Harput'ta Bir Amerikalı [An American in Harput]. Cevat Fehmi Başkut. Ankara: İnkılap Oyun Dizisi, 1972. p/bk 144 pp. ISBN 978-9-75109-898-6. Price TL.5.25.

Written in 1955 by Cevat Fehmi Başkut, *Harputta Bir Amerikalı* (*An American in Harput)* is a three-act comedy that satirizes the prevailing admiration for western cultures, especially American culture. Turkish culture has undergone a rapid process of westernization starting from the Rescript of Gülhane in 1856 (that created a coherent system of taxation), and accelerating after the foundation of the modern Republic of Turkey in 1923. Nonetheless this process gave rise to certain fears that local traditions might be lost. Americanization was seen as a substitute for a culture centered on nonmaterial goodwill with a money-ridden culture. Başkut's play includes characters who have been "contaminated" by this ideology as they are ready to give up their authentic identities and assume fake ones just for the sake of material gain.

Forty years ago, leaving behind his mother and brother in Harput, Abraham Moderus was taken to the United States by his father when he was a child. He is now a rich businessman and turns back to İstanbul to seek his long lost brother. However, his major motivation is financial; he hires Necmettin, the major character, to sort things out, as well as a retired police commissioner.

As the news about the presence of this "American" spreads, four people show up: three men, Ahmet Okyay, Ahmet Bulur and Ahmet Hamlet, all of whom claim to be the brother; and a woman, Celile who claims to be the wife of the brother and to have given birth to his daughter. All of them have an exaggerated admiration for everything American. Celile boasts of being a lady brought up in the "American way"; her house is decorated like American houses, she smokes only American cigarettes and knows only whisky as a drink" (44). Ahmet Bulur explains that if an American industrialist would invest in his business he would be extremely pleased (53). Ahmet Okyay complains about Turks being "oriental," not only sociologically but also economically and culturally (54). For Ahmet Hamlet America is "the land of fame, fortune, art, science and knowledge" (41).

Unable to solve the riddle, Moderus takes them to now deserted Harput, a city in eastern Turkey that was once a center of trade. The news

arrives that a runaway mad person is in the group, a situation which creates a second mystery to be solved. The retired police commissioner, who turns out to be the mad person, assumes that everyone in the group is mad due to their idolization of American culture. Madness becomes one of the dominant themes in the play when the mayor of Harput finds the true brother (i.e. not the three Ahmets whom we have already encountered) and describes him as being supposedly out of his senses. Despite Moderns' blandishments, the brother refuses any financial aid, and hence rejects everything that Americanization stands for. He is far more interested in protecting a decaying local culture as represented by the city of Harput. This triggers a reversal in attitude amongst the protagonists, as they decide to open a guesthouse in Harput in the hope that this will encourage others to come back and restore the city back to its glorious days. Harput's restoration necessarily means the survival of the authentic culture which is fighting against the threat of a culture contaminated by Americanization.

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