from the 18th century, by Vanmour. Sourced from *Recueil de cent estampes representant differentes nations du Levant tirées sur les tableaux peints d'après Nature en 1707, et 1708 par les Ordres de Mr. de Ferriol ambassadeur du Roi a la Porte…* (Paris, 1714).

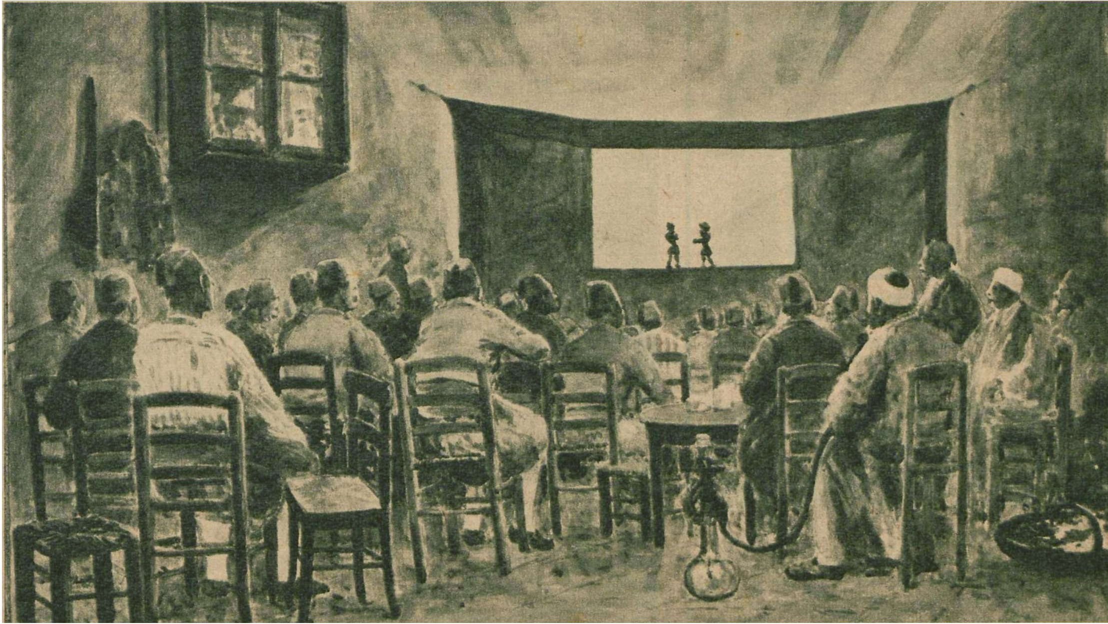

Figure 11: *Karagöz* performance. Sourced from Orhan Tahsin, "Eski Ramazanlardan Hatıralar: Fasıl Okuyucuları ve Kantocular," *Hayat Mecmuası*, Vol. 1, No. 10, (1961): 1.

Figure 12: *Orta Oyunu* performance. Sourced from Orhan Tahsin, “Eski Ramazanlardan Hatıralar: Fasıl Okuyucuları ve Kantocular,” *Hayat Mecmuası*, Vol. 1, No. 10, (1961): 4-5.

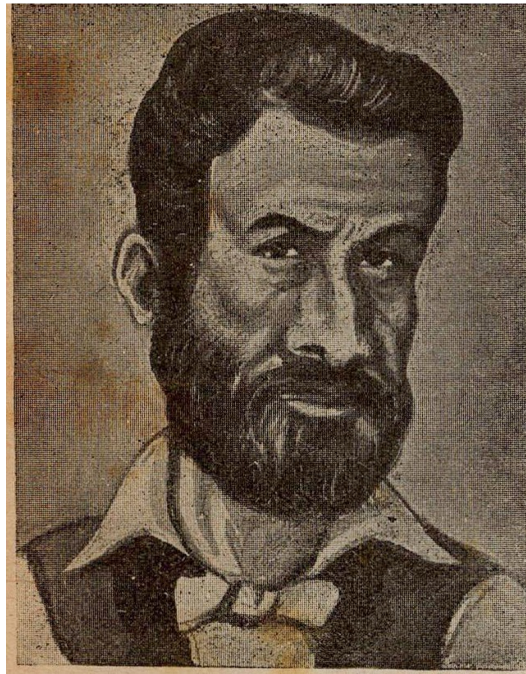

Figure 13: Güllü Agop. Sourced from “Güllü Agop,” *Yedigün*, no. 376 (May 21, 1955): 12.

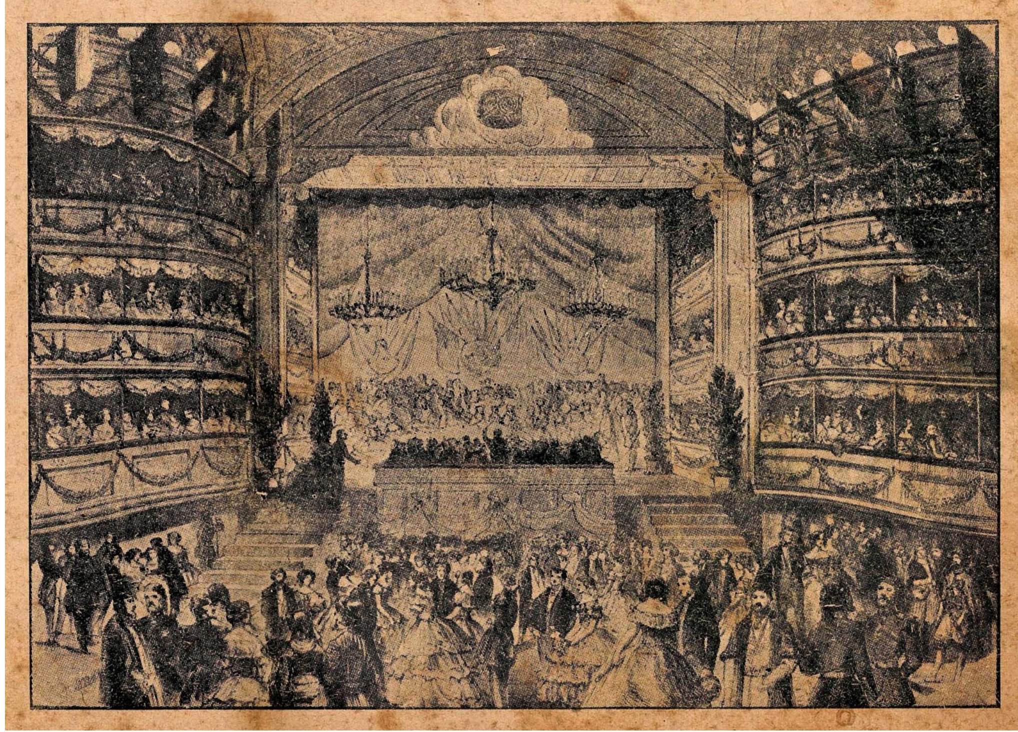

Figure 14: The *Naum Tiyatrosu*. Sourced from *Yedigün*, no. 425 (May 25, 1941): 11.

Figure 15: Karaköy in 1890, from a photograph by Sébah & Joaillier. Sourced from SALT Galata Research Archives.

Figure 16: Kavuklu Hamdi and Pişekar Küçük İsmail. Sourced from "Kavuklu Hamdi ve Pişekarı," 001527273006, Dosya No: 76, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

Figure 17: Komik Abdürrezzak (Abdi). Sourced from Sermet Muhtar Alus, "Karaköyden Tophaneye doğru..." *Akşam*, (December 4, 1938): 8.

Figure 18: Kel Hasan. Sourced from Haldun Taner, Haldun Taner, "Direklerarası: Ramazan Takvimi" *Milliyet* (July 26, 1980): 13.

Figure 19: Komik Naşit in "Çingene" costume. Sourced from Cemaldim Server, "Naşid," *Son Telgraf* (March 22 1938): 7.

Figure 20: *Tuluatçı*s in the roles of Kavuklu and Pişekar. Sourced from Orhan Tahsin, "Eski Ramazanlardan Hatıralar: Fasıl Okuyucuları ve Kantocular," *Hayat Mecmuası*, Vol. 1, No. 10, (1961): 1.

Figure 21: *Kanto* and *tuluat* troupe. From right to left, Komik Naşit Özcan, Şamram, Küçük Virjin, Mari Ferha, Avantia and Amelya (Naşit's wife). Sourced from Orhan Tahsin, "Eski Ramazanlardan Hatıralar: Fasıl Okuyucuları ve Kantocular," *Hayat Mecmuası*, Vol. 1, No. 10, (1961): 9.

Figure 22: Küçük Virjin. Sourced from "Kanto Sanatçısı Verjin Hanım," SALT Galata Research Archives.

Figure 23: Photograph of Şamram Kelleçiyan. Sourced from "Kanto ile ilgili kupür," 001526672006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, Istanbul, Turkey.

Figure 24: Şamram in later life, with interviewer. Sourced from Hikmet Heridun, "Herdem Taze Bir Sanatkar Kadın: Şamram Hanım, Muharririmize Hayatını Hatıralarını Anlatıyor," 001525846006, Dosya No: 175, Taha Toros Arşivi, İstanbul, Turkey.

Figure 25: Zarife Hanım. Sourced from Orhan Tahsin, “Eski Ramazanlardan Hatıralar: Fasıl Okuyucuları ve Kantocular,” *Hayat Mecmuası*, Vol. 1, No. 10, (1961): 9.

Figure 26: *Düettocu* Niko in “Laz” costume. Sourced from Orhan Tahsin, “Eski Ramazanlardan Hatıralar: Fasıl Okuyucuları ve Kantocular,” *Hayat Mecmuası*, Vol. 1, No. 10, (1961): 9.

Figure 27: Agavni Necip Hanım. Sourced from Bintülbetül. “Sahnelerimizde Çalışanlardan: Agavni Necib Hanım.” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 10, no. 194 (March 6, 1921): 13.

Figure 28: Ottoman-era poster for Kel Hasan and Komik Naşit company *tuluat* and *kanto* performances. Sourced from "Evvel Zaman İçinde," Osmanlı Tiyatro Afişleri Sergisi, Information Research Center online archives, Research of the Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

Figure 29: Multilingual (Ottoman, Armenian, French) poster for a *kanto* and *tuluat* performance with Şevki, Mari Ferha, and Adile Hanım. Sourced from "Komik Şevki Bey, Adile Hanım ve Şehire Mari Hanım'ın tiyatro ilanları," 001508468006, Dosya No: 170, Taha Toros Arşivi, Istanbul, Turkey.

F

Maskeli ve maskesiz büyük artistik balosu

Şehzade başı Millet sinema tiyatrosunda

16 Şubat Pazartesi günü akşamı

Sanatkâr Naşit B. temsilleri
Türkiyemizin sevimli komiği
Şevkı bey birlikte

Muhterem halkın sabırsızlıkla beklediği zengin *program*

Türkiyemizin yegâne 2 meşhur kahkahalar kralları bir sahnede karşı karşıya

Sanatkâr Naşit B. komik Şevkı B. bütün kuvveti sanatkâranelerini muhterem halka taktim edeceklerdir

Maske ile baloya iştirak edecek hanım ve madamlar için tiyatro meccanendir.

Heyetı temsiliye primadonnası Jerfin H.

Türkiyemizin büyük sanatkârı Naşit B.

Eğlenceli bir gece
Serpantin yağmuru

Güzel sesile maruf sahnemizin güzel kelebeği Minyon Zarife H.

Bu gece çok gülmek ve çok eğlenmek gecesidir· fırsatı kaçırmayınız·

Sanatkâr Naşit B. ve komik Şevkı beyin en ziyade muvafak oldukları büyük piyes

KADIN TAHAKKÜMÜ

Taklitli ve gayet gülünçlü piyes 3 perde

İşbu piyes için lâzım olan dekor ve kostümler aslına mutabık bir surette ihzar edilmiştir.

Figure 30: Monolingual Republic-era *kanto* poster for a performance by Komik Şevki alongside Komik Naşit and Zarife Hanım. Sourced from “Kadın Tahakkümü,” 001636103019, Dosya No: 170, Taha Toros Arşivi, Istanbul, Turkey.

Figure 31: Caricature of a “Kara Kız.” Sourced from *Akbaba*. no. 141 (April 11, 1924): 1.

نشئۀ دل

یکی شرقی و قنطو مجموعه سی

جامع و منتخبی

حسن تحسین

معارف عمومیه نظارت جلیله سنک
رخصتیله طبع اولنمشدر

مطبعۀ [کتبخانۀ جهان]
بابعالی جاده سنده

۱۳۲۳

Figure 32: Title page for *Neşe-i Dil.* Sourced from Hasan Tahsin, *Neşe-i Dil: Yeni Şarkı ve Kanto Memuası* (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Kütüphane-i Cihan, 1907): 1.