

GRAŻYNA ZAJĄC

**KIRK YIL (FORTY YEARS) – THE MEMOIRS
BY HALİT ZİYA UŞAKLIGİL**

Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil (1866-1945) is one of the greatest Turkish writers belonging to the group of *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* and assembling round the magazine of *Servet-i Fünun*. This group of young, progressive writers was a dominating literary company in the Ottoman Turkey of last years of the 19th century and early years of the 20th century. Halit Ziya with his vast literary work – six published novels, eleven collections of short stories and four plays – can be reckoned to be the best prose writer, not only among the representatives of *Edebiyat-ı Cedide*, but also among Turkish writers of pre-republican Turkey. His novels and short stories, created under the influence of European naturalism and realism, are still read with interest because of the problems, fearlessly raised by the author. In order to meet readers' expectations, publishers bring out his works again, adapting their language to contemporary Turkish. In this passage it may be well to add, that Halit Ziya has also written some novels issued only in extracts (not in books), memoirs, poems, a lot of articles, and that he is the author of many translations from French. Although a lot of good Turkish writers have manifested themselves after him, he is still considered to be one of the most popular authors in Turkey.

Halit Ziya made history as a novelist, and on the whole he is not referred to as a writer of memoirs. However, one ought to remember, that he is the author of nine volumes of memoirs. Considering their quantity and quality, we can term him as one of the greatest in Turkish literature. *Kırk Yıl (Forty Years)*, which is the subject of the present

article, consists of five volumes and describes forty years of Halit Ziya's life, from early childhood up to 1909, when he was appointed chief secretary at the sultan's court. This work was written in 1935 and published in 1936¹. The next selection of the writer's memoirs was *Saray ve Ötesi (At the Court and Over It)* consisting of three volumes. They were published between 1940 and 1942. The period of the writer's work at the sultan's court is depicted here. The third title of Halit Ziya's memoirs is *Bir Acı Hikâye (The Painful Story)*. It is a one-volume book written in 1942 after the suicidal death of the writer's son².

Kırk Yıl is a precious source of information about the life of Turkish intellectuals of the last period of the Ottoman Sultanate. We can read here a lot about the childhood of a Turkish boy spent in a house full of relatives, servants and slaves, about the problem of school (in particular – the problem of the lack of any high school, which could be compared with the schools kept by national minorities), about the circles of young writers and editors. The reader can also gain an insight into Turks' amusements and fashions (almost all of them come from Europe), of political and cultural events. The variety and great number of topics mean that we are unable to present all of them here.

Ottoman family. Woman. Child. Slave. Little Halit Ziya grows up in an affluent family headed by a father who earns his living in the carpet trade. However the father is not the most important person in the family. The head of the family is the grandfather, even if he happens to live far away. When Halit's father has to take any significant decision, he consults grandfather and, when he becomes the cause of losses in the family business, he is called by grandfather and reprimanded by

¹ The present article is based on the last edition of *Kırk Yıl*. It was published in 1987 by Şemsettin Kutlu, who simplified the language of the work and added necessary commentaries and explanations. It is a one-volume edition, numbering 699 pages. All quotations in the article are taken from this edition.

/Halit Ziya U ş a k l ı g i l: *Kırk Yıl*. İnkılâp Kitabevi, İstanbul 1987 (ed.: Şemsettin Kutlu)/

² Vedat Uşaklıgil committed suicide during his stay in Tirana, where he was an official of the Turkish embassy. In the preface to *Kırk Yıl* Ş. Kutlu writes, that *The Painful Story* is crying more than memoir...

him in a hearing of all the male members of the family. The women lead their calm home life, not coming into contact with strangers, but they are of great importance; they supervise all home affairs, take care of children, servants and slaves. In many places of *Kırk Yıl* Halit Ziya gives voice to his feeling of love for his mother. She is the only confidant and consoler for her little son and – in Halit Ziya's young days – she is like an oasis of peace and warmth, to whom one comes back willingly after the day of wearisome and tiring work. The children – both boys and girls – enjoy a special place in the home life; they are loved and cuddled by everybody and, they repay this with a respect and veneration for their elders and with kindness for the slaves. *Kırk Yıl* provides us with valuable knowledge of slavery in Ottoman society. Keeping slaves at home was still a daily occurrence among powerful Turkish families of the decadent period of the sultanate, and their position was not so bad as one may suppose. From earliest youth Halit Ziya had grown up in a household where a lot of slaves were kept. Mostly they came from Africa or the Caucasus, and spoke many different languages. Their duties were like the duties of servants, but they were treated as if they were the members of the family. The slaves had definite duties in the house. When Halit Ziya was born, he was given a nanny from Tchad, who looked after him day and night, and she carried the baby in a shawl on her back, as the women from Tchad used to do it. In some passages Halit Ziya describes the slaves' love for the children, and the children's love for the slaves. When Halit was four-five years old, one of the slave women was dying and she asked Halit's mother to bring the children as she wanted to say good-bye to them. "They stopped us in the doorway. She was lying in her bed. My mother spoke with the sweetest voice: – Nazmîdil, my girl. Look, since you wished, the children have come. All three are here: Fitnat, Ethem and Halit... Can you see, my girl? – Then we could hear something, as if she wanted to say: yes. Even now I can hear this voice in my ears"³. In the other passage we can find some more recollections on slaves. Dark-skinned Refik Ağa was the chief of all the domestic slaves. The children were afraid of him because of his liking for order and discipline. He was really father's trustworthy supporter in home affairs. All the children loved the twenty-year-old Ethiopian Server. Unfortunately, he

³ *Kırk Yıl*, p.26.

fell ill and was sent to hospital. On page 36 one can find an impressive description of the visit of seven-year-old Halit to the hospital, at the bedside of the dying slave.

School. *Kırk Yıl*, particularly its first volume, contains a lot of remarks on the Turkish educational system. While writing these memoirs (in republican Turkey), Halit Ziya regrets, that education in his childhood was so poor. His first school is depicted on pages 27-30. The only thing to be done here, is reading the Koran with rhythmically body shaking, and the only thing that the teacher does is sitting all day without moving, and putting the children in order with the help of a stick. The stick is so long that each child can be easily reached... Six-year-old Halit hates this place. Luckily, the new system of education is introduced in this period and Halit enters *iptidai mektep*, a school of the new type⁴. This is quite a different school. When Halit enters the classroom for the first time, he notices, that the children sit on desks, don't shake while learning and the teacher is "pretty, young, likeable and sweet"⁵. In one year Halit enters another school of the new type. It is *Askeri Rüşdiye*⁶ and Halit learns here from the age of eight to the age of twelve. After the Russian war of 1877-1878 the family's affairs grow worse and they have to go to Izmir, where grandfather and the major part of the family is living. Now we are given an accurate description of Izmir's educational conditions. Halit enters *İzmir Rüşdiyesi*, which is the only Turkish secondary level school in this town, i.e. in the second town in Turkey as regards population. On pages 101-110 we can find the writer's remarks on this school, as well as on other schools of Izmir. Their comparison draws very sad conclusions. There are a lot of minority secondary schools in this big Turkish town and

⁴ A new type of elementary school was set up in 1862 but enforcing modern education was very hard. For example, of Istanbul's 360 elementary schools of the traditional type (*sıbyan mektebi*) only 12 were changed into *iptidai mektep* in the initial period. Desks and blackboards were brought into practice there. Conservatives didn't enjoy these schools and one could hear such the charge: „it isn't possible to learn the Koran sitting at a desk and swinging one's legs". *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyete Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, c. 2, p. 466; İstanbul 1985/.

⁵ *Kırk Yıl*, p.30.

⁶ *Rüşdiye* (*rüştiye*) was a new type of secondary school, set up in 1838. Soon after *rüşdiye* a higher level school, *idâdi*, was brought into being.

only one Turkish one. Moreover, the girls from minority groups can be educated at secondary level whereas *İzmir Rüşdiyesi* is only for boys. The writer mentions the names of the schools founded by Greeks, Armenians and Jews living in Izmir as well as the private schools run by Protestant and Catholic monks and nuns. In particular, the writer underlines the fact, that non-Muslim girls attend the schools, which look like palaces. Also the Jewish school *Alliance Israelite* is of magnificent appearance, which is especially sorrowful for Halit Ziya as his inconspicuous *rüşdiye* is on exactly the other side of the street. From the first day at this school Halit suspects that something is wrong with Turkish education. The schoolboys have only two long lessons every-day and one of them is obligatorily Arabic - the most important subject in the school. The Arabic lesson consists of reading, translating and explaining such a complicated book (*Rebâil-i Erba'a*), that one can only get two sentences done per day. The Persian lesson consists of reading a passage from *Gülistan* by Şeyh Sadi and discussing its grammatical problems. Turkish grammar and orthography are taught only by reading *Osmanlı Tarihi* (*The History of the Ottomans*). Arithmetical exercises are so foolish that the writer recalls them with embarrassment. During the geography lessons the schoolboys practice showing with their finger on the map towns, mountains, seas and rivers. What is more, when the young Jews leave their school every day with a pile of notebooks full of work to be done at home, the young Turks aren't given any tasks. What are the competences of a Turk who was graduated from such a school? "In the end, a young man who has finished a school with such a level of culture and education, is neither able to say one simple sentence in Persian to a Persian tea-seller, nor can he understand a single passage from an Egyptian newspaper in Arabic. As for geography, even if he can locate Paris and Berlin in their proper places, he is not able to imagine the position of New York or Chicago"⁷. Next, Halit Ziya writes, that a young Turkish man who wants to find a job after such a school, has no chance⁸. *Rüşdiye* doesn't

⁷ *Kırk Yıl*, p.103.

⁸ Only some years later will Turkish secondary and higher education develop. Eighteen years old Halit Ziya is nominated to the post of French teacher in the *İzmir Rüşdiyesi* and from then the students of this school can learn French. Six years later a new school of the *idâdi* type is opened in

provide modern knowledge expected from the educated person. That is, why all important institutions, such as banks, commercial companies, mail, telegraph, railway, printing houses etc. are conducted by Christians or Jews and what is more, all their workers are non-Turks. Of the many faults of Turkish education of this period the greatest is, that there are no lessons of European languages at all, while the graduates from minorities' colleges know not one, not two, but three or more languages. Now we can explain, why fourteen-year-old Halit Ziya had the courage to enter the college of French monks.

Foreign languages. Weight of translations. Halit Ziya's career in literature, press editing, translating and education wouldn't have been possible, if he had not entered a Catholic school. This decision called for a lot of courage because sending a child to a Christian school wasn't an everyday-event among Muslim families; on the contrary, it was totally unparalleled. Halit Ziya could manage it, because he realized the weight of knowledge of foreign languages, was enchanted by European literature, theatre, opera (in short, by the culture of the West) and – what is most important – he had a grandfather, who not only had enough money, but also was brave and determined enough to send his grandson to a French school. This school was founded by Austrian and Italian monks for the Armenians of Izmir. As Halit Ziya writes, “only Hamburger, a Jew from Germany and I were from outside this Catholic world”⁹. One should know French very well to be admitted to this school, so Halit Ziya first of all takes private lessons from a lawyer, who – which is very interesting – speaks with equal fluency Turkish, Persian, French, German, Italian, Greek and Armenian, so nobody in

Izmir and Halit Ziya becomes a teacher in it. It is quite a good school with a high level. On pages 207 and 283-285 of *Kırk Yıl* the writer underlines the friendly atmosphere and high culture and quality of the teachers of this school. Its founder and director, Abdurrahman Efendi, is depicted by Halit Ziya as a modern and very inventive man. Thanks to him *İzmir İdâdisi* soon became one of the best Turkish schools in the whole country. He managed to find several well educated, modern young men like Halit Ziya and to introduce, with their participation, such new subjects as: physics, chemistry, biology and geometry.

⁹ *Kırk Yıl*, p.117.

Izmir can guess, what his nationality is¹⁰. When Halit finally enters the school, he finds to his satisfaction, that French is the most important subject there. Each student is obliged to choose another foreign language from among Latin, Greek, Italian, German and English and Halit Ziya decides to learn Italian. During some years spent in this school he falls into the habit of reading books and magazines in French. It seems to be the course of nature that soon he begins to translate his favourite works into Turkish. While writing his memoirs he wonders at his courage at the age of fifteen, when he sent to *Hazine-i Evrak*, one of Istanbul's magazines, his first translations and – what is more striking – they were published. It was a series of small articles on nature. “How strange that Celâleddin bey, who was then the editor-in-chief of the magazine began to publish my trials with great respect, though he didn't know me at all. What have I written... It is impossible today to enumerate. I remember only *Hedgehogs*, *Seals*, *Sea-horses*, *Geysers* and the like”¹¹. As to literary works of the West, Halit Ziya's first translations come from the output of A. de Musset, V. Hugo, A. Dumas, E. Zola, Stendahl, H. de Balzac, A. Daudet, G. de Maupassant, E. and J. de Goncourt. Only some of these translations were published at once; some of them appeared after the foundation of an academic-literary magazine by Halit Ziya and his friends in 1884¹² and some others were not to appear at all because the manuscripts sent by him to Istanbul editors were lost. Also his translation of the libretto of the French operetta *Mascotte* disappeared before being staged. As he explains in pages 243-247, he translated it in three days with great enthu-

¹⁰ As in this period the standard of mathematics lessons given in Turkish schools was very low, Halit Ziya had to take private lessons in this subject, too.

¹¹ H. Z. Uşaklıgil, *50 yıl evvel yazıya nasıl başladım*, “Son Posta” no 4488 (1943); [after:] Ö. F. Huyugüzel, *Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil'in İzmir devresi ve bu devrede verdiği eserler*, “Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Araştırmaları Dergisi”, İzmir 1984 (pp. 69-86).

¹² *Nevruz*, founded by Halit Ziya, Tevfik Nevzat and Bıçakçızade Hakkı was the first magazine on science and arts in Izmir, founded by Turks and written in Turkish (there were in Izmir several magazines in Greek, Armenian and in Western Europe languages). *Nevruz* appeared from March to August 1884 (12 numbers). Then Halit Ziya and his friends began to publish *Hizmet*, which soon became a very significant Turkish magazine.

siasm, because he was charged with this task by the theatre company, in which the famous prima donna Virginie Karakaşyan was acting. Young Halit Ziya had seen her several times on the stage and was enraptured by her. In his memoirs he writes, that when he brought her the translation and saw her close up, he was very disappointed. It was one of the greatest disappointments of his youth. Soon this company broke up and *Mascotte* in Halit Ziya's translation was never played. In *Kırk Yıl* one can find a lot of notes concerning the work of translation. A Turkish translator of that period had to struggle with plenty of obstacles. The biggest one being the lack of a good dictionary. In the beginning Turkish translators have only one kind of French-Turkish dictionary, written by Bianchi. Halit Ziya writes, that this is a quite useless dictionary. Only from 1880 is a new dictionary published in thin fascicles one by one. Halit Ziya collects scrupulously all the numbers and finally he becomes an owner of a dictionary that is good enough to help the young translator in his trials. This is *Kamus-i Fransevî* by Şemsettin Sami. In some places of *Kırk Yıl* we can find Halit Ziya's praises for this great Turkish writer¹³. Another obstacle that the translator of that period is faced with, is the lack of editors, who would like to print literature of note. On pages 396-400 and 434-442 Halit Ziya paints in black colours the situation of the book market in Turkey. The most powerful and apparent environment is connected with the magazine of *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, which is very popular among the adherents of traditional culture. Crowds of conservative readers read this magazine. Another environment is formed by a few modern Turks. They try to publish their own magazines, which popularize European literature; unfortunately these periodicals disappear in a short time, mainly because of the problem of money or censorship. And the third environment mentioned by Halit Ziya is the group of Armenian publishers. Their aim is to earn as much as possible. For that purpose they

¹³ Şemsettin Sami (1850-1904) is the author of the first Turkish novel (*Taaşuk-ı Tal'ât ve Fitnat*), a translator of *Les Misérables* by V. Hugo and *Robinson Crusoe* by D. Defoe, he is also an editor of Istanbul's modern magazines, the author of some dictionaries and plenty of articles. As a Turk born on Greek land, he could achieve excellent education at a Greek school. That is why he knew several European languages, and, when he came to Istanbul in 1871, he became at once one of the best educated young people of the capital.

print bad translations of bad novels and they have no inclination to publish good translations of valuable European prose or good works of young, modern Turkish writers. In Halit Ziya's opinion European books ought to be translated into Turkish and this task seems to be much more important than writing books, because the Turkish nation of the second half of the 19th century hasn't its own experiences in writing novels, short stories, dramas and textbooks on various subjects. Instead of creating bad books that may dishearten simple readers or give them incorrect knowledge, it would be more useful to translate good European books. Halit Ziya writes, that he knows some people, who realize the importance of this and translate books into Turkish, but they do it dishonestly. Some of them translate the whole book or its part, others write their own modifications or adaptations and none of them gives the name of the true author. Halit Ziya calls it theft and gives us one example: a meritorious professor couldn't find a textbook in Turkish on exact sciences. Finally he translated and published under his own name some French books, and in this way he saved the poor situation of Turkish education...

The World of Literature and Theatre. *Kırk Yıl* is a rich source of information about the books read by young Turks of the period, as also about Turkish literary circles. From the first volume we can learn that Halit Ziya's admiration for literature begins very early. He is only ten years old, when he regularly visits with his father the theatre of *Gedikpaşa*. It is the theatre that sends little Halit to books. In the beginning he buys with his pocket money all the published plays that he can find. Some of them are good works of the first period of Turkish drama (e.g. *Akif Bey* and *Zavallı Çocuk* by Namık Kemal, *Vuslat* by Recaizade Ekrem¹⁴) but most of them are bad translations or adapta-

¹⁴ Namık Kemal (1840-1888) – the main representative of the period of Tanzimat in Turkish literature; poet, novelist and playwright. Not attending any school, he could attain rich knowledge by taking private lessons at home. He was an example for all young, progressive writers. Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem (1847-1914) – the poet, novelist and playwright of Tanzimat, the translator of some French novels; beloved teacher of literature in the high schools of Istanbul. Educated in *Mekteb-i İrfan* and *Harbiye İdâdisi*, he learnt French from foreign teachers. He took young writers under his protection and inspired them to create the literary circle of *Servet-i Fünun*.

tions of no value. After moving to Izmir Halit Ziya continues to go to the theatre. He writes in his memoirs that theatre in Izmir is not of a lower standard than in Istanbul. On the contrary, it seems to be much more brilliant. The writer gives two reasons for this situation. One of them is that Izmir has close contacts with the towns of Italy and France. The second is of a political character: Izmir is far away from the capital and from the rigorous censorship of this period¹⁵. One can also see the performances of opera and operetta in this town. They are given by French and Italian companies, both in Turkish and in French or Italian. Halit Ziya becomes a lover of classical European music, and three-five times a week he watches performances with his Armenian friends¹⁶. In the Izmir period Halit Ziya falls in love with the novel and from then on he spends all his money on bad and good books. Needless to say they are mostly bad. Only in the period of education at the French school does he begin to discern good books from bad, and he becomes a true connoisseur of literature. Through the agency of the Armenian Kevork he gets from Istanbul books and magazines. This way he acquaints himself with all the works of Namık Kemal and Ab-

¹⁵ In *Kırk Yıl* Halit Ziya often mentions the stifling atmosphere in the state of this time and destructive activities of *Encümen-i Teftiş ve Muayene*, the institution for censorship in the period of Sultan Abdülhamid the Second.

¹⁶ Halit Ziya underlines here (p.136) that the theatre and opera are the amusements of foreigners and minorities. Turks can be seen among spectators very rarely. The same notes can be found in the fourth and fifth volume of *Kırk Yıl* (pp. 547-548 and 575-576). While describing theatre life in Istanbul the writer states that a lot of people come to watch performances but only five-ten Turks can be seen among them. What is more, they are the members of government or the secret police. Halit Ziya writes with bitterness that in Turkey only minorities and foreigners are happy and able to take part in entertainment whereas Turks aren't happy in their own country and don't enjoy themselves. He finishes the fourth volume with the very painful remark: when he comes back after a night performance from Beyoğlu, which is the quarter of wealth and entertainments, he can see the brilliant houses of foreigners, Greeks, Armenians and Jews. The houses are full of happiness, laughter and music. And on the other side of Golden Horn, where Turks live, there is no sign of joy. Inhabitants go to sleep with the thought that the next day will be just the same - sad and dark. It is one of the writer's many remarks on the atmosphere in the sultanate of the period of Abdülhamid the Second.

dülhak Hâmid¹⁷ and becomes a faithful reader of such periodicals as *Hafta* and *Hazine-i Evrak*. Thanks to Kevork he can get French books too. First of all these are the complete works of J. Verne, L. Figuiet and C. Falammariot. Then he gets the books of P. Zaccane, E. Sue, P. Feval, F. Soulie and A. Dumas père. Particularly this last one becomes Halit Ziya's beloved writer. As to the literary circles of this period depicted in *Kırk Yıl*, we can specify the group of young writers and editors in Izmir, the circle of conservative writers with Muallim Naci at the head, the writers of the preceding generation and the young, progressive writers assembling round the periodical of *Servet-i Fünun*. The group of young writers in Izmir in the period of Halit Ziya's early activity consists of Tefvik Nevzat, Bıçakçızade Hakkı, İsmail Safa and Menemenlizade Tahir. Particularly Tefvik Nevzat, Halit's best friend of these years, is mentioned very often. After moving to Istanbul in 1893 Halit Ziya meets some followers of traditional oriental literature. The main representative is Muallim Naci,¹⁸ connected with *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*¹⁹. The first visit in the editorial office, which is situated in a poor, dirty, ruined building is a big disappointment for Halit Ziya. His numerous remarks on Muallim Naci are also not flattering. Halit Ziya dislikes Muallim Naci's affection for oriental traditions in literature, his hostility towards progressive writers, pitiless attacks on the writers who have different opinions, and his explosive temper. He is not a good example for any young writers... Another representatives of this circle mentioned by Halit Ziya are Baba Tahir and Faik Esat Andelib. As far as the preceding literary generation is concerned, Halit Ziya writes with great respect about Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem who seems

¹⁷ Abdülhak Hâmid (1852-1937) – the diplomat, the greatest poet and playwright of Tanzimat and later periods. As the son of an aristocrat and diplomat he was educated at home by foreign teachers and in Paris.

¹⁸ Muallim Naci (1850-1893) – great poet and prose writer of the period of Tanzimat; press-editor and teacher of Turkish Literature. He was educated in a traditional way, in madrasah, and through all his life he defended traditional, oriental culture and literature. As a teacher he was very popular among his students.

¹⁹ *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* – the newspaper created by Muallim Naci's father-in-law, Ahmet Mithat Efendi in 1878. In the columns of this paper one could read sharp statements of Muallim Naci in his famous literary dispute with Recaizade M. Ekrem.

to be his supporter and guide in his early years in Istanbul. Another experienced writer, Ahmet Mithat Efendi²⁰, although he is a great novelist of Tanzimat, the so called “the Father of the Turkish Novel”, yet in *Kırk Yıl* he is depicted rather unfriendly. Halit Ziya underlines his vehemence and strong connections with Muallim Naci, who was a great antagonist of young, progressive writers. Ebüzziya Tevfik is another writer of the same generation²¹. In Halit Ziya’s opinion he is well-mannered, well-educated and a very laborious man. Though he isn’t often mentioned by the authors of anthologies, his share in the development of Turkish literature of the 19th century is indisputable. Finally, let us look at the circle of *Servet-i Fünun*. According to the theoretical books on this period of literature, there were sixteen members of this group, that is five prose writers, ten poets and one theoretician. And in fact, Halit Ziya mentions all of them in *Kırk Yıl*. The prose writers are: Cenap Şehabettin (1871-1934), Mehmet Rauf (1875-1931), Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın (1874-1957), Ahmet Hikmet Müftüoğlu (1870-1927) and Safveti Ziya (1875-1929). The poets of *Servet-i Fünun* are: Tevfik Fikret (1867-1915), the main poet of the group and the chief editor of *Servet-i Fünun*, Cenap Şehabettin (1871-1934), Süleyman Nazif (1870-1927), Faik Ali Ozansoy (1875-1950), the brother of Süleyman Nazif, Ali Ekrem Bolayır (1876-1937), the son of Namık Kemal, Hüseyin Siret Özsever (1872-1959), Celâl Sahir Erozan (1883-1935), Sami Bey (1866-1917) with the pen-name Süleyman Nesib, İsmail Safa (1867-1901) and Hüseyin Suat Yalçın (1867-1942), the elder brother of H.Cahit Yalçın. Ahmet Şuayip (1876-1910) was the theoretician of the circle.

²⁰ Ahmet Mithat Efendi (1844-1912) – the great Turkish novelist of the period of Tanzimat, press-editor and the teacher of history and philosophy at *Darülfünun* (the University of Istanbul). Because of poverty he did not go to a good school, but he succeeded in achieving extensive and modern knowledge by teaching himself. He managed to learn French with success and become a translator of French literature.

²¹ Ebüzziya Tevfik (1848-1913) – he was the author of some plays, Turkish anthologies and plenty of essays but in the main he was engaged in editing newspapers and printing books. He set up *Kütüphane-i Ebüzziya*, a series for the Turkish literature of that time. This way the Turkish reader could buy over one hundred volumes with the output of such important writers as: Namık Kemal, Sinasi, Ziya Paşa, Recaizade M. Ekrem, Muallim Naci, Ahmet Rasim.

of the circle. Ahmed İhsan Tokgöz (1868-1942) as the founder of the newspaper *Servet-i Fünun* is often mentioned by Halit Ziya. *Kırk Yıl* is a very important source of knowledge about the period of *Edebiyat-ı Cedide*. The remarks on it begin in the fourth volume (in the presented here one-volume edition the history of *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* begins on page 424 with the depiction of the editorial office). It is one small room with four broken chairs, with one table and a pile of periodicals in the corner. In this poor place arises the best literary newspaper of that time. Its representatives have certain features in common. They know European languages, are well educated, popularise European culture and way of life, stand out against Arabic and Persian traditions in Turkish literature, are enchanted by the West, in particular, France. They create their outstanding works in the stifling atmosphere of Abdülhamid’s period, when each progressive writer can be unexpectedly arrested or sent into exile for a long time.

These are the most important themes of *Kırk Yıl*. Of course, in Halit Ziya’s memoirs we can find other subjects, such as: historical events of the presented period, the world of the press, the favourite amusements of Turks, European music and fashion in the sultanate. Yet first of all *Kırk Yıl* is a wide and picturesque panorama of the literary world of Halit Ziya’s generation. This was the generation that believed in the importance of European culture. Let the quotation from Hüseyin Cahit be the illustration of this belief: “No matter, whether we want or not, we must become European. Just as the trousers which came to us from Europe – if any example is to come to our literature – it will come from the same place as the trousers”²².

²² H. C. Yalçın, *Kavgalarım*, 1910 [after:] *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyete Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, c. 2, p. 399; İst. 1985