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Tragedy and parody in the twentieth-century Turkish novel

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POETICS OF MODERNITY AS CRISIS

Tragedy and Parody
in the Twentieth-Century Turkish Novel

Ahmed Nuri Ahmed

POETICS OF MODERNITY AS CRISIS
Tragedy and Parody in the Twentieth-Century
Turkish Novel

Ahmed Nuri Ahmed

Doctoral Thesis
University of Amsterdam

Poetics of Modernity as Crisis
Tragedy and Parody in the Twentieth-Century Turkish Novel

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	8
Notes on Spelling and Conventions	10
Introduction: The Three Dimensions of Modernity in the Turkish Novel	11
The Modernity Experience as Narratives of Crisis	15
The Crisis Narratives and Their Temporality	19
The Temporal and Terminological Frame of Modernity and the Turkish Novel	24
The Turkish Novel (as) and (within) World Literature	29
The Limitations of the Belatedness Discourse	32
The Dynamic Relation Beyond the Center-(Semi-)Periphery Model	35
Tragedy and Parody as the Narrative Modes of Crisis	40
Dissecting the Narrative Modes, Plots, and Characters	42
Chapter Outline	45
PART I: MODERNITY AS TRAGEDY	47
Tragedy, the Tragic, and non-Western Modernities	50
The Idea of the Tragic and Turkish Modernity	54
The Emergence of the Tragic in Turkish Literature	57
The Novel as Expression of the Tragic	62
Modernity Experience as the Conflict of Values, Ideas, and Choices	66
Gendering the Modernity Experience	68
The Elements of the Tragic	72
The Tragic in the Selected Novels	74
Chapter One : Inevitability and Secular Reconciliation with the Divine in <i>Pleiades Storm</i>	77
The Biblical Construction of the Evil and Betrayal	82
Music as the Theatre of Conflicting Cultures and Mindsets	85
“ <i>Hasret</i> ” as the Mystical Yearning vs. Physical Love	89
Suffering as Becoming	96
Chapter Two: Longing for the Unattainable and the Bleak Despair in <i>A Mind at Peace</i>	105
The Inescapability of the Tragic	108
Homesickness, “ <i>Hasret</i> ,” and the Nostalgic Insight	113
Self-Knowledge through Suffering	118
Walking as Self-Transformation	124
Chapter Three: The Secular Emancipation and its Tragic Redemption in <i>Lying Down to Die</i>	135
Suicide as the State of Crisis and its Suspense	138
Historizing the Existential Crisis	142
Unmaking the Gender Discourse of the Republic	147
Lying as Reinventing Self	153
Conclusion of Part I	161

PART II: MODERNITY AS PARODY	165
The Crisis Narratives and the Parodic Imagination	167
Some Definitions and Functions of Parody	170
The Manifestations of Parody in the Turkish Novel	174
Social Parody in the Turkish Novel	178
The Crisis Narratives as Social Parodies	182
Chapter Four: The Self-Reflexive Parody of Being Modern in <i>The Time Regulation Institute</i>	189
The Playful Reality–Fiction Conundrum	192
The Crises of the Modernity Experience: Absurdity, Time, and Self	199
The Seduction and Moral Redemption of Modern Life	205
Writing Memoirs as Self-Recognition and Murmuring Apology	212
Chapter Five: The Cruel Parody of the Ideological and Ethical Impasse in <i>A Strange Woman</i>	217
The Scornful Mockery of the Uncompromising Masculinity	220
The Female Body as the Subject of the Crisis	227
Contradicting Self, History, and the Other	232
Scoffing at the Leftist Discourse and Madness	239
Chapter Six: The Tragic Parody of Belatedness and Positivism as Salvation in <i>Silent House</i>	245
A Faustian Quest for Knowledge	248
Towards a Satire of the Top-Down Modernization	253
The Derivation of Evil and Grotesque Madness	259
Ridiculing as the Implied Author	265
Conclusion of Part II	271
CONCLUSION	275
Bibliography	286
Summary	312
Samenvatting	315

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Notes on Spelling and Conventions

In this thesis, I have meticulously followed the standard modern Turkish spelling for Turkish and Ottoman names and terms, in accordance with the Turkish orthography set by *Türk Dil Kurumu* (Turkish Language Institute), following the adoption of the modified Latin alphabet in 1928. Most consonants and vowels are pronounced the same as in English.

After the implementation of The Surname Law in 1934, all citizens of the Republic of Turkey were required to take a surname. However, some of the authors and intellectual figures either never adopted a surname before this date or only did so later in their lives. In instances where individuals did not adopt a surname, such as Namık Kemal and Mehmet Rauf, I will refer to them by their original names in the main text, footnotes, and bibliography. For those who adopted a surname, it is common to refer to authors such as Yahya Kemal (Beyatlı) and Halide Edib (Adivar) without their surnames in Turkish literary studies. I will follow this convention and indicate the surnames in parenthesis upon the first mention in the main text and continue using their original names. However, in the bibliography, I will refer to them by their surnames in parenthesis to ensure consistency and standardization.

Introduction

Introduction: The Three Dimensions of Modernity in the Turkish Novel

Turkish modernity—which began in the nineteenth century with the profound transformation from the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire to a nation state—has been a long, complicated, and ever-changing process that contains many factors and elements, which have influenced every aspect of society in Turkey. Due to close encounters with European culture and institutions, crucial sociocultural developments occurred over almost two hundred years, and these developments have shaped a new cultural structure and discourse in Turkey. Turkish literary modernity, the rise of the novel in the Ottoman Empire, the introduction of various new genres into Turkish literature, and different understandings in the Turkish novel, all have been formed within this process, which possesses its own unique conditions and features.¹

Ottoman-Turkish modernity² and its varied implications have become a main theme in the Turkish novel since its emergence in the mid-nineteenth century. However, modernity as either a condition or a process is not only a thematic manifestation in Turkish fiction. The novel as a literary genre is, indeed, one of the constituent agents of Ottoman-Turkish modernity itself because it has played a significant role in different stages: a literary device for cultural transfer from Europe, a journalistic platform through serials, an activator

¹ The rise of the novel in Europe is associated with the rise of the bourgeoisie and individuality due to the economic and socio-political changes led by capitalism. See Lucien Goldmann, *Towards A Sociology of the Novel*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1975), 7–11; Alan Swingewood, *The Novel and Revolution* (London: MacMillan, 1975), 4–45. For the relationship between modernity and the novel, see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957); Diana Laurenson and Alan Swingewood, *The Sociology of Literature* (London: Mac Gibbon & Kee, 1971); and Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: the Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).

² In my usage, “Ottoman-Turkish modernity” refers to this complex process mainly concerning the Muslim-Turkish community and the Turkish language as a whole. The term descriptively confines the particular focus of my thesis. Otherwise, I do not overlook the relation of the other ethno-religious communities in this process and their contributions to the Ottoman Turkish literary field. I use “Turkish modernity” and “Republican modernity” interchangeably, and they refer to the modernity process in Turkey since 1923.

of sociocultural or even political transformations, a textual space for the construction of national identity, a sign of the intellectual or ideological trajectory, and the battlefield of the old and new literary aesthetics in Turkish literature, including the never-ending discussion on the Turkish language.

For these reasons, the Turkish novel can be considered a litmus paper of Ottoman-Turkish modernity that conveys its contradictions, dilemmas, conflicts, and ambiguities. Besides, many Turkish novels contain not only individual and collective crises in relation to traumatic events, crucial political and sociocultural transformations, and radical linguistic changes in Turkish but also the clashes of different worldviews, traditions, cultural values, and ethics. The genre of the novel in the Turkish language then encapsulates various discourses about Turkey's secular, nationalist modernity process, reflecting the changing perceptions and different interpretations thereof through time. Furthermore, the fundamental institutions of Ottoman-Turkish modernity are historically constituted from within literature as the writers, poets, and journalists (i.e., the Ottoman-Turkish intelligentsia) were demanding sociocultural reforms and engaged in politics.³ There is therefore a strong entanglement between the Ottoman-Turkish modernity process as a whole and the development of Turkish fiction since its emergence, which also explains why many historians and sociologists paid attention to the Turkish novel.⁴

The general aim of this thesis is, therefore, to explore the complex relationship

³ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 132. See also Hasan Bülent Kahraman, *Postmodernite ile Modernite Arasında Türkiye* (Istanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2002), 267.

⁴ See Sabri F. Ülgener, *İktisadi Çözülmenin Ahlak ve Zihniyet Dünyası* (Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 1981); Şerif Mardin, "Tanzimat'tan Sonra Aşırı Batılılaşma," in *Türk Modernleşmesi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), 21–79; Nilüfer Göle, "Snapshots of Islamic Modernities," *Daedalus* 129, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 91–117; Taner Timur, *Osmanlı-Türk Romanında Tarih, Toplum ve Kimlik* (Istanbul: Afa Yayınları, 1991); Kemal Karpat, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Edebiyat ve Toplum* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009); and M. Hakan Yavuz, *Nostalgia for the Empire: The Politics of Neo-Ottomanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 68–106.

between Turkish modernity and the twentieth-century Turkish novel, focusing particularly on the link between the different representations of the modernity experience and the narrative modes employed in six novels published between the 1940s and the very early 1980s. The six novels examined in this thesis are *Ülker Fırtınası* “Pleiades Storm” (1944) by Safiye Erol, *Huzur* “A Mind at Peace” (1949) and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* “The Time Regulation Institute” (1961) by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Tuhaf Bir Kadın* “A Strange Woman” (1971) by Leylâ Erbil, *Ölmeye Yatmak* “Lying Down to Die” (1973) by Adalet Ağaoğlu, and *Sessiz Ev* “Silent House” (1983) by Orhan Pamuk.⁵

This thesis attempts to investigate how the six novels represent individual modernity experiences as crises in Turkey. To seek detailed answers to this main question, it also examines the following questions: How are the existential and moral crises of the protagonists addressed within the broadest socio-historical and cultural circumstances of modernizing Turkey? How is gender represented in the novels concerning the tension between the protagonists’ crises and such circumstances? How is the link between tragedy and modernity variously manifested in these novels? How has the relationship between tragedy and parody emerged with respect to Turkish modernity and its changing interpretations over time?

Analyzing individual modernity experiences as represented in these six novels enables us to explore the close link between Turkish fiction and the meanings and conditions of Turkish modernity over decades, especially between the 1940s and the very early 1980s. The framing of the Turkish novel in this thesis draws particular attention to the three dimensions of modernity in Turkish literature: thematic, structural, and agency(-aspect). The selected novels, like many other ones excluded here due to this thesis’s limited length, are

⁵ In all cases, I read these novels in Turkish, but for the convenience of the non-Turkish reader I quote from English translations where they exist. As *Ülker Fırtınası* and *Ölmeye Yatmak* have not been translated into English yet, I use my own translations when I quote from these two novels.

heavy with the reality of Turkey's sociocultural and political history, so they form the thematic dimension. These novels are simultaneously the manifestations of Turkish modernity from within and produced in its particular context and stage, thereby indicating the structural dimension. Accordingly, while the novels narrate various types of individual crises concerning Turkish modernity, they concurrently convey or re-construct various discourses about this process from either a current perspective at that time or retrospectively. That is to say, they are crucial in forging the sense and meaning of Turkish modernity.

At this point, the third dimension of modernity in the Turkish novel comes into play as it refers to the changing critical reception of the novels over time. These novels were, and still are, re-evaluated in a certain context and literary understanding of a particular period. Each novel and its continuous, ever-evolving reception have noticeably played a role in rethinking both the various aspects and earlier stages of Turkish modernity, depending on the given period. This thesis, therefore, also discusses the six novels as the agents of Turkish modernity. By considering these thematic, structural, and agential dimensions in the Turkish novel, my thesis contributes to further understanding of what I call the poetics of the modernity experience as a crisis in the Turkish novel.

The Modernity Experience as Narratives of Crisis

The major sociocultural, political, and structural transformations throughout the modernity process in the Ottoman Empire, and later in Turkey, have generated both individual and collective conflicts, depending on the circumstances of a particular period. These conflicts essentially derive from the different dualisms and tensions in which the old and new epistemologies collide with each other, thus forming various binary oppositions or unresolved ambiguities, such as the Eastern–Western cultural values, the secular–Islamic-oriented worldviews, and the Ottoman legacy–Turkish identity. The main reason for the

epistemological clash lies in the re-evaluation of the conventional worldviews and different traditional norms regulated by those worldviews, which constituted the socio-religious, cultural, existential, and ethical texture of many communities in the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Structural changes since the nineteenth century led to the traditional values being reconsidered or reconciled with the emerging secular mindset and positivist thought derived from European culture, or even contested by individuals and different collectives.⁷

The conflict of values, or at least, the increasing encounters with European concepts and lifestyles is then perceived as a source of ontological insecurity at individual levels. Both epistemological contradictions and sociocultural or moral anxieties have been deepened due to some other essential aspects that emerged either simultaneously or subsequently, such as the secularization of institutions and law, the dominance of the positivist worldview on lifestyle and cultural practices, the prevalence of the idea of progress, the nation-building in Turkey and its identity politics, and so forth. This unevenly profound transformation and its radical implications in the Empire and later in Turkey led to the unavoidable tensions and dilemmas between the secular and the Ottoman understanding of Islam; Turkishness and other ethno-religious identities; European and Muslim-(Ottoman-)Turkish values; and individual and community. These tensions and dilemmas are variously manifested in many Turkish novels.⁸

⁶ For a short discussion on the changes in the nineteenth century, see İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2008), 13–37.

⁷ The reformist tendencies were strong due to those of the powerful state bureaucrats, intellectuals, and religious scholars in Istanbul who were “deeply influenced by European positivist and materialist philosophy.” See Andrew Hammond, *Late Ottoman Origins of Modern Islamic Thought: Turkish and Egyptian Thinkers on the Disruption of Islamic Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 17. Similar kinds of intelligentsia were powerful in the other major cities of the Empire. See Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800–1912* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 178.

⁸ The main themes in the early Turkish novel are the “impact of Westernization, the condition of women, forced marriage, and the place of religion in modern society.” Laurent Mignon, *Uncoupling Language and Religion: An Exploration into the Margins of Turkish Literature* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021),

The different stages of Ottoman-Turkish modernity, in other words, have produced a habitat for conflict and crisis, ranging from existential questions and ethics to politics and aesthetics.

The co-existence of such conflicts and crises, along with the individual's inner struggle, is thematically manifest in the six novels analyzed in this thesis. These novels tackle the modernity experiences of the different protagonists in Turkey in various ways, employing diverse novelistic poetics. "Modernity experience" in this thesis refers to each protagonist's traumatic or troubled encounter with various contradictions of the dramatic sociocultural transformation in Turkey and their unavoidable effects in an urban setting (e.g., Istanbul or Ankara) and in a certain period. *The* modernity experience denotes the singularity of each representation rather than the experience itself in reality. It additionally implies how these protagonists existentially and ethically react to such contradictions and effects as depicted in the novels. These six novels may be posited as "crisis narratives" of the modernity experience that recount the story of the Western-oriented urban protagonist's existential, ethical, and cultural struggle associated with the sociocultural and moral values in modernizing Turkey.⁹ This thesis then excludes the rural dimensions of Turkish modernity and its literary manifestations in the Turkish novel.¹⁰

In general terms, the centrality of crisis narratives can be traced back to the 1870s.

39. See also Robert Finn, *The Early Turkish Novel: 1872–1990* (Istanbul, The Isis Press, 1984), 164–70. For the moral, cultural, and religious conflicts of values in Turkish fiction until 1923, see Şahmurat Arık, "Cumhuriyet Öncesi Türk Romanında Değerler Çatışması," *Hece* 6, no. 65/66/67 (May–June–July 2002), 342–52.

⁹ In her comparative and historical analysis of the novel, Jale Parla uses the notion of "crisis" in various contexts and even defines Ağaoğlu's trilogy of *Dar Zamanlar* (Narrow Times) as the "crisis narratives." See Jale Parla, *Don Kişot'tan Bugüne Roman* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 305–16. In my usage, the term "crisis narratives" refers to a group of Turkish novels, depending on the specific features. For a detailed discussion, see Ahmed Nuri, "Can the Tragic Also Be Feminist? An Essay on the Poetics of Crisis Narratives in the 1960s and 1970s," *Zemin*, 3 (2022): 128–61.

¹⁰ For further discussion on this extent, see Erkan Irmak, *Eski Köye Yeni Roman: Köy Romanının Tarihi, Kökeni ve Sonu (1950–1980)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 11–46 and N. Buket Cengiz, *Right to the City Novels in Turkish Literature from the 1960s to the Present* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 7–14.

There are strong continuities of themes, characters, and even narrative patterns about how individual modernity experiences are represented in Turkish novels published from the 1870s onwards.¹¹ Many novels narrate the different forms and discourses of the protagonist's confusion and struggle in relation to Ottoman-Turkish modernity, depending on the varying sociocultural circumstances, literary understandings, and the moral or even socio-political needs of the periods. This specific theme, however, contains not only the contradictions of Ottoman-Turkish and Western values but also the existential crises, ethical dilemmas, and conflict of values in such novels. In his article, "Türk Edebiyatında Cereyanlar" (Trends in Turkish Literature) published in 1959, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, in his capacity as a literary scholar, argues that many individuals (and Turkish society as a whole) were dealing with an identity crisis, which was derived from the duality of modernization since the *Tanzimat* edict of 1839, and Turkish literature had been markedly influenced by this crisis.¹² By crisis, Tanpınar highlights the moral and cultural difficulty of interposing oneself within such a radical transformation of society and values, indicating its predicament for the individuals.

The six selected novels in this thesis also frame the crisis of the urban individual in the setting of modern Turkey, involving its existential, ethical, sociocultural, and even ideological aspects. The various kinds of this crisis narrated in these novels lie in the personal ontological crises derived from the complicated conditions of Turkish modernity. The notion of crisis applies to different cultural, ethical, gender, and even political discourses employed in these novels that reflect upon the assorted subjects of Turkish modernity. Nevertheless, the protagonist's crisis dominates the story and discourse of each fiction, thus designating its

¹¹ The main subject of the Turkish novel until the 1950s was Westernization and its effects. See Berna Moran, *Türk Edebiyatına Eleştirel Bakış I: Ahmet Mithat'tan A. H. Tanpınar'a*, 30th ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983), 24.

¹² Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, "Türk Edebiyatında Cereyanlar," in *Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1998), 107.

thematic and formalistic texture.¹³ Therefore, this thesis explores how these six novels depict the struggles of the urban protagonists in various states of their crises. Accordingly, it does not inherently and necessarily consider the modernity process itself as a crisis in a socio-historical sense. This consideration, otherwise, may imply a sort of moral decline or, on the contrary, the emancipation of the individual and society from previous traditions, depending on different ideological frameworks and their master narratives about this process.¹⁴ Instead, this thesis scrutinizes how each fiction configures the protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis and in which mode it predominantly narrates this crisis.

The Crisis Narratives and Their Temporality

The six novels I term “crisis narratives” involve four temporal elements that need a coherent and plausible explanation to justify why I have selected these novels and how I position them within Turkish fiction. To begin with the first temporal element, these novels were published within a relatively long period. While the earliest novel, *Pleiades Storm*, was first serialized in 1938 and published as a book in 1944, the latest novel of my selection, *Silent House*, was published in 1983. Indeed, this period indicates a significant phase in the development of the Turkish novel. As Azade Seyhan points out, the Turkish novel involves “such a diverse and

¹³ For some prominent studies that examine Turkish fiction in terms of a theme and its relation to sociocultural dynamics in Turkey, see Kenan Çayır, *Türkiye’de İslâmcılık ve İslâmi Edebiyat: Toplu Hidayet Söyleminden Yeni Bireysel Müslümanlıklara* (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008); Çimen Günay-Erkol, *Broken Masculinities: Solitude, Alienation, and Frustration in Turkish Literature After 1970* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016), 1–38; and Burcu Alkan, *Promethean Encounters: Representation of the Intellectual in the Modern Turkish Novel of the 1970s* (Wiesbaden, DE: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 1–17.

¹⁴ For the notion of moral crisis and its changing meanings, based on different ideologies in the late Ottoman era, see Çiğdem Oğuz, *Moral Crisis in the Ottoman Empire: Society, Politics and Gender During WWI* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2021), 9, 20, 23–63. For the three different meanings of crisis in a historical sense, see Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 236–47. See also Maria Boletsi et al., *(Un)timely Crises: Chronotopes and Critique* (Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

complex triangulation of theme, form, and historical insight that the assertion of a genuine paradigm shift in the genre is problematic”¹⁵ in this period. Simultaneously, there occurred a new generation of writers sharing a modernist vision, the liberation and diversification of the publishing industry from the late 1930s, newly emergent literary understandings, and various novelistic pursuits.¹⁶ Accordingly, the quest for diverse narrative styles and forms occurred, along with both new and established themes, ranging from fiction to poetry, which led to new literary formations, understandings, and classifications in Turkish literature.

The socio-political paradigm in Turkey had been changing significantly since the 1940s. Before the 1940s, many authors were directly engaged with the Turkish state and its nationalist ethos while several prominent writers remained silent or were in (self-)exile due to their implicit or explicit defiance against this ethos and the state’s controlling policy and pressure on culture, media, and publishing industry.¹⁷ After almost three decades of the single-party regime, a new, center-right political party, *Demokrat Parti* (Democrat Party) began to govern Turkey in 1950 and eased the state’s control on Islam and sociocultural life. In the meantime, the global conjecture was polarized due to the aftermath of World War Two, and the existing Cold War enhanced the ideological and sociocultural schisms between left-

¹⁵ Azade Seyhan, *Tales of Crossed Destinies: The Modern Turkish Novel in a Comparative Context* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2008), 5. Seyhan underlines the era from the 1920s to the 1970s instead. See also Talat Sait Halman, “Turkish Literature,” in *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature*, 2nd ed., ed. Jean-Albert Bédé and William B. Edgerton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 823 and Atilla Özkırmırlı, “Ana Hatlarıyla Edebiyat,” in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983), 3:596. See also Yalçın Armağan, *İmkânsız Özerklik: Türk Şiirinde Modernizm* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 115–35.

¹⁶ Copyright issues of the translated texts, the impact of cinema and theatre on popular literature, and new reading habits are other striking aspects. See Rauf Mutluay, *50 Yılın Türk Edebiyatı*, 3rd ed. (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976), 600–1. See also Tuncay Birkan, *Dünya ile Devlet Arasında Türk Muharriri: 1930–1960* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2018), 187–88.

¹⁷ See Mutluay, *50 Yılın Türk Edebiyatı*, 555; 605. Birkan underlines the state’s pressure on the opposition or leftist authors with different strategies: making them unemployed, profiling, exiling, or even killing them. For further discussion, see Birkan, *Türk Muharriri*, 405–29.

and right-wing groups in Turkey. These schisms affected the Turkish cultural and literary field, particularly the uses and understandings of literature to varying degrees. There are then many intra- and extra-textual factors to be considered. Although the literary field in Turkey started to be more autonomous, that is, more independent from the state's control, innumerable novels still tackled such ideological or socially committed discourses as the agents of Republicanism, Islamism, Social(ist) Realism, or even neo-Ottomanism.¹⁸

However, the six novels analyzed in the following chapters show, though not solely and exclusively, autonomous agency and reject the prevalent narrative tradition of their periods. They substantially foreground their own literariness. But even so, they are the products of the aforementioned sociocultural, political, and historical conditions, and they reflect on various senses of history and Turkish modernity. This thesis thus intends to explore the thematic, narrative, ethical, and sociocultural aspects of these “crisis narratives” produced in the rich, complex conditions of this specific period. These novels, however, do not and cannot represent the Turkish novel as a whole but instead typify a strong narrative inclination of a recurring theme and the so-called “modernist” vein within it.

The second temporal element is that these novels reflect not only the setting of the periods they were published but also the wider sociocultural and politico-historical context of the epoch between the 1910s and the late 1970s in the plots, thus capturing crucial events and traumatic phases in Turkey. Each novel narrates the existential and ethical struggle of a young protagonist, particularly a middle-class, predominantly intellectual and urban Turkish individual who experienced the reformist implementations of the state-led modernization,

¹⁸ Georg Lukács' views were influential among the Turkish authors, enhancing the inclination to social realism between the 1950s and the 1970s. See Berna Moran, *Türk Edebiyatına Eleştirel Bakış 3: Sevgi Soysal'dan Bilge Karasu'ya*, 18th ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994), 51–52. For the reception of Lukács' views in the Turkish literary field, see Ahmet Oktay, “Türkçe’de Lukács ve Düşüncesinin Etkisi,” *Defter* 10 (September 1989): 20–39. The Islamic *hidâyet romanları* (the novels of the true path) also appeared in the 1970s. For an extensive study on them, see Çayır, *Türkiye’de İslamcılık*, 6–8; 29–31.

appertaining to Turkishness, gender, secular ethics, and cultural matters in Turkey. This temporal element corresponds to the thematic dimension of modernity in the Turkish novel.

The third temporal element pertains to the generations of the writers of these novels. Erol (1902–1964) and Tanpınar (1901–1962) are two members of the last generation who were born into the sophisticated Ottoman culture and its Islamic-oriented social practices, and they witnessed the traumatic transition from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey. On the other hand, Ağaoğlu (1929–2020) and Erbil (1931–2013) are members of the following generation who were heavily indoctrinated by the secular nationalist modernization project in Turkey. Pamuk (1952–) belongs to the subsequent generation that critically approaches Republican modernity and its sociocultural reforms, favoring a completely (post-)modernist novelistic style after the mid-1980s. Accordingly, these novels written by three generations of authors involve various approaches to Turkish modernity and its different implications, including the conception and use of literature. Indeed, there are relations of influence between those authors, particularly Tanpınar and Pamuk, and some intertextual references to several Western novels manifest in these novels. This temporal element, coupled with the first one, thus, accounts for the structural dimension of modernity in the Turkish novel.

The last temporal element concerns the uneven process of (de-)canonization of these novels, indicating the changing reception of them over time, which came into prominence beginning in the 1980s. This last temporal element implies the agential dimension of modernity in the Turkish novel. The focus on these novels published until the very early 1980s also contests the main tendency in Turkish literary studies that has explained the so-called “aesthetic autonomy” in Turkish fiction with the de-politicization of the cultural and literary field in Turkey.¹⁹ In this view, the de-politicization of Turkey’s literary field derives

¹⁹ See Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış* 3, 9–10, Hasan Bülent Kahraman, *Türkiye’de Yazınsal Bilincin Oluşumu* (Istanbul: Kapı Yayınları, 2014), 291; Erdağ Gökner, “Turkey,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Novel*, ed. Peter

from the combination of the trauma and disillusionment of many authors and the oppressive control of the new regime on cultural life after the military coup in September 1980.

However, I would suggest that this explanation is oversimplified and thus insufficient for two reasons. First, it lies in the normative preconception that accounts for the autonomy of the Turkish novel, based only on the (post-)modernist literary tendencies that have become prevalent since the 1980s. Second, it does not even consider that these six crisis narratives, along with many other novels, exemplify a shift from the conventional, ideologically committed, and nationalist understanding to the inventive, more experimental, and modernist horizon in Turkish fiction at an earlier point in time.

On the other hand, these novels had too little impact on the literary milieu and readers at the time they were published, except *Lying Down to Die* and partially *Silent House*, which was published only in 1983. The crucial point here is why the selected novels in this thesis have been canonized by literary scholars, publishers, and different readerships much later. Indeed, these novels have become agents of Turkish modernity itself over decades, particularly beginning in the 1980s, when they started to be re-evaluated from fresh and critical perspectives. There is, therefore, a close link between the change of both literary and socio-political paradigms in 1980s Turkey and the reception of these novels, including the newly emerging and critical approaches to Turkish literature. That is to say, the perception and interpretation of Turkish modernity has changed over time, and this change has constantly led to the re-evaluation of Turkish modernity in and through fiction, based on the literary tendencies and cultural, ethical, and socio-political aspects of different periods. To juxtapose

Melville Logan, et al., (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 1:826 and “The Novel in Turkish: Narrative Tradition to Nobel Prize,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4:497–98. Yıldız Ecevit highlights the 1970s as the beginning of modernism in the Turkish novel; her approach criticizes the (social-)realist understanding and unquestionably favors the (post-)modernist formations in the Turkish novel. See Yıldız Ecevit, *Türk Romanında Postmodernist Açılımlar* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 83–86.

these six novels is unavoidably a part of this process and relies on the aim of this thesis, which is to scrutinize how Turkish modernity is variously manifested in Turkish fiction.

By examining the link between the thematic and structural features of each novel, this thesis provides a comparative study of these crisis narratives, exploring the predominant narrative modes employed in the novels, particularly tragedy and parody, each of which is discussed in the following chapters in detail. On the one hand, it scrutinizes how the modernity experience of the protagonists is variously narrated in these novels; on the other, it shows how tragedy and parody are constructed in them in relation to Turkish modernity. In doing so, this thesis will provide insights into the poetics of the modernity experience as a crisis in the twentieth-century Turkish novel, especially when considering the varying agency of these novels.

The Temporal and Terminological Frame of Modernity and the Turkish Novel

Ottoman-Turkish modernity is often conventionally dated to the modernization of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. However, it is also widely accepted that Western-oriented modernization of the empire officially and systematically began in 1839 through the proclamation *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu* (The Noble Edict of *Gülhane*).²⁰ This complex process includes vast structural and statewide transformations in the late Ottoman Empire (1839–1908), the transition period to the nation-state (1908–1923), and the Republican era (1923–). Although the whole process covers nearly two centuries, the visible impact on Turkish literature began during the late 1850s through translations from European literature,

²⁰ Influential interpretations include Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London: Hurst, 1998), 25; Lewis, *Modern Turkey*, 36; and Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 45. For cultural and intellectual orientations between 1839 and 1876, see Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 72–106. For the historiography of Turkey, see Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004) 1–6.

which “conveys Western literary aesthetic and taste into the Turkish language.”²¹ The year 1859, though controversial, is commonly accepted as the emergent year of Turkish literary modernity by many scholars due to three translations that introduced European literature to the Ottoman-Turkish literary field.²² It is a futile attempt to state a particular origin year of “new” Turkish literature without systemically examining all the texts published during that period and profoundly explaining what and how is narratively “new” and different from the previous conception of Turkish literature.²³

The historiography of Turkish literature after 1859 relies upon the socio-political circumstances and historical phases of the era, and therefore, the historiography of Turkish fiction is explicitly based on socio-political and thematic categorization in terms of periodization. This kind of categorization tends to neglect the transformations in narrative forms and literary aesthetics. There is also no consensus on the periodization of the Turkish novel.²⁴ The so-called national literature in the early twentieth century, as İlber Ortaylı

²¹ Ahmet Evin, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1983), 48.

²² See Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *19 uncu. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 4th ed. (Istanbul: Çağlayan Kitabevi, 1976), 150; Ömer Faruk Akün, “Tanzimat Edebiyatı Sözü Ne Dereceye Kadar Doğrudur?,” *Kubbealtı Akademi Mecmuası* 6, no. 2 (April 1977): 32–33; Cevdet Kudret, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türk Edebiyatı,” in *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyete Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 1:401; and Seyhan, *Crossed Destinies*, 30. For a discussion of these three translations, see Saliha Paker, “Translated European Literature in the Late Ottoman Literary Polysystem,” *New Comparison* 1 (1986): 67–82. The first known Turkish novel, however, was written in the Armenian script and published in 1851. Its manuscript was found and transliterated into Latin script by Andreas Tietze. See Hovsep Vartanyan, *Akabi Hikayesi*, ed. Andreas Tietze (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1991). For further discussion on the early Turkish novels in Armenian and Greek scripts and their exclusion in Turkish literary history, see Mignon, *Uncoupling Language*, 25–50; 80.

²³ A recent study discovered two-hundreds thirty-one new novels serialized in journals and newspapers between 1831 and 1928. Sixty-two of them remained incomplete. See Ali Serdar and Reyhan Tutumlu, “Tefrika Romanlarla Osmanlı/Türk Romanına Kanonun Ötesinden Bakmak,” *Zemin* 3 (2022): 186–212.

²⁴ The establishment year of the Republic, 1923, has remained as the categorical demarcation in general. See Berna Moran, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyete Roman,” in *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, ed. Murat Belge (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 2:409; Nihad Sami Banarlı, *Resimli Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*

pointed out, is not so different or more “national” from the late nineteenth century’s novel in terms of content and form. What makes it national is the explicit use of the word *milli* (national) and the increasing presence of nationalist content.²⁵ The word *milli* was also used in the 1890s, but its meaning was more extensive or less definite, referring to a religious or local community.²⁶

To use terms concretely, this thesis defines the whole modernity process in the late Ottoman era (1839–1922) and Turkey (1923–) with four structural elements that outline the interpenetration of such geo-historical, demographical, socio-political, economic, and cultural developments. These are modernization, Westernization, nationalization, and secularization. These four major processes are interrelated and overlap. Modernization signifies the process that transformed the administrative, military, legal, educational, and fiscal structures in the Ottoman Empire and later in Turkey, which aimed to centralize political, economic, and sociocultural power.²⁷ Like the other three terms, I use “modernization” here as neither a

(Istanbul: Yedigün Neşriyatı, 1948), 1246–88; and Kenan Akyüz, *Modern Türk Edebiyatının Ana Çizgileri: 1860–1923*, 5th ed. (Istanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, 1990), 157–62. A socio-political periodization, including the author-based approach offers three periods: 1923–1946, 1946–1980, and after 1980. See İnci Enginün, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Edebiyatı*, 22nd ed. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2020), 265–71. For the periodization of Turkish fiction, see Gökner, “The Novel in Turkish,” 481. For an overview of how the renewal in Turkish literature is contextualized in the Turkish literary history, see M. Orhan Okay, “Abdülhalim Memduh’tan Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’a Edebiyat Tarihlerinde Yenileşmenin Sınırları,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 4, no. 8 (2006): 9–21.

²⁵ Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, 292.

²⁶ Lewis, *Modern Turkey*, 329 and Şerif Mardin, “Playing Games with Names,” in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 123. The authors of the journal *Servet-i Fünûn* (Wealth of Knowledge) barely used the word “Turk” although they wrote in Turkish. See Hercules Iraklis Millas, “Turkishness and the Novel,” in *Encyclopedia of Romantic Nationalism in Europe*, ed. Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 2:1444. The exemption is Mehmet Emin Yurdakul’s poem *Anadolu’dan Bir Ses yahut Cenge Giderken* (A Voice from Anatolia or While Going to War) published in the newspaper *Asır* (Century) in 1897.

²⁷ For further analysis of the Ottoman state’s response to European capitalism, see Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development* (London: Verso, 1987), 52–53; Reşat Kasaba, *The*

favorable nor a pejorative term. It only implies the amalgamation of such radical transformations, official policies, and their manifestations in a wide variety of areas.²⁸ Westernization, however, indicates a particular form of emulation that refers to “the adoption of the physical attributes of the West,” and “material culture”²⁹ from fashion and literature to interior design and sociocultural practices, depending on the trends of a given period. The great interest of the Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals and authors in European literatures over time, then, can be seen as a part of Westernization, for they favored the Western narrative tradition as the only and superior model.

The Westernization process is later intertwined with nationalistic politics, especially between the 1910s and the 1930s, which designated the transition era from the multi-ethnic empire to the Republic of Turkey as a nation-state. Since the early 1920s, the socio-political programs and cultural discourses of Turkey’s state-led nationalist modernization explicitly determined the specific definition of Turkish identity—modern Turkishness—and the characteristics of the imagined society, including the Turkish language and the adoption of the Latin script.³⁰ This nationalist paradigm unavoidably made its mark on the direction and function of the Turkish novel. On the other hand, the secularization process began with the

Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century (Albany: State University of New York, 1988), 48–85.

²⁸ For a discussion on the problems of such concepts in Ottoman Studies, see Alp Eren Topal and Einar Wigen, “Ottoman Conceptual History: Challenges and Prospects,” *Contributions of the History of Concepts* 14, no. 1 (2019): 93–114. For the definitions of modernization, modernism, the French term *modernité*, and modernity, see Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 12–13.

²⁹ Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoise, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 6–9.

³⁰ The replacement of Arabic script with Latin script is considered “the most iconoclastic reform” of Turkish modernity. See Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), 80. For further discussion on the language reform, see Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27–56; Ağâh Sırrı Levend, *Türk Dilinde Gelişme ve Sadeleşme Evreleri*, 2nd. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1960), 389–405; and Rekin Ertem, *Elifbeden Alfabeğe: Türkiye’de Alfabe Tartışmaları*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2021), 223–440.

introduction of civil law and constitutional citizenship, thanks to the aforementioned *Gülhane* edict in 1839, and followed a similar trajectory of the top-down nationalist modernization since the 1920s. The scope of secularization has been expanded from the legislative and institutional structures to the public sphere, cultural and language politics, aesthetics, and even Turkish literature.³¹

By considering the difficulty of periodization and categorization of such a complex process, this thesis defines “Turkish modernity” as a subjective perception of modernization, Westernization, nationalization, and secularization as a whole. I approach Turkish modernity with the notion of non-Western modernity, for it provides a starting point for the framework to examine this modernity process on its own specific conditions and its relation to literature, particularly to the twentieth-century Turkish novel.³² Moreover, this understanding opposes the superiority of Western modernity as the only model and as a deterministic historical condition for (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity.³³ I discuss Turkish modernity as an uneven process of semi-voluntary, partially necessary modernization and non-colonial Westernization that eventually resulted in a radical historical and cultural rupture from tradition. In this way, this thesis seeks to reframe the evolution of the Turkish novel since the mid-nineteenth century. By doing so, it explores the intricate relation between Turkish modernity and the development of the Turkish novel beyond the Western-centric perspective.

³¹ For the relation between Westernization and secularization manifested in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s *Nutuk* (Speech), which became the formative text of Turkey’s official historiography, see Aysel Morin, *Crafting Turkish National Identity, 1919–1927: A Rhetorical Approach* (London: Routledge, 2022), 141–54. For further discussion on the secularization and Turkish literature, see Barış Büyükokutan, *Bound Together: The Secularization of Turkey’s Literary Fields and the Western Promise of Freedom* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2021).

³² For the notion of non-Western Modernity, see Nilüfer Göle, “Global Expectations, Local Experiences, Non-Western Modernities,” in *Through a Glass, Darkly: Blurred Images of Cultural Tradition and Modernity over Distance and Time*, ed. Will Arts (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 40–55.

³³ I use the qualifying adjectives “(Ottoman-)Turkish” and “Ottoman(-Turkish)” when I emphasize a period, an aspect, or a group of this modernity process more affiliated with the term outside the parenthesis.

The Turkish Novel (as) and (within) World Literature

With this aim, a crucial point for analyzing Turkish fiction may be to concentrate on the changing functions and understandings of the novel concerning Turkish modernity. As Franco Moretti states, “the great theories of the novel have been theories of modernity”³⁴ and *vice versa*. Moretti here highlights the complex interplay between the modernity process and the rise of the novel in different cases. From this point of view, the evolution and function of the novel in a specific literary tradition and language may be then quite different and unique. More specifically, the particular sociocultural patterns and historical conditions, as well as several embedded variables, determined the emergence and development of Turkish fiction, which included the literary legacy, variety of narrative forms, traditional genres like classical Ottoman poetry, the ongoing evolution of the Turkish language, the high impact of French literature, the nation-building process, and the varying sociocultural (or even political) needs of different periods. Moreover, (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity and its changing perceptions can be as dynamic as the evolution and function of the novel. The complicated relationship between (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity and the Turkish novel is therefore reciprocal, to a varying degree, and everlastingly and unevenly changing.

In this respect, the novel as a narrative form taken from the European literary tradition does not necessarily follow the same or similar developments that occurred in other European literatures.³⁵ The literary traditions, the conditions of Ottoman-Turkish modernity, and many other factors (e.g., the secularization of the Ottoman-Turkish mindset, European literatures favored and emulated by the majority of authors, and the all-embracing implications of Turkish nationalism) determined the evolution and function of the Turkish novel, including its

³⁴ Franco Moretti, “The Novel: History and Theory,” in *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013), 176.

³⁵ For a prominent analysis of the relationship between social change, the novel, and writers, see Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1990).

different narrative characteristics and poetics. As Victoria Rowe Holbrook argues, “Turkish modernism was implicated in a far-reaching program termed *Westernization*, articulated by reformers we might call ‘the Turkish Occidentalists’”³⁶ in the late Ottoman era.

The new perception of these Occidentalists does not necessarily exclude all the traditional narrative forms of Turkish literature or the Islamic epistemology and its ethics, but it instead attempts to accommodate this epistemology and set of values within the literary forms and genres of European literature that are quite new for the Ottoman-Turkish authors. Those authors used the novel “as a kind of technology for describing modern reality”³⁷, thereby intending to constitute a new aesthetic horizon. However, neither did these Occidentalists form a united group that agreed on every aspect and function of the new Turkish literature, nor were all the writers of this period inclined to approve this new understanding. Accordingly, the changes in the way of perceiving the world and its manifestations in literature can happen in various forms and at different times.

By considering the novel as a foreign form evolved from another language and literary tradition, the relationship between Ottoman-Turkish modernity and the Turkish fiction can be better analyzed on the plain of world literature.³⁸ “World literature” as a loaded term has different dimensions and, by definition, its own problems and challenges. However, it enables us to reconsider the cultural transfer and evolution of both the novel and literary aspects to

³⁶ Victoria Rowe Holbrook, *The Unreadable Shores of Love: Turkish Modernity and Mystic Romance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 21. Italics in the original unless otherwise indicated. For an analysis of the founder of new Turkish literature Namık Kemal’s thoughts, see Fatih Altuğ, “Namık Kemal’in Edebiyat Eleştirisinde Modernlik ve Öznellik” (PhD Diss., Boğaziçi University, 2003), 137; 299; 357.

³⁷ Holbrook, *Unreadable Shores*, 21. See also Victoria Rowe Holbrook, “A Technology of Reference: *Divan* and *Anti-Divân* in the Reception of a Turkish Poet,” *Edebiyat* 4 (1993), 50 and Ali Budak, *Batılılaşma ve Türk Edebiyatı: Lale Devri’nden Tanzimat’a Yenileşme* (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2008), 340.

³⁸ For a comparative study of Turkish literature with Bengali and Mexican literatures, based on world literature theory, see Ian Almond, *World Literature Decentered: Beyond The ‘West’ Through Turkey, Mexico and Bengal* (New York: Routledge, 2022). See also Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay-Erkol, eds., *Turkish Literature as World Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).

Turkish literature. It is then possible to discuss the development of the Turkish novel, going beyond the idea of the one-sided influence of Western literature and any other one-dimensional approach, such as the “belatedness” discourse, which has already had a negative and biased effect on the evaluation of the Turkish novel.

This thesis therefore draws particularly on Franco Moretti’s idea of “a law of literary evolution,” which involves two stages: variation and selection.³⁹ The first stage indicates the significant changes in the novel as a narrative genre depending on chance or coincidence, whereas the second stage is related to a social necessity.⁴⁰ This approach emphasizes the dissemination of the novel from the West and its particular development within Turkish literature that interacted with its literary legacy and older narrative features. In this complicated formation, new narrative forms express an emergent worldview, a distinct conception of space and time, which meets the sociocultural, moral, existential, or even political needs of a specific period.

The novel as a literary genre in Turkish literature is, as repeated by many literary scholars, “imported” from the West.⁴¹ However, the point should be made as to why and how the Turkish novel has been formed in this way. Moretti’s idea of the “law of literary evolution” can shed light on the relationship between the European novel and the development of the Turkish novel. This “law” is also based on the center–periphery relationship of the novel that has evolved through “a compromise between a Western formal

³⁹ Franco Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature,” *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 54–68.

⁴⁰ Franco Moretti, “On Literary Evolution,” in *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays In the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans. Susan Fisher et al., rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1997), 262–63.

⁴¹ Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 9. For a short overview of this process, see Talat S. Halman, *A Millennium of Turkish Literature: A Concise History* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 63–79.

influence (usually French or English) and local materials.”⁴² This formal compromise begins with translations of European literatures into other literatures. The great impact of the translations particularly from French literature to Turkish literature, without overlooking other innumerable factors, proves this approach in the emergence of Turkish fiction.

Moretti’s approach is also useful to explain not only the socio-political power of theatre in the late Ottoman era, the social functionality of the early Turkish novel, and the dominance of melodramatic novels in the early Republican period, but also the reasons for the choice or popularity of certain genres, the moral and nationalist contents in the Turkish novel and the evolution of Turkish literary modernism. The effort to compare or equalize the literary values of European novels with many Turkish novels, which manifest different needs, contradictions, and tensions, could be then neither fair nor contextually useful to comprehend the Turkish novel and its poetics. Accordingly, Moretti’s “law” helps us to discuss the trajectory of the Turkish novel and its different phases insightfully.

The Limitations of the Belatedness Discourse

Since the Turkish novel emerged via the Westernization process in the nineteenth century, many scholars and authors have considered it a “belated” literary phenomenon, especially when comparing it to the novel in Europe.⁴³ Although his excessively historicist and wholesale approach to Turkish literature may be criticized, it is worth remembering M. Fuad Köprülü’s categorization of Turkish literature made in the 1920s. His categorization relies on the fundamental changes in the pattern of thinking and living in Turkish history: “Turkish

⁴² Moretti, “Conjectures,” 58. Moretti’s point of reference is Fredric Jameson’s idea of compromise. See Fredric Jameson, introduction to *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, by Karatani Kōjin, trans. Brett de Bary (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), vii–xx.

⁴³ Orhan Koçak, “Kaptırılmış İdeal: *Mai ve Siyah* Üzerinde Psikanalitik Bir Deneme,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 70 (Autumn 1996), 99; Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 9; Güzin Dino, *Türk Romanının Doğuşu*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2008), 6; Tanpınar, *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı*, 30; and Mutluay, *50 Yılın Türk Edebiyatı*, 54.

literature before Islam,” “Turkish literature under the influence of Islamic civilization,” and “Turkish literature under the influence of European civilization.”⁴⁴ If the idea of belatedness derives from a comparison with the dominant civilization and its prevalent narrative forms, then, Turkish literature is, and can be, evaluated as belated throughout the ages.⁴⁵

I consider the idea of belatedness to be problematic as an explanation of literary studies insofar as there is “a—multiple—rise of the novel” in different geographies in which “the same pattern, the same old metaphor of the rise of the novel came alive.”⁴⁶ That is to say, rather than only one, many “*histories* of the novel”⁴⁷ exist in various parts and times of the world, depending on the literary legacy, storytelling tradition, and specific conditions of the different modernities. More precisely, the Turkish novel has not evolved along the same trajectory as the European novel due to the differences in socio-historical, economic, cultural, and literary aspects. Thus, the idea of belatedness signifies a normative statement from a Eurocentric view, and this view is misleading as its rhetoric is “orientalist” and “reductive.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ M. Fuad Köprülü, *Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 1980), 5. See also Banarlı, *Resimli Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 50–51.

⁴⁵ Mehmet Rauf (1875–1931), a prominent Turkish writer and literary figure, did not even consider belatedness as a view or category in his critical essays published between 1896 and 1901 because he intended to locate Turkish literature within world literature as its part, while he emphasized its national aspect. See Fatma Damak, “Servet-i Fünûndan ‘Cihani’ Edebiyata: Mehmet Rauf’un Edebiyat Eleştirisinin Haritası” (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2018), 36–45; 103; 115–138; 140–141.

⁴⁶ Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Model for a Literary History* (London: Verso, 2005), 5–9. Moretti examines the rise of the novel in Britain (1720–1740), Japan (1745–1765), Italy (1820–1840), Spain (1845–1860), and Nigeria (1965–1980). For a discussion of Moretti’s theory in the context of the early Turkish novel, see Şeyda Başlı, *Osmanlı Romanının İmkânları Üzerine: İlk Romanlarda Çok Katmanlı Anlatı Yapısı* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 37–53.

⁴⁷ Milan Kundera, *The Art of Novel*, trans. Linda Asher (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 143.

⁴⁸ Gökner, “The Novel in Turkish,” 475. In his Nobel lecture, Octavio Paz expresses that the American Spaniards look for “the real present,” that is “the time lived by other,” namely Europeans. See Octavio, Paz, “In the Search for the Present,” *The New Republic*, January 7 & 14 (1991): 33–38. Similarly, modern and Western become “synonymous” with the Greek intelligentsia that aimed at “catching up with Europe.” See Gregory Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature* (Minneapolis: University of

Even so, the idea of belatedness generated a view of literary deficiency among authors, literary critics, and even readers and remained dominant until the 1980s. Turkish modernity has been dominantly perceived, discussed, and conceptualized, either critically or approvingly, through temporal terms, such as belatedness, time lag, backwardness, contemporaneousness, rapid modernization, coeval time, lack of present time, and progress.⁴⁹ In other words, modernity is defined as the temporalization of the West as a singular sociocultural entity. The idea of belatedness then manifests the aspiration of the sociocultural or political agents in Turkey to be like the West. This aspiration and the ways of its implementation led to either Occidentalism or (self-)Orientalism.⁵⁰

The belatedness discourse has thus been generated in the context of the so-called national literature, particularly, of the Turkish novel in which Pascale Casanova metaphorically explains the aesthetic distance with “the Greenwich Meridian of literature.”⁵¹ Casanova argues that “[t]here is a time specific to literature,” and it is “possible to draw an

Minnesota Press, 1991), 80. In Arabic and Persian literatures, the novel was seen as a borrowed form. See Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse: A Sociology on the Modern Arabic Literature* (London, Saqi Books, 1989), 17; Joseph A. Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 6–27; and Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity Between the Middle East and Europe: Textual Transactions in 19th Century Arabic, English and Persian Literatures*. (London: Routledge, 2007), 11–34.

⁴⁹ Meltem Ahıska, “Occidentalism: The Historical Fantasy of the Modern,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2 (2003): 351–379; Nurdan Gürbilek, “Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness, and the Turkish Novel,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2 (2003): 599–628; İbrahim Kaya *A Social Theory and Later Modernities: The Turkish Experience* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 137–55; and Orhan Koçak, “‘Westernization against the West’: Cultural Politics in the Early Turkish Republic,” in *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem, and Philip Robins (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 305–22.

⁵⁰ Meltem Ahıska, *Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radio Broadcasting* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010); Hasan Bülent Kahraman, “İçselleştirilmiş, Açık ve Gizli Oryantalizm ve Kemalizm,” *Doğu Batı* 5, no. 20 (August–September–October 2002): 153–78; and Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 768–96.

⁵¹ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 351.

aesthetic map of the world, the position of each national space being determined by its temporal distance from the center.”⁵² Many writers, critics, and even literary scholars in Turkey possess this mentality to reckon with the great influence of European literature despite, for instance, Mehmet Rauf’s cautiously holistic approach to literature even before the twentieth century.⁵³ Indeed, the main theme of the first Turkish novels until the 1900s reflects the tension between right and wrong Westernization, not the idea of belatedness.⁵⁴ This thesis approaches “belatedness” as a thematic aspect or as a discourse rather than as an analytical category, thus examining whether and how it is presented in the six selected novels. For instance, Tanpınar’s *The Time Regulation Institute* and Pamuk’s *Silent House* are fine examples that self-consciously and parodically treat belatedness.

The Dynamic Relation Beyond the Center-(Semi-)Periphery Model

The apparent interest of what Holbrook calls the Turkish Occidentalists in the narrative forms of European literatures was equally shared by the literati of many other ethnoreligious communities in the Ottoman Empire beginning in the 1850s. The genesis of the national linguistic consciousness included different languages and literatures within the Empire since the modernity process encompassed different ethnic and religious communities in the Empire. Istanbul was a center of printing and publishing for Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Sephardic Jews, Persians, and Arabs as well. Many novels in different languages were

⁵² Casanova, *World Republic*, 351. For a critique of this temporality in terms of literary modernism, see Özen Nergis Dolcerroca, “Transnational Modernism and the Problem of Eurochronology,” in *Chronologies Periodisation in a Global Context* ed. Barbara Mittler Thomas Maissen, and Pierre Monnet (Heidelberg, DE: Heidelberg University, 2022), 191–203.

⁵³ See footnote 45.

⁵⁴ These novels illustrate the stories of a dandy (*züppe*), such as Ahmet Mithat’s iconic *Felâtn Bey ile Rakim Efendi* (1875), that constructs the binary opposition as a negative, excessive way of Westernization and a positive, prudent way of Westernization. See Ahmet Mithat, *Felâtn Bey and Rakim Efendi: An Ottoman Novel*, trans. Melih Levi and Monica M. Ringer (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016). See also footnote 8.

published for the first time in there.⁵⁵ In this respect, there were multiple, uneven, and intricate developments throughout Ottoman modernity that allowed different national languages and national literatures to evolve.⁵⁶

Turkish novels throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were produced in different alphabets, mainly in Arabic, Armenian, and Greek scripts. These three scripts were primarily used by three different groups: Turkish-speaking Muslim-Ottomans, Ottoman-Armenians who also used the Turkish language, and the Turkish-speaking Orthodox community Karamanlides, respectively.⁵⁷ Within the multiplicity and co-existence of different languages and scripts, the proliferation of the printed press (along with publications and translations) resulted in the rise of a readership and an introduction of new genres in Turkish literature. Simultaneously, the newly emerging Turkish writing practices and grammar, predominantly in Arabic scripts, also helped to establish a certain kind of prose.

Indeed, the so-called importation of the novel as a new narrative genre from Europe reflects what happens in the formation of non-Western literatures when they meet Western

⁵⁵ Johann Strauss, “Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th–20th centuries),” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 6, no. 1 (2003), 40–43. See also Mehmet Fatih Uslu and Fatih Altuğ, eds., *Tanzimat ve Edebiyat: Osmanlı İstanbul’unda Modern Edebi Kültür* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014). Rather than Turks, the other ethno-religious communities played the leading role in the exchanges between the Empire and Europe, especially in print culture, theatre, art, and architecture. See Doğan Kuban, *Türk ve İslam Sanatı Üzerine Denemeler* (Istanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 1982), 94.

⁵⁶ For the impact of the printed press in Greece, see Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity*, 128–35. For the case of Aleppo and the role of newspapers in the formation of “public opinion” in Arab modernity, see Keith David Wattenpugh, *Being Modern in The Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 70; 116. For the role of the printed press concerning nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 34.

⁵⁷ For a critical account of such Turkish texts written by non-Muslims and non-Turks, see Mignon, *Uncoupling Language*. See also Fatih Altuğ, “The Entangled History of Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in Modern Turkish Literature,” in *Turkish Literature*, 19–35 and Etienne E. Charrière, “‘We Must Ourselves Write About Ourselves’: The Trans-Communal Rise of the Novel in the Late Ottoman Empire” (PhD Diss., The University of Michigan, 2016).

literatures or their translations: writers take the form they emulate and keep the local content they want to narrate. The emergence of Turkish fiction followed this pattern and thus highlighted the necessity of new literary forms to frame a way of thinking and aesthetic expression, as similarly happened in the emergence of classical Ottoman poetry in the fifteenth century.⁵⁸ Thus, the lack of a deep-scaled legacy of the Turkish novel reflects a historic-cultural condition, not a literary deficiency.

The necessity of new literary sources and models, at least according to those “Turkish Occidentalists” Holbrook mentioned, forms the basis for the Turkish novel. In this line of thought, the influence of the French novel arguably had a positive impact during the dawn of the Turkish novel. As Özen Nergis Dolcerocca argues, “the existing standards and practices had to be entirely revised and replaced with new conceptions from the source culture.”⁵⁹ This cultural transfer met the need for new literary sources and forms emulated by those who favored European narrative tradition in the late Ottoman era and later in Turkey. This claim, however, does not prevail the novel as a literary form over the previous forms and genres or narrative traditions of Turkish literature.

The adaption and influence of a new literary model indeed are not limited to Turkish fiction. On the contrary, it is a common pattern in other non-Western modernities and different literatures, as the influence of European literature is a determining factor, though not

⁵⁸ One view claims that The Turks needed guidance to express themselves through literature, so they “learn[ed] what to think and in what way to think” thanks to Persian literature. See E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry* (London: Luzac, 1900), 4:11–13. For the critique of Gibb’s Euro-centric, biased approach, see Holbrook, *Unreadable Shores*, 29. Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı critically highlights the disconnectedness of Classical Ottoman-Turkish poetry from space and nature. For further discussion, see Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Divan Edebiyatı Beyanındadır* (Istanbul: Marmara Kitabevi, 1945), 120. However, it is worth noting that this view is retrospective and unavoidably includes the ethos of the early Republican period.

⁵⁹ Özen Nergis Dolcerocca, “The *Tanzimat* Period and Its Diverse Cultures of Translation: Towards New Thinking in Comparative Literature,” in *Ottoman Culture and the Project of Modernity: Reform and Translation in the Tanzimat Novel*, ed. Monica M. Ringer and Etienne E. Charrière (London: I. B. Tauris, 2020), 203.

the only one.⁶⁰ As with the multiplicity and particularity of modernity, the novel has diversified by gaining new dimensions in content, form, and technique—the variety of literary evolutions and genres that make world literature possible. To expect *the* novel in different literatures to adopt the same fixed characteristics of *the* European novel is thus misleading and reductive.

The emergence of the Turkish novel is not only based on the imitated aspects and patterns of the European novel. Both the oral and written storytelling conventions of folk and classical Turkish literature supply the thematic and formalistic features in the emergence of Turkish fiction. The other side of the formal compromise then indicates the local themes, involving local narrative contents, forms, and techniques.⁶¹ The relation between literatures and the evolutionary process of the novel lies in a “triangle” that contains “foreign form, local material—and local form,” corresponding to “foreign *plot*; local *characters*; and then, local *narrative voice*,” respectively.⁶² This kind of literary evolution is explicit in the development of Turkish fiction. The openness of the first Ottoman(-Turkish) writers is a salient feature in terms of new narrative techniques and styles, as Jale Parla argues, because they were eager to try new genres or forms as long as the content did not threaten their moral principles or values.⁶³ The rich variety of genres, forms, discourses, and narrative features in the Turkish novel between the 1940s and the early 1980s can be also considered in this respect.

⁶⁰ For the European influence on Latin American literatures, see Casanova, *World Republic*, 222.

⁶¹ For the narrative traditions in Turkish literature, see Mustafa Nihat Özön, *Türkçede Roman* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2020), 47–182; Fahir İz, *Eski Türk Edebiyatında Nesir: XIV. Yüzyıldan XIX. Yüzyıl Ortasına Kadar Yazmalardan Seçilmiş Metinler* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 1996); and Barbara Flemming, “Some Remarks on Turkish Prose Before the Tanzimat Period,” in *Essays on Turkish Literature and History* (Lieden: Brill, 2018), 60–72.

⁶² Moretti, “Conjectures,” 65.

⁶³ See Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar*, 53. For Ahmet Mithat’s use of traditional oral storytelling technique, *meddah*, an overt narrator, see Nüket Esen, “The Narrator and the Narratee in Ahmet Mithat,” *Edebiyat: Journal of M. E. Literatures* 13, no. 2 (2003): 139–46 and Parla, *Don Kişot’tan Bugüne*, 73–99.

At this point, it is worth bringing up Jale Parla's view that problematizes Moretti's idea of compromise despite her agreement with his triangle theory. For Parla, "the rise of the novel necessitated a formal compromise everywhere," not only in non-Western literatures.⁶⁴ The Turkish novel has evolved by adapting varying socio-cultural, moral, literary, or even political needs in different periods into both new and existing narrative features, techniques, and forms. While Moretti's idea of compromise serves as a starting point to contextualize the relationship between Turkish fiction and European literatures in this thesis, Parla's argument enables us to reconsider the specificity of the Turkish novel in this compromise.

There is also a significant but unheeded aspect in discussing the development of the Turkish novel: that is the varying structure of the relationship between Turkish fiction and other literatures, such as the influence and reception of social realism in the 1960s and 1970s and those of Latin American or post-colonial literatures in the 1980s. The formal compromise between different (national) literatures is then dynamic and sporadically changing rather than stable, one-off, and even single-sided. This compromise arises from an uneven cultural transfer, as Galin Tihanov argues, "as a process of interaction between literatures in particular zones"⁶⁵, involving both intra- and extra-literary factors in a given period.

On the other hand, "the relation between one literary tradition and another is a discursive practice constructed in reception, not a substantial continuity measured like cloth

⁶⁴ Jale Parla, "The Object of Comparison," *Comparative Literature Studies* 41, no. 1 (2004): 117; 121. Ottoman Turkish literature influenced by Persian and Arabic literatures "becomes the repository that preserves, transforms, and even surpasses Persian and Arabic traditions." See C. Ceyhun Arslan, "Ambivalences of Ottoman Modernity: *Nahda*, *Tanzimat*, and World Literature" (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2017), 27.

⁶⁵ Galin Tihanov, "The Location of World Literature," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 44, no. 3 (September 2017), 473. For a similar view as the "combination of cosmopolitan and vernacular orientations," see also Stefan Helgesson et al., "Series Introduction—The Cosmopolitan—Vernacular Dynamic: Conjunctions of World Literature," in *Claiming Space Locations and Orientations in World Literatures*, ed. Bo Ekelund, Adnan Mahmutović, and Helena Wulff (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), ix–xxvi.

or light.”⁶⁶ The prominent novels and their narrative features modeled by another literature can thus change in this kind of reception, based on the ethos and literary tendencies of a particular period. They can acquire new meanings and dimensions in other literary cultures in their circulation and reception, as David Damrosch asserts.⁶⁷ Some Turkish novels may be self-conscious of their “belatedness” and its burden while some may not consider it at all. The matter of belatedness, influence, or imitation shall be considered within the changing structure of the formal compromise and a particular period, author, or work in Turkish fiction.⁶⁸

Tragedy and Parody as the Narrative Modes of Crisis

As has been discussed so far, this thesis considers the Turkish novel as “a sign of modernity”⁶⁹ unevenly shaped by the process of Ottoman-Turkish modernity. The six novels under scrutiny tackle underlying themes related to this process, such as East–West, modern–traditional, rational–irrational, secular–religious, agency–destiny, as well as the sense of Turkishness, gender and identity constructions through two prevalent narrative modes: tragedy and parody. This thesis therefore proposes to examine the crises, tensions, conflicts, and dilemmas of the protagonists in the novels by scrutinizing these two modes. Each fiction predominantly employs one of these narrative modes and its different elements. The depiction of the modernity experience as either tragedy or parody is then self-evident in each novel.

⁶⁶ Holbrook, *Unreadable Shores*, 31.

⁶⁷ David Damrosch, *What is World Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 5–6.

⁶⁸ For Seyhan, a few authors tried to contextualize “the sense of belatedness and incompleteness,” for instance, Tanpınar. See Seyhan, *Crossed Destinies*, 26. See also Nurdan Gürbilek, *Kötü Çocuk Türk*, 5th ed. (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2016), 87. For an analysis of belatedness as a crisis of modernity in Oğuz Atay’s novels, see Suna Ertuğrul, “Belated Modernity and Modernity as Belatedness in *Tutunamayanlar*,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2 (2003): 629–45. For the interplay between modernity, belatedness, and the anxiety of influence in the Turkish novel, see Nurdan Gürbilek, *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark: Edebiyat ve Endişe*, 5th ed. (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2016), 17–74 and Koçak, “Kaptırılmış İdeal,” 94–150.

⁶⁹ Ayşe Özge Koçak Hemmat, *The Turkish Novel and the Quest for Rationality* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1.

By analyzing these two primary modes of these crisis narratives, this thesis can extensively grasp the thematic and structural features of the novels. They encompass not only the thematic dualities, existential crises, moral dilemmas, or cultural conflicts but also various narrative techniques, discourses, elements of tragedy and parody, and the great degree of overlap between them. Thus, this thesis scrutinizes how each novel represents the protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis concerning the challenges and contradictions of non-Western modernity, particularly of Turkish modernity, involving the changes in its mode of representation. Tragedy and parody are indeed two narrative modes that narrate the alienation, in-betweenness, moral confusion, inevitable conflict of values, state of crisis, suffering, and failure of urban individuals. These two modes thus problematize the cultural, ethical, and socio-political implications of Turkish modernity. In other words, the frantic search for an authentic identity or self-fulfillment in modernizing Turkey is represented through these two distinct modes that recount the stories of perplexed male or female protagonists who deal with existential, ethical, and identity crises.

Tragic and parodic modes of crisis narratives then reflect the battlefield of values, ideas, choices, and actions in which the confused protagonists in the novels strive for self-realization and deal with such struggles that restrain the individual's agency and any desire beyond the frame of culturally Western-oriented, ideologically secular Turkishness.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the crises and inner conflicts of the characters in these novels lie not solely in Turkey's "imperfect modernization"⁷¹ but also in the fragmentation of the individual due to the socio-political schism, cultural conflicts, a sense of alienation and failure, ideological

⁷⁰ For the idea of Turkishness, see Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey, 1923–1945* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 3. Gökner explains the alienation of "Homo secularis" in analyzing Orhan Pamuk's novels. See Erdağ Gökner, *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism, Blasphemy: the Politics of the Turkish Novel* (London: Routledge, 2013), 165–66.

⁷¹ Jusdanis, *Belated Modernity*, 81. Jusdanis links a cultural alienation of individuals and society in Greece with the sense of belatedness and its outcomes in Greek literature, which is similar in Turkish literature.

fallacies, and agony of remorse. While depicting the crises of the protagonists' modernity experiences as either tragedy or parody, these novels also employ various narrative tools, modernist techniques, and even experimental literary devices.

Accordingly, these novels sought new horizons and insights in a dialogue with the Western literary tradition, its narrative features, and the legacy of Turkish fiction itself. Tragedy and parody in these novels then provide the specific manifestations of the formal compromise Moretti mentions. Moreover, the intricate "triangle" relation occurred between the Western novelistic tradition and a particular phase of the Turkish novel as a representation of the 'crisis of modernity' inextricably bound up with tragic and parodic elements. By examining the modernity experience of the main characters as either tragedy or parody, this thesis will contribute to a deeper insight into the poetics of the crisis narratives in Turkish fiction, thus reaching a better understanding of tragedy and parody within a non-Western context and literature, particularly the twentieth-century Turkish novel.

Dissecting the Narrative Modes, Plots, and Characters

One of the premises of this thesis is the idea that the novel is a modern cultural form used to narrate anything possible either in an "illustrative" or a "representational" way.⁷² However, the novels are not only the subjects of this thesis but also the objects of its analysis. This analysis requires a meticulous approach as the research subject spans different disciplines, the theory of the novel, the sociocultural history of Turkey, tragedy, parody, and world literature. The method of this thesis is based on how the novels are analyzed and categorized. The former point requires textual analysis of the characters, plots, and narrative modes of the novels. The latter point includes two distinct categories composed of tragedy and parody.

⁷² Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 84–88. This distinction points to the relation between reality and fiction in two different ways.

The categorization of the narrative modes and the textual analysis pay regard to the thematic and structural features of these novels. Close reading will be the central method of textual analysis, which employs the narrative theory and its tools as a supplementary method. Thus, the significant narrative features of the novels can be analyzed with a focus on *how* the “certain effects”⁷³ and meanings of these texts play a role in constructing tragedy or parody associated with the depictions of modernity experience as a crisis. The use of narratology helps to analyze the narrative techniques, devices, and styles that configure the tragic and parodic modes in the novels. This approach thus grasps the interplay between the theme and structure of each novel.⁷⁴

The protagonists in these fictions are treated as fictional characters who are linguistically constructed. In other words, they are “fabricated creatures made up from fantasy, imitation, memory,” which makes them “paper people, without flesh and blood.”⁷⁵ This approach then excludes psychoanalysis and the photographic imitations of reality as the protagonists have no *real* history or past.⁷⁶ Both the protagonists and the stories, in the general sense, exist within the language in which they are narrated. Thematically, the characters represent both an individual and a social identity, but they move beyond them and manifest existential questions, ethics, and gender. In this respect, they reflect socio-political or cultural discourses concerning the various aspects of Turkish modernity in the novels.

In addition to the characters, plot structure, narrator, and point of view are three major features to consider in the analysis of the tragic and parodic narrative modes. Narrative theory divides story and discourse in texts, and this “distinction always involves a relation of

⁷³ Monika Fludernik, “Histories of Narrative Theory (II): From Structuralism to the Present,” in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 39.

⁷⁴ See Nuri, “Crisis Narratives,” 128–61.

⁷⁵ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2009), 113.

⁷⁶ Terry Eagleton, *How to Read Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), 46.

dependency.”⁷⁷ Story denotes the events in linearity while discourse refers to how the events are presented in terms of order, time, and narrative style. In other words, story and discourse correspond to plot and style in the most general sense.⁷⁸ Each novel tells the story of the protagonist in the setting of modernizing Turkey. The plot as “the logic and dynamic of narrative”⁷⁹ plays a crucial role in storytelling and the narrative construction of these novels because it can also configure the mode and even subgenre of the novel.

The relationship between the plot and the narrator is explicit as each story is narrated by at least one narrator. This feature makes the narrator “the most central concept in the analysis of narrative texts.”⁸⁰ A main concern of the narrative theory is the focus on who speaks and who sees in the story. The narrator determines not only the plot but also the narrative rhythm, style, mode, and devices. The matter of who sees is related to by whose perspective the story is told, called “focalization” by Mieke Bal.⁸¹ How and by whom a character is focalized in the plot then constitute both how the narrative is told and “how the reader perceives the character seen.”⁸² In other words, the narrator and focalization establish the representation of the protagonists and the texture of the story of the novels, including the different narrative elements and discourses that determine the tragic and parodic modes.

However, the approach to the novels is not limited to purely structural analysis, as these characters and stories exist within the language and cannot be separated from the

⁷⁷ Jonathan Culler, *Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1981), 207–8. See also Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay on Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 25–32.

⁷⁸ Franco Moretti, “Evolution, World System, *Weltliteratur*,” in *Distant Reading*, 132.

⁷⁹ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 10. See also Jonathan Culler, foreword to *The Poetics of Prose*, by Tzvetan Todorov trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 10–11.

⁸⁰ Bal, *Narratology*, 18.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 18–35.

⁸² Mieke Bal, “Narration and Focalization,” in *A Mieke Bal Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 13.

context of the novel produced by the same language. Toril Moi remarks that “[t]here is no fundamental conflict between paying attention to language and paying attention to characters.”⁸³ It is thus necessary to examine *what* these characters present in the stories, linking various aspects of Turkish modernity to these two narrative modes. The analysis of the novels contains the view in which each text is “worldly” and “a part of the social world, human life, and [...] the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted,” as Edward Said argued.⁸⁴ In sum, close reading with these narratological tools frame the textual analysis, which focuses on the narrative modes in a back-and-forth trajectory between story and discourse; character and plot; tragedy and parody; and content and form.

Chapter Outline

With this approach, the main structure of the thesis consists of two parts, excluding this introductory chapter and the conclusion. Part I looks at how the protagonist’s modernity experience as a crisis in each novel is constructed as a tragedy, focusing on what narrative and discursive aspects configure this mode. This part is made up of three chapters, each of which gives a close reading of *Pleiades Storm*, *A Mind at Peace*, and *Lying Down to Die*, respectively. Part II, also comprised of three chapters, examines how the protagonist’s crisis in each novel is narrated in a parodic mode by analyzing *The Time Regulation Institute*, *A Strange Woman*, and *Silent House*. Following this, the conclusion discusses the key points of the analysis of the six novels and the relevance of tragedy and parody in the Turkish novel, while considering varying cultural, literary, and socio-political paradigms in Turkey.

⁸³ Toril Moi, “Rethinking Character,” in *Character: Three Inquiries in Literary Studies*, by Amanda Anderson, Rita Felski, and Toril Moi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 39.

⁸⁴ Edward Said, “Introduction: Secular Criticism” in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1983), 4.

Part 1

MODERNITY AS TRAGEDY

Turkish modernity as either a process or a condition is often associated with a sense of failure, impasse, alienation, self-confrontation, and suffering. I refer to the representation of this condition in the novels as “crisis narratives.” The three novels analyzed in this part depict the crises of male or female protagonists as tragic conditions, or at least, the crises narrated in various modes contain the idea of the tragic. The tragic in these novels occurs as a conflict of values, inevitable failure, and a process of suffering in which the urban protagonists deal with existential, moral, sociocultural, or even intellectual contradictions; it emerges as the crisis of the confused protagonists concerning the modern condition and its implications in Turkey.⁸⁵

While the protagonist in each fiction seeks to come to terms with the effects of the modernity process in Turkey, he or she attempts to establish a certain worldview and its ethics as a way of being in the world. The struggles of the urban characters reflected in the three novels stem from questions of existence, ethics, national identity, cultural or intellectual matters related to modern life, and the gender patterns of the protagonists. The novels emplot these struggles in a tragic mode, which is utterly self-evident. This is in contrast to how other similar narrative mode(s) in early Turkish emplotted struggles, as they relied mainly on a definite social or moral concern and lacked the protagonist’s inner conflict.⁸⁶ Each of the three novels constructs its protagonist’s inner conflict as an unavoidable crisis concerning his

⁸⁵ See Nuri, “Crisis Narratives,” 131–35.

⁸⁶ For some studies about the tragic in modern Turkish literary prose, see Tolga Bayındır, “Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’ın Eserlerinde Ölüm-Hayat Çatışması ve ‘Trajik’ Olan,” *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 335–42; Veli Aşkaroğlu, *Trajik ve Modern: Triolojik Bir Çözümleme; Oğuz Atay–Joseph Conrad–Yusuf Atılgan* (Ankara: Kültür Ajans, 2016); Asiye Çıgın Yıldırım, *Servet-i Fünûn Romanında Trajik Durum* (Ankara: Pegem Akademi, 2018); Yasin Sofuoğlu “Tragic Thought in Oğuz Atay’s *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*: Identity, Culture, and History” (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2019); and Günül Özlem Ayaydın Cebe, “Trajik ve Alegorik Açından ‘Diyet’te Ulus İnşası,” in *Sonsuza Uzanan Ses: Ömer Seyfettin*, ed. Hülya Argunşah, Abdullah Şengül, and Murat Gür (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2020), 425–43. A systematic study examines early Turkish novels based on the Aristotelian interpretation of tragedy and imposes it in the analyses of those novels. It, however, overlooks inevitability and suffering as two important aspects of the tragic in its analysis. See Alphan Akgül, *Kim Egemen Olabilir Yazısına: Türk Romanında Trajedi ve Özgür İrade* (Ankara: Çolpan Kitap, 2021).

or her modernity experience in Turkey. By narrating this crisis, each novel either refers itself to tragedy explicitly or alludes to it.

Accordingly, I propose to trace in detail the dynamic relationship between the tragic and the representations of the modernity experience in the Turkish novel and to show how this complex interplay determines the main lines of the three novels, regarding content and form.⁸⁷ By exploring the construction of the tragic and its essential elements in these novels, I hope to be able to provide valuable insights into the literary, ethical, and philosophical dimensions of Turkish modernity represented in them. In addition, by scrutinizing the various crises of the Western-oriented, urban protagonists, I seek to contribute to the discussion of how and why the protagonists in many novels fail to actualize their ideals or desires, which is mostly analyzed in relation to *Bildungsroman* in the Turkish literary scholarship.⁸⁸

With this aim, this part focuses on Erol's *Ülker Fırtınası* "Pleiades Storm" (1944), Tanpınar's *Huzur* "A Mind at Peace" (1949), and Ağaoğlu's *Ölmeye Yatmak* "Lying Down to Die" (1973), respectively. My purpose in this part is to examine the representations of individual modernity experiences as crises in these novels, particularly regarding how the crises are configured in a tragic mode. This part therefore analyzes how each protagonist struggles to come to terms with the effects of Turkish modernity and how this struggle is depicted in each novel. The analysis of these novels then explores the tragic specific to Turkish modernity and its conditions. The point of reference in this thesis lies in the established principles of the tragedy derived from Western literature and thus utilizes theories of the tragic. But the chapters do not simply trace the same principles and impose a certain

⁸⁷ See also Nuri, "Crisis Narratives," 141.

⁸⁸ For some featured examples, see Jale Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başkalaşım* (İstanbul: İletişim, Yayınları 2011); Kahraman, *Yazınsal Bilincin Oluşumu*, 18; Meltem Gürle, "'Wandering on the Peripheries': The Turkish Novelistic Hero as 'Beautiful Soul,'" *Journal of Modern Literature* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2013): 96–112; and "Hermits, Stoics, and Hysterics: Turkish Democracy and the Female Bildungsroman," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 90–107.

theory of the tragic in analyzing the novels. My aim is then to reformulate (the idea of) the tragic⁸⁹ and its defining traits specific to the three novels. This reformulation hinges on how the idea of the tragic is contextually, discursively, and formalistically constructed in them.

Tragedy, the Tragic, and non-Western Modernities

By discussing the idea of the tragic and its characteristics in these novels, two points need to be clarified. The first concerns how the representations of modernity as a tragedy emerged in Turkish fiction and to what extent these representations are associated with Ottoman-Turkish modernity. First of all, tragedy has been genealogically related to drama as a genre since Aristotle's *Poetics*, including tragedy's changing meaning and features in Western literature.⁹⁰ However, many literary scholars emphasize that "[t]he word tragedy never possessed any particular precision."⁹¹ In other words, tragedy is used arbitrarily or fuzzily to refer to a character's ethical crisis, a particular conflict of values, a literary genre, a vision and sense of life, or even a philosophical condition.

⁸⁹ I use the terms "the tragic," "the idea of the tragic," "the tragic idea," and "tragic vision" interchangeably in the thesis. Additionally, "tragic mode" refers to a mode of the tragic that each novel employs.

⁹⁰ Aristotle sets the principles of tragedy, defining the Greek tragedy under the category of verse drama. See Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Kenneth A. Telford (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1970). Tragedy has evolved through various phases in different languages, such as Roman tragedy (Livius Andronicus and Seneca), Elizabethan Tragedy (Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare), the classical French tragedy in the seventeenth century (Corneille and Racine), and modern tragedy from Henrik Ibsen to Arthur Miller. For the changing meanings of the tragedy, see Clifford Leech, *Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1969), 22–23; Andrew Bennett and Nicolas Royle, "The Tragic," in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism, and Theory*, 5th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 124–25; and Franco Moretti, "The Great Eclipse: The Tragic Form as the Deconsecration of Sovereignty," in *Signs Taken*, 42–82.

⁹¹ Richard H. Palmer, *Tragedy and The Tragic: An Analytical Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 5. This view is extensionally discussed in another study that asserts that "[t]he usual fault is to transform Aristotle's analysis of the best kind of tragedy." See Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy from Aristotle and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xiv–xv. In her article published in 1963, Susan Sontag points out that "tragedy is simply much rarer than has been supposed" in Western literature. See Susan Sontag, "The Death of Tragedy," in *Against Interpretation* (London: Vintage, 2001), 133.

Yet one can argue, like George Steiner, that “tragedy as a form of drama is not universal” as it derives from Western culture and philosophy.⁹² Steiner also posits the invalidity of tragedy as an idea and a narrative form in the twentieth century, declaring its death in Western literary tradition.⁹³ Another but more radical claim argues that there is “no tragic experience” except “theatrical experience.”⁹⁴ On the other hand, in the mid-twentieth century, eminent writers like Albert Camus and Arthur Miller attempted to establish modern tragedy by writing plays and even essays about it.⁹⁵ According to Max Scheler, the tragic implies “a property which we observe in events, fortunes, characters, and the like and which actually exists in them.”⁹⁶ Furthermore, several prominent studies assert the validity of the tragic idea in the modern sense or the return of tragedy and its link with modernity.⁹⁷

Despite stimulating and challenging content, much of the existing scholarship on the interplay of the tragic and modernity focuses merely on the Western context and its various aspects. However, the tragic as a condition or sense is a widely proliferated and shared phenomenon. Indeed, it can arise in different ways and from various contexts. In line with this

⁹² George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3.

⁹³ Steiner, *Death of Tragedy*, 193–95; 284–92. See also Joseph Wood Krutch, “The Tragic Fallacy,” in *The Modern Temper* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929), 79–97; and Morse Peckham, *Beyond the Tragic Vision: The Quest for Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 369.

⁹⁴ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Tragedy and Dramatic Theatre*, trans. Erik Butler (London: Routledge, 2016), 3.

⁹⁵ For the analysis of Camus’ “On the Future of Tragedy” (1955) and Miller’s “Tragedy and the Common Man” (1949), see Julian Young, *The Philosophy of Tragedy: From Plato to Žižek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 235–53.

⁹⁶ Max Scheler, “On the Tragic,” in *Tragedy Vision and Form*, ed. Robert W. Corrigan, trans. Bernard Stambler (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 17.

⁹⁷ See Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966); Michel Maffesoli, “The Return of the Tragic in Postmodern Society [with Commentary],” trans. Rita Felski Allan Megill, and Marilyn Gaddis Rose, *New Literary History* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 133–59; Joshua Billings and Miriam Leonard, eds., *Tragedy and the Idea of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Miriam Leonard, *Tragic Modernities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); and Terry Eagleton, *Tragedy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020).

view, William Storm argues that this “condition itself is timeless and constant.”⁹⁸ However, neither tragedy nor the tragic is universal and completely the same for every culture and for different literatures. First of all, there has been, as Peter Szondi underlines, a difference between the “poetics of tragedy” as a literary form and the “philosophy of the tragic” within Western culture.⁹⁹

Moreover, the idea of the tragic may be formed around different bases, temporalities, and conceptions of individuality and community. As Rowan Williams put it succinctly, “what most writers, audiences, and critics mean by tragedy is indeed a phenomenon with a particular local history.”¹⁰⁰ The tragic in the non-Western context may have different grounds as it negotiates with philosophy, history, religion, and existing literary tradition on its own plane, which could be substantially associated with the Western legacy of tragedy. This difference between the Western and non-Western contexts does not contradict the validity of the tragic, but it implies diverse conceptions of the world and of life that construct different tragic visions, depending on sociocultural, religious, ethical, literary, and even ideological factors.¹⁰¹

In this line of thought, the tragic and the mode of its representation can vary, especially considering the understanding of non-Western modernities and different literary

⁹⁸ William Storm, *After Dionysus: A Theory of the Tragic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 33. See also Scheler, “Tragic,” 17.

⁹⁹ Peter Szondi, *An Essay on the Tragic*, trans. Paul Fleming (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 1. For a view that the tragic is distinguished from tragedy by the German philosophy in the eighteenth century, see John D. Barbour, *Tragedy as a Critique of Virtue: The Novel and Ethical Reflection* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 19; Vassilis Lambropoulos, *The Tragic Idea* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2006), 8; and Joshua Billings, *Genealogy of the Tragic: Greek Tragedy and German Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 1–8. For a critique of Szondi’s approach, see Simon Critchley, “The Tragical Sublime,” in *The Sublime and Its Teleology*, ed. Donald Loose (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 174.

¹⁰⁰ Rowan Williams, *The Tragic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 138. For this particularity, see also Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), xvi; and Ato Quayson, *Tragedy and Postcolonial Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 43.

¹⁰¹ For studies on tragedy in non-Western context, see Kinya Nishi, *Fate, Nature, and Literary Form: the Politics of the Tragic in Japanese Literature* (Boston: Academic Studies, 2020) and Quayson, *Tragedy*.

traditions. The idea of the tragic therefore can gain a particular meaning and different features in a specific culture and literature. What is needed then is a detailed explanation of how the tragic is constructed in the three novels in conjunction with the representation of the modernity experience: that is, how each protagonist tackles his or her existential crisis derived from the implications and contradictions of Turkish modernity. This specificity, however, does not overlook the constant reference to the Western notions of the tragic. The tragic and its elements can be represented in various forms and genres by considering the cultural exchange between Western and non-Western conceptions of the tragic and especially the variability of the novel as a narrative form.¹⁰² It is therefore necessary to distinguish “tragedy” in Western literature from the tragic represented in these novels.

Although both notions are interrelated, *the tragic* refers to an unavoidable condition that a character confronts, be it a conflict of values as a crisis, a failure, or an unforeseeable yet inevitable situation in specific, sociocultural, and historical terms. In other words, the tragic refers to “a dialectical mode of experience”¹⁰³ derived from the combination of inevitability, contrast, paradox, crisis, and suffering. On the other hand, *tragedy* signifies the manifestation of this condition in drama, particularly within Western literature. This thesis, therefore, uses the word “tragedy” only to allude to a tragic conflict, vision, or condition. It

¹⁰² For tragedy in nineteenth-century novels, see Sidney Zink, “The Novel as a Medium of Modern Tragedy,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 17, no. 2 (December 1958): 171; Richard B. Sewall, *The Vision of Tragedy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 3; Dorothea Krook, *Elements of Tragedy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), 177; John Snyder, *Prospects of Power: Tragedy, Satire, the Essay, and the Theory of Genre* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 83–84; Jeannette King, *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel: Theory and Practice in the Novels of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Henry James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 1–16; and Leech, *Tragedy*, 31. For tragedy in the modern novel, see Manya Lempert, *Tragedy and the Modernist Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) and Eagleton, *Sweet Violence*. Jennifer Wallace claims that the medium can be photography and film too. See Jennifer Wallace, *Tragedy Since 9/11: Reading World Out of Joint* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 15.

¹⁰³ Simon Critchley, *Tragedy, The Greeks, and Us* (London: Profile Books, 2020), 28. Szondi also defines the tragic identically. See Szondi, *An Essay on the Tragic*, 55.

also considers that the tragic itself is genealogically derived from the Greek tragedy, though it does not adhere to the strict Aristotelian concept of tragedy and its formalistic features.¹⁰⁴

This distinction between these two notions bears on the second point: that is, how the idea of the tragic functions in the Turkish novel, specifically in the three novels. Both the novel as a narrative form and the tragic as a concept, indeed, stem from Western culture. Furthermore, the modernity experience as tragedy is precisely due to the close encounter with the West and its norms. The concept of the tragic, in this sense, serves as a teleological model for comprehending the modes of the foreseen but inevitable crises and failures narrated in the novels, rather than as a purely philosophical question or an inherently universal phenomenon.

The Idea of the Tragic and Turkish Modernity

The close link between the representations of the modernity experience as a crisis and the tragic in the Turkish context, indeed, shows a remarkable contrast to that link in Western culture. When Steiner enunciates the death of tragedy, his claim lies in “the triumph of rationalism and secular metaphysics which marks the point of no return” due to the rise of the middle class that pays attention to the autonomous power of the individual in Europe and its manifestation in the novel rather than in drama.¹⁰⁵ However, the transformations in the late Ottoman Empire provoked different kinds of individual and collective conflicts, which involved the effects and processes of Westernization, secularization, and later, nationalization of culture in Turkey. Indeed, one could speak of a permanent conflict of values at both individual and collective levels. The Turkish novel emerged as a textual platform giving voice

¹⁰⁴ The Greek tragedy is way too specific within Western literature and culture as well and reflects a particular understanding of the Greek world in the late sixth century B.C. in a form of drama. See Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 29–48.

¹⁰⁵ Steiner, *Death of Tragedy*, 193.

to the various conflicts of values rather than as an autonomous power of the individual that Steiner addresses as a specific characteristic of the novel in Europe.

While such changes created contradictions, dualities, ambiguities, and conflicts, the newly emerging secular and rationalist mindset raised an essential question about the individual's agency. This question pertains to the perceived tension between the freedom of the subject derived from Western rationalism and the Islamic (or traditional) understanding of fate that demarcates human agency exceedingly. This tension then signifies a perception of two distinct discourses rather than a reality.¹⁰⁶ In other words, Ottoman-Turkish modernity and its encountered contradictions both introduced and provoked the idea of the tragic and its conditions in the Turkish case. This notion of unavoidable crisis was already explicitly manifest in Turkish literature from the 1900s onwards. The essential aspects of this crisis in the novels are the inner conflict of the character, due to the dualities and dilemmas encountered, and the limited agency that reveals the verge of the rational, secular, and Westernized vision of life. The concept of the tragic is therefore useful to grasp the various representations of the protagonists' existential or ethical struggles between freedom and necessity, relating to their modernity experiences in Turkey.

Due to the Westernization process in the late Ottoman era, the secularization of some mindsets and lifestyles changed, or at least challenged, the epistemology of traditional Islamic belief and ethics, which were valued by many Ottoman-Turkish authors. The Western conception of the individual's self-determining agency encountered the conventional understanding of fate. This encounter indicates a clash of two worldviews and their discourses. This clash is variously manifest in Turkish fiction. The emergence of the tragic and its representation in Turkish literature bear directly on the modernity process in this

¹⁰⁶ For a general discussion on predestination and free will in Islamic theology, see Binyamin Abrahamov, *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 35–36.

respect. While the various versions of the individual's crisis appear due to the conflict and dualism of these two different mindsets, simultaneously the introduction of new genres from European literature, particularly theatre and novel, provides a whole new space for representing these tensions. Within these genres, the tragic occurs by gaining new dimensions and features, especially in the three novels examined here. In sum, not only does the idea of the tragic become more apparent but also its modes of representation vary with some new genres, literary tendencies, and the sociocultural or moral conditions of the period.

In his study on the tragic and its politics in Japanese literature, Kinya Nishi emphasizes that “[e]ach modernizing society is a fertile ground for tragedy’s critical imagination in which our values are measured and tested by the action we take, rather than by the cultural achievements of the past.”¹⁰⁷ The radical transformations of Ottoman-Turkish modernity brought forth the notions of crisis, though the transformation of society itself was not necessarily a crisis from a neutral perspective but a vast sociocultural and political change, or a more general historical development.¹⁰⁸ Many novels construct and reflect a tragic vision because they variously narrate the crisis of the protagonist, connecting this crisis to the relation between agency, self-identity, and the sociocultural or ethical implications of Turkish modernity. John Orr claims that “the renaissance of tragedy in a modern secular world could well come from outside the West all together, in those countries still emerging from a colonial or traditional past.”¹⁰⁹ What Orr emphasizes is the highest potential conflict of values and mindsets between the secular conception of the world and the traditional thinking of fate. This creates a ground for the tragic, as it brings individual agency and its limit or even its lack into the discussion.

¹⁰⁷ Nishi, *Fate*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ For the notion of crisis, see also pages 19 and 20, including footnote 14.

¹⁰⁹ John Orr, *Tragic Realism and Modern Society: Studies in the Sociology of the Modern Novel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 192. See also Eagleton, *Sweet Violence*, 107.

The Emergence of the Tragic in Turkish Literature

However, the modernity process itself did not automatically generate the idea of the tragic and its manifestations in Turkish fiction. Unlike the literary and philosophical legacy of tragedy in Western culture, in Ottoman-Turkish literature neither was the idea of the tragic conceptualized as a philosophical thought or worldview (with a few exceptions), nor did a literary tradition and form of the tragedy exist until the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹⁰ The first so-called tragedies influenced by French models are two plays, *Sergüzeşt-i Perviz* (Perviz's Adventure) and *İkinci Ersas* (Ersas the Second) written by Ali Haydar Bey in 1860.¹¹¹ These plays, however, cannot be "defined in the accepted sense of the word" of tragedy.¹¹² On the

¹¹⁰ Tragedy was introduced to the Turkish-speaking readership through an article "Tiyatro" (Theatre) published by *Ceride-i Havadis* (the Journal of News), the first semi-official newspaper in the Ottoman Empire. See Tanpınar, *19 uncu Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi*, 146. This article published on 5 December 1841 gives information about tragedy, comedy, opera, melodrama, and ballet. See Emre Aracı, *Naum Tiyatrosu: 19. Yüzyıl İstanbulu'nun İtalyan Operası* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 57–58. In the library of the reformist sultan Mahmud II (1785–1839), there were 500 plays brought from Europe; 40 of them were tragedy. See Metin And, *Türkiye'de İtalyan Sahnesi, İtalyan Sahnesinde Türkiye* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları 1989), 25. For a prominent study that explores the role of drama written in Turkish and Armenian as both conflict and negotiation in the late Ottoman era, see Mehmet Fatih Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere: Osmanlı'da Türkçe ve Ermenice Dramatik Edebiyat* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014).

¹¹¹ Metin And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e Türk Tiyatro Tarihi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 98. For more information about the play, see Mehmet Çetintaş, "Sergüzeşt-i Perviz," *Cogito* 54 (Spring 2018): 283–88.

¹¹² Metin And, *A History of Theatre and Popular Entertainment in Turkey* (Ankara: Forum, 1963), 79. See also Niyazi Akı, *XIX. Yüzyıl Türk Tiyatrosu Tarihi* (Erzurum: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1963), 53; Akyüz, *Türk Edebiyatının Ana Çizgileri*, 40. Turkish theatre and the written drama begin in the year 1859, and *Şair Evlenmesi* (The Marriage of the Poet) written by Şinasi is conventionally considered the first example. See İnci Enginün, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Tiyatro Tarihi* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2001), 161; Nihad Sami Banarlı, *Resimli Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi II* (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1983), 867. There are some other plays written before this play, though they are not considered as influential and determinative as they did not reach a wide readership or audience in the Empire. The first known play written in Turkish is the handwritten manuscript *Vakayî-i Acibe ve Havadis-i Garibe-i Keşşger Ahmed* (Keşşger Ahmed's Strange News and Astonishing Incident) whose author is unknown. See Niyazi Akı, *Türk Tiyatro Tarihi I: Başlangıçtan Cumhuriyet Devrine Kadar* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1989), 41. Indeed, the first Turkish plays were written

other hand, *Mukaddime-i Celâl* (Introduction to Celâl) (1897), the postscript preface to his biographical play *Celâleddin Harzemşah* (1875) written by Namık Kemal, advocates the social function of theatre while briefly discussing the history of tragedy from Ancient Greece to Corneille. As a major figure in the Ottoman-Turkish theatre and literature, Kemal discusses the unity of plot, space, and time in Aristotle's *Poetics* and rejects its strict rules by referring to the examples of Lope de Vega and William Shakespeare.¹¹³ His attitude strives to reconcile the form of tragedy with his understanding of Islam and Ottoman patriotism.

However, despite the dominance of theatre as entertainment and as a space for presenting the ideological and moral values in the Ottoman Empire, tragedy in the Western sense never became a major or popular genre. Instead, melodrama and other kinds of drama were in demand. Metin And argues that the authors of the period between the 1860s and the 1890s intended to write tragedies influenced by French dramatists, particularly Racine and Corneille. However, they were not able to establish the form, conflict, and effect that tragedy requires. As a result, they produced rough sketches of tragedy, called *manzum dram*, verse drama.¹¹⁴ These plays lie in either a historical story or a melodramatic love affair written under the influence of Romanticism, emulated by the different Ottoman-Turkish authors.

This outcome may be related to the attempts to reconcile the tragedy as a new narrative form in Ottoman-Turkish literature with the pre-existing local culture and the well-established literary tradition. Mehmet Fatih Uslu argues that the aspects of tragedy did not

in Armenian script by Catholic Armenian priests in Venice in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The first known Turkish translations in the Armenian script were also published in Venice in 1831. See Yervant Baret Manok, *Doğu ile Batı Arasında San Larazzo Sahnesi: Ermeni Mikhitarist Manastırı ve İlk Türkçe Oyunlar* (Istanbul: BGST, 2013), 53–69; 73.

¹¹³ Namık Kemal, “*Mukaddime-i Celâl*,” in *Celâleddin Harzemşah* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2005), 31–76.

¹¹⁴ And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 102. For a detailed analysis of the tragic plays in Turkish published between 1839 and 1908, see Zehra (Balı) Kaplan, “Türk Tiyatrosunda Trajedi” (MA thesis, Eskişehir Osmangazi University, 2014), 145–222.

meet the sociocultural and political needs of the late Ottoman period because cultural and political nationalism was growing at that time, and tragedy presented fragmentation, dialogue, pluralism, and indecision rather than unity and absolute certainty that nationalism required. Thus, melodrama prevailed over tragedy.¹¹⁵ The intricate relationship that combines the favored form with a social necessity of a certain era and its literary culture endorses Moretti's idea of formal compromise discussed in the Introduction. It also shows how the form—tragedy—can be used differently in a new context and literary practice considering its evolution in another literature.

The alternative nomenclature used to classify the genre of the “tragic” plays prove that the notion of tragedy did not exist in the mindsets of the Ottoman(-Turkish) dramatists and therefore in the Ottoman-Turkish theatre.¹¹⁶ The word “tragedy” in Turkish, *tragedya* or *trajedi* comes from the French *tragédie*, and it refers to tragedy as a genre whose very sad story lies in mythological and historical events. Its second meaning is a very sad incident, bad predicament, or calamity.¹¹⁷ The tragic, *trajik* as an adjective in Turkish, is taken from the

¹¹⁵ Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere*, 177. Melodrama is a striking mode in many Turkish novels published between the 1920s and the 1940s. Those novels “express excessive meanings in periods of symbolic crisis which could not be expressed by language, but they also produce meanings and reformatize/categorize the elements of crisis.” See Şima B. Parker, “Bodies of Exception: Literary Construction of Illness in Women's Fiction in Turkish, 1912–1994” (PhD Diss., University of Manchester, 2017), 118.

¹¹⁶ *Facia*, “disaster” in English was first used by Ebüzziya Tevfik to refer to tragedy in the preface of the play *Habibe yahut Semahat-i Aşk*. *Facia yani dram* (disaster, that is drama), *dehşetli facia* (cataclysmic disaster), and *tragedya* (tragedy) are the terms that were rarely used. *Haile, korkunç, acıklı, neticesi sürurlu tiyatro* (a disastrous, terrible, and sad theatre whose final is happy), *bir facia-i tarihihiye* (historical tragedy) *mukaffa bir facia* (tragedy in rhyme) were commonly used instead. See And, *Başlangıcından 1983'e*, 98–99. Historical drams called tragedies in that period are indeed melodramas. See Uslu, *Çatışma ve Müzakere*, 22; 142.

¹¹⁷ İlhan Ayverdi, *Kubbealtı Lügati: Misalli Büyük Sözlük* (Istanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, 2005), 3:3233 and Sevan Nişanyan, *Nişanyan Sözlük: Çağdaş Türkçenin Etimolojisi*, 3rd ed. (Istanbul: Liberus, 2021), 900. The Turkified meaning of “tragedy” in Turkish literary studies is given as “ağlatı,” which derives from the word *ağla(mak)*, “(to) cry” in English. See Ali Püsküllüoğlu, *Edebiyat Sözlüğü* (Ankara: Arkadaş Yayınevi, 2015), 10. See also Tahir Olgun, *Edebiyat Lügati* (Istanbul: Asar-ı İlmiye Kütüphanesi Neşriyatı, 1936), 146–47; Hasan

French word *tragique* before 1900. Its first meaning is “related to tragedy” while the second meaning denotes “very touching, disastrous.”¹¹⁸ Despite the lexical congruence, the tragic in Turkish literature shows a conceptual and contextual distance from the tragedy taken as a model from European literature.

The reason for this distance may be slightly related to Tanpınar’s overly-generalized claim in his monumental study of nineteenth-century Turkish literature, first published in 1949. Tanpınar asserts that the lack of tragedy in Ottoman-Turkish literature until the nineteenth century is due to Islam and its mentality: people could not find a possibility to encounter their own fate in this understanding.¹¹⁹ Tanpınar’s line of thought, indeed, approvingly invokes Louis Massignon’s article, *Les Méthodes de réalisation artistique des peuples de l’Islam* (1921). This article argues the lack of the tragic sense in the Islamic arts. In this controversially essentialist thought, as there is no other entity except God (*Allah*) in Islam, life is reduced to shadow play, which is to say that people cannot confront and withstand their destinies.¹²⁰

In his study on the history of the nineteenth-century Turkish theatre, Niyazi Akı lays stress on the impact of Islam on Muslim artists and their visions by explaining that they think abstractly, and their imaginations are based on fantasy without transcending the sacred principles of the Islamic worldview that relies on the life of the ethereal world.¹²¹ Şerif Mardin also argues that there is no tragedy in Turkish culture in a real sense due to the lack of the idea of the daemon. According to Mardin, the “daemon” does not exist as a creative figure

Boynukara, *Modern Eleştiri Terimleri* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1997), 237–39; and Turan Karataş, *Ansiklopedik Terimler Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: Perşembe Kitapları, 2001), 437–38.

¹¹⁸ Ayverdi, *Kubbealtı*, 3233; Nişanyan, *Sözlük*, 900; Püsküllüoğlu, *Edebiyat Sözlüğü*, 134.

¹¹⁹ Tanpınar, *19 uncu Asır*, 25.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24–25. For Massignon’s article in Turkish, see Louis Massignon, “İslam Sanatlarının Felsefesi,” in *Din ve Sanat*, trans. and ed. Burhan Toprak (Istanbul: Sühulet Kitabevi, 1937), 11–41.

¹²¹ Akı, *XIX. Yüzyıl*, 17.

because it only refers to the devil in Islamic and Ottoman culture, except in Sufism.¹²² Beşir Ayvazoğlu states that the idea of the tragic did not even exist in the old Ottoman-Turkish literature as in Western culture; Muslim artists self-consciously escaped from this idea and ignored the materiality of the world and the conflict against the divine power. For them, pure love is always spiritual and a way of reaching God, so for those who are not in fear of death, there is no point or need to challenge their fate or any power beyond their limited agency.¹²³ On the other hand, Annemarie Schimmel's thought-provoking study argues the presence of the daemonic, proving the tragic dimension in Sufism and Islamic literature by some examples.¹²⁴

These varied explanations that explicitly point to the Islamic worldview and its manifestations in literature can also explain the dominance of melodrama instead of tragedy. In melodrama, the conflict occurs “between men, or between men and things,” rather than that “the conflict is within man” as in tragedy.¹²⁵ The melodramatic representation of the conflict therefore bypasses the inner crisis and self-confrontation of the individual and instead concentrates on exteriority in which moral, ideological, or sociocultural values are embeddedly constructed while narrating the character's predicament. The historical plays of Abdülhak Hâmid (Tarhan) (1852–1937), under the heavy influence of Romanticism, and Necip Fazıl (Kısakürek)'s (1904–1983) appropriation of tragedy into Islamic thought in his

¹²² See Şerif Mardin, “‘Aydınlar’ Konusunda Ülgener ve Bir İzah Denemesi,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 24 (1984): 9–16. For the lack of tragedy in modern literature, see Hasan Bülent Kahraman, “Siyasal Romanın Ölümü,” *Radikal* 2 (19 August 2000), 23 and Gürbilek, *Kötü Çocuk Türk*, 66–88.

¹²³ Beşir Ayvazoğlu, *Aşk Estetiği: İslam Sanatlarının Estetiği Üzerine Bir Deneme* (Istanbul: Ötügen Neşriyat, 1993), 146–47. For a similar view, see A. Turan Oflazoğlu, *Mutlak Avcıları* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu: 2001), 142; 203.

¹²⁴ Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 187–99.

¹²⁵ Robert Bechtold Heilman, *Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 79. For further discussion, see Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 15; 30–35.

plays can be evaluated as two different versions of this transition from melodrama to tragedy.

It is also worth noting that various remarkable examples of tragedy in a Western sense occurred in Turkish drama and literature over time.¹²⁶ At this point, it is useful to discuss briefly how the tragic is constructed in relation to the modernity experience depicted in the novels and how this construction has evolved in the Turkish novel since its beginning. By discussing Turkish fiction in its specific context, the tragic and its primary elements can be defined sufficiently and will be examined in greater detail in the following chapters.

The Novel as Expression of the Tragic

In early Turkish novels (1870–1900), many characters are confused young males who fail to find reasonable harmony between a Western-oriented lifestyle and traditional Ottoman-Turkish values. These characters, therefore, lose their conventional sociocultural manners and moral values, and even their socio-economic status due to their own “wrong” choices and attitudes. A contributing reason for their confusion is a lack of guidance, particularly a fatherly mentorship that could lead a young man towards the right path in the advent of modernity.¹²⁷ The distinct theme of the protagonist’s struggle for harmonious survival and failure inherently contains the nucleus of existential and identity crises in those novels.

By embracing this theme, the early Turkish novel presents two distinct representations of the young man in late-Ottoman society, which began around the 1870s: the ideal Ottoman-Turkish man and the dandy (*züppe*).¹²⁸ The former embodies the harmonious and pragmatic manners of male protagonists under the increasing influence of European culture and lifestyle, while the latter refers to those who cannot synthesize the two distinct cultures and depicts the

¹²⁶ The plays of Güngör Dilmen (1930–2012) and Turan Oflazoğlu (1932–) are classical examples.

¹²⁷ Finn stresses “the absence of a father figure” as a common feature of the Turkish novels written between the 1870s and the 1890s. See Finn, *Early Turkish Novel*, 86.

¹²⁸ See also page 35 and footnotes 8 and 55.

excessive emulation and even “wrong” manners of the modernity process. The downfall of the Ottoman(-Turkish) dandy in many novels is represented in mocking or didactically caricatured ways, although the failure can be referred to as the indication of a severe crisis.¹²⁹

The early Ottoman-Turkish novelists, Jale Parla argues, did not portray the East–West duality, for they consider Westernization a problem that they could handle. Their worldview lies in “a priori, idealistic, Islamic epistemology” that does not have any space for “suspicion and misgiving” due to its absoluteness, which is why there is “no ontological or metaphysical question” in those novels.¹³⁰ Although Parla’s overly generalized claim is controversial, it simply emphasizes the lack of inner conflict and crisis manifoldly represented in such novels. Instead, two distinct characters form the binary opposition: the exemplary character (the idealized Ottoman-Turkish man) and its negated counterpart (the dandy). However, this stark difference between the young characters and the ways of their representations has developed over time, gaining various contents, discourses, and forms.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, the novels of Halit Ziya (Uşaklıgil) (1866-1945), which established modern Turkish fiction according to many literary critics and scholars, recount in romantic and realist modes the stories of young protagonists who are full of desires and ideals. These novels end with deep disappointments and devastating failures of the protagonists, resembling tragedies in the form of a novel, arguably for the first time in Turkish literature. The individual’s ideal or desire disaccords with his or her personal obligations and the socio-economic or cultural conditions of the period. There exists a conflict that leads to an existential crisis later, and the protagonist confronts him or herself, and his or her flawed action, which may also be beyond his or her agency. Robert Finn emphasizes that

¹²⁹ Evin comments on some early Turkish novels by using the term tragedy loosely. See Evin, *Turkish Novel*, 56; 67; 220. *Taaşuk-ı Talat ve Fitnat* (The Love Between Talat and Fitnat) (1875) “ends as a tragedy,” while *İntibah* (Awakening) (1876) is “a romantic tragedy.” See Finn, *Early Turkish Novel*, 12; 27.

¹³⁰ Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar*, 48.

“a major theme in these novels is the crisis of realization which the characters inevitably face.”¹³¹ This confrontation generates an inner conflict as a process that involves the character’s self-questioning, failure, moments of revelation, and suffering. This process is that of the tragic conflict, and it implies the inexplicable tension between the character’s agency and destiny or even contingency in the state of crisis that requires a momentous decision between certain values as a resolution or ends with an explicit failure.

The key point in these novels is a complete failure and its link with the protagonists’ modernity experience in certain time and space. The protagonists fail due to the inevitable conflict between their vision of the world and the ethics of the modernizing community. This conflict is also related to divine fate and even fortune that transcend the characters’ agencies. The inevitable clash of these two opposite situations therefore constructs the tragic that bears on the protagonists’ pursuits of meaning or self-fulfillment. This pursuit generally leads to an existential or ethical crisis of the protagonists that culminates in a lack of self-actualization, disillusionment, despair, fall, or even suicide and death in the *fin de siècle*.¹³²

At this point, the ridiculed failure of the excessively Westernized dandy turns into the downfall of a confused urban protagonist who oscillates not only between Western manners and traditional Ottoman values but also between his desire, power of agency, and the sociocultural or historical conditions beyond his self-control. In other words, the former

¹³¹ Finn, *Early Turkish Novel*, 168.

¹³² Individual agency in Halit Ziya’s novels is represented as a mode of “abandonment.” Characters in his novels are full of desires and ideals, but they are mostly lonely, helpless, and hopeless. They lack the capability of self-actualization. For instance, *Mai ve Siyah* (Blue and Black) (1897) depicts the individuality of the male protagonist for the first time in the Turkish novel. Bihter as a heroine in *Aşk-ı Memnu* (Forbidden Love) (1899) or Ömer Behiç in *Kırk Hayatlar* (Broken Lives) (1901-2) become subjects of the tragic in the context of modernity. See Zeynep Uysal, *Metruk Ev: Halit Ziya Romanında Modern Osmanlı Bireyi* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 14–15. Jale Parla asserts that there is a “tragic fall” and “tragic end” in *Blue and Black*. See Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar*, 74. I do not incorporate Halit Ziya’s novels in this thesis as his novels depict and reflect solely on the Ottoman context, which is outside the temporality of the selected novels.

conflict indicates the modern condition riddled with contradictions in the Ottoman-Turkish context whereas the latter points to the human condition in general. These conflicts manifest the dialectic between the external world and the protagonist; predestination and free will; and failure and self-fulfillment. The conflict or synthesis of these oppositions tackled in the novels results in the emergence of different tragic visions and characters in relation to various implications of Turkish modernity. The three novels also depict similar dichotomies in the particularities of Turkish modernity. The unresolved ambiguity between these dichotomies becomes the source of the tragic as the insoluble conflicts lead to the characters being caught in sheer complexities, crises, grief, and despair.

By the 1920s, when Republican modernization started, the novel was already in place as a genre to process these conflicts and crises that came with modernity. The young protagonist struggling to come to terms with the effects of Ottoman-Turkish modernity continues to be a significant theme in many novels. These novels generally tackle this theme within the tension between national identity and being modern in Turkey. This tension involves the conflictual relation between the individual and the community and that between personal desire, agency, and Republican values. The novel as a genre can then claim a certain autonomy, thus making it an agent of Turkish modernity itself. The more autonomous—that is, devoid of didacticism—the Turkish novel became, the more place there appears for crises, inner conflicts, self-confrontations, and therefore, the tragic and its manifold representations. The three novels analyzed in this part can be considered as agents themselves in the modernity process to varying degrees. It is yet worth remembering, as the temporality explained previously, that not every fiction was influential right after its first publication. Each one garnered a different degree of interest and reception in Turkey's literary field after the late 1980s.

Modernity Experience as the Conflict of Values, Ideas, and Choices

Since the 1900s, some of the failed dandy characters who needed guidance under the varying conditions of Ottoman-Turkish modernity have gained new features in many novels. An explicit side of this transformation in the character's representation manifests itself in the form of a young protagonist who struggles to find self-identity and meaning, and therefore, relative harmony between individual happiness and the national ideal of modern Turkey, with its collective, secular ethics.¹³³ The crises of the male or female protagonists in these novels are substantially associated with the significant subjects of Turkish modernity, such as Westernization, national identity, the progressivist vision of the state-led modernization, its gender aspect, secular ethics, and the discourse of the new life in Turkey.

Within the narratives that depict the crises and struggles of the protagonists throughout such great sociocultural and political transformations, the representations of the Western-oriented, perplexed protagonists then “can unite the intellectual and the dramatic so as to enhance both—personality vitalizing ideas, and ideas distinguishing personality.”¹³⁴ The depictions of these confused characters and the plot constructions of their crises point to a conflict of values that is directly pertinent to Turkish modernity and its specificity. The three novels examined in this part also narrate the existential, ethical, and intellectual crises of the male or female protagonists in modernizing, reflecting several contradictions dilemmas, or even an impasse for them in the making of the new collective consciousness and self-identity.

As these three novels tackle the existential questions and moral dilemmas entangled with the nationalist secular context of Turkey, they convey various dichotomies narrated in different ways. The dichotomies employed in these fictions pose questions about the “series

¹³³ In my usage, secular ethics refers to the non-Islamic set of values, norms, and behaviors established by the discourses and reforms of the Republican modernization project in Turkey beginning in the 1920s. See also Nuri, “Crisis Narratives,” 142–43.

¹³⁴ Zink, “Modern Tragedy,” 172.

of recurring anxieties that are at the heart of modern life: a concern with freedom and the limits of agency, the paradox of historical rupture and continuity, the promise and betrayal of the political, and the interrelationship between gender and subjectivity.”¹³⁵ The tragic in these novels, then, occurs as “the conflict between an individual and the forces that destroy”¹³⁶ characters in the particularities of Turkey. That is to say, the middle-class, Western-oriented, intellectual, urban protagonists of the novels face multiple conflicts: pursuing self-identity while dealing with the sense of moral or intellectual responsibility; searching for self-fulfillment but holding onto the nationalist ideals; tackling an existential crisis yet seeking inner harmony and personal morality in the modernizing society. These conflicts lie in the tensions between the personal and the social; the internal and the external; the right and less right (rather than the wrong); and gender and its nationalist construction.

The tragic then hinges upon a foreseeable but inevitable conflict due to the protagonist’s vision of the world, his or her will, flawed action, and failure. On the other hand, this conflict is derived from the amalgam of fate, coincidence, and socio-economic or cultural realities of Turkey at that time, which moves beyond the protagonist’s agency and therefore the notion of culpability. That is to say, the very specific, local experience of the inevitable crisis is embodied in and by these novels. The source of the crisis is, indeed, multi-layered as it involves the painful transition from the empire to a nation-state, the changes in morality and ethics due to the secular worldview, the new, Westernized lifestyle, and its gender discourse imposed by Republican modernity, the individual’s existential angst and pursuit of cultural unity in the ever-changing society. What makes the crisis of each protagonist’s modernity experience is that the novels present each protagonist’s crisis as inevitable while narrating the moments of his or her inner conflict, dilemmas, and suffering.

¹³⁵ Leonard, *Tragic Modernities*, 4.

¹³⁶ Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, 87. See also Nuri, “Crisis Narratives,” 143.

Each protagonist's crisis takes a different form. These novels narrate the personal, intellectual, and spiritual "education" of the protagonists, depicting their self-questioning, crises, and dilemmas. The main reason for the conflict of values in these novels is that the self-fulfillment or happiness of each protagonist entails harmony between her or his self-integration and the external world, which lies in the necessity of coming to terms with the effects of Republican modernity. The struggle for this necessity pertains to not simply an inner conflict but its inescapability despite its foreseeability, thus constructing an apparent existential or moral crisis without an easy resolution in the plots. This paradoxical aspect of the existential crisis forms the tragic in the novels and displays the limits of the protagonists' agency and willpower in Istanbul or Ankara.

The protagonists' crises then show the discrepancy between the cultural-national values and the individualistic ideals, leaving the characters to deal with a moral dilemma, existential angst, suffering, a sense of failure, and facing an impossible or stark choice. These themes convey the shared aspects and problems of human nature associated with "the question of existence"¹³⁷ and the modern condition: what it is to be a human in the world at times of such crucial changes and vast sociocultural transformations. The stories of the novels are culture-specific to some extent. The conflict of values, suffering, a sense of failure, and searching for a place in such uncertainties tackled in these novels reflect the same old struggle of the individual's existence and human values in their specificity.

Gendering the Modernity Experience

In such construction of the tragic modes, gender plays a key role, particularly when associated with Turkish modernity. In her comprehensive study that focuses primarily on Western

¹³⁷ For further discussion on the subject of existence concerning tragedy, see Sewall, *Vision of Tragedy*, 4 and Leonard, *Tragic Modernities*, 12.

literature, Rita Felski explains that “[t]he ‘tragedy of culture’ is [...] a tragedy of male culture insofar as the culture is composed of masculine ideas and values. It is man who constantly seeks to externalize himself in the act of performance, and who thereby exemplifies the principle of knowledge, becoming, and volition that typify the spirit of the modern.”¹³⁸ Felski’s criticism does not overlook the tradition of female tragic heroines in European literature predominantly written by male authors (e.g., Gustave Flaubert, Henry James, Leo Tolstoy, and Henrik Ibsen), but it underlines the masculinist construction of the modern. The criticism of male domination regarding modernity also poses a question about the gender dimension of the protagonists’ crises in relation to Turkish modernity. Felski’s view, in this sense, epitomizes the inner conflict of the male protagonist in *A Mind at Peace*: that the existential crisis, failure, masculinity, the question of agency, and suffering all are entangled with each other.

On the other hand, the specificity of Turkish modernity is that the ideal image of modern Turkish women and their urban femininity is portrayed in detail whereas that of modern Turkish men is less defined. Accordingly, the roles and characteristics of Republican Turkish women come into prominence, especially in the public imagination and space in Turkey.¹³⁹ Erol’s *Pleiades Storm* and Ağaoğlu’s *Lying Down to Die* come into play at this point, for they narrate the existential crisis, ethical dilemma, suffering, and fall of two heroines concerning their painful experiences of Turkish modernity.

¹³⁸ Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, 43. Felski criticizes that “the gender of modernity is indeed male,” giving Marshall Berman’s study *All that is Solid Melts into Air* as an example. In this seminal work, Faust, Marx, Baudelaire, and Dostoyevsky are all the “symbols not just of modernity, but also of masculinity.” *ibid.*, 2. See also Rita Felski, *Literature After Feminism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 58.

¹³⁹ The female authors of the late Ottoman era and afterward like Fatma Aliye (1862–1936), Güzide Sabri (Aygün) (1886–1946), Halide Edib (Adivar) (1884–1964), and Nezihe Muhiddin (Tepedelengil) (1889–1958) portray stronger female characters who are yet melancholic and hysterical due to their suppressed feelings and desires. See Ayşegül Utku Günaydın, *Kadınlık Bir Muamma: Osmanlı Kadın Yazarların Romanlarında Modernleşme* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2017), 95; 128.

Since the early twentieth century, the model of the “New Woman” in Europe presents “a resonant symbol of emancipation, whose modernity signaled not an endorsement of an existing present but rather a bold imagining of an alternative future.”¹⁴⁰ Turkey’s secular nationalist modernization makes Turkish women a main subject of its vision by changing women’s statuses and rights through social, cultural, and legal reforms influenced by this European model.¹⁴¹ In this way, women’s emancipation is directly associated with national progress and the definition of modern. This equation establishes the “images of women that became central to the iconography of the regime”¹⁴² in Turkey, particularly since the 1920s. With the reforms and the gender discourse of state feminism in Turkey, women are idealized by being defined as “‘a citizen woman’, urban and urbane, socially progressive, but also uncomplaining and dutiful at home.”¹⁴³ This definition glorifies women as the sublime figures of the modernizing nation, on the one hand. However, it also regulates women’s sexuality, body practices, public behaviors, relations with men, and even their personal desires due to the limitations of the secular, nationalist mindset that conveys a masculinist perspective.

By considering this specific context of Turkish modernity, the protagonists’ crises from the gender perspective require a careful analysis because “th[e] tragic fatalism is how

¹⁴⁰ Felski, *Gender of Modernity*, 14.

¹⁴¹ For a review of women’s status in Turkey, see Nermin Abadan-Unat, “Social Change and Turkish Women,” in *Women in Turkish Society*, ed. Nermin Abadan-Unat (Leiden, Brill, 1981), 5–31.

¹⁴² Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern on Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity,” in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 125. In the novels published between the 1880s and the 1890s, an essential theme is “female slavery.” See Finn, *Early Turkish Novel*, 27. In 1930s novels, women are predominantly depicted as industrious, patient, sacrificing, devoted, loyal to family, pure, untouched, and modern. See Mehmet Behçet Yazar, *Genç Romancılarımız ve Eserleri* (Istanbul: Ahmet Sait Basımevi, 1937), 42. See also Serpil Sancar, *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti: Erkekler Devlet, Kadınlar Aile Kurar*, 6th ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022), 125–59.

¹⁴³ Jenny B. White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” *NWSA Journal* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 146.

historical injustices normally are justified”¹⁴⁴, especially when the subject is about the relationship between women, modernity, and agency. That is to say, it is easy to fall into a trap that women’s “suffering as a universal condition” may function to legitimize such injustices although “what is wrong with human life lies not in nature or God but in societies that can and do change.”¹⁴⁵ In the novels, the conflict of each female protagonist “generates disunity and exposes disharmony”¹⁴⁶, emphasizing the tension between fate, sociocultural conditions, agency, gender, and the ethics of the community. This tension broadly applies to the male protagonists who are also “split between forces or motives or values”¹⁴⁷ that are equally essential and valuable, thus leading to a crisis.

In sum, the tragic, for either female or male protagonists, occurs as an inevitable condition that dwells upon the ethical and ontological relation of the individual to society, national identity, gender norms, and the Western-oriented lifestyle in Turkey. In narrating this condition, the novels challenge the progressivist vision, secular ethics, and gender discourse of Republican modernity to a certain extent. The construction of the tragic in and through literature, therefore, inherently involves “a full-blooded critique of modernity”¹⁴⁸ both in general terms and within the specific context of Turkey. Due to the depictions of such crises and the gender patterns of the protagonists, the historical and literary specificity of the idea of the tragic emerges in the Turkish novel along with its various narrative aspects, forms, and styles.

¹⁴⁴ Kathleen M. Sands, “Tragedy, Theology, and Feminism in the Time After Time,” *Literary History* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 41–61.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*,” 95–96. For the tragic and its link with feminism in Turkish fiction, see Nuri, “Crisis Narratives,” 128–61.

¹⁴⁶ Bennett and Royle, “Tragic,” 121.

¹⁴⁷ Heilman, *Tragedy and Melodrama*, 89.

¹⁴⁸ Eagleton, *Sweet Violence*, 204. See also Lempert, *Tragedy and the Modernist Novel*, 6.

The Elements of the Tragic

In considering the representations of the modernity experience as a crisis and the narrative features of the three novels analyzed in this part, the tragic is composed of five main elements. Some elements resemble the features of tragedy formulated in Aristotle's *Poetics*, but I do not strive to match them with those in *Poetics* or any other study.¹⁴⁹ The first element is the protagonist's inner conflict that leads to an existential crisis, including its ethical aspect. This crisis lies in a conflict of values that "represents what goes beyond but does not and cannot transcend."¹⁵⁰ In this crisis, the notion of the character's action is significant and embodies his or her flaws and need to make a crucial choice.

The second element is the protagonist's ideal, desire, or even weakness that emerges as a flawed action. His or her flaw pertains to the act that involves the combination of guilt and victimhood. While a protagonist's action may make him or her responsible in one sense, the uncontrollable forces make the protagonist a victim of contingency, coincidence, ideology, and external conditions—his or her fate. This combination indeed regards the link between intention, blindness, and insight.¹⁵¹ The protagonist intends to act for the sake of the good in life. But an intentional act may lead to a bad result by a mistake or an unforeseen reason that may be beyond his or her self-determination and will. The unintentional result then occurs due to the protagonist's action and its agency or his or her nonaction. Thus, the protagonist's responsibility indicates the determining agency and will of the acting subject while the limit of agency implies the mixture of fate and external aspects.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ For these elements, see Aristotle, *Poetics*, 11–14; 19–21; 24; 30–32.

¹⁵⁰ Lambropoulos, *Tragic Idea*, 10.

¹⁵¹ For intention and its link with guilt, see Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, *Myth and Tragedy*, 64.

¹⁵² The question of agency in the novels resembles Hegel's conception of the tragic, implying not doing "what is wrong, but rather what is right." See Robert R. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God: Studies in Hegel and Nietzsche* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 125.

At this point, the third element comes into play: an inevitable necessity attributed to fate, contingency, a great disaster, or an external factor beyond the character's agency.¹⁵³ The significant feature here is "a sense of what is unforeseeable but unavoidable."¹⁵⁴ When the necessity happens in the story, the crisis of the protagonist begins in the plot, and the conflict leads to the character's self-confrontation at the threshold of a choice. The protagonist's crisis is then the main motor of the plot. In other words, the plot construction dictates the moral and existential dimensions of the tragic in the story, as the novel depicts how the protagonist struggles to overcome an existential and ethical crisis and reacts to certain conditions, including the process of angst, defeat, despair, and suffering. Therefore, the narrative construction of the tragic in each novel is substantially designated by the protagonist's crisis, its mode of representation, and then the plot structure.

Within the process of crisis, the ways the flawed action and failure are comprehended by the protagonist involve alienation, sorrow, disillusionment, endurance, and suffering. This feature constitutes the fourth element. That is to say, "the moments of assertion and recognition"¹⁵⁵ gain importance as epiphanies in the plot. The crucial moment and its subsequent development determine the consequent events of the self-confrontation, suffering, and the protagonist's final decision or even unjust fall. The last element is the process of suffering of the protagonist. This process "show[s] progression toward value, rather than denial of it, and a relationship between the inner life of the sufferer and the world of values about him"¹⁵⁶ or her.

¹⁵³ For further discussion on the necessity associated with tragedy, see D. D. Raphael, *The Paradox of Tragedy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960), 25. See also Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, ed. and trans. Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 249–56.

¹⁵⁴ Bennett and Doyle, "Tragic," 123.

¹⁵⁵ M. S. Silk, "Tragic Language: The Greek Tragedians and Shakespeare," in *Tragedy and the Tragic Greek: Theatre and Beyond*, ed. M. S. Silk (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 488.

¹⁵⁶ Sewall, *Vision of Tragedy*, 47–48.

The process of the protagonist's crisis may culminate in self-knowledge or self-transformation if the character overcomes his or her inner crisis and the suffering it causes, depending on the circumstances. However, there is neither a guarantee for self-knowledge nor a happy ending despite the self-recognition, endurance, and gained knowledge of life. The crucial point of the tragic mode in these novels is that all can be in vain despite the "guiltless guilt"¹⁵⁷ and the prolonging agony of its elusiveness. Consequently, by regarding these five elements and the narrative features of the novels, my analysis focuses on the "formal elements," "situation," and "ethical direction" that construct the tragic modes and slightly discusses the "emotional effect"¹⁵⁸ (*catharsis*) in these novels.

The Tragic in the Selected Novels

These three novels present three different configurations of the tragic within the context of Turkish modernity. At this juncture, it is necessary to explain their key aspects and significance concerning the tragic in Turkish fiction. Although there is no apparent intertextuality between these novels, they have some commonalities and distinctive characteristics. Although written in different periods, all three novels address the 1930s. For instance, *A Mind at Peace* depicts the male protagonist's crisis and existential quest in 1930s Turkey in a modernist mode. Written right after World War Two and published in 1949, the novel reflects a melancholic mood, the angst of the pre-war period, and the socio-economic and cultural conditions in Turkey from the perspective of the 1940s. In other words, the existential crisis and intellectual confusion of its protagonist intersect the sociocultural change and ambiguity that the whole society encounters.

¹⁵⁷ Critchley, "Tragical Sublime," 176; 178.

¹⁵⁸ Oscar Mandel, *A Definition of Tragedy* (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 10–11.

Pleiades Storm was published in 1944, a couple of years before *A Mind at Peace*.

These two novels have certain similarities in their plots: a love story in Istanbul, the East–West dichotomy, the protagonists’ quest for cultural authenticity in Westernizing Turkey, the presence of music as a source of cultural conflict, and endurance. It is therefore valuable to explore how these two novels written in the same era configure the protagonists’ modernity experiences in tragic modes while depicting a similar love story in 1930s Istanbul. Moreover, *Pleiades Storm* narrates the crisis from a female character’s perspective in contrast to the male protagonist’s perspective in *A Mind at Peace*. Examining these novels in this respect provides valuable insights into the gender dimension of the modernity experience as a crisis and different representations of the tragic in the twentieth-century Turkish novel.

Like *Pleiades Storm*, *Lying Down to Die* recounts a story of the heroine’s inevitable existential crisis in Turkey, depicting her life from the 1930s to the 1960s. However, as the latter was published almost three decades later in 1973, these two novels tackle the crisis of female protagonists quite differently and thus construct the tragic in relation to Turkish modernity distinctly. The complex relationship between the modernity experience as a crisis, gender, agency, and a sense of failure is contextually, discursively, and formalistically represented in two specific ways. The difference in the gender perspective and the way the heroines’ existential crises is represented in the novels displays how the tragic associated with the modernity process and its representation has changed over decades and generations. This change delineates the temporality of these novels explained in the Introduction.

Indeed, *Lying Down to Die* intends to grasp the cultural and socio-historical panorama of the longer period from the 1930s to the late 1960s as the external conditions (including the matters of fate and coincidence) of the protagonist’s ontological crisis and flawed action. However, this novel contains different symbolic, critical, and ideological layers in the protagonist’s crisis by interpreting three decades of Turkey in retrospect. This retrospective

interpretation in fiction reflects yet another perspective on the link between Turkish modernity and the protagonist's crisis manifested in the Turkish novel. This difference in the perspective shows how a first generation-writer of modern Turkey, Ağaoğlu, evaluates Turkish modernity and configures the tragic hallmark of the protagonist's crisis, as compared to Erol and Tanpınar who are members of the previous generation that personally experienced the transition from the empire to the nation-state.

Due to the considerable time gap, different worldviews, and the novelistic poetics, these novels inevitably possess various approaches to the sociocultural paradigm of the 1930s and after, as well as Turkish modernity in the broadest sense. This part of my thesis then intends to shed light on the dynamic relationship between the protagonists' modernity experiences as crises and how the tragic is constructed in these novels by examining the various narrative ways and modes this interplay is represented. Chapter One examines *Pleiades Storm* in detail while Chapter Two focuses on *A Mind at Peace*. Investigating these novels consecutively demonstrates how the tragic takes different forms in the two novels, both published in the 1940s. Chapter Three gives a close reading of *Lying Down to Die* on the same plane, mostly comparing it with *Pleiades Storm*. Analyzing all these novels in this manner will reveal both the similarities and differences regarding the tragic mode in these novels. Hence, it shows us how this tragic mode and the narrative features that designate it have altered across time, especially when considering the changing perception and reinterpretation of Turkish modernity in fiction.

Chapter 1

Inevitability and Secular Reconciliation
with the Divine in *Pleiades Storm*

Chapter One

Inevitability and Secular Reconciliation with the Divine in *Pleiades Storm*

Safiye Erol is a neglected author of modern Turkish literature. Her collected works were published only in the early 2000s.¹⁵⁹ In this corpus, Erol's second novel, *Ülker Fırtınası* "Pleiades Storm," which was first serialized in 1938 and published as a book in 1944, was printed for the second time in 2001. This novel has remained untranslated so far.¹⁶⁰ However, since 2001, Erol's literary works and in particular this novel, have attracted modest attention from literary critics and readers. This attention arguably overlooks the novel's narrative features, storytelling mode, and particularly the radical discourse on modern Turkish women at the time, which undermines many recent opinions on the literature of the early Republican era. Even so, this late recognition of this fiction has increased due to state-sponsored initiatives that have promoted so-called "conservative" authors like Erol as part of Turkey's culture wars since the 2000s, though, it is hard to define Erol and her literary style as conservative.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ The 2000s is the decade that all of Erol's works were published by *Kubbealtı Neşriyatı*. Erol was a slightly well-known author in her lifetime, especially due to her novel *Ciğerdelen* (Štrúrovo) (1946), but she has never been a popular or prominent figure of the early Republic. Her novels *Kadıköyü'nün Romanı* (The Novel of Kadıköyü) (1938), *Ülker Fırtınası* (1944), and *Ciğerdelen* (1946) were published in 2001 after their first publications. Due to this more-than a-half-century gap and the inaccessibility of the novels, it was nearly impossible for the generations to recognize these novels in the second half of the twentieth century. Her last novel *Dineyri Papazı* (Dineyri Priest) serialized in the newspaper *Tercüman* in 1955 was for the first time published as a book in 2001. All her essays were compiled as *Makaleler* (Articles) in 2002, and her short stories under the name of *Leylak Mevsimi* (Lilac Season) were published as a book for the first time in 2010.

¹⁶⁰ I use the 2001 edition of this novel, and all translations from the novel in this chapter are mine.

¹⁶¹ A leading leftist-liberal scholar Murat Belge wrote two short articles in the daily newspaper *Radikal*, describing his "discovery" of Erol by chance. Belge evaluates Erol as an author at the scale of Halide Edib, a canonical female author whose works were published before and during the same period Erol lived. See Murat Belge, "Safiye Erol's Tanır Mısınız?," in *Sanat ve Edebiyat Yazıları* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 228–31. For a discussion of Erol in relation to the Turkish novel and canonization, see Murat Belge, "Türkiye'de Kanon,"

Pleiades Storm tells the story of a young woman's quest for self and meaning in 1930s Istanbul. The novel centers on the female protagonist Nuran's stormy love affair and its complex nature as her existential crisis. Within this crisis, the narrative raises questions about human existence and ethics, particularly the relationship between sexuality, national identity, and Republican femininity in a very precise and unusual sense. A common view in Turkish literary scholarship relies on the argument that many novels published until the late 1940s represent urban Turkish women in two modes: they either include a moralistic overtone conveying a sort of didacticism and the values of Republican modernity, or they contain a plotline of an exemplary fall by which the female character is punished because of her flawed action. *Pleiades Storm*, however, overturns not only this common view but also the depiction of Republican Turkish women in Turkish literature only as role models whose sexuality and femininity are suppressed or even ignored.¹⁶²

Erol's novel breaks down the preconceptions about the representation of modern Turkish femininity in literature while narrating Nuran's existential crisis and its moral aspects. Moreover, *Pleiades Storm* conveys a spiritualist discourse, or at least, an explicit Sufi kind of mysticism, and several references to Christian mythology. The combination of the mystical features of Islam and the motifs of Christianity with apparent sexual desire and vehement love in Nuran's story indeed contradicts the Republican worldview in Turkey and

in *Sanat ve Edebiyat*, 81–93. A prominent Turkish novelist Selim İleri also paid attention to Erol and her works, introducing them to the reader in some newspapers, in his book, and at public seminars. See Selim İleri, "Bir Roman Kapağı," *Cumhuriyet* (6 February 2001); "Defterimde Safiye Erol," *Zaman* (27 February 2010); "Sukut Suikastına Uğrayan Bir Yazar Safiye Erol," *Türk Edebiyatı* 495 (January 2015): 66–68; and *Edebiyatımızda Sevdiğim Romanlar Kılavuzu*, (Istanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2015), 277–279; 318–20.

¹⁶² In her study on obscene literature in Turkish, D. Fatma Türe highlights the desexualization of women and several representations in this sense. See D. Fatma Türe, *Facts and Fantasies: Images of Istanbul Women in the 1920s* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2015), 125. See also Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case," *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 324 and White, "State Feminism," 153.

its positivist, secularist, and masculinist discourses. All these features employed in the novel are quite unusual in the Turkish literary field of the 1930s and later, which makes this fiction spellbinding even today.

The novel's narrative structure and plot construction are other significant features. *Pleiades Storm* consists of two narrative frames. The interval between them is presumably a couple of years, though it is not explicitly stated in the novel. The first frame is the main story that tells Nuran's life and love affair in the third person, and it is written by an author whose identity remains unintroduced in the novel. The second frame is Nuran's commentaries before and after she reads her own story written by this unnamed author. At the outset of the fiction, Nuran explains that an author wants to write her life story and marks her skepticism about it, which problematizes the representability of her experiences and feelings as the right representation. At the end of the novel, she expresses her dissatisfaction with the result after she had read the story. This feature signifies a meta-reflection in the novel.

The main narrative recounts the story of a young, well-educated Nuran who moves back to Istanbul after seven years of living in Vienna, where she studied Classical music. In this story told by the unnamed author in the third person, the narrated time is three years: it begins with Nuran's arrival to Istanbul in 1933 and includes her fiercest love affair and her struggle to find meaning in life, culminating in 1936 when she comes to terms with the values of Republican modernity and attains her inner harmony. While there is a side story told in parallel, the main story line focuses on Nuran's affair with Sermet and her existential crisis that generates the tragic vision in the novel.¹⁶³ Before her crisis, Nuran pursues her self-realization and something transcendental in her way of being, but she does not know what it is yet. The depiction of Nuran's existential crisis in the novel lies in some binary oppositions,

¹⁶³ This side story depicts another character, Numan, whose passionate yet desperate love for Eglantine (a married German woman living in Istanbul) drives him to suicide.

such as East–West, Ottoman Classical music–Western Classical music, modernity–tradition, Western–oriented Turkish woman–Eastern Turkish man, pure love–sex, and fate–agency.

These oppositions constitute the primary themes of the story and the texture of the narrative.

Nuran is eager to contribute to the Western-oriented musical reforms in 1930s Turkey after her return to Istanbul. Due to her classical music education in Vienna, she reflects on her preconceptions about the old Ottoman Classical music and its culture, but in the meantime, she falls in love with Sermet, a well-known oud player who is a representative of this old Ottoman-style music. They spend the summer of 1933 with passionate love and joy; however, Nuran finds out that Sermet is married to another woman and has four children from this marriage. The plot lies heavily on Nuran’s way of dealing with this truth and her perceived betrayal by Sermet. The ebb and flow of their love affair trigger Nuran’s crisis, and this crisis leads to her quest for deeper meaning in her life.

This chapter examines how Nuran’s existential crisis is represented in 1930s Istanbul, focusing on the entanglement of her modernity experience and the tragic vision in the novel. The first section explores the ways in which Nuran’s story is narrated as an inevitable – tragic– crisis condition of life by using the myth of Judas’s betrayal of Jesus derived from Christianity. The second section examines the role of music in depicting Nuran’s modernity experience through the conflict between cultures and these lovers. The third section analyzes how Nuran’s obsessive love intensifies her inner conflict and her yearning for something transcendental in her life, by exploring the link between her crisis and her way of experiencing Turkish modernity. The fourth section investigates how Nuran copes with her existential struggle and the process of her suffering that results in her spiritual integration with Turkey’s cultural modernization. The narration of Nuran’s crisis configures the tragic as both a sense of life and the inevitable in the novel, associating it with some implications of Republican modernity.

The Biblical Construction of the Evil and Betrayal

Two primary features constitute the tragic vision in the novel. First, at the very beginning of the frame story, Nuran explains that she saw Judas, referring to Sermet, her lover.¹⁶⁴ In this way, Nuran utilizes the story of Judas and his betrayal of Jesus as a metaphorical equivalence to her uneven relationship with Sermet and his betrayals in order to emphasize the inevitable betrayal and suffering in her life, which involves fateful incidents that transcend her agency. As the narrator of the frame narrative, Nuran uses the myth of Judas to depict her existential struggle and great suffering at that time. The use of Judas's betrayal of Jesus is a salient leitmotif of the novel that hinges on the story of Nuran's modernity experience in 1930s Istanbul, including her deception, suffering, and path to her spiritual salvation. As Sermet is described as Judas many times, Nuran denotes a manifestation of Jesus in terms of their relationship and in the matter of loyalty. This biblical myth is repeatedly used throughout the fiction not only as a constitutive motif of the story but also as a way of constructing the tragic vision and its elements.

In the frame story, Nuran describes Sermet as a brown-skinned pretty man with black eyes and long curly hair like Judas. In the gospels of the New Testament, Judas betrays Jesus for some money, even though Jesus had told Judas beforehand that he would do it.¹⁶⁵ However, Nuran's interpretation of Judas's betrayal in the novel is quite different. She claims that Judas had been loyal until the moment Jesus told him that he would betray him before

¹⁶⁴ See Safiye Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası* (Istanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, 2001), 17.

¹⁶⁵ For the emergence and development of Judas's image in the New Testament, see Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 22–25; 79. For the interpretations of Judas's story and the relationship between Christian tragedy and Jesus, see Ulrich Simon, *Pity and Terror: Christianity and Tragedy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 42–50 and Ben Quash, "Four Biblical Characters: In Search of a Tragedy," in *Christian Theology and Tragedy: Theologians, Tragic Literature and Tragic Theory*, ed. Kevin Taylor and Gilles Waller (London: Routledge, 2011), 25–27; 31–33.

sunrise. This intimation affects Judas, and after a short while, Judas goes to the town like he is given “a hidden order”¹⁶⁶ and betrays Jesus.

In this line of interpretation in the novel, two aspects need explanation: Judas’s agency as Sermet’s responsibility for Nuran’s suffering and his betrayal as the inevitable necessity in the story. These two aspects bear upon the tension between predestination and the free will of Nuran in the secular context of Turkey. This tension, indeed, adds to the tragic vision that the novel offers. *Pleiades Storm* then raises a question about the complex relation between fate, contingency, free will, and agency from the very beginning, relying on a mythic narrative of Christianity. The novel uses Christian imagery to describe this complex relation, the notion of inevitability, and suffering in Nuran’s story.

By involving these essential components of the tragic, Nuran compares her life with Judas’s story of betrayal and recounts the time she was a guest at the house of Sermet and his wife, Müzeyyen. In the development of the main story, Sermet convinces Nuran that he does not love his wife at all. However, later by chance, Nuran witnesses Sermet and his wife having intercourse. Due to this, Nuran feels not only betrayed but also anxious, disillusioned, sorrowful, and agonized. In the frame story, she describes her situation in the guest room as the way Jesus was betrayed and later crucified: “I was like I am crucified on the mattress I am lying on.”¹⁶⁷ While the powerful imagery of crucifixion reinforces the feature of suffering, endurance, and guiltless redemption, Nuran’s prior expression of what happened at the outset demystifies the main story and plot told by the fictional author.

The key point here is Nuran’s encounter with the emotional and spiritual suffering that springs from human relations and the nature of life itself. The novel narrates the source and purpose of her suffering by using Nuran’s own words: “I did not know that part of humanity

¹⁶⁶ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 18.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

is the son of gloom, and that the essence of its life always faced towards the darkness, which erupts suffering, while attracting affliction like a magnet. Encountering this aspect of nature blows my cool.”¹⁶⁸ The last sentence is crucial as it proves that Nuran’s crisis is not just derived from Sermet’s inexcusable betrayal. What is significant is that her existence itself generates a sense of failure and suffering, according to Nuran, and she feels that she is merely obliged to endure both what comes after and her suffering, as an inevitable condition.

This condition is the second aspect of the tragic vision in the novel, for it simply refers to the tragic sense of life while Nuran’s quest for meaning and self-realization is narrated in relation to her modernity experience in Turkey. At the outset, the novel portrays Nuran as a willing, energetic, Western-oriented young woman whose primary life goal is still indefinite. The state of being and suffering is configured in a localized context of Nuran’s crisis that represents what it is like to be a young urban modern woman in 1930s Istanbul and involves her struggle for inner harmony. This configuration also includes the question of how she should live in post-imperial Istanbul associated with the ongoing secular nationalist modernization project at that time. The ontological pursuit in Nuran’s story is unavoidably related to the politics and ethics of Republican modernity as she seeks the right way of living and values that correspond to her idealism. Certain moral and behavioral values then need an epistemological positioning: that is, Nuran’s Western-oriented education and understanding of life determines her secular worldview and its ethics in the novel.

In considering Nuran’s retrospective self-reflection in the frame story, the reader recognizes that Nuran’s vision of life has changed due to some events in the last few years, particularly her love affair. Two conflicts construct the tragic in the fiction: one between Nuran’s idealism and reality and another one due to the story of her return to Istanbul where the imperial culture is being replaced with European culture. While the former is the contrast

¹⁶⁸ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 20.

between her yearning for serene happiness and the harsh actuality of daily life, the latter implies the conflict of values, cultures, and worldviews Nuran has faced. This double conflict leads to her existential crisis and suffering, constructing a strong link between her idealism, her sense of failure, and the idea of inevitability. Nuran's growing crisis after the first betrayal of Sermet and her way of dealing with it are closely associated with the circumstances of modernizing Turkey in the novel.

Music as the Theatre of Conflicting Cultures and Mindsets

At this phase, a significant question arises: How does a seemingly melodramatic love affair represent the protagonist's tragic conflict (i.e., her inner crisis and conflict of values) with the modernity process in Turkey? Nuran's crisis and suffering due to her sad love affair are indeed related to the modernity process in Turkey because, after her return from Vienna, she struggles to find a harmonious way of being between the worldviews of East and West. She cannot easily combine the two cultures and their values to constitute a Western-oriented Turkish national ethos. This struggle turns into her inner conflict, and a prominent theme of this conflict in the fiction lies in music as a cultural manifestation of the East–West dilemma.

When Nuran returns to Istanbul after her classical music education in Vienna, she wants to study Byzantine music and trace its impact on Ottoman Classical music, called *alaturka* in Turkish, which signifies the Turkish style (as opposed to *alafiranga*, which denotes simply European classical music).¹⁶⁹ However, despite her open-mindedness, Nuran has sharp prejudices about *alaturka* music and even its instruments, such as the oud. In May 1933, Nuran attends a party in a mansion together with many elite members of the community in Istanbul and tells some guests that she does not even like the instrument's shape.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ For a remarkable analysis of this music style and cultural change in Turkey, see John Morgan O'Connell, *Alaturka: Style in Turkish Music (1923–1938)* (London: Routledge, 2016), 1–50.

¹⁷⁰ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 31.

It is also at the party, that for the first time in many years, Nuran listens to classical Ottoman music live. Although she complains about its monotonous sound, she is strangely entranced by this music. The first time Nuran lays on, Sermet, a renowned oud player, he is giving this impressive performance, and the beauty of this music generates a strong feeling that Nuran cannot clearly define, a sense of melancholy and sorrow internalized. She recognizes that: “I am not an entirely spiritually Westerner. After all, I carry this music in my blood. Atavism!”¹⁷¹ This moment is Nuran’s first epiphany in the novel, and her recognition indicates a significant feature of her fate with cultural atavism and its coincidental nature. The *alaturka* music at the party then stimulates undefinable emotions and a spiritual dimension for Nuran.

Following this scene, the narrative adds another layer to Nuran’s quest for meaning in life through her love affair with Sermet. Nuran, as an expert of European classical music who mildly denigrates *alaturka* music, encounters Sermet, an Istanbulite, bohemian oud player. In the early morning after the party, Nuran meets Sermet in the garden; they are attracted to each other and their love grows quickly. This encounter turns into a counterpoint of two different mindsets (one of a Westernized Turkish woman, the other of a traditional Turkish man) and of the two musical understandings, shared and performed by these two artistic personalities. They spend the summer days of 1933 together, and Nuran is astonished by this pure love and the happiness it brings her. In the main story told by the unnamed narrator, she thinks about what happened to her and voices her amazement: “What have I become? How come the felicity for which I had always longed has embraced me suddenly?”¹⁷² Nuran’s spontaneous expression shows her long-standing yearning, a sense of longing for inner happiness. This

¹⁷¹ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 33.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 45.

yearning and her quest for meaning reflect her “inner restlessness”¹⁷³ as in the logic of the *Bildungsroman*.

As a young, beautiful, dynamic, and well-educated woman, Nuran seeks self-fulfillment and happiness in the setting of 1930s Istanbul. Her love affair with Sermet makes Nuran think that she comes to the point of pure happiness. However, the romantic summer days turn into suffering and self-questioning after Nuran finds out that Sermet is married to Müzeyyen. After confronting Sermet outside his house, she is left shocked, filled with disillusionment, grief, and suffering. Sermet’s betrayal becomes a crucial moment in Nuran’s life as it is the first reversal that prompts her to change her way of seeing the world. Her confrontation with Sermet reveals the moment that the magical sense of pure love has been lost for her. This revelation marks the beginning of an existential crisis because Nuran’s longing for inner happiness has been destroyed by the cruel reality.

After this confrontation, Nuran realizes that she has transferred her artistic idealism and her quest for spiritual depth into this love affair. For her, to love becomes the way of reaching transcendence and pleasure in the material world. However, due to Sermet’s betrayal, Nuran’s experience of love has lost its innocence, purity, and beauty. This devastating disillusionment makes Nuran remember her idealism and her goal; she will conduct musical research to contribute to the cultural reforms in 1930s Turkey.¹⁷⁴ Nuran recognizes how fast this passionate love made her completely blind and misdirected from her idealism, particularly her musical studies. At this juncture, the unnamed author comments on Nuran’s situation by giving hints about the progression of the plot: “She couldn’t stay at the

¹⁷³ Franco Moretti, *A Way of the World: the Bildungsroman in the European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987), 5. Moretti underlines the importance of restlessness in analyzing the European *Bildungsroman* tradition.

¹⁷⁴ For the musical reforms in 1930s Turkey, see Orhan Tekelioğlu, “Modernizing Reforms and Turkish Music in the 1930s,” *Turkish Studies* 2, no. 1 (2001): 93–108, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2001.11009175>.

point she felt down.”¹⁷⁵ This hint also reveals Nuran’s will and act to go through what will come in her life, rather than wallowing in pity and despair.

However, after a short while, Nuran forgives Sermet because of his insistence and promise to divorce. In the meantime, she spends a week with a fever that generates bad dreams, complicated feelings, and gloomy thoughts. Her physical sickness affects her mentality at this stage. When Sermet visits Nuran, she, once again, realizes a huge difference between them—their personalities and the two musical traditions to which they belong—despite her overwhelming love for him. In Nuran’s view, they have different visions of life and distinct understandings of the world.¹⁷⁶ She has also lost the spiritual dimension of her love due to Sermet’s betrayal and lies. The unnamed narrator, here, switches the perspective unexpectedly and focalizes Sermet’s viewpoint in the main story. As a married man with four children, Sermet needs to provide a good life and stable economic conditions for his family. Moreover, his bohemian personality has grown tired with the serious and faithful relationship with Nuran, and he misses his previously cheerful, free lifestyle. One day, Sermet sees a carriage carrying the belongings of his wife and children as they all are moving from his home due to the marital separation. The white wooden rocking horse Sermet sees reminds him of the old days with his children, and he suddenly decides not to divorce his wife.¹⁷⁷

This sheer coincidence changes Nuran’s life, as Sermet does not fulfill his promise, thus betraying her, in a sense, once again. Nuran has been indefinably desolate, mournful, and vulnerable after this second betrayal. Her grief and suffering lead to the deterioration of her physical health. Indeed, Nuran comprehends her environment and such events in her life through European Classical music. When she feels nostalgic, an aria from Giacomo Puccini’s opera, *Tosca*, comes to mind. Similarly, in a moment of grief, the melody of Johannes

¹⁷⁵ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 53.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

Brahms' *Intermezzo in A Major* plays in her head.¹⁷⁸ Towards the end of the novel, Nuran gives Sermet a final chance to be with her, stipulating that he must divorce his wife and shift his musical style from *alaturka* music to *alafranga* music. Sermet rejects both conditions and this rejection disappoints her once again. At this point, the concepts and styles of *alafranga* and *alaturka* music in the novel do not form a synthesis even in a symbolic sense. This incompatibility is then manifested as explicit disharmony between Nuran and Sermet not only as lovers but also as two musicians from two different cultures.

“Hasret” as the Mystical Yearning vs. Physical Love

However, Nuran's crisis does not solely derive from her affair with Sermet. Her failed love triggers her existential crisis, and this crisis turns into her self-questioning that bears on her quest for meaning and transcendental sense in the world. Several aspects and events in Nuran's life determine her sense of yearning for harmonic and spiritually profound happiness, *saâdet* in Turkish. For instance, Nuran's mother dies when she is a child, and her father begins to live in seclusion after losing his wife. She grows up at her aunt's house together with her two cousins in Istanbul and later lives alone in Vienna for seven years. Nuran's loneliness and lack of family have unequivocally affected her emotions and shaped her personality. There is indeed a certain sense of uprootedness and yearning for something unknown that fulfills this sense in her story.

Nuran's situation therefore pertains to the sense of *hasret* as used in the novel. *Hasret* means “longing” in English, referring to an aspiration for something that either is lost or remains separate.¹⁷⁹ In the novel, it implies a longing for something transcendental in a particular way. Nuran's sense of yearning is repeated throughout the fiction, but neither

¹⁷⁸ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 46–47; 82.

¹⁷⁹ For the meanings of this word, see Ayverdi, *Kubbealtı*, 1215.

Nuran in the frame narrative nor the narrator in the main story clarifies this strong feeling. The reader cannot fully comprehend if her *hasret* is for an object, an ideal, an epiphany, or if it reflects the sense itself. The word is used in varying contexts, such as “happiness that she longs for”, “those feelings are happiness for which one can yearn until death” and “this crazy longing.”¹⁸⁰ However, this strong desire manifests due to the combination of her loneliness, orphanhood, homesickness, and atavistic impulses. Therefore, it seems to be future-oriented, referring to her quest for self-fulfillment both because of and despite these conditions.

Nuran’s affair with Sermet and its sorrowful process trigger her longing for deeper meaning in her life and something more sublime than her pure love, particularly after Sermet’s betrayals. The sorrow, pain, and defeat of these betrayals lead Nuran to meditate on the sources of unjust human affliction and its nature in life. Apart from her grief and sadness, Nuran feels that she has lost something, yet she cannot name this loss; she is also culturally torn after her return to Istanbul. Nuran’s sense of incompleteness gradually grows, and this inner crisis reveals her demand and quest for something that can fill this voided loss.

By recognizing her sense of incompleteness, Nuran goes through a process of self-questioning and suffering. She cuts almost all her ties from daily life and even music, living like a stoic in seclusion. Her reclusiveness resembles her father’s way of living as he resides on the outskirts of Istanbul. At this point, the unknown narrator focalizes Nuran’s cousin Selçuk in the main story. Selçuk thinks that Nuran’s sorrow and suffering do not arise from only her failed affair with Sermet; there is indeed an explicit atavism in her melancholic grief and wistfulness.¹⁸¹ This kind of atavism Selçuk mentions that indicates “the Eastern side of Nuran”¹⁸² is inherent by referring to the cultural heredity insomuch as depicted in the novel. Despite her Western-oriented lifestyle and education and years of living in Vienna, Nuran

¹⁸⁰ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 45; 74; 83; 177.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 90.

also thinks that she carries her father's blood and the pre-Republican Turkish culture within her soul. It is significant to remember that during the party scene Nuran felt strange and realized her spiritual inclination to Turkish culture after Sermet's *alaturka* music performance.

Since Nuran's return to her homeland, Istanbul, she has encountered the tension not only between European and Turkish values but also between the old Ottoman imperial culture and the newly emergent Western-oriented values of modernizing Turkey. Therefore, this multi-layered tension and its cultural implications primarily determine Nuran's modernity experiences as a young composer and piano player who seeks a spiritual place and adopts secular ethics in Turkey. In this sense, Nuran's existential crisis is depicted as an inevitable outcome of her modernity experience, combining this experience with her failed love affair, disillusionment, confusion, *hasret*, quest for meaning, and cultural hereditary.

This complex relationality in the novel highlights the confluence of predestination and free will and thus poses a question about the link between the notion of action, Nuran's agency, her existential struggle, the matter of coincidence, and particularly ill fortune. Nuran meditates on her existence while struggling for inner harmony. Her conflict of cultural values and the pain of love amalgamate in Nuran's life. This amalgamation indeed constructs the tragic vision in the novel, for both crisis states of Nuran are depicted as inevitable and even necessary phases in her life. There exists a complicated interplay between Nuran's sense of incompleteness, that of failure due to her affair with Sermet, and her yearning as an aspiration for something supreme beyond her love. This link points to causation and its relation to the tragic vision constructed in the novel. *Kara baht* in Turkish comes into play here as it was often used in the novel. *Kara baht*, literally meaning "black fortune" and denotes bad luck or ill fortune that goes beyond one's agency in life, prevails over Nuran's self-determining

agency. She then goes through a process of suffering and endurance by accepting its unavoidability while searching for meaning and in the earthly world.

After a while, Nuran invites Sermet to her mansion. This meeting reveals another link with the idea of fate in the novel. Nuran expresses that she knew, from the beginning, that Sermet would leave her. Nuran's expression may seem to reflect her retrospective view told in the main story by the external narrator¹⁸³—the unnamed, fictional author of her life story. However, at this phase, the narrative ties an additional aspect to the knot of her existential crisis, for Nuran explains that an unknown but fated necessity predetermined Sermet's actions, which may be phrased as either fate, *kara baht*, or the elusiveness of life. She says that: "Life, fortune, whatever you call, a stubborn necessity decided it in this way, and I knew this."¹⁸⁴ The idea of necessity as divine fate, that of inevitability, and Nuran's limited agency are strongly underlined in her story again.

Accordingly, the novel highlights the inevitability of Sermet's actions through Nuran's voice in the main story. As Nishi asserts, "every cultural tradition has its own conception of human fate."¹⁸⁵ Nuran accepts these actions—Sermet's lies and betrayals from her perspective—as the mixture of her fate and the consequences of her choices. There is indeed an apparent determinism in Nuran's view, and she clarifies that the reason for her deterministic thoughts arises from her prophetic dreaming, a metaphysical ability she speculates she inherited from her father's side. These dreams give hints about the future of her life, and therefore, her fate, ill fortune, and particularly Sermet's betrayals. In the same section, Nuran describes that she had three dreams. In her first dream, which occurred before

¹⁸³ External narrator "never refers to itself as a character" in text, telling a story in the third-person. See Bal, *Narratology*, 21–22. For the sake of consistency, I use this term during my analysis of the novels.

¹⁸⁴ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 100.

¹⁸⁵ Nishi, *Fate*, 4. Nishi discusses fate concerning the tragic and gives examples of "the Chinese idea of Ming" and the Indian worldview of Karma.

returning to Istanbul, Nuran dreamt of a dark-haired man, which she understands (retrospectively) to be foretelling of her meeting Sermet. In her second dream, which was right after she met Sermet at the party in the mansion, a man waits for her on the stairs, but this man stands inside another house, along with his wife and children. This dream encapsulates the current situation in the novel. In her third dream that she had a short while ago, Sermet's wife was to become pregnant.

When Nuran describes this last dream, Sermet opposes its eventuality, saying that he does not even have sexual intercourse with his wife. Nuran, however, emphasizes that it would happen anyway.¹⁸⁶ Later, when Nuran visits Sermet's wife Müzeyyen, she confesses to Nuran that she had been pregnant but aborted the baby. Nuran's last oracle is then confirmed as the plot progresses; Nuran's first two dreams are mentioned in the middle of the novel and explain what already happened in the story, and these dreams as prophecies serve to legitimate the third one.¹⁸⁷ After her third oracle occurred in the story, Nuran faces yet another betrayal of Sermet. Nuran's dream oracles thus designate the narrative logic and the plot construction in the fiction as they predetermine what happens in the story and why it will happen in the progress of the plot.

These "reporting dreams"¹⁸⁸ derived from an unknown mystical source, a kind of extraordinary that gives a clear hint about the events in the development of the story. Nuran's prophecies also forge the idea of inevitability in the story. What is going to happen in the plot

¹⁸⁶ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 158.

¹⁸⁷ Nuran's dreams function as oracles and resemble those in Greek tragedies, especially in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. In his analysis of *Oedipus Rex*, Szondi points out that "the first two oracles prove themselves to be the prefiguration of the decisive third oracle, which Sophocles places in the middle of his tragedy." Szondi, *An Essay on the Tragic*, 63. This pattern observed by Szondi is the same in the plot structure of *Pleiades Storm*.

¹⁸⁸ Zübeyde Şenderin, *Safiye Erol'un Romanlarında Manevi Olgunlaşma Yolunda Aşk ve Sembolik Dil* (Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2015), 239.

is mentioned and thus known by Nuran, Sermet, and the reader.¹⁸⁹ In other words, what happens in the middle of the story is foreseeable but still unavoidable until the action or event happens. This paradox conveys the idea of “causal determinism” as in the Stoic philosophy that reveals “a corollary of [Stoics’] commitments to the unity and cohesion of the cosmos and to an all-encompassing divine reason controlling that cosmos.”¹⁹⁰ Divine fate, ill fortune, Nuran’s agency, and free will all are inseparable from each other in the novel’s discourse.

In her self-questioning process, Nuran recognizes that her love affair makes her purely blind. The external narrator comments on Nuran’s attitude, explaining that “she was young and an artist. She wanted life to be splendid just like a work of art.”¹⁹¹ This self-realization is crucial because she recognizes that love is not the way of transcending her sense of incompleteness. She expresses that she has put all her life and its meaning on Sermet’s presence: “I handed over myself to such degree. I esteemed that you are ‘the self’ superior to myself.”¹⁹² Nuran’s expression here is a self-confession that voices her self-awareness and the moment of revelation. With this confession, Nuran’s blindness then turns into a “sudden realization, being a transition from ignorance towards full awareness,” and this transition indicates “the discovery of [her] identity, or a discovery of an important piece of information about a crucial circumstance”¹⁹³ in this particular state of her crisis.

The narrator comments on Nuran’s disillusionment and the reason for her sadness, explaining that she wants to relish any aspects of the material world while searching for a

¹⁸⁹ Dreams play an important role in Greek tragedies and other tragic dramas. In his study on German mourning plays, Walter Benjamin defines “prophetic dreams” as “an obligatory ingredient of the drama.” See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osbourne (London: Verso, 1998), 134.

¹⁹⁰ Michael J. White, “Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology),” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, ed. Brad Inwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 139.

¹⁹¹ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 177.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁹³ Jan Maarten Bremer, *Hamartia: Tragic Error in the Poetics of Aristotle and in Greek Tragedy* (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1969), 8.

spiritual depth in her existence. Her intention is depicted by the narrator as Nuran's error because she dares to have everything in life and push the limits of her fate: "Nuran embarked upon a contradiction that not even the Sun could dare: She challenged fate and she encroached upon her destiny."¹⁹⁴ In other words, Nuran is responsible for her actions and general attitude. Nuran's gradual self-realization then leads her to think about her emotional and spiritual defeat. Her defeat indeed shows the limit of her agency and her incognizance about it despite the divination of her oracular dreams. In this regard, Nuran fails due to her own actions and ignorance of what will happen.

However, there is also an elusive necessity that goes beyond Nuran's agency and will. It is then necessary to make "a crucial distinction between tragic guilt and moral guilt"¹⁹⁵ as Nuran's defeat arises from her tragic guilt that pushes the border of where her fate begins and where her agency ends. On the other hand, although Nuran's failure does not stem from moral guilt, a moral question implicitly occurs in her crisis. For instance, on her way to visit Sermet one day, Nuran encounters his oldest child, and their conversation makes Nuran realize her adulterous relationship with a married man. Indeed, her affair is not judged by her close circle, but this awareness adds a moral layer to Nuran's crisis. Her self-inquiry therefore intensifies while she attempts to reconcile her suffering with the ethics of the community. Yet the significant matter here, as the novel depicts, is not the Turkish societal ethics of "dignity" as defined by matrimony, family honor, and purity of women. Nuran's explicit sexuality and unorthodox affair with Sermet contravenes the prevalent idea of the modern Turkish Republican woman as a desexualized figure.

The novel therefore offers an unusual way of representing urban Turkish femininity concerning the Republican ideology and its gender discourse, particularly when considering

¹⁹⁴ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 178.

¹⁹⁵ Walter Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 244. For the same view, see Keith M. May, *Nietzsche and the Spirit of Tragedy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 105.

that the 1930s—in which the novel was first serialized—was the heyday of the sociocultural reforms and Turkey’s secular modernization. In this representation, the fiction does not rewrite the limited emancipation of modern Turkish women and its ethical values constructed by the masculinist mindset of this modernization project. Nuran’s femininity is explicitly sexualized through her acts, desires, and even eroticism depicted in the novel. However, her crisis and sense of failure do not refer to her sexual affair with Sermet as moral guilt that culminates in an ethical crisis.¹⁹⁶ Rather than due to a sad love affair and lasciviousness, Nuran’s downfall lies in the lack of self-knowledge and the ignorance of her dreams, and her deviation from her idealism—the primary aim of serving Turkey’s Western-oriented cultural modernization.

Suffering as Becoming

The way to gain self-knowledge for Nuran, as the novel depicts, is to suffer. The multiple scenes of Nuran’s suffering derived from Sermet’s lies and betrayals form the structure of her suffering and additionally stem from her actions, fallacies, forgiveness, and grieved choices. Suffering indicates an essential condition in Nuran’s modernity experience that reveals her struggle to transcend her sense of incompleteness and *hasret* to make sense of her being in the world, particularly in 1930s Istanbul. Her sense of incompleteness arises from not only her oscillation between the Eastern and Western values she has encountered in Istanbul but also the complexity of human existence.

Nuran’s crisis triggered by Sermet’s betrayals, then, evolves into the process of her self-questioning and immense suffering that reinforces her quest for something deeply

¹⁹⁶ Belge, “Safiye Erol,” 231. For a feminist reading of this novel based on Simone de Beauvoir’s views, see Pınar Dönmez, “Safiye Erol’un Romanlarındaki Kadınların Simone de Beauvoir’ın Feminist Teorisine Göre İncelenmesi” (MA thesis, Istanbul University, 2019), 97–118.

spiritual to deal with her sense of incompleteness.¹⁹⁷ The acceptance of this somber and painful process infers Nuran's will to be true to herself and her search for meaning and ethics in this manner. During her self-reflecting in seclusion, the plot contains several scenes that exemplify this process. Among these scenes, a crucial one is Nuran's visit to Sermet and his wife despite the affair. At the outset of the frame narrative, Nuran already highlights this event and its significance. This event is also told in the main story by the external narrator but in more detail.

After having dinner together, Sermet plays a melancholic *alaturka* song with his oud. Due to this doleful song, Nuran feels an intensive, suffering sorrow and has strong, sudden spiritual insights into the world. She loses her consciousness and falls to the ground. This sudden fall indicates a physical manifestation of her inner crisis and the degree of suffering. This scene also embodies the strong role of music in the texture of the narrative, compounding the earlier scene when, for the first time, Nuran heard *alaturka* music, which evoked a strange feeling and reminded her of her cultural and spiritual roots as an epiphany.

In this more recent scene where music triggers such a degree of anguish, the narrator describes Nuran as a wounded bird in pain whose wings are broken while she crawls in a desert: "She did not recognize in such a clear way until now, to what extent she had been pursuing ultimate happiness and how she had found such dark pain in this pursuit."¹⁹⁸ The fallen bird in the desert is powerful imagery that points to Nuran's tenacious attitude and its asceticism despite her intensive existential struggle, endurance, despair, and resignation. On the other hand, this implicit reference to the phoenix evokes Nuran's regeneration in a symbolic sense as the phoenix rises from its ashes. The imagery of the fallen phoenix refers to Nuran's loneliness, suffering, and sense of incompleteness while she seeks meaning in

¹⁹⁷ For a view claiming that there are seven phases in this process, see Sema Uğurcan, "Safiye Erol'un Romanları," *Kubbealtı Akademi Mecmuası* 30, no. 3 (2001): 36.

¹⁹⁸ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 113.

modernizing Turkey where the emulated Western culture encounters the Ottoman-Turkish culture and its imperial legacy.

The fallen phoenix metaphor is used to accentuate the idea of rebirth, which slightly evokes Jesus Christ's resurrection after the crucifixion and Judas's betrayal as the biblical references often take part in the novel. This evocation turns into real action in the following scene. While Nuran rests in the guest room after her faint, she hears a strange voice and looks into the other room through a hole on the wall and accidentally witnesses Sermet having sex with Müzeyyen. This unintended voyeurism becomes the last blow for her as Sermet had promised that he lived in this house for his family but only loves Nuran. Right after the faint, which already reveals the degree of both her physical and emotional suffering, this exposure destroys Nuran's reliance on not only Sermet but human nature itself, as narrated in the main story. The narrator describes Nuran lying on the bed like the crucified Christ, which aligns with the idea of being reborn after endurance, suffering, and also self-sacrifice.

Nuran leaves the house silently after this vulnerable moment and wanders outside until morning. She describes Sermet as "unconscious Judas."¹⁹⁹ According to her, Sermet is not intentionally or purely evil because he simply acts as he is and will be. What makes Sermet Judas from Nuran's perspective is then her own deep love for him, despite all her prophetic dreams that signaled his betrayals. "Making sense of the bad, even horrible things in life" becomes the central tenet of the tragic vision in Nuran's story, "and resolving how to feel, to think, and to act in the clear knowledge of good and evil"²⁰⁰ shapes the existential, metaphysical, and narrative of this vision depicted in the fiction.

Nuran accepts what has come so far and will come after. She reconciles her fate and ill fortune with her limited agency in a somber way after all her attempts to blindly resist her

¹⁹⁹ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 118.

²⁰⁰ George W. Harris, *Reason's Grief: An Essay on Tragedy and Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 19.

destiny. However, when she plays a piece by Bach on her piano, Sermet comes to her mind for a second, and what she calls “a motif of Judas”²⁰¹ occurs as a muse at that moment. While this muse shows the impact and role of music in the texture of the novel, this powerful recall indicates that Nuran still cannot make an explicit choice between her passionate but sad love and her will to reach something beyond this love. In other words, Nuran has been oscillating between her love and her idealism; her sexual desire and her yearning for spiritual depth; her Westernized mindset and her Eastern atavistic feeling; and her predestination and her agency. The varied aspects of this oscillation thus deepen her existential angst, suffering, and downfall, prolonging her crisis.

In the most vulnerable state of her life, Nuran feels the need for her father’s presence and guidance. She therefore visits him and stays at his home for three weeks. During this stay, Nuran’s wounded pride and sense of defeat gradually heals in the peaceful environment outside Istanbul and through her conversations with her wise Sufi father, who lives without any earthly concerns. Going to her father and experiencing such a reclusive way of Sufi lifestyle have affected Nuran and influence her way of seeing the world. Her stay with her father also indicates her return to her roots, or at least to a spiritual need and serenity by which a simple, Sufi way of living meets. In her long walks there, Nuran observes nature and the patterns of its change, thus comprehending the unity and cohesion of the world. Indeed, Nuran has experienced various, deep and extreme feelings, all within a single year. By healing her soul slowly, she decides to engage in things that are only beautiful in life. In this way, her quest for inner harmony and self-actualization begins to gain a sort of mystical dimension.

In the process of Nuran’s inner conflict, she comes to the threshold of maturity and reconciliation between herself and the social world. At this threshold, she recognizes her

²⁰¹ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 123.

ignorance, blindness, and mistakes. Now, her existential struggle turns into a mystical journey in which suffering generates self-knowledge, the truth for herself, and even metaphysical insights into the world. Nuran's newly emerging vision guides her way of being and morality. The way her inevitable inner conflict is represented makes the reader meditate on both the internal and external reasons for the suffering and for endurance narrated in the novel, evoking pity and sympathy for Nuran due to her suffering and resignation. This sympathy then creates a cathartic effect in the fiction. Her mystical tendency and self-transformation through suffering indeed oppose Steiner's view about the death of tragedy discussed in the introduction of this part. Nuran's crisis presents the opposite and derives from her modernity experience in Turkey that lies in a secular way of living and its ethics. This thus shows that the tragic as a model for the East-West encounter is valid, specific, and even inherent, depending on personal, ethical, and sociocultural aspects, and this model is manifested in the Turkish novel.

Nuran's re-evaluation of her own existence commences with her suffering. This process indicates a trajectory from blindness to clarity in the story, but its trajectory is not smoothly linear. After reading her written life story at the end of the novel, Nuran confirms her self-transformation and major revelations about life.²⁰² Her self-transformation could only happen through suffering, endurance, and even asceticism that culminates in self-knowledge. However, her self-knowledge does not occur in the main story suddenly. Even after her stay at her father's home, Nuran self-consciously accepts that she still loves Sermet. In her vision, Nuran also discerns her fallacy and failure, taking the responsibility for her will and behaviors consciously. Her self-awareness progressively increases due to her suffering. In this process, Nuran accepts the elusive presence of divine fate or what can be called a casual determinism that transcends her agency.

²⁰² Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 215–16.

The way Nuran perceives the world is not directly religious, but it points to a sort of pantheistic vision of the world. After recognizing the limit of her agency, Nuran comes to terms with herself, her weaknesses, and her tendencies.²⁰³ She therefore meets Sermet in a small pavilion at the corner of her mansion's garden only every two weeks to benefit from the sensual pleasure of sexuality and the material world. Otherwise, Nuran separates everything in her life from Sermet, even her mansion, as her private space. This attitude reveals Nuran's will to be true to herself in life, which is to say that her mystical vision of the world and its secular ethics involve neither an ascetic life and conventional Islamic customs nor a moralist didacticism and a full commitment to the Republican gender discourse of modern Turkish women. Nuran then reconciles her Eastern mysticism with her Western-oriented lifestyle and secular understanding of the world.

The narrator explicitly highlights Nuran's pantheist vision at the end of the novel; she "walks towards the edge of the thin and artistic pantheism."²⁰⁴ This pantheist insight pertains to her faith in God in a spiritual sense, rather than through traditional Islam, which otherwise requires her to practice daily Islamic rituals and tasks. The self-awareness of her own weakness and tendencies proves her harmonic reconciliation between her self-existence and the world without conveying the same gender discourse of Republican modernity about the tasks of Turkish women and its masculinist ethics in 1930s Turkey. There is no singular

²⁰³ By considering Nuran's suffering and quest for the transcendently beautiful, the tragic in the novel resembles Arthur Schopenhauer's view on tragedy. He "interprets the tragic as the self-destruction and self-negation of the will." See Szondi, *An Essay on the Tragic*, 29. For Schopenhauer's views on tragedy, see Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, 6th ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1886), 3: 212–18; and Lambropoulos, *Tragic Idea*, 55–56. Having in mind that Erol had her high school and university education in Germany, including her doctoral degree, she may have been influenced by Schopenhauer's philosophy or by the German philosophical tradition in general. In 1927, her first articles published in a Turkish newspaper introduce his thoughts about women and genius to the reader. See Safiye Erol, "Kadınlara Dair," "Yine Kadınlara Dair," and "Dehaya Dair," in *Makaleler*, 5th ed. (Istanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, 2021), 25–30; 31–32; 33–37.

²⁰⁴ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 201.

ethical truth in the novel's discourse. Moralism in Nuran's story, as Murat Belge points out, only indicates the authenticity of her feelings and her sincerity with herself as in Erol's other novels.²⁰⁵ This fiction thus offers an alternative vision of the sexuality, modernistic image, and morality of Turkish women.

The redemptive power of suffering and a sort of disenchanting asceticism shows how Nuran finds her way of being with her artistic pantheism. Her suffering and endurance lead to her self-recognition, and "at the moment of self-comprehension"²⁰⁶, her devotion to music plays an important role in this understanding of self. Towards the end, Nuran dedicates her life to music studies and proposes art as the only antidote to suffering in life.²⁰⁷ Nuran's downfall then transforms into a creative process, and her survival occurs through her mystical insights into human nature and her devotion to Republican modernity, particularly the musical reforms that aimed to establish *alafranga* music in Turkey. After this phase, the narrator summarizes events and speeds up the story. In a few pages, the main story ends with an explicit emphasis on Nuran's altruism associated with her self-dedication to Turkey's cultural modernization and its politics. The pure suffering, endurance, and healing process dissolve her sense of incompleteness, *hasret*, and her existential struggle.

Accordingly, her pursuit of the transcendently beautiful and spiritual is interpenetrated into what constitutes a valuable life along with its secular ethics in Turkey's cultural modernization. The narrative slowly shifts from the depiction of Nuran's fiercest love affair and sense of incompleteness to that of her suffering, and towards the end of the narrative, Nuran is depicted as an admirer of her country—a good, industrious citizen who sacrifices herself for Turkey's cultural progress. Despite the novel's bold, alternative contribution to the gender discourse of Republican modernity (e.g., its emphasis on female

²⁰⁵ Belge, "Safiye Erol," 231.

²⁰⁶ Leo Bersani, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 97.

²⁰⁷ This relation implies Schopenhauer's conception of tragedy. See Schopenhauer, *World*, 212–18.

sexuality and eroticism), Nuran's spiritual survival and self-sacrifice still convey the Republican idea of self-devotion, in which every citizen needs to contribute to Turkey's cultural modernization.

The novel ends as it begins. Nuran comments on her written story in the frame narrative after reading it. She emphasizes the unnarratable moments and feelings of her life, asking whether felicity or calamity can be depicted in and through fiction. Nuran reflects her skepticism on the idea of writing and the representation of reality at the outset of the novel. She thinks that her story as fiction does not and even cannot represent reality as imitation because it is impossible to narrate the essential aspects of such feelings, degree of suffering, and deep insights.²⁰⁸ Nuran then highlights the deficiency of words and language as a system to represent her downfall or felicity: "Where does the truth begin? Where do the words come to an end!"²⁰⁹ Her view conveys "the difference between actual suffering in life and the artistic representation of suffering in which we can learn from someone else's pain instead of going through it."²¹⁰ Apart from her dissatisfaction with the written story, Nuran adds a few details to her story, explaining that she completely forgives Sermet despite his betrayals.

The story of Judas is used in the novel for the last time when Nuran expresses that Jesus instigates his own murder because he puts the idea, which was not thought of before, into Judas's mind. The necessity and inevitability of what happened to Nuran are then affirmed by herself as the manifestation of causal determinism. On the other hand, the novel constructs the human experience of the tragic and suffering as both inevitable and as a way of tackling evil in human nature. Nuran's mystical insight into the world implies neither purely

²⁰⁸ Erol, *Ülker Fırtınası*, 213. The structure of this novel resembles the form of *masnavi*, a traditional genre of poetry that includes a story within a story, which was common in Ottoman-Turkish literature until the nineteenth century, see Şeyma Sevilay Güneş, "Safiye Erol'un Hikâye ve Romanlarında Kadın" (MA thesis, Van Yüzüncü Yıl University, 2019), 25–26.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²¹⁰ Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz, *Greek Tragedy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 17.

Sufi mysticism of Islam nor pantheism as theology and philosophy explicitly. Instead, this metaphysical insight of the world is combined with a secular worldview, a European kind of lifestyle, the Republican sociocultural reforms, and the particular ethics of 1930s Turkey.²¹¹ This secular reconciliation with the divine then signifies a way of dealing with the Eastern–Western dilemma, considering the particular conditions of Turkish modernity at this time. This reconciliation, insomuch as the novel depicts, leads to both individual artistic creation and self-sacrificing contribution to Turkey’s cultural modernization, which can be considered self-fulfillment and altruism to a great extent. The idea of inevitability and the tragic vision configured in the novel thus turn into redemption, refined grace and profundity, and also self-sacrifice in the end.

²¹¹ Many indications in the novel imply the aspects of Islamic mysticism, such as pure love, self-transformation, suffering, endurance, asceticism, self-sacrifice, and spirituality. For an analysis of the novel based on mysticism, see Sema Noyan, “Türk Romanında Mistisizm (1923–1980)” (PhD Diss., Marmara University, 2013), 337–64. However, the novel does not convey Sufism in particular because it involves a pantheist approach to nature, which contradicts Islamic mysticism and Sufism, but evokes Indian mysticism in one sense. For the differences between Sufism and pantheism, see Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *100 Soruda Tasavvuf*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Gerçek Yayınları, 1985), 41.

Chapter 2

Longing for the Unattainable and the
Bleak Despair in *A Mind at Peace*

Chapter Two

Longing for the Unattainable and the Bleak Despair in *A Mind at Peace*

Huzur, “A Mind at Peace,” is an iconic and arguably one of the first self-consciously written modernist novels of twentieth-century Turkish literature; it has also maintained its literary influence and appeal.²¹² The novel contains innumerable references to Turkish cultural history, ranging from classical Ottoman music and folk songs to the architectural richness of Istanbul and uses a dense language style, which forms its “encyclopedic”²¹³ character. The multi-layered components of the fiction also explain its significance among the analyzed works of this thesis, identifying it as a threshold to new novelistic poetics in Turkish literature.²¹⁴

The novel tells the story of twenty-seven-year-old Mümtaz during the interwar period in Turkey. Mümtaz witnessed the Empire-to-Republic transformation firsthand, including the occupation of Anatolia after the Great War, the Turkish War of Resistance, and the establishment of Turkey with the radical sociocultural reforms implemented in the 1920s and the 1930s. The fiction recounts the story of Mümtaz’s twenty-four-hour period before World

²¹² The novel was serialized in 1948 in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (Republic) and published as a book in 1949, with significant additions and changes: a new character Suad and a new chapter. For these differences, see Handan İnci, “Tefrikadan Kitaba *Huzur*,” in *Huzur* by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2000), 384–42. This thesis uses the most recent English translation of the novel for the quotations. See Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, trans. Erdağ Göknar (New York, Archipelago Books, 2011).

²¹³ For the use of “the encyclopedic” feature, see Bakhtin, “The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Towards a Historical Typology of the Novel),” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas, 1986), 45.

²¹⁴ The reception of this novel and Tanpınar’s other works is a posthumous, long-running process. It is arguably this novel that brought Tanpınar well-respected status and growing fame. For the bibliography of all the essays written about Tanpınar’s corpus until 2007, see Abdullah Uçman and Handan İnci, eds., “*Bir Gül Bu Karanlıklarda*”: *Tanpınar Üzerine Yazılar*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: 3F, 2008). See also Julian Rentzsch and İbrahim Şahin, eds., *Tanpınar’ın Saklı Dünyası: Arayışlar–Keşifler–Yorumlar* (Istanbul: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2018).

War II begins, including flashbacks. In the plot, Mümtaz wanders around the city where he observes its people and objects in detail, all the while suffering from the breakup with his fiancé Nuran and feeling overly anxious due to the upcoming threat of World War II and his mentor Ihsan's impending death. In the meantime, the external narrator tells about Mümtaz's childhood and adolescence as well as his love story with Nuran through flashbacks. Mümtaz has also been writing a biography of an eighteenth-century Ottoman poet Sheikh Galib.²¹⁵ The story of Mümtaz is indeed that of a Western-oriented urban individual's existential struggle and the way he deals with his crisis, which derives from Turkey's secular, nationalist modernization. It is also a story where Mümtaz's individual concerns, intellectual matters, and the matter of masculinity²¹⁶ intersect.

In the dense culture-specific content of the novel, the idea of the tragic dominates the texture of the narrative and its plot, not only in Mümtaz's story but also in the stories of the other characters. The narrative constructs the tragic as an unavoidable condition in which the protagonist's modernity experience, the question of existence, fate, fortune, and ethics are interconnected with one another in the setting of 1930s Turkey. This chapter therefore explores the tragic vision and its elements in *A Mind at Peace*, tracing why and how the tragic vision is closely linked to Mümtaz's way of experiencing Turkish modernity as a crisis.

Regarding this general question, the analysis of the novel focuses mostly on Mümtaz's inner conflict as a crisis of an intellectual, urban, confused young man in post-imperial

²¹⁵ Sheikh Galib (1757–1799), a prominent poet in Turkish literature, is known for his philosophical and mystical tale, *Hüsn-ü Aşk* (Beauty and Love) published in 1825. There is an analogy between Mümtaz's love for Nuran and Galib's love story. For the splendid analysis of *Hüsn-ü Aşk*, see Holbrook, *Unreadable Shores*.

²¹⁶ Çimen Günay-Erkol argues that Mümtaz's gender identity is not stable, and the novel narrates "how Mümtaz oscillates between different models of manhood" concerning male desire and homoeroticism. See Çimen Günay-Erkol, "Sleepwalking in Istanbul: A Man in Anguish in A. H. Tanpınar's *A Mind at Peace*," *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 63, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 88. For further discussion of the novel in direction, see also Egem Atik, "'Kendini Yapmak': Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın Romanlarında Erkeklik Temsilleri" (PhD Diss., Boğaziçi University, 2021), 65–102.

Turkey that reflects the human condition and its angst in a broad sense. This crisis illustrates the painful process in which Mümtaz seeks to find a lasting reconciliation between his *saâdet*, as often used in the novel meaning happiness, and his sense of responsibility that lies in the sociocultural, moral, and intellectual aspects of Turkey. Thus, the crisis of Mümtaz, a privileged citizen of the new nation-state, intertwines with the disunity of society derived from the effects of Turkish modernity. Mümtaz's inner crisis leads to a conflict of values and self-questioning and requires him to make a certain choice. His confusion and indecision in the fiction prolong his suffering and despair. The confluence of the personal and the social constitutes the base of the tragic vision in the novel.

In scrutinizing this vision, this chapter first explores Mümtaz's characteristic features, along with the socio-historical and cultural aspects of Turkey and discusses his existential crisis as a way of coming to terms with the effects of Turkish modernity. The second section analyzes the reasons for this crisis, focusing on his sense of yearning and homesickness. It also discusses how the novel represents the way Mümtaz interprets Westernization and the vanishing imperial culture in 1930s modernizing Turkey. The next section examines how Ihsan's wise guidance affects Mümtaz's crisis and confusion and considers his impact on Mümtaz's intellectual and spiritual "education." The last section scrutinizes the shift in Mümtaz's way of looking at the external world due to his suffering and increasing self-awareness and examines how this shift designates his existential struggle, associating the tragic vision with his modernity experience.

The Inescapability of the Tragic

In addition to Mümtaz, all the main characters face tough obstacles and dramatic events, and their different crises are intertwined in Mümtaz's story. In this sense, the idea of crisis occupies the content and texture of the narrative, and these crises are represented as inevitable

and thus tragic for the characters to varying degrees.²¹⁷ For instance, Ihsan and his wife Macide lose their daughter in a car accident, and this loss leads to the onset of Macide's mental illness. Suad's self-destructive existential struggle ends with his dramatic suicide, and Nuran returns to her ex-husband unwillingly, sacrificing her life for her daughter's happiness.

The crises of the different characters then involve the explicit "element of hopelessness, of inevitability."²¹⁸ The depiction of these crises conveys personal catastrophes in the narrative. At this juncture, it is worth remembering that Tanpınar already paid attention to the lack of the tragic idea in his study on nineteenth-century Turkish literature discussed in the introduction of this part. Before he wrote *A Mind at Peace*, he had also translated three tragedies of Euripides (published in 1943) as part of the translation policy of the Western classics in Turkey, which proves his particular interest in tragedy.²¹⁹ The recurring motif of music, particularly *Mahur Beste* (*Mahur Tune*) in this novel lies in a sad love story and its

²¹⁷ Azade Seyhan mentions that there is generally a "tragic course" in the novel. See Seyhan, *Crossed Destinies*, 140. On the other hand, Seval Şahin argues that Tanpınar aimed to construct the tragedy with the character Suad; however, he fails to do so. See Seval Şahin *Talih, Tesadüf ve İrade: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın Romanlığı Üzerine Düşünceler* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019), 73. For a claim that Tanpınar's novels fail to give explicit reasons for the tragic actions in the plots, see Özgür Taburoğlu, *Tanpınar Sözlüğü: Şahsi Bir Masalın Simgeleri* (Ankara: Doğu Batı Yayınları, 2019), 240–42. See also Ahmet Oktay, "Tanpınar: Bir Tereddütün Adamı," *Defter* 23 (Spring 1995): 50; 55. İnci Enginün remarks that, in his novels, Tanpınar intended to narrate the tragedies of ordinary people and presented a new kind of tragic thought. See İnci Enginün, *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2019), 30. But Enginün does not explain this tragic idea. It is worth noting that in the third novel of the *Roman-fleuve*, *Those Outside the Scene*, the protagonist attempted to write a tragedy but failed to do so.

²¹⁸ J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 985.

²¹⁹ These three translations are *Alcestis*, *Medea*, and *Electra*. For the revised edition of the translations, see Euripides, *Alkestis–Medeia–Elektra*, trans. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2018). For more details about Tanpınar's translations, see Enginün, *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar*, 252–57; 258–60. In his notes found later, there are pieces of Andre Gidé's *Oedipus* translated into Turkish. See Turan Alptekin, *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar: Bir Kültür Bir İnsan* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 74–77.

lasting effects.²²⁰ Accordingly, it seems that Tanpınar constructs such crises based on a tragic vision set against the backdrop of modernizing Turkey, war, and a love story in this novel. This tragic vision used as a leitmotif is thus multifaceted.²²¹

The social world represented in the novel consists of interlocking personal crises and socio-historical and cultural challenges, such as the introduction of the secular, progressivist, Westernist mindset that offers a new and nationalist cultural vision and the threat of World War II. The sociohistorical background narrated in this fiction then adds another layer to the plight of these characters. Mümtaz's story is situated in the center of the other characters' challenges, for both personal and external reasons. These combined matters include his traumas of war, death, and losing family in his childhood as well as his recent growing anxiety due to Ihsan's grave illness (pneumonia), his sorrowful mood after the break-up with Nuran, and the unsettling possibility of a World War II as the potential crisis of the world.²²²

Mümtaz's story is depicted in four chapters, each titled with the name of a main character: Ihsan, Nuran, Suad, and Mümtaz. The first and fourth chapters (Ihsan and Mümtaz) narrate a single day in Mümtaz's life on which he leaves the house four times. That day is the last day of August in 1939, the day before the outbreak of World War II. In these chapters, sometimes willingly and sometimes compulsorily, Mümtaz wanders in the old district of Istanbul, reflecting on his impressions of the city. In his wanderings, Mümtaz remembers the traumatic events of his past. When Mümtaz was a teenager, he witnessed his father's murder due to a misunderstanding. He had a sexual affair with a random young girl the day after his

²²⁰ *Mahur Tune* is also the name of the first novel of the *Roman-fleuve* trilogy serialized in 1944. For the fateful story of *Mahur Tune* in *A Mind at Peace*, see pages 126; 136; 149; 158; 160.

²²¹ A study states the tragic sense in the novel, but, tragedy is used for every sad situation, implying it as a word, rather than a condition or a specific literary term. See Zeynep Bayramoğlu, *Huzursuz Huzur ve Tekinsiz Saatler: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar Üzerine Tezler* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007), 106–108.

²²² For the reading of the novel as an anti-war narrative, see Halim Kara, "Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın Savaş Eleştirisi: Huzur'da Savaş, İstirap ve Birey," *Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları* 20 (2019): 13–46.

father's death, which generated a boundless sense of guilt in his consciousness. Additionally, his mother dies after a short while. Mümtaz's cousin, Ihsan, who was twenty-three years older than him adopted and raised orphaned Mümtaz in Istanbul. On the other hand, the second and third chapters narrate Mümtaz's love affair with Nuran from the summer of 1938 to April 1939 and his relative Suad's sudden appearance and later his dramatic suicide that became the reason for their separation.

By considering both Mümtaz's past traumas and recent crisis, his story manifests the "idea of testing"²²³, which the protagonist undergoes in relation to the sociocultural conditions of Turkey that poses existential and ethical questions. The testing here has two main phases that accentuate a necessity, an aspect that refers neither to only divine fate nor to a purely human error.²²⁴ It implies then the unavoidability of the existential crisis and individual agency juxtaposes fate, contingency, and bad luck. In the first phase, the narrative emphasizes how the past traumas of war, loss of family, and an odd sexual experience have deeply affected Mümtaz's conception of the world. In this way, the novel challenges the idea that one can re-invent himself, and hence, creates another layer of the tragic vision, for this idea underlines the sense of unavoidability. In the novel's discourse, being in the world itself is tragic due to uncontrolled situations and events.

The tragic vision in Mümtaz's story directly derives from the intricate combination of his fate, fortune, and other catastrophic incidents that determine the trajectory of his life. The novel, indeed, illustrates his sufferings due to external factors over which he does not have any control, such as the aftermath of the Great War and the consecutive deaths of his parents. Ill fortune involving accidentality (*kara baht* as in Nuran's case in *Pleiades Storm*) has

²²³ Bakhtin, "Bildungsroman," 16. Bakhtin argues that the idea of testing for the hero is reflected in the realist French novel and the basis of the story of the *Bildungsroman*. See also Gregory Castle, *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), 8.

²²⁴ For the importance of the necessity in this respect, see Raphael, *Paradox of Tragedy*, 25.

importance here, for it refers to the determinative power of his fate, that is, the limit or even the lack of his agency in life. Tanpınar often uses the word *kader*, fate in English, which primarily denotes fortune—not luck—and for him, the unknowable in fate is the problem that creates the idea of the tragic.²²⁵ Even the narrator of the novel defines Mümtaz and his life as tragic by using the word “tragedy” explicitly and often: for instance, “Like a figure in a novel, he’d confronted tragedy at a young age, ensuring that its effects would always afflict him. His mind had blossomed to love and thought during the span between his father’s death and his return to Istanbul.”²²⁶ The tragic vision in the novel then relies on situations and uncontrollable events rather than individual choices and actions.

The current crisis of Mümtaz in the plot indicates the second phase of testing in life. When taking into account his personal issues and the socio-political conditions of the 1930s, Mümtaz struggles to find inner harmony and self-fulfillment at the threshold of his intellectual and spiritual maturity. The first phase of his testing, which implies the combination of his ill fortune and bad fate, preconditions the inevitability of his existential crisis in the fiction from the beginning. Moreover, this tragic vision underlines fate but overlooks the authority of God in Islam. This approach contradicts the Islamic belief in fate which Tanpınar asserts as the reason for the lack of tragedy in Turkish literature.²²⁷ However, the second phase of testing constructs Mümtaz’s crisis that manifests both his disruption, sense of failure, and instant transformation through suffering. In this crisis, the fear of losing Ihsan, his sorrow due to Nuran’s love, and the threat of war intersect in Mümtaz’s consciousness, while he wanders through the city.

²²⁵ M. Orhan Okay, *Bir Hülya Adamının Romanı: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2010), 252; 259.

²²⁶ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 45.

²²⁷ For Tanpınar’s argument about this and his claim that there is not even a single tragic situation in *The One Thousand One Nights*. See Tanpınar, *19 uncu Asır*, 27. See also page 60.

Homesickness, “Hasret,” and the Nostalgic Insight

Two main causes configure Mümtaz’s crisis as tragic in the novel. The first cause refers to destiny and contingency as the inevitability of individual catastrophe, and the second is Mümtaz’s present existential crisis and the reasons behind its emergence. These two circumstances portray “an image of growing in national-historical time” in the plot.²²⁸ This “national-historical time” in the early Republican context of Turkey leads to the permanence of Mümtaz’s sense of homesickness. Mümtaz’s quest for meaning in life and the way he copes with the sense of his homesickness are thus directly linked to the idea of the tragic configured in the fiction. Mümtaz’s homesickness, then, becomes the precondition of his existential crisis that harbors his individualist idealism as a way of survival. In this sense, although Mümtaz is depicted as an innocent, true victim of the socio-historical incidents with no agency, what makes him a tragic character in modernizing Turkey is the inescapability of his homesickness and its elusive feeling, *hasret*—a strong sense of yearning that goes beyond melancholy and nostalgic aspiration. This feeling corresponds to a similar sense of *hasret* Nuran possesses in *Pleiades Storm*, but they are not necessarily exactly the same.

In Mümtaz’s story, homesickness, *dâüssıla* in Turkish used by Tanpınar, refers to a mental and emotional state in between alienation, existential angst, and a sense of non-belonging to the world. Homesickness therefore brings forth his sense of yearning. Özen Nergis Dolcerocca underlines the significance of homesickness in Tanpınar’s writing, and emphasizes that it should not be reduced to a crisis of national culture, as homesickness “points the essential anxieties and problematics of modernity.”²²⁹ In other words, Mümtaz’s

²²⁸ Bakhtin, “Bildungsroman,” 25.

²²⁹ Özen Nergis Dolcerocca, “Chronometrics in the Modern Metropolis: the City, the Past, and Collective Memory in A. H. Tanpınar,” *MLN* 130, no. 5 (December 2015), 1155. She argues that homesickness

way of dealing with this strong feeling establishes the main contour of the tragic vision because the kernel of his crisis derives from this insoluble feeling—*hasret*, his wistful longing.²³⁰ The state of longing is unavoidably related to ever-changing values and his moral responsibility due to Turkey's modernization and the radical shifts in Mümtaz's life.

In this regard, homesickness (*dâüssıla*) and longing (*hasret*) as the outcome of Mümtaz's modernity experience are associated with nostalgia, which determines the essence of his worldview. Svetlana Boym explains "nostalgia" as "a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values"²³¹ of which Mümtaz struggles to make sense. Mümtaz's approach to the external world manifests "a secular expression of a spiritual longing," and the pursuit of "a nostalgic for an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the Edenic unity of time and space before the entry into history."²³² Mümtaz endeavors to transcend the elusiveness of the world and complexity of life itself in Istanbul, a city that became home for him after his traumatic childhood.

Mümtaz's nostalgia can be seen as too abstract due to his mystical quest for human existence, but it is also tangible as he still searches for meaning *in* this world and its materiality. Mümtaz's sense of homesickness is indeed limited to a particular space, period, and culture: namely, the slow loss of old Ottoman culture and imperial aesthetics, its

(*dâüssıla* in Turkish) is overshadowed by the idea of "composition" or synthesis (*terkip*) as most of the studies prioritize it. In her view, homelessness pertains to the change of Istanbul's old culture and its unsettling lack of permanence." *ibid.*, 1158–62. Another work touches upon the notion of homelessness, defining it as "one's own polar point" and the extreme of solitude. See Oğuz Demiralp, *Kutup Noktası: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın Yapıtı Üzerine Eleştirel Deneme* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993), 158.

²³⁰ For the notion of *hasret* and its two different interpretations in Tanpınar's *Five Cities*, a collection of essays on the loss, history, and memory through the cities of Ankara, Erzurum, Konya, Bursa, and Istanbul, see Nurdan Gürbilek, "Dried Spring, Blind Mirror, Lost East: Ophelia, Water, and Dreams," trans. Victoria Holbrook, *Middle Eastern Literatures* 20, no. 2 (2017): 133–61 and Nergis Ertürk, "Modernity and Its Fallen Languages: Tanpınar's 'Hasret' and Benjamin's Melancholy," *PMLA* 123, no. 1 (January 2008): 41–56.

²³¹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 8.

²³² *Ibid.*, 8.

manifestations in Istanbul, and his way of experiencing the sense of past. He searches for something transcendental within the material culture of the past and Istanbul as his *Heimat*, “the place where one is and becomes what one was destined to be and become, one’s proper place.”²³³ His nostalgia, however, does not glorify and Orientalize any ideology or a certain value. Accordingly, Mümtaz turns into the suffering hero of his modernity experience as an intellectual urban male who wrestles with “the essential homelessness in the experience of the past in present.”²³⁴ In other words, his great struggle particularly implies the condition of being a Western-oriented, Republican young man in Turkey in the midst of his estrangement, ambiguity, confusion, and insecurity.

Mümtaz’s existential angst then arises from the permanent sense of homesickness and the agony of his inner longing. By considering this existential struggle, Mümtaz’s story can be read as the crisis of a wounded, confused young man who deals with his homesickness through a certain kind of idealism and resorts to strategies to eradicate this sense and his yearning for it, which vary depending on how he reconciles his inner world with the external world. Mümtaz does not self-consciously aim for a synthesis of two cultures, if considering the East–West dichotomy.²³⁵ Instead, Mümtaz seeks a spiritual and cultural *home* in this material world, where the old Ottoman cultural legacy and newly embraced Western culture co-exist. However, his quest is solely passive and only happens in his thoughts and feelings. Moreover, such a home, either spiritually or culturally, does not exist in reality, as he would recognize later.

²³³ Marc Crépon, “Heimat,” in *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, ed. Barbara Cassin, trans. Steven Kendall et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 430.

²³⁴ Dolcerocca, “Chronometrics,” 1173.

²³⁵ Innumerable works evaluate the novel in the frame of East–West dichotomy, rather than focusing on its poetics and texture. For some exceptions, see Moran, *Eleştirel Bir Bakış I*, 269–96; Oktay, “Tanpınar,” 49–61; Günay-Erkol, “Sleepwalking,” 85–106; Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar*, 107–52; Gürle, “‘Wandering’,” 96–112; and Dolcerocca, “Chronometrics,” 1150–78.

A Mind at Peace therefore depicts Mümtaz's sense of homesickness as inevitable and underscores this inevitability as tragic when the irreversibility of what happened to him in the past is also considered. No matter how happy or anxious Mümtaz feels in different scenes, this sense becomes visible and puts a certain distance between Mümtaz and the present moment. For instance, Mümtaz and Nuran spend all day together, visiting beautiful places of the Bosphorus in chapter two, and when they are on the ferry, returning home, Mümtaz's homesickness appears evidently:

As night fell, Mümtaz found a nip of winter yet in the air. With an unsettling sense of cold, he recoiled into himself.

"In winter the Bosphorus has a separate beauty," he said. "An eerie loneliness."

"But you can't quite endure it."

"No, I can't. In order to withstand it, one either has to be thoroughly rooted in life or has to live extravagantly. I mean, one has to have had a sufficient degree of experience. As for me—"

He cut himself off; he was about to say, "I'm still like a child." What was there in his life besides a menagerie of dreams? *Tomorrow, won't you, too, become a dream?*²³⁶

In this passage, the voices of the external narrator and Mümtaz are interlocked just as throughout the entire novel. The significant point, however, is why Mümtaz cannot be "rooted in life." He implicitly signals a lack that points to his sense of non-belonging to this world and to his alienation despite Istanbul's picturesque landscape and the loving presence of Nuran. This lack emphasized by Mümtaz is directly related to his sense of homesickness. However, there is more than that as Mümtaz, in his words, also underlines another lack: "a sufficient degree of experience." What Mümtaz means by experience is not clear. This lack may refer to a lack of pure love, intellectual maturity, or spiritual education. The ambiguity about the

²³⁶ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 134.

reason for his rootlessness in life and his lack of experience shows the elusiveness of the world for him and thus the melancholy of his awareness of this matter.

In this ferry scene, the reader may expect that Mümtaz feels happier and less insecure next to his beloved Nuran because he is not even struggling with any existential or intellectual crisis at the time; however, a happy moment evokes his sense of homelessness and insecurity instead. From this perspective, Mümtaz represents a wounded, perplexed young man who struggles to tackle his disruption, melancholy, and sense of longing in a changing Turkey. The way Mümtaz copes with this struggle constructs the tragic vision in the novel, as his passionate love and exhilarated mood is not enough to resolve his strong sense of longing, which becomes more explicit towards the end of chapter three.

At the outset of chapter three, Ihsan, Macide, Nuran, and some friends of Mümtaz gather in Mümtaz's house, including an old wise Emin Bey who plays mystical Sufi music. During a dense and spiritual moment of this performance, Mümtaz's gaze finds Nuran's face, and his insecure thoughts flow, as depicted by the narrator in the third person:

He sought an inner, emotional order for himself. He was in pursuit of a fiery catalyst that would bring words and images of life. But the rules of the game had changed from the outset, and in the trial that he'd willingly entered, he'd failed. A bewildering thought. From time to time Mümtaz awoke from his complacency to ask himself, *I wonder if it's excessive?* The question alone turned the paradise of their love into a mock heaven. Throughout the summer of his content, he'd lived a life that was effectively doubled. And the strangest of all was that the suspicion he nurtured against his emotions, his self-scrutiny, neither diminished his affections toward Nuran nor prevented his suffering from the torments of life.²³⁷

This music scene serves as Mümtaz's epiphany and resembles the scene in *Pleiades Storm* in which Nuran heard *alaturka* music for the first time and felt instinctively strange. In the powerful scene here, the musical performance resurrects Mümtaz's yearning with two major

²³⁷ Tanpınar *A Mind at Peace*, 318–19.

points. First, Mümtaz underlines his life as an inherent failure from the beginning, and therefore, he portrays himself as doomed to fail, which reiterates the inevitability of failure. This approach reflects both self-pity and lamentation, and that Mümtaz considers himself a pure victim of life. The idea of inherent failure also reinforces his passivity, inertia, and despair. In this line of thought, Mümtaz does not have the agency and free will to resist his fate, particularly his sense of homesickness. Second, he has continued to suffer due to this strong sense despite his passionately sacred love, which proves its inadequacy in his case.²³⁸ Therefore, the unforgettable summer of 1938, Nuran's love, as well as all the worldly and aesthetic pleasures are not enough for Mümtaz to transcend his sense of homesickness and fulfill that sense of yearning. At this crucial point, Ihsan plays a significant role in helping Mümtaz. Before his sickness, he comforts Mümtaz to tackle his existential crisis.

Self-Knowledge through Suffering

A Mind at Peace portrays a self-confident, intellectual, and wise figure who has raised and educated Mümtaz: Ihsan. Indeed, Ihsan is Mümtaz's fifty year old cousin and the most influential person for him, having shaped Mümtaz's spiritual and intellectual education. He plays all the roles for Mümtaz; a father figure, a friend, a wise mentor, and an intellectual guide who introduces him to history, literature, and aesthetics, encompassing both European and Ottoman-Turkish culture. Ihsan's crucial impact on Mümtaz persists from the beginning to the end of the fiction. Naming the first chapter "Ihsan" also saliently refers to this importance.²³⁹ Ihsan also represents an ideal Republican, Turkish man who conveys the idea

²³⁸ Love is a common theme of the tension in the novels of *Servet-i Fünûn* period (1890-1901), serving as the main ground for the reality-imagination conflict. See Yıldırım, *Trajik Durum*, 189.

²³⁹ Moran argues that each chapter with the name of a character stresses the importance and impact of each character on Mümtaz's formation and life. Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 274.

of the Western-oriented, secular life in 1930s Turkey. In sum, Mümtaz has been Ihsan's protégé in their mentor-mentee relationship.

In considering this relationship, including Mümtaz's quest for meaning and self-fulfillment, the logic and narrative template of the novel resemble the features of the *Bildungsroman*, even though the novel does not provide a progressive understanding of how the young hero comes to the point of self-integration and harmony with society after educational obstacles.²⁴⁰ Ihsan plays a crucial role in Mümtaz's present crisis and moral dilemma, however. The narrative illustrates Ihsan's authoritative intellectual views and moralist individualism on Mümtaz several times. When Nuran asks why Mümtaz "admire[s] all these historical things," Mümtaz explains Ihsan's significance in an obvious way: "Ihsan's influence over me is immense. He's my true mentor. Thanks to him, I was spared such unnecessary intellectual exhaustion. Ihsan's greatest virtue is that he points out shortcuts for people."²⁴¹ This powerful authority is so strong that Mümtaz often catches himself repeating Ihsan's opinions as epiphanies. However, Mümtaz cannot entirely internalize Ihsan's opinions about the new, secular life and its nationalist orientations imposed by Republican ideology including his sense of moral and intellectual responsibility.

Ihsan and Mümtaz discuss the radical changes in society due to (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity, and Ihsan advocates the new, secular and Western-oriented life and its emerging cultural structure in Turkey. However, his understanding of the new life diverges from the positivist, progressive mindset that radically cut cultural and historical ties with the Ottoman legacy. Ihsan claims that the natural flow of incidents inherently constructs its composition of life with the understanding of cultural continuity, allowing intellectuality and arts to emerge

²⁴⁰ Gökner argues that it is an "example of the Empire-to-Republic bildungsroman." See Gökner, *Orhan Pamuk*, 118. For discussion on *Bildungsroman*, see Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 24–71.

²⁴¹ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 216.

and grow freely. Due to his perfectly balanced position, involving his rationalist, Occidentalist, and slightly nationalist features, Ihsan conveys a vision that consists of moralist individualism, secular ethics, and faith in Republican modernity.²⁴² However, Mümtaz cannot completely come to terms with Ihsan's vision since he struggles to overcome his sense of homesickness with his love, the pleasures of aesthetics, and Istanbul's rich urban culture. This approach indeed leads to his flaw.

Since Mümtaz has no concerns about the social world in the ways Ihsan does, he only sees the world through the lens of his individualist idealism. Mümtaz enjoys the beauty of Istanbul and his love for Nuran. However, when Nuran breaks up with him due to Suad's shocking suicide at Mümtaz's house, Mümtaz finds himself in pain and sorrow of love, emotionally vulnerable and intellectually more confused. These sudden changes have solidified his sense of homesickness, longing, and existential crisis. From then on, there is nothing left to end or even mitigate his multi-layered crisis. Both the tangible and intangible aspects of Mümtaz's nostalgic insight into the world begin to disintegrate. Thus, his pursuit of transcendental meaning within the materiality of 1930s Istanbul collapses.

Mümtaz's current crisis begins with his emotional and spiritual suffering and continues through his gradual awareness that his ideal is too normative and thus unattainable. The tragic in the novel, then, appears not only due to the inherent impassability of his sense of homesickness but also due to the fallacy about his idealism that pursues something transcendental. In Mümtaz's most vulnerable phase due to this recognition and moral defeat,

²⁴² Ihsan's opinions resemble the vision of an intellectual group in Turkey that offers the idea of "the Other West." For the cultural and intellectual roots of this idea, see Nazım İrem, "Undercurrents of European Modernity and the Foundations of Modern Turkish Conservatism: Bergsonism in Retrospect," *Middle Eastern Studies* 140, no. 4 (July 2004), 79–112. Tanpınar's works are mainly interpreted with regard to Henri Bergson's thoughts. For further discussion, see Şerif Eskin, *Zamanın ve Hafızanın Kıyısında: Tanpınar'ın Edebiyat, Estetik ve Düşünce Dünyasında Bergson Felsefesi*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2021), 80–117; 134–95.

it is Ihsan who then asks about the biography that Mümtaz has been writing of Ottoman poet Sheikh Galib. Mümtaz tells him that he is unable to write more:

Ihsan had an ambiguous hand gesture. “Don’t dwell on it, it’ll pass...” Then he abruptly stated what he’d actually wanted to say, “You’ve been looking at them through the light of your own emotions. You were projecting what you’d conjured in your own life onto them! You cherished them not for what they were in and of themselves, but as part of your own life and for your own sake. Had you sought them out through the particular historical era that you’d chosen, everything would have been different. Whereas you were trying to gather the world around a single individual.”

Mümtaz, grasping the edge of the chair, listened carefully.

“But I was occupied with the concerns of the times.”

“No, you were simply preoccupied with the beloved, Nuran.” Then his face softened suddenly. “And this was quite natural. You passed through an experience that is the shared destiny of everyone. Now you’ll open up to life! You must become a man of your convictions, not of your emotions! [...] To seize life we must be free in our thoughts and our lives.” Then, in a lower voice: “Become a man of convictions whose responsibilities you can shoulder! Nurture them like a tree within your own being. Toil around them, patiently and carefully, like a gardener!”

“You realize you’re chastising me, don’t you?”

“No, I’m not chastising you. Nuran exposed you to a spectrum of inspiration. Others might have arrived there by different means. That’s not important. But thoughts of her shouldn’t impede you any longer!²⁴³

Mümtaz then actively attempts to connect Ottoman poetry and its culture to the present through this book, but his attempt is futile, exacerbating his inability and despair.²⁴⁴ On the other hand, this dialogue illustrates a stiff confrontation between Ihsan and Mümtaz, although Ihsan mercifully explains how Mümtaz should cope with this difficult situation. This sagacious fatherly guidance indicates the essence of Mümtaz’s emotional experience and the inevitability of suffering in life, which, once again, underscores Ihsan’s moralist individualism. Indeed, Ihsan shows Mümtaz the right direction patiently and compassionately, raising Mümtaz’s awareness about the reality of the world and its presence outside his consciousness. In this respect, Ihsan suggests that pursuing individual happiness through the

²⁴³ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 379.

²⁴⁴ For the discussion of this incomplete text in the novel, see Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar*, 123–39.

filter of aesthetics or love cannot make Mümtaz grasp the sociocultural realities of modernizing Turkey. Ihsan's role as a mentor resembles the role of Nuran's father in *Pleiades Storm* and functions to help Mümtaz's moral, spiritual, and intellectual education.

After this conversation, Mümtaz's gradual awareness of the social world beyond his idealism leads to his self-questioning, thus confronting his own values and his quest for transcendental meaning under such circumstances. But Mümtaz's self-awareness inherently holds its potential solution for his existential struggle, depending on how he deals with his fallacy—individualistic idealism and his blindness to the reality of daily life in modernizing Turkey. After this confrontation with Ihsan, Mümtaz spends all day alone, walking in the ruins of the city, and he confirms his insufficiency in a self-pitying mode: "*I'm feeble, a feeble man simply created out of weakness. Which of us isn't?*"²⁴⁵ The reason Suad comes to Mümtaz's mind in his most hopeless moment explicitly signifies Mümtaz's fear of a similar end. This moment is the point where pity is combined with fear, creating the pathos of Mümtaz's inner conflict throughout the fiction. Suad was also emotionally weak and vulnerable and struggled to come terms with the present reality of Turkey before committing suicide. He is portrayed as a demonic character who embodies destructive agency. This portrayal is the negative and aggressive counterpart of Mümtaz, who is the passive victim of his fate—the uncontrollable factors beyond his agency.²⁴⁶

Ihsan's realistically bitter counsel is valuable, as his mentorship may prevent Mümtaz's catastrophic fall like Suad's. Until the present day of the plot, Mümtaz has been gradually confronting the reality of the social world while suffering from Nuran's love and Suad's suicide. As Ihsan emphasizes before, Mümtaz's sufferings have recently turned into

²⁴⁵ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 382. The italics in the translation do not exist in the Turkish version.

²⁴⁶ For a view that Suad is part of Mümtaz's self in the novel. see Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar*, 23, 139; Şahin, *Talih, Tesadüf ve İrade*, 92; Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 293; and Bayramoğlu, *Huzursuz Huzur*, 64.

the knowledge of life as he endures them across time. His suffering and its representation in the novel then “record[s] the fundamental contradiction between reality and ideality: life is not as it should be; we are not as we should be”²⁴⁷ just as in Nuran’s case in *Pleiades Storm*. This contradiction is about to be internalized by Mümtaz.

Through suffering, Mümtaz becomes aware of the world and experiences the painful realities of life, evoking the mystical ordeal of Sufis enduring pain. Various references to Sheikh Galib and Sufi music in the novel enhance this idea of his inner journey through suffering. By analyzing the music scene when Mümtaz expresses his insecurity while looking at Nuran, Meltem Gürle draws attention to the fact that “Mümtaz is too worldly for that [Sufist’s unworldly authenticity]. His heart sinks as he realizes that he will never be at home in the world.”²⁴⁸ Ihsan’s fatherly counsel, however, suggests that Mümtaz should not seek his true self by emulating spiritual mysticism as in Sufism. Instead, he should see the reality of today’s world, particularly Westernizing Turkey, without any medium. Accordingly, the novel’s discourse implies that Mümtaz should search for his *Heimat* in the rough reality of modernizing Turkey.

Mümtaz’s flaw is that he strives to overcome his sense of homelessness through his individualistic idealism—the nostalgic and mystical insight from a world and era gone by. However, via the process of his awareness through time and suffering, his individualistic value and its ethics are shattered and even begin to disappear. The value of individual moral responsibility replaces the former. This transition is the central point of Mümtaz’s existential

²⁴⁷ Sands, “Tragedy,” 84.

²⁴⁸ Gürle, ““Wandering,”” 103. Sufism and mysticism are not limited to this novel in Tanpınar’s corpus. In his story, *The Dreams of Abdullah Efendi*, mysticism excludes Islam or God, leading to his tragedy. See Sarah Moment Atuş, *Semantic Structuring in the Modern Turkish Short Story: An Analysis of The Dreams of Abdullah Efendi and Other Short Stories by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 180–82. Tanpınar’s poetry is seen as “the tragedy of living on the threshold” where imagination and reality compete in his conception of life and aesthetics. See Mehmet Kaplan, *Tanpınar’ın Şiir Dünyası*, 7th ed. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2018), 134.

crisis because the two values conflict with one another.²⁴⁹ However, Mümtaz's awareness is not swift and resolved. On the contrary, his inner conflict reaches its apex due to this oscillation. The external narrator emphasizes this oscillation as a paradox in his crisis: "Man and life were separate entities. The former created the latter through flesh, bone, sweat, and thought. But they weren't commensurate. It was necessary to be partial to one or the other. Yet Mümtaz knew he'd remain in a perpetual state of ambivalence between the two."²⁵⁰ To comprehend this paradox requires a discussion on the moments of Mümtaz's recognition and the distinct shift in his way of looking at the external world.

Walking as Self-Transformation

Chapters one and four illustrate Mümtaz's present-day in August 1939, which frame the whole novel. Like in many modernist novels, these two chapters tell the moments of his crisis and fleeting impressions over the course of a single day.²⁵¹ The linear plot structure with flashbacks reveals the different challenges Mümtaz encountered during his spiritual and intellectual growth. Thus, the interplay between his varying emotions, confusion, and even the before-after of his revelation after Ihsan's warning in chapter three is more explicit. The plot structure then highlights Mümtaz's ongoing self-transformation, displaying his sufferings and contemplations of the objects, people, and urban space from within his consciousness.²⁵² The moments depicted in the fiction consist of Mümtaz's involuntary memories and musings

²⁴⁹ For the tragic conflict between two values, see Ioanna Kuçuradi, *Sanata Felsefeyle Bakmak* (Ankara: Ayraç Yayınevi, 1997), 11–12.

²⁵⁰ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 382.

²⁵¹ A narration of "the day" refers to the modernist novels, such as James Joyce's *Ulysses* or Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. See Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 129.

²⁵² For the claim that novel's structure is based on a form of symphony, considering the references to Beethoven, the themes of the chapters, and Tanpınar's use of music, see Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 274–75. See also Bayramoğlu, *Huzursuz Huzur*, 31; 40–43.

during his wanderings. These wanderings display “the nature of [his] private experience within modern conditions, and notably within the city”²⁵³ as in other modernist novels. They reveal how he perceives the social world and depict his self-confrontation process, suffering, and grief, arranging the temporal order of the plot.

The novel uses a particular storytelling technique that presents the conflict of values and Mümtaz’s quest for ethics that sets up the moral principles of modernizing Turkey. In this matter, two key features determine the way of narration: the role of the narrator and its link to how Mümtaz’s consciousness is represented. The external narrator tells the whole story in the third person, mostly depicting the events from Mümtaz’s consciousness. This technique, “singular focalization”²⁵⁴, lies in the difference between the agent of telling and that of seeing in the novel. While Mümtaz sees, thinks, and feels, the narrator describes his acts, thoughts, and emotions in the third person *as if* the narrator is Mümtaz. This storytelling method therefore mirrors Mümtaz’s dilemmas, complex feelings, and reluctant thoughts from his perspective.

In this way, the novel creates a simultaneous effect of Mümtaz’s suffering and sympathy for him, while revealing the conflict of values in his consciousness. The conflict in

²⁵³ Christopher Butler, *Modernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 54.

²⁵⁴ The use of singular focalization is not limited to Mümtaz. This technique is applied to the other characters, even when Mümtaz is not part of the events. The narrator uses “serial focalization,” which refers to multiple applications of the singular focalization. See Stephen Kern, *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 35–40. The novel’s narrative mode is based on Mümtaz’s temporal consciousness. See Mehmet Kaplan, “Bir Şairin Romanı: *Huzur*,” *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 12 (1962), 41. Fethi Naci mentions “optical zooming” that prioritizes Mümtaz’s consciousness, limiting the use of this technique with Mümtaz. See Naci, *Yüzyılın 100 Türk Romanı* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2017), 211. Moran discusses this as a new technique in Turkish fiction but interprets it as a weakness of narration. See Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 270–74. See also Orhan Pamuk, “Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar ve Türk Modernizmi,” in *Manzaradan Parçalar: Hayat, Sokaklar, Edebiyat* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017), 301–6. For uses of this technique, see Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes of Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 14–47; 100.

Mümtaz's story then leads to sympathy for his suffering, considering his confusion, sorrow, and agony over his sense of homesickness. This sympathy implies the pathos of his crisis; pity and fear are manifest in the narrative as a catharsis for the reader. On the other hand, the third-person narration keeps a certain distance from Mümtaz that prevents identification with him. The complex balance between the entangled voices of the narrator and Mümtaz constitutes the tragic narrative mode of the novel.

With this technique, the narrator therefore presents Mümtaz's existential crisis, intellectual dilemmas, and emotional fluctuations, showing how he perceives the external world as the focalizer of objects, places, and people. The depiction of the existential and ethical questions in such sociocultural conditions gives a remarkable insight into the agency of the novel. This fiction has been canonized since the late 1980s due to the significant changes in the literary and socio-cultural paradigms in Turkey; beginning in the 1990s, *A Mind at Peace* became a popular novel, serving different ideological interpretations and intellectual orientations, including the book market.²⁵⁵

As a result of this narrative technique, the narrator reinforces not only the implied meaning of the tragic by using the word "tragedy" but also directly presents Mümtaz's crisis from within his self-consciousness. Singular focalization therefore helps to narrate Mümtaz's perspective from within, conveying his inner voice, thoughts, and soliloquy. The narrator directly reflects Mümtaz's interior world, revealing his emotions and thoughts with the "third person limited point of view."²⁵⁶ The entanglement of Mümtaz's gaze and the external

²⁵⁵ For further discussion, see Hasret Zerkinli, "Modern Mit ve Toplumsal Mutabakat Katmanları Bağlamında Mitleştirme: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar Örneği" (MA thesis, Istanbul University, 2021), 220–76.

²⁵⁶ Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 90. Culler names this technique "temporal focalization." The narrator focalizes an event or an action through the consciousness of a character either in the past or the present time of the narrative. *ibid.*, 89. See also J. Hillis Miller, "Henry James and 'Focalization,' or Why James Loves Gyp," in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 124.

narrator's voice then underpins the spatialization of his crisis. The city becomes a space of self-confrontation and suffering that recalls the past, despair, and sorrow of his current crisis. The singular focalization provides Mümtaz's "mental images"²⁵⁷ and his impressions of reality from his perspective. It thus provides a space where the conflict of values happens; moral and existential questions are at an impasse.

In this way, the narrator highlights the shifts and conflicts between the exterior world and Mümtaz's inner world, manifesting his intricate psychological state due to his sense of homelessness, the pain of love, fear for losing Ihsan, and a threat of a world war. This narrative technique reflects Mümtaz's crisis that, as Georg Lukács explains in his theory on the novel, "becomes problematic, not because of his so-called 'false tendencies', but just because he wants to realize his deepest interiority in the outside world"²⁵⁸ through love, aesthetics, or the legacy of Ottoman culture. In the story, the narrator uses Mümtaz as a "roving camera"²⁵⁹ that zooms in on a particular thing or person at present, revealing what and how Mümtaz thinks or feels, thus grasping two opposite ways of seeing the world that Mümtaz experiences. The modernist depiction of these two opposite ways then underscores the transformative power of suffering in the novel.

Mümtaz leaves home four times for several reasons, and the fiction illustrates people, objects, and the environment as his "accumulating impressions"²⁶⁰ of the present. Mümtaz becomes a sort of "unwilling flaneur"²⁶¹ at the moments of his crisis, wandering in the streets

²⁵⁷ Childs, *Modernism*, 76.

²⁵⁸ Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-Philosophical Essay on Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. Anna Bostock (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1974), 136.

²⁵⁹ Childs, *Modernism*, 125–26. For this function defined as "a reflector-character," see Franz K. Stanzel, *A Theory of Narrative*, trans. Charlotte Goedsche (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 144.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁶¹ Marina Mackay, "The Modernist 'Novel'," in *The Cambridge History of Modernism*, ed. Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 313.

of Istanbul within a melancholic mood and paying attention to the concrete details of daily life. He zooms in on ruined neighborhoods, the poverty of the environment, children playing outside, workers, beggars, and porters. Mümtaz perceives the external world in a realistic and socially engaged manner. Walter Benjamin defines the flaneur's perspective as "the gaze of the alienated man,"²⁶² pointing to his own self-estrangement. Mümtaz as an unwilling flaneur deals with his concerns during his walks, acting like a "dreaming idler"²⁶³ whose consciousness encounters the instant memories and snapshots of the city.

Mümtaz's observing gaze and the way it is represented dominate the novel's texture: "The market was a fragment of this city's life; forever and a day it would confide in him somehow. All the same, what issued from within Mümtaz was not what he saw but rather his own idiosyncratic experiences."²⁶⁴ Just as in this passage, his temporal perception slows down, and his involuntary memory surfaces at the point where his mind blends different temporalities, memories, and things filtered from his consciousness. Mümtaz's way of relating to the city highlights the painful process of coming to terms with the reality and community in Turkey: that is, poverty, the ordinariness of people, the authenticity of culture, and his sense of moral responsibility. Mümtaz gradually recognizes Istanbul and its people as an "imperfect home"²⁶⁵ beyond his previous nostalgic insight, and that acknowledges that there is no other home.

This way of seeing the world contradicts how Mümtaz first perceived the city, particularly in chapters two and three, in which his earlier summer romance with Nuran are

²⁶² Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 10. Flaneur is also a thinker-wanderer and will solve the mysteries of social relations. See David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 84–85.

²⁶³ Benjamin, "Flaneur," in *Arcades*, 417.

²⁶⁴ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 65.

²⁶⁵ Boym, *Nostalgia*, 21. Boym states the relationship between the modern city and nostalgia.

narrated. At that time, due to his idealism and nostalgic insight into life, Mümtaz aestheticizes everything he sees by enjoying the authentic culture, the aesthetics, and the cityscape of Istanbul. Mümtaz's idealist conception of the world reflects his pursuit of individualistic happiness and resembles the dandy as a romantic lover and admirer, especially when considering his idealist attitude that embraces the bygone era and its pleasurable cultural aesthetics.²⁶⁶ On the other hand, in chapters one and four, he becomes a flaneur who recognizes the other facet of the city and its community, poverty, threat of impending war—that is, the reality as it is, not as it should be, or not as Mümtaz wishes that it could be.

After recognizing the lack of a spiritual home in this world, Mümtaz's four wanderings of the day gradually develop his awareness of the social world and its reality. Step by step, Mümtaz's way of seeing the world changes. This shift in Mümtaz's gaze reflects his emotional and intellectual crises that gradually climax during the day. The city itself becomes the source of the self-knowledge and the space of Mümtaz's self-transformation through a set of contemplations. This aspect also evokes the discourse of *Pleiades Storm* in which Nuran benefited from emotional and spiritual suffering that resulted in the secular reconciliation between her sexual desire for Sermet, her mystical vision of life, and her full commitment to Turkey's Westernization and its cultural politics.

While Mümtaz's awareness increases to the extent that he contemplates the city and its community by confronting his nostalgic idealism and his sense of moral responsibility, there is more sympathy for his suffering because Mümtaz comes to a stoic or spiritual state due to his suffering and endurance towards the end of the fiction, similar to Nuran's final state in *Pleiades Storm*. However, the dramatic tension gradually grows in the last chapter for two

²⁶⁶ The legacy of the dandy includes a pejorative meaning in Turkish literature. See page 35 in this thesis. However, the concept originally coined by Charles Baudelaire refers to the understanding of the cityscape with a romantic ideology. See, Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of the Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne, 2nd ed. (London, Phaidon, 1995), 78–88.

reasons: the risk of Ihsan's death and Mümtaz's encounter with Suad's ghost as the final heated confrontation. When Mümtaz returns home early in the morning with medicine he bought for Ihsan, on the one hand, he feels estranged from everything, including the world itself. On the other hand, he sees the pure reality of life:

... *What's happening to me?* It was certain that a shroud existed between him and the world that he hadn't noticed before. Something translucent, which permitted exceptional focus, separated him from the world.

But could he even be separated from the world? *Life is so sublime...* Living at this morning hour was a beautiful thing. Everything was beautiful, fresh, and harmonious. It greeted one with the pliancy of a smile, and Mümtaz had the conviction that at this hour he could tirelessly observe an acacia leaf, the face of a small animal, or a human hand in perpetuity. Because all of it, everything, was sublime. [...] But he wasn't able to focus fully on any one. *At such an hour? Perhaps it's because I find objects to be so beautiful that I am able to divorce myself from life. Why shouldn't this be the case?* Because this sense of the sublime and within it the accompanying jubilation like an orchestra was no everyday experience. It resembled an epiphany of sorts. It was a variety of epiphany that could come to one only at the last possible instant, at the moment when the intellect cut off all contact with everything and became its hermetic self, the moment when it functioned in the most idealized way. It was reality located at the edge of abyss. The perspicuity within him could only bespeak the lucidity of the moment before.

"How strange! Nothing is connected to any other thing. I perceive everything as atomized," he complained.²⁶⁷

After a long, stressful day wallowing in his suffering, this moment describes Mümtaz's relief and his integration into the world. Mümtaz feels at home now, probably for the first time. But this does not mean that he has overcome his sense of homesickness or has found absolute harmony between himself and the social world. The scene continues with the appearance of Suad's ghost:

²⁶⁷ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 439–40. Italics belong to the translator and divide Mümtaz's inner thoughts from the narrator's descriptions. The translator here uses "beautiful" and "sublime" interchangeably. However, *güzel*, exists in the Turkish text, referring to "beautiful." Yet it can be interpreted as sublime, depending on the context. See Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Huzur*, 25th ed. (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2016), 405.

[Suad] “Of course it doesn’t connect. Because what you’re seeing is nothing but unmediated reality.”

“But yesterday and the day before, didn’t I also see things this way? Wasn’t I perceiving reality? Hadn’t I always encountered it before?”

He sensed the presence of the man beside him, but he couldn’t look him in the face, though this didn’t seem unnatural.

“No... Because you had been regarding your surroundings from the perspective of your identity. You were actually observing your own self.”²⁶⁸

In the moment, when Mümtaz feels the pure reality of the world, it is no coincidence that Suad appears and challenges him as his counterpart. When Mümtaz vulnerably confirms his weakness after Ihsan’s counsel, the only person that comes to his mind was also Suad. It is a crucial point that Mümtaz talks to Suad in another vulnerable moment whether the scene is narrated as Mümtaz’s dream or an encounter with Suad’s ghost.²⁶⁹ Suad tries to seduce Mümtaz regarding death, but Mümtaz resists his seductive and accusatory expressions. At the end of this scene, Mümtaz falls to the floor, and the bottle of medicine breaks. However, he has confronted his fear of being like Suad and the idea of death, thus passing this challenging test successfully. Meanwhile, the radio announces the outset of World War II, and Mümtaz arrives home, shocking Macide and the doctor due to his miserable appearance. Mümtaz wonders if the recurring crisis of Ihsan’s illness has passed:

...Then he turned to face the doctor. “How is he?”

“So—so,” he said. “He is better. He doesn’t need anything more. Have you heard the news?”

Mümtaz, no longer listening, had withdrawn to a corner where he stared at his palms, then darted from his spot and walked toward the stairs.

“But he [Mümtaz] couldn’t ascend. There, on the first step, he sank back down with his head in his hands. The doctor looked at him *as if to say*, “Now you’re mine, all mine!” Wiping her eyes, Macide approached him. Alone, in the quiescence of the house, an intrepid voice on the radio spoke of the turn of events on behalf of them all.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 439–40.

²⁶⁹ For some interpretations of this scene, see Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar*, 46; Seyhan, *Crossed Destinies*, 148; Rentzch and Şahin, *Tanpınar’ın Saklı Dünyası*; and Uçman and İnci, “*Bir Gül Bu Karanlıklarda*.”

²⁷⁰ Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 447. The italics are mine.

This scene contains uncertainties regarding both Ihsan's health and Mümtaz's mental state. These uncertainties have led to over- and misinterpretations of the final scene, with literary scholars speculating whether Mümtaz has gone insane or has died.²⁷¹ However, these comments ignore the singular focalization discussed earlier. In this technique, the narrator's use of the "as if" idiom shows Mümtaz's perception.²⁷² Who looks at Mümtaz is significant, but who sees the doctor is more crucial. The narrator tells how Mümtaz perceives the way the doctor looks at him and expresses Mümtaz's perception of the doctor's eyes in the early morning of the stressful, sleepless, and shocking night—not the way the doctor looks at him.

At the end of the novel, Mümtaz has faced all his fears and anxieties: losing Nuran's love when she returned to her ex-husband, losing his father figure Ihsan (though this remains ambiguous), the symbolic or even literal confrontation with Suad, and the beginning of World War II. The final scene then forms the resolution of Mümtaz's multi-faceted crisis as all the knotted problems are untied and result in yet another uncertain relief. Mümtaz's story ends at its climax and thus leaves many questions unanswered. However, despite the ambiguities, Mümtaz recognizes, at least, the world beyond his nostalgic and mystical conception of the world and attempts to be self-consciously prepared for life after all these phases he has just passed through.

In sum, the idea of the tragic in the novel relies first on the uncontrollable forces that designate one's fate. By building on this aspect and the idea of inherent failure, the fiction depicts Mümtaz's existential crisis as inevitable due to his sense of homesickness and past

²⁷¹ For Kaplan, Mümtaz dies in the end, see Kaplan, "Bir Şairin Romanı," 57. For a view that he goes mad, see Naci, *100 Türk Romanı*, 212 and Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar*, 23. For a view that Mümtaz continues his life, see Moran, *Eleştirel Bir Bakış I*, 295.

²⁷² For this use, see Tanpınar, *A Mind at Peace*, 33, 81, 421, 436, 447. For a discussion on this use in other novels, see Paul Armstrong, "What is it Like to Be Conscious? Impressionism and the Problem of Qualia," in *A History of the Modernist Novel*, ed. Gregory Castle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 68.

traumas. He tries to overcome this struggle with his yearning and quest for secular morality in 1930s Turkey, but he fails to do so. Mümtaz's suffering emerges from the uncontrollable catastrophes, past traumas, love pain, and its sorrow. But it also derives from the challenging state of being, particularly in 1930s Istanbul, where the Ottoman imperial culture was gradually disappearing as the Western-oriented, secular cultural politics were being imposed. *A Mind at Peace* then depicts "the tragedy of passive suffering"²⁷³, portraying Mümtaz's confusion, self-confrontation, pain, and awareness of the reality of Turkey from within his consciousness.

Mümtaz's attempts to make sense of the world under such conditions turns into lamentation, grief, and a hopeless endurance, in which he could only struggle. The novel offers neither an explicit happy ending nor a hopeful resolution but instead provides a reconciliation between Mümtaz's inner harmony and the social world that was left at the threshold—and not as explicit as Nuran's in *Pleiades Storm*. It does not hint at whether Mümtaz fully comes to terms with Ihsan's vision, or, more generally, the effects of Turkish modernity. Despite Mümtaz's crisis and its existential, moral, and sociocultural aspects, the novel configures a tragic vision in which the protagonist passively suffers rather than tackles a purely unresolved conflict of values in action or a particular flaw.

²⁷³ Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, 69.

Chapter 3

The Secular Emancipation and its Tragic
Redemption in *Lying Down to Die*

Chapter Three

The Secular Emancipation and its Tragic Redemption in *Lying Down to Die*

Published in 1973, Aġaoġlu's debut novel, *Ölmeğe Yatmak* "Lying Down to Die," is the first novel in the *Dar Zamanlar* (Narrow Times) tetralogy.²⁷⁴ It is considered a canonical novel in Turkish literature, containing a mixture of innovative and modernist narrative conventions. The novel recounts the life story of the female protagonist, Aysel, who represents a Western-oriented, patriotic, urban woman of modern Turkey. At the outset of the fiction, Aysel is a middle-aged, leftist professor determined to kill herself because of her sexual affair with Engin, a student of hers from university. In a hotel room, she confronts the uneasiness of this act and deals with her shame and self-blame. Within this confrontation, the narrative depicts the various stages of Aysel's life from her last day at a primary school in 1938 to an unspecified day in April in the very late 1960s.

The novel presents the panorama of the first generation of Turkey whose members were born between the 1920s and the early 1930s and who were ideologically schooled by Turkey's secular, nationalist, and progressivist modernization program. Thus, the telling of Aysel's life story brings to the stage the complex interplay of her identity, gender, agency, and modernity experience in Turkey.²⁷⁵ Aysel is portrayed as both a victim of her behaviors

²⁷⁴ The other novels of the tetralogy are *Bir Düğün Gecesi* (A Wedding Night), *Hayır...* (No...), and *Dert Dinleme Uzmanı* (An Expert to Listen to Problems). They were published in 1979, 1987, and 2014, respectively. Until the last novel, these novels remained as a trilogy. The last novel has no direct relationship with the other novels in terms of characters, plot, and settings despite the commonality of the first three novels.

²⁷⁵ For an analysis of the novel in relation to irony and the discourse of Westernization, see Gunvald Axner Ims, *Conflicted Selves: Ironic Representations of Westernization in Three Twentieth-Century Turkish Novels* (Uppsala, SE: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2020), 141–80. For a short but profound analysis of the trilogy, see Parla, *Don Kişot'tan Bugüne*, 305–16. See also Nüket Esen and Erol Köroġlu, eds., *Hayata Bakan Edebiyat: Adalet Aġaoġlu Yapıtlarına Eleştirel Yaklaşımlar* (Istanbul: Boġaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2003). For general information about Aġaoġlu and her work, see Petra de Bruijn, "Adalet Aġaoġlu (1929–)," in *Turkish Novelists Since 1960*, ed. Burcu Alkan and Çimen Günay–Erkol (Detroit: Gale Cengage, 2014), 3–18.

and of the modern condition in Turkey. Her individual story entangled with Turkey's path to modernization is represented through two frames, told successively and connected within thirteen chapters. Each chapter is titled with the precise hour and minute (e.g., 07.55) and narrates Aysel's recent acts, speeches, and thoughts in the first-person narration, using inner monologue, stream of consciousness technique, and involuntary memories.

In the plot, Aysel checks into a hotel room in the early morning, lies on a bed in a suicidal mood, and re-evaluates her life. The linear timeframe of the plot covers around one-and-a-half hours, which forms the narrative structure of the novel. Following each chapter, the titled sections within it recall the past events and actions related to Aysel, which constitute the second narrative frame. These sections consist of different stories, letters, diary notes, radio broadcasts, governmental declarations, and blurbs from a newspaper, illustrating various phases and conditions in which Aysel and her friends had found themselves in for over three decades. These sections assemble the individual stories and the socio-political history of Turkey. Additionally, there exists an unknown narrator who tells the events in the third-person, playing a crucial role in determining the rhythm, mode, and discourse of the story in the second frame.

This chapter examines how Aysel's existential crisis in the hotel room is represented in relation to Republican modernity and how the idea of the tragic is constructed within this representation. By focusing on the narrative features and the textual strategy of the fiction, this chapter explores the paradox of what it means to be a modern Republican woman in the first decades of Turkey. Thus, it scrutinizes the relationship between Aysel's existential crisis, ethical dilemmas, and the contradictions inherent Turkey's secular, nationalist modernization. The first section examines the relationship between the narrative structure of the novel and Aysel's self-confrontation, as the plot construction relies on the implied act of committing suicide in the hotel room. The way in which Aysel's crisis and moral dilemma are narrated

problematizes the idealized image of modern Turkish women defined and imposed by Turkey's secular modernization project. The second section then examines how this problematization becomes the source of Aysel's crisis, as her vision of the world and its ethics begin to conflict with the gender discourse of Republican modernity and its moral norms.

The third section then discusses the relationship between Aysel's flawed action, the external conditions beyond her agency, and the reasons for her failure, all which put her into a severe crisis. This discussion aims to unearth the meaning of Aysel's affair with her student and to analyze the interplay between Aysel's crisis and her female body, as the narrative centers upon Aysel's act from the normative perspective of (un)faithfulness, which causes her inner conflict. Lastly, the fourth section examines Aysel's suffering, her recognition of her own failures, and her newly emerging self-awareness. Within this new self-awareness, at the apex of her crisis, a resistant voice emerges that challenges the gender discourse of the Republican ideology and its masculinist aspects (e.g., the moralistic norm of marital fidelity as a virtue, the asexual public image of Republican Turkish women, and the burden of being a dedicated, patriotic citizen who has no individualistic desire).

Suicide as the State of Crisis and its Suspense

Lying Down to Die begins with Aysel's arrival at a hotel room to commit suicide, as she feels confused, guilty, and ashamed because she had an affair with her student Engin and thus cheated on her husband, Ömer. In the first chapter titled "07.22," Aysel locks herself in the room, closes the curtains, takes her clothes off, and lies down on the bed, naked in the dark hotel room. Nakedness, silence, and darkness are key features in the narrative space; the hotel room contains no special characteristics that would enable Aysel to connect to the external world. The anonymity of the objects and the room provides a dark, silent space for her to start reviewing her life marked by the sociocultural, ideological, and moral imperatives of

Turkey's secular modernization.²⁷⁶ The novel predominantly tells a confrontation between her past and present self.

However, Aysel's crisis hinges not only on the moral concern of her extramarital relationship with Engin but on her ideals of modern individualism and the secular ethics of Republican modernity. Aysel confronts both the displays of her disloyalty as a mental breakdown and the moral violation of her idealized female identity, and substantially—the reasons and conditions that caused her affair with Engin. This point is where, why, and how the tragic is constructed because Aysel's self-confrontation reflects her ethical conflict that turns into her existential crisis. The process of this conflict is narrated in a dialectical mode. In this mode, the two narrative frames complete each other, conveying the tension between Aysel's present crisis and her past actions, and that between her agency and the uncontrollable sociocultural forces. In this way, the novel establishes a direct connection between Aysel's life story and the socio-historical dynamics of Turkey, designating the narrative structure as a whole.

Having locked herself in the hotel room, Aysel is isolated from the external world. Her nakedness enhances this isolation, eliminating anything material related to her socio-economic status, profession, and gender indications. She lies on the bed naked, freed from all her roles and responsibilities, which explicitly emphasizes her vulnerability and despair. This setting reinforces the implied act of committing suicide that the title of the novel already offers: *Ölmeye Yatmak*, “lying down to die” in English. The first pages intimate this suicidal death, as Aysel mentions that she cannot remember what she wrote on the note in her bag. In

²⁷⁶ For the analysis of hotel room, see Irzik, “Allegorical lives: The Public and the Private in the Modern Turkish Novel,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2003): 551; Gürle, “Hermits, Stoics, and Hysterics,” 93–94.

addition to this signal, Aysel thinks, “But I could be also serious at the threshold of the last thing that could be ever tried.”²⁷⁷

The space of the narrative also evokes a dramatic atmosphere and disturbing imagery of being in a coffin or under the soil. In the following chapters, this imagery is voiced by Aysel herself: “I lied down just as I am in a coffin.”²⁷⁸ The isolated and non-significant hotel room indicates where her crisis as tragic occurs in the story. This physical place indicates solitude, complete seclusion, and inward tension. In one sense, Aysel’s way of hiding resembles Nuran’s reclusive periods in *Pleiades Storm*. The indoor spaces turn into a place of a private crisis and self-questioning, where modernity is being played out: this also similar to Mümtaz’s inner conflict reflected in *A Mind at Peace*, though his conflict is triggered by outside space. The theme of suicide also looms large in both *Pleiades Storm* and *A Mind at Peace*, to varying degrees. However, due to Aysel’s solitary presence and the physical limitations of the space, the tragic essence of her crisis is built on Aysel’s inner world, which depicts her dilemmas, regrets, self-inquiry, revelations, and suffering.

The implied act of committing suicide designates not only the narrative logic, plot structure, and expectation of the reader but also how Aysel’s crisis is represented. Although her suicide is strongly implied, this act is continuously suspended, and therefore, it becomes vague. This vagueness persists towards the end of the novel and turns into the functional justification of the story and the plot structure. The ambiguity of Aysel’s suicide conveys a playfully dual meaning of “lying down to die.” First, this phrase refers to her intention for a literal suicide that is meant at the outset. Second, it indicates her self-confrontation and self-

²⁷⁷ Aġaoġlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 10.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 69. For the comparison of the novel with Samuel Beckett’s work regarding the lack of action, see Elmas Şahin, “Intertextuality in Beckett’s and Aġaoġlu’s Work,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 16, no. 1 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2279>.

defeating acts due to her faith in the Republican discourse of modern Turkish women and its ethical and intellectual responsibility.²⁷⁹

A middle-aged, successful, leftist professor devoted to the vision of Republican modernity, Aysel considers how she is (and has been) an exemplary, patriotic, modern urban woman born from the sociocultural reforms in 1920s and 1930s Turkey. Her act of lying down and the suspense of her suicide enable the novel to portray the details of Aysel's present crisis and its existential, ethical, sociocultural, and even ideological manifestations. The fiction illustrates her existential struggle and moral dilemma concerning her past, her relations with other people, and the moral values of the secular modernization in Turkey—essentially her way of experiencing Republican modernity. Arising from her moral anxiety, Aysel's inner conflict reflects the apparent contradictions between her will to be in the world as a modern Turkish female individual and the moral imperatives and obligations of Turkish society.

Accordingly, Aysel's crisis lies in the tension between her experience of the past decades, her patriotic female identity, which is further complicated by her contradictory and alienated state of mind. This female identity relies on the sense of a strong responsibility to her fellow compatriots and country: that is, Aysel feels that she "always" has to undergo and endure purposeful "serious tasks" in order to be useful to her country and support her countrymen.²⁸⁰ The ethical questioning of her affair with Engin that violates this commitment and the suspended act of committing suicide reinforce her conflict of values by adding a dramatic dimension to it. Furthermore, Aysel thinks that she may be pregnant, which intensifies the pathos in her crisis.

²⁷⁹ It should be also regarded that suicide is the main leitmotif of the tetralogy. In the second novel, *Bir Düşün Gecesi*, Aysel is absent from the story. The novel begins with her sister's phrase: "If we do not commit suicide, let's drink, then!" and ends with it. In the third one, *Hayır...* suicide is a theme, a part of the events, and the subject of Aysel's academic article.

²⁸⁰ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 193; 204.

Aysel's crisis, in other words, consists of three successive layers: Her potential act of committing suicide, her intimacy with Engin as the motive of her suicidal intention, and her self-confrontation while reviewing her life. These three knotted aspects constitute the tragic and its elements in Aysel's story. They are also linked to the gender discourse of Republican modernity. The suspense of her suicide therefore becomes the motor of the narrative, as it reveals the unresolvable dilemmas and both the moral and sociocultural forces that transcend her free will and power of action.

Historizing the Existential Crisis

Aysel's inner conflict is represented in a way that places her individual story within the broad history of nation-building, Westernization, and modernization in Turkey. This representation unravels the dialectic between the individual and the sociocultural circumstances regarding Aysel's crisis as a tragic condition. The interplay of free will, action, and uncontrollable forces (though not necessarily only fate or a certain socio-political aspect but also bad fortune and coincidence) determines the trajectory of Aysel's life. In other words, the novel attempts to grasp this intersection between Aysel's modernity and gendered experiences in Turkey by narrating her confusion, moral dilemma, failure, and suffering in a back-and-forth plot construction.²⁸¹ While the chapters describe Aysel's recent actions, feelings, and alienation in the hotel room, the separately titled sections within the chapters illustrate her modernity experience, the question of gender, and the sociocultural conditions that forcefully formed Aysel's Western-oriented, Republican vision of life and her secular ethics.

The source of the tragic in Aysel's story relies on why she is doomed to failure. The novel reveals, in retrospect, how this failure occurred and questions whether it even

²⁸¹ For the aim and writing process of this novel, see Ağaoğlu's diary, Adalet Ağaoğlu, *Damla Damla Günler I (1969–1977)* (Istanbul: Alkım Yayınevi, 2004), 10, 21, 54, 107, 191, 195.

constitutes a failure. Aysel's self-confrontation, while she lies down to die, comprises the how and why her existential crisis emerges, pursuing the interplay between the power of her agency and the external forces beyond it. Her self-confrontation process connects different temporalities, events, discourses, and spaces to the outcomes of her inner conflict at present. The novel then frames the intricate relationship between the individual and the social, that is, "the connections between two such seemingly irreconcilable notions as the modern autonomous subject and the determinism of the destiny to which tragic subjects submit."²⁸² Thus, the depiction of this self-confrontation enables the readers to ruminate on the causal link between her agency, responsibility, and the sociocultural aspects beyond. This intention designates the relevancy between the content and form of the narrative. "The hand that has remade the history" is a key phrase repeatedly mentioned towards the end of the novel. This phrase reiterates the idea that lays emphasis on the ideological, moral, and sociocultural factors directly related to Turkish modernity, well beyond Aysel's agency.

What the phrase "the hand that has remade the history" underscores, in this sense, is the question of the balance between the uncontrollable forces and Aysel's responsibility—i.e., whether she has an agency. Aysel's given agency indeed stems from the emancipatory policies and discourse of Republican modernity advocating for the equality and visibility of women in the public space. To what extent Aysel was and is free to act the way she wants gains importance as she grows up to embody the exemplary, urban Republican woman defined by the Occidental vision of Turkish modernity. On the other hand, Aysel's moral dilemma due to her affair with Engin and her ensuing crisis are not separated from the question of her agency and personal responsibility. Aysel's act of lying down to die involves

²⁸² Gabriela Basterra, *Seductions of Fate: Tragic Subjectivity, Ethics, Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2.

the re-evaluation of her actions and their consequences, confronting her fallacy about both masculinist secular ethics of society and her confined way of being in life.

For Aysel, confronting her present and past self turns into confronting the strict limitations of her self-determination. Aysel's existential crisis and moral questioning surface this limitation derived from Turkish modernity and its gender discourse. Her crisis is historicized through personal letters, diary notes, radio broadcasts, pieces from the semi-official newspaper *Ulus* (Nation), as well as the historical depictions of national and international incidents.²⁸³ There is, then, the abundance of various discourses conveyed by different characters, various genres, styles, and languages that make the narrative mode of the fiction not only tragic but also ironic and parodic on several planes.²⁸⁴ Heteroglossia coined by Mikhail Bakhtin becomes a crucial element of the novel, "as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized."²⁸⁵ The historicist and documentary-like features of the novel contain a strong representational layer due to the manifestations of the relationship between the individual and the social; fiction and history; and between agency, fate, and contingency.

Two key points require an explanation at this juncture. The first one refers to how the novel represents the inexplicable interplay between Aysel's acts, free will, and the sociocultural and ideological factors in the plot structure. The second point implies how Aysel's crisis and self-confrontation are constructed in relation to this interplay. By considering these two points, I argue that the novel establishes a particular revealing mode in

²⁸³ Parla interprets the interplay of Turkish history and the individual concerning *Bildungsroman*. See Jale Parla, "Tarihçem Kabusumdur: Kadın Romanlarında Rüya, Kâbus, Oda, Yazı," in *Kadınlar Dile Düşünce: Edebiyat ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet*, ed. Sibel Irzik and Jale Parla (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 192. The novel can be seen as "a bildungsroman of the intellectual." See Alkan, *Promethean Encounters*, 21.

²⁸⁴ For irony and its link with Westernization in the novel, see Ims, *Conflicted Selves*, 141–80.

²⁸⁵ M. M. Bakhtin, "The Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 262.

that the reader sees Aysel's acts, beliefs, fallacies, and her relations with her community in various conditions and at different times. The logic, narrative structure, and plot construction of the novel thus present the tension between the sociocultural or ideological forces in modernizing Turkey, Aysel's agency, and her fortune in an illustrative and critical narrative mode. This mode historicizes Aysel's crisis and the process of her self-confrontation, through the titled sections, in retrospect. Accordingly, the tragic in the fiction is also historicized.

This kind of historicization by the interrogative and illustrative mode of representation resembles that of the Brechtian epic theatre to a certain extent.²⁸⁶ In this mode, the tragic in Aysel's story springing from her existential and moral self-questioning is narrated "in a dialectical, non-illusionist and non-linear manner, declaring its own artifice as it hoped also to reveal the workings of ideology"²⁸⁷ and its ethics, including Aysel's actions, choices, and responsibility. This mode therefore shows the relation between her agency and the socio-ideological aspects that leads to her ontological crisis. While the former involves Aysel's vision of life, her way of being, and her flawed actions as the traits of the human condition, the latter concerns her gender, sexuality, family, place of birth, national identity, and intellectual responsibility as the essential features of the modern condition in Turkey.

With this mode, Aysel's tragedy is closely related to her social class, traditional family, gender, and modernity experience. There are referential connections between the chapters that narrate Aysel's self-confrontation at present and the titled sections that illustrate

²⁸⁶ Irzik stresses the commonalities of the novel with the formalistic aspects of the epic plays, listing several features, such as the external narrator's role in an "attentive stage management," the use of irony, titles of sections, and slogans. See Irzik, "Allegorical Lives," 559–60; "Ölmeye Yatmak, Anlatı ve Otorite" in *Hayata Bakan Edebiyat*, 47–51; foreword to *Karnavaldan Romana: Edebiyat Teorisinden Dil Felsefesine Seçme Yazılar*, by Mihail Bahtin, ed. Sibel Irzik, trans. Cem Soydemir (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2001), 22.

²⁸⁷ Peter Brooker, "Keywords in Brecht's Theory and Practice of Theatre," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*, ed. Peter Thomson and Gendry Sacks, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 215.

her past events on a wider, historical plane. These connections exist both contextually and formally. In chapter two, for instance, Aysel comments on the first section.²⁸⁸ This section titled *Doğdu Gün Işıkları Ülkü'nün* (The Daylight of the Ideal Rose) tells of Aysel and her friends' graduation ceremony in 1938, taking back the story to the earliest time reference in the novel. The section serves as the formative episode of the second narrative frame, indicating the social class, family status, and gender of each character as their destinies and outlining the following chapters and sections, which is a *mise en abyme*, or what Mieke Bal calls a "mirror-text."²⁸⁹ The temporal gap between the chapters and the titled sections becomes narrow throughout the fiction, and the chapters autopsy Aysel's actions, various conditions, and the ideological structure behind the crisis of her female identity.

In this way, while Aysel recognizes her failure and the conditions transcending her control, the fiction keeps the reader alert by posing complex questions. Aysel's crisis, ethical dilemma, fallacies, and their reasons are left to be interpreted by the reader, who needs to meditate on how the intersection of socio-ideological forces, individual agency, free will, and even the idea of fate are interpenetrated in Aysel's life. In sum, the integration of various genres, stylistic forms, discourses, historical materials, and the worldviews of the characters depicts how Aysel has become a modern, urban Turkish woman, burdened by existential and moral struggles. This kind of depiction problematizes the sociocultural values and ethics of Turkish modernity.

²⁸⁸ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 31.

²⁸⁹ For the various uses of *mise en abyme* in narratives, see Bal, *Narratology*, 62–63. This section is mostly interpreted as a national allegory due to the presence of the performances by students and their symbolic dimensions. See Irzik, "Allegorical Lives," 559–60; and Alkan, *Promethean Encounters*, 28. It is also read as a parody of national allegory. See Simla Ayşe Doğançün, "From National Allegory to Cosmopolitanism: Transformations in Contemporary Anglo-Indian and Turkish Novels" (PhD Diss., University of Amsterdam, 2014), 24.

Unmaking the Gender Discourse of the Republic

As Aysel lies on the bed, she thinks how if her female students were to see her in this situation, as Anna Karenina or Madame Bovary, they would laugh at her.²⁹⁰ Aysel's reference to Anna Karenina and Emma Bovary manifests her true intention behind committing suicide, and more importantly, underscores the tension between marital fidelity, suicide, and happiness. This initial reason driving Aysel to commit suicide first materializes as an instinctive decision, and the implied idea of committing suicide over her affair with Engin creates a dramatic effect through to the end of the novel. This preliminary implication is then used to unfold Aysel's crisis and its deeply hidden reasons. Her unfaithful act from a normative perspective contains more than her moral dilemma and the question of family.

Aysel is portrayed as an exemplary "daughter of the Republic" and as a "new woman" of modernizing Turkey, becoming an exemplary urban Turkish woman and a successful professor thanks to Republican reforms at that time. Therefore, her moral dilemma is double: she violates not only the moral and emotional agreement with her husband but also the values of "family-centered modernity"²⁹¹ in Turkey. This double deception then becomes the essence of her current crisis. In her prominent study on feminist literature, Rita Felski argues that in many fictions that narrate women's experiences "[t]he beginning of the text [...] typically introduces a negative model, an image of female alienation which the text will strive to overcome."²⁹² Although Felski's study particularly relies on the novels of Western literature, *Lying Down to Die* possesses the same feature in terms of its plot development and poses questions on gender, self-identity, and the female body in the setting of Turkey.

²⁹⁰ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 31.

²⁹¹ See Sancar, *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti*, 317.

²⁹² Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 129.

The image of a modern, urban, patriotic Turkish woman is a significant phenomenon and rhetoric of Republican modernity that portrays singular and idealized femininity in the formative years of the nation-building in Turkey. In chapter four, some of Aysel's letters, which she had sent to her friend Semiha when they were teenagers, emphasize Aysel's goal and will to perform the features of this idealized image of Turkish women. For instance, Aysel complains that her father forces her to cover her head with a scarf; she feels ashamed of this paternalistic tradition as she wants to be a "civilized" woman following Atatürk's order.²⁹³ However, she cannot disobey her father as he may not let her go back to school after the summer. The necessity of making crucial choices appears in the early stages of Aysel's life. In her case, embracing the discourse of the modern Turkish womanhood seems to be the only alternative against traditional and religious paternalism. Her choices like this determine the trajectory of her life, but not necessarily in the way she desires.

Aysel gradually recognizes this paradox and her limited agency in the hotel room. This recognition intensifies the present state of her disappointment, frustration, vulnerability, and suffering. Her letters in the following sections unfold her sorrow and fragility, depicting how her will and actions in the past have shaped her into the person she is now. Due to those letters, it is possible to trace how young Aysel's vision of life and ethics have been influenced by the Republican woman discourse. For instance, Aysel describes a garden party she attended in Ankara as "a civilized environment" where both men and women dance together.²⁹⁴ For Aysel, however, all those men are brothers just as the whole nation is seen as a big family with the "ideal citizens" defined as the "children of the state."²⁹⁵ Her female

²⁹³ Aġaoġlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 77.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁹⁵ Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 68. For the family metaphor in literature, see Türe, *Facts and Fantasies*, 125.

identity is then limited to being a responsible, educated, and exemplary citizen that conveys the mindset of the fraternity of the nation: as Deniz Kandiyoti phrases it, “[a] ‘true daughter of the republic’.”²⁹⁶ Aysel’s femininity is suppressed from the beginning and excludes sexual desire. This exclusion thus makes her asexual in public, where “women were expected to act like men and be like men.”²⁹⁷

Aysel’s other letter shows to what extent she is marginalized due to her traditional appearance by both her friends and teachers in late 1930s Ankara. As a young girl from a provincial town with long braided hair and a long skirt, she becomes an outsider as her appearance and mode of dress do not fit the image of a modern, urban woman. The community’s understanding defines the singular, Westernized femininity with visual elements, symbols, and clothing. What Aysel learns through her marginalization is that modern Turkish women must look and act like European women and to do so, she must reject her peasant appearance and manners. The definition of *the* ideal Turkish woman in this sense is explicitly limited to an urban representative of “the modern, secular, Westernized state” as women were “expected to behave and dress in what the state defined as a modern, Western manner.”²⁹⁸ In another section, Aysel’s classmate, Aydın, writes in his diary that she is beautiful, but not “*Avrupai*” (European-like) enough as a young girl.²⁹⁹

The titled sections within each chapter of the novel illustrate that Aysel encounters the strict definition of this idealized, singular femininity in Turkey. This definition self-evidently desexualizes Turkish women in public, and the image of the modern Turkish woman is seen as the sublime in the city and by its urban community, representing the degree to which the

²⁹⁶ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Slave Girls, Tempresses, and Comrades: Images of Women in the Turkish Novel,” *Feminist Studies* 8 (1988), 46.

²⁹⁷ Yeşim Arat, “The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey,” in *Rethinking Modernity*, 109. Sabiha Gökçen is the first female war pilot as a model for the ideal, asexual, and patriotic woman. See *ibid.*, 99.

²⁹⁸ White, “State Feminism,” 145–46. See also Nuri, “Crisis Narratives,” 138.

²⁹⁹ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 164.

nation is modern and Westernized. During her coming of age, Aysel is trapped between the traditional values dictated by her father and the values of the progressivist, emancipatory vision of the masculinist state feminism. Aysel's present crisis in the hotel room is then rooted in her modernity experience and its burden, for her way of becoming (and being recognizes as) a modern Turkish woman generate her existential angst at present, which is indeed beyond her moral dilemma due to her affair with Engin.

Aysel's conflict can be seen as inevitable because she did and still does perform the gender role and acts prescribed by Republican modernity. Due to this sole and imperative condition, she would grapple with its limit and challenges sooner or later. Yet her crisis is unforeseeable until her sexual affair with Engin, which is presented as Aysel's fault in the narrative. But by engaging in this affair, Aysel also reveals her suppressed sexuality and will to be a woman in the way she desires. Aysel's inner conflict thus bears on the Butlerian understanding of "to be a woman is to have *become* a woman, too"³⁰⁰ in the implications of Turkish modernity. The way of emancipating women in Turkey involves particularly defined physical appearance, gestures, symbols, and styles in public that specify the psyche of *the* patriotic, urban, modern Turkish woman. This restricted definition directly eliminates personal desires, female sexuality, and overt eroticism. Aysel has internalized this strictly defined urban female identity over the years. However, her affair with Engin contravenes the secular ethics of what she has internally valued so far.

Due to this breach, Aysel questions her actions until she reaches an epiphany of her self-understanding. In the following chapter, she looks at the calluses on her feet and remembers the days she went to a beauty salon for a pedicure. She always felt a need to highlight her profession and social role as a female academician there, not just as a woman or

³⁰⁰ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988), 522.

an individual. She proves her role in society through her profession, as any personal need in relation to her body seems to be a superfluous and secondary. The successive examples discussed so far (e.g., the letters from her youth and her reflecting on her past while looking at her feet) reveal the inescapable impact of the Republican gender discourse on Aysel's self-identity, ethics, and intellectual formation.

The tragic in Aysel's story is indeed derived from the paradox that makes her a "part of the Turkish 'common good' defined by the nationalist model of paternalism and obligation."³⁰¹ While Aysel gains several vital civil liberties, simultaneously her agency is restricted by the new rules, responsibilities, and moral values of the Republican ideology and secular ethics. Anything about Aysel's body makes her feel guilty if she prioritizes her body or sexuality in daily life. She then becomes an asexual, intellectual woman with a strong sense of moral responsibility. Her affair with Engin therefore results in two emotions: guilt and shame. These two emotions are due to the violation of her fidelity to her husband and the idealized imagination of the modernizing nation, both literally and symbolically. Aysel violates a code of secular ethics performed in the city and valued by its Westernizing community. She then destructs the sublime for Turkey's nation-building and its masculinist gender discourse because the purity of her womanhood is self-consciously sexualized. Her implacable violation causes a sense of shame, contemplations of suicide, and an inner crisis.

In the masculinist Republican ideology, female purity plays a significant role, as women represent the nation in a modernizing society. Although female purity indicates a different configuration from the traditional or religious one, it still becomes a substantial part of the modernization discourse and of the public sphere, linking the honor of women to the

³⁰¹ Gürle, "Hermits, Stoics, and Hysterics," 97. For a link between female suffering and socio-political structures in another non-Western context, see Peina Zhuang and Jiazhao Lin, "Becoming as Suffering: A Genealogy of Female Suffering in Chinese Myth and Literature," *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 21, 5 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3262>.

nation, rather than to Islam or any traditional belief. Honor hinges on the female body and sexuality, which brings chastity to the center stage in Aysel's self-confrontation throughout the plot. Chastity serves as a way of constructing the modern Turkish woman discourse and asexual identity dictated by the Republican ideology insomuch as the narrative presents. Promiscuity as its counterpart thus evokes a particular pejorative trait for women, thus making them *orospu*, which means prostitute in English. Transcending the given limits of the Republican female identity then leads to a derogatory and marginalizing label.

In the fiction, Aysel considers the threat of this label both unconsciously, when she enters the hotel, and self-consciously, when she lies on the bed after a while. She is worried that the hotel staff will think that she is a prostitute when she books a room.³⁰² The same fear manifests when she hears voices outside the room, which makes her think that being in that room reduces her self-esteem and dignity, as the room does not seem “*namuslu*,” pure or honorable, enough to her.³⁰³ *Namuslu*, here, indicates the asexuality of women, that is, the notion of chastity that the novel problematizes. The relationship between Aysel's affair with Engin, chastity, faith in the nation, and the idea of suicide therefore becomes the essence of her crisis and the tragic condition configured in the novel.

Indeed, female suicide occupies a significant place in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century literature. The same theme is common both in early Turkish novels and in the first decades of twentieth-century Turkish literature.³⁰⁴ In these novels, female suicide is closely associated with the link between infidelity, chastity, or purity as a virtue. Moreover, the (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity process is presented as a misguiding seduction for young

³⁰² Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeğe Yatmak*, 71.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 229–30.

³⁰⁴ For a link between faithlessness and suicide in the early novels, see Finn, *Early Turkish Novel*, 31. For this relation and its feminist criticism in those novels, see Kandiyoti, “Slave Girls,” 35–50 and “Emancipated but Unliberated?,” 326. In the printed magazines of the 1920s, “[m]oral stories often refer to suicide.” See Türe, *Facts and Fantasies*, 137.

women. However, *Lying Down to Die* differs from these novels due to its self-conscious, critical approach that challenges the values of the modern Republican woman discourse and its masculinist aspects. Aysel's nearly one-and-a-half-hour re-evaluation then reconsiders the existential, ethical, and gender aspects of the modern condition in Turkey critically.

At the apex of her crisis, however, Aysel still defines her femininity with honor and self-esteem and wants to die in an honorable way: "I should be purely clean when they find me dead here. Completely naked and purely clean."³⁰⁵ These two significant points require further discussion. First, Aysel's affair with Engin defies her asexuality as an indication of her ethics. Second, she then attempts to justify her purification and innocence in terms of her sexuality. Thus, Aysel distinguishes herself from the negative image of the "prostitute" that comes to her mind several times. This approach unavoidably blurs her sexual desire as the crucial reason for her affair with Engin, underlining it as a secular transgression or "sin". Sexuality is then detached from lust, eroticism, and emotions in Aysel's story.³⁰⁶

Lying as Reinventing Self

However, Aysel's views and feelings gradually change during her self-confrontation in the hotel room. Her gradual recognition in the plot poses a question about the interplay between her morality, agency, and the secular ideology of Republican modernity. The tragic condition in Aysel's self-confrontation is voiced by herself: "They do not understand the pain of being wrong. The pain of being mistaken at a very unexpected moment. Unbearableness in this!"³⁰⁷ This is her most vulnerable moment in which she explicitly illustrates the recognition of her

³⁰⁵ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 112.

³⁰⁶ The female protagonists are noticeably asexual in the novels of a prominent feminist author, Halide Edib. See Kandiyoti, "Slave Girls," 46; and Hülya Adak, "Otobiyoğrafik Benliğin Çok-Karakterliliği: Halide Edib'in İlk Romanlarında Toplumsal Cinsiyet," in *Kadınlar Dile Düşünce*, 165.

³⁰⁷ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 363.

failure, disillusionment, despair, and sorrow. Aysel begins to realize the fallacy of her nationalist and secular idealism, and the ways and reasons she developed into a modern urban Republican woman. This realization signifies her blindness to her previous actions and the intrinsic aspects of her dissatisfaction in life.

The emancipatory reforms in Turkey provide an alternative space for Aysel through Western-oriented education, public visibility, and the legal equality of women. However, the new rules also imprison her individuality with new obligatory responsibilities, strict codes of morality, and the desexualization of her female identity. She talks to herself about this paradox:

Oh dear, I cannot think of my femininity when I am even with my husband either. The things that I consider are other things. Always different things... More honorable, more supreme things. I am educated that much, I've learned. I run, run... I am almost exhausted. It is almost a period of retirement. Almost... But the country... To save, to glorify, to learn, to teach, to run more... To become civilized more... West... Backward... Advanced... Underdeveloping... To save more... To get rid of...³⁰⁸

Aysel's epiphany here is not conflictual, but it encapsulates her painful, traumatic, and dismal experiences. The moment of Aysel's recognition directly bears on her individuality and femaleness which are, commonly argued from the feminist perspective, "emancipated but unliberated."³⁰⁹ She discerns that all the body practices, sociocultural gestures, and symbolic acts that "compel the body to conform to a historical idea of 'woman', to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility"³¹⁰ during her life. In other words, she has only become a "secular self"³¹¹ in the public sphere or at the university, rather than for herself. This grieved revelation then bears

³⁰⁸ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 290.

³⁰⁹ Kandiyoti, "Emancipated," 324.

³¹⁰ Butler, "Performative Acts," 522.

³¹¹ Nilüfer Göle, *Seküler ve Dinsel: Aşınan Sınırlar* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2012), 20.

the questions of her agency and authenticity. Aysel “has been play-acting all her life,” and due to her recent crisis, as Gürle explains it succinctly, “she comes to feel that she has never been true to herself.”³¹² Her blindness ends at this point, as she gains a revealing insight into her fallacy. However, the narrative still requires the resolution of how Aysel’s course of action ends in the hotel room.

Aysel’s stream of consciousness mirrors the painful and vulnerable moment of her revelation: she asks, “Have I ever been myself?”³¹³ This crucial question indicates her existential struggle explicitly. During her self-confrontation, Aysel comes to a crossroads where her gradually increasing self-awareness emancipates her from her present duties of being a modern Turkish woman. Her affair with Engin then pertains to not only the act of cheating on her husband but also the triggering impulse that subconsciously rejects the gender discourse of Republican modernity and its masculinist ethics. This novel can be, in this sense, seen as a genuine expression of *écriture féminine* in Turkish literature, paving the way for critically narrating the subjects of women and gender, though not necessarily claiming an explicit feminist approach.³¹⁴

Aysel’s affair with Engin causes her to question her female identity—which, up until this point, has been defined and confined by Turkey’s state feminism—and her individualism—which has been limited to being an intellectual, dedicated Republican citizen. It also puts her into the state of suicidality. From another angle, Aysel’s intimate relationship

³¹² Gürle, “Hermits, Stoics, and Hysterics,” 96.

³¹³ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 191.

³¹⁴ For a discussion about feminism in women’s writing in Turkey between 1960 and 1980, see Duygu Çayıröğlü, *Kadınca Bilmeyişlerin Sonu: 1960-1980 Döneminde Feminist Edebiyat* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2022), 12–15; 77–181. See also Güneli Gün, “The Woman in the Darkroom: Contemporary Women Writers in Turkey,” *World Literature Today* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 275–79; and Saliha Paker, “Unmuffled Voices in the Shade and Beyond: Women’s Writing in Turkish,” in *Textual Liberation: Europe Feminist Writing in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Helena Forsås-Scott (New York: Routledge, 1991), 270–300.

with Engin is instrumentalized in the novel because she explains that this affair did not lie in passionate love or irrepressible sexual desire.³¹⁵ Yet this affair problematizes the epistemological and ethical grounds of her existence and female identity, and more importantly, the Republican woman discourse in Turkey. This act predetermines her self-awareness as a confused, malcontent woman pursuing a new avenue in life. Her affair with Engin thus becomes the driving force behind Aysel's awakening, leading to a process of the "self-legislating exercise of moral freedom"³¹⁶ that creates a tragic condition in the fiction. With this endeavor, her immoral action according to Republican secular ethics gains a constructive dimension in the fiction as it commences her self-discovery. In other words, Aysel rejects the "conservative morality and the requirement to remain true to the state's modernizing project and state interests."³¹⁷ Her self-knowledge then comes through her in-depth self-confrontation, sorrowful recognition of her fallacy, and current suffering.

In her analysis of the novel, Gürle argues that Aysel is "a stoic" character that "has become an abstraction."³¹⁸ However, while confronting herself and her past, Aysel recognizes both the internal and external reasons for her failure. She gradually liberates herself by accepting her responsibility, her fallacy, and the redemption of Republican modernity that emancipated her as a woman, though limitedly. Accordingly, Aysel's "[t]ragedy is not an abstraction but a product of a concrete social and political situation"³¹⁹ that derives from the contradictions and effects of Republican modernity. Aysel's responsibility for her choices and

³¹⁵ For this view, see Naci, *100 Türk Romanı*, 417, Çimen Günay-Erkol, "Osmanlı-Türk Romanından Çağdaş Türk Romanına Kadınlık: Değişim ve Dönüşüm," *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 21, no. 2 (2011), 170; and Ann Conway and Çimen Günay-Erkol, "Ölmeye Yatmak'ta Cinsellik ve Olmayan Trajedi," *Bianet*, April 9, 2003, <https://m.bianet.org/english/human-rights/14913-olmeye-yatmakta-cinsellik-ve-olmayan-trajedi>.

³¹⁶ Lambropoulos, *Tragic Idea*, 106.

³¹⁷ White, "State Feminism," 153.

³¹⁸ Gürle, "Hermits, Stoics, and Hysterics," 97.

³¹⁹ Leonard, *Tragic Modernities*, 36.

actions is also a part of her modernity experience under its own specific circumstances. What the novel formalistically, contextually, and discursively intends to grasp is indeed this junction point.

Thus, Aysel's crisis displays the apparent contradiction between how her life in modernizing Turkey is and how she expects it to be, just as in the cases of *Pleiades Storm* and *A Mind at Peace*. Aysel's "contradiction is the birth trauma of moral consciousness"³²⁰ in the hotel room, for she cannot find an explanatory reason for her affair with Engin: "I haven't thought in detail on why I had an affair with him. It is something that had to happen. Inevitable. I did not leave home for that reason. It is for whatever reason I had an affair with my student... A moment that has no beginning and end."³²¹ Aysel's inner monologue eliminates causality in her action to a large extent. Why is then her affair with Engin presented as a necessity in the story? Why and to what extent this necessity is related to Engin requires a discussion, as it provides useful insights into Aysel's actions, her responsibility, and the ethical justification in the novel.

Engin as a young, poor, leftist university student who works in the printing house represents the combination of the working class and the intellectual, leftist community in 1960s Turkey. He is a member of the second generation of modern Turkey who is not blindly dedicated to the progressivist, nationalist modernization like Aysel and her generation were. Two aspects regarding Engin come into prominence: his belonging to the working class and to the generation of the 1960s. Çimen Günay-Erkol's argument about the instrumentalization of sexuality in this fiction is seemingly reasonable as "sexuality is not problematized in a historical frame when considering Aysel's female identity; instead, the novel consecrates the contemporary era of the 1960s as young, new and unsoiled."³²²

³²⁰ Sands, "Tragedy," 84.

³²¹ Aġaoġlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 111–112.

³²² Günay-Erkol, "Kadınlık," 170.

However, two points need a coherent explanation here. First, Aysel's affair with Engin is coincidental and impulsive. Second, Aysel's affair pertains to her troubled relations with the men of her generation and of the previous one. For instance, while Aysel's father and brother resist her transformation into becoming a modern individual in Turkey by going to university, her teacher Dündar and the secular Republican ideology in general shape Aysel's mindset, agency, and even personality. On the other hand, Aysel's male friends always see her as a woman to love, kiss, or marry, rather than as a free individual. Aysel indeed separates herself from both generations' paternalism and its either traditional or modern manifestations.

Aysel's ideological and emotional engagement with the second generation of Turkey in the 1960s then rejects the masculinist vision of the Republican ideology. The idea of revolution at that time enables Aysel to repair her suppressed femininity, limited agency, and restless dissatisfaction. While she reckons with her affair, she also explains its significance at present: "In the period that forces even my femaleness to be gradually shadowed, I find myself full of life suddenly, standing in the front. This was maybe my last chance! I put my heart and soul into it. I was vivid like I was given an injection that resurrects my progressiveness."³²³ Aysel's soliloquy shows that her action is instinctive, unconscious, and fortuitous. She rejects Engin's offer to be together again, which proves the singularity of her act. It is true that her intimacy also conveys "a highly symbolic action"³²⁴ that dismisses the gender discourse and ethics of Turkey's state-led secular modernization. Aysel sympathizes with the second generation of Turkey, and her sympathy contains a way of emulation. She indeed envies this new generation by exemplifying her younger sister, Tezel.

In the most vulnerable moment of her life that may lead to her suicide, Aysel wants to call Tezel and declare that both Engin and Tezel are free from any sense of obligation or

³²³ Aġaoġlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, 188–89.

³²⁴ Alkan, *Promethean Encounters*, 54.

responsibility, unlike herself and her generation.³²⁵ However, Aysel's attempt to be engaged with this second generation of the Republic through her impulsive intimacy can be considered tragic itself because it leads to her another fallacy. This fallacy is not solely a moral concern but Aysel's impulse to have sexual affair with her student Engin to emancipate herself from the imposed femininity is also tragic. Due to this recently recognized fallacy, she stands at a crossroads, which determines her life or death. At this threshold, she recognizes the catastrophe of her idealism and wasted years and that she was doomed to failure.

Her self-confrontation shows that this affair is not a recovery from her fallacy and asexualized female identity. Instead, her self-awareness begins with this affair and its re-evaluation, which compounds her tragic condition. It then leads to her self-discovery concerning her body and sexuality. The tragic mode of Aysel's crisis in the novel relies on "a clear developmental plot in which the heroine moves from a state of alienation to a discovery of female identity through a process of separation from male-defined values" as in many feminist narratives, as Felski explains thoroughly.³²⁶ Aysel's sexuality here then demystifies the existential, ethical, and societal implications of her existential crisis.

This crisis also generates a redemptive power for Aysel because she gains knowledge about her modernity experience, fallacies, failure, and herself. When Aysel looks at her naked body in the mirror in the room, she recognizes that she has begun to meditate on her body and sexuality after her affair with Engin. By standing naked in front of the mirror, Aysel's awareness of her body increases; she overcomes her sense of guilt, shame, and the state of being a victim of the modern condition in Turkey. Lying down to die thus creates a catharsis for both Aysel and the reader in the act of reading. In this mirror scene, the change in Aysel's feelings and insight into the world becomes apparent; she intends to find the "power of

³²⁵ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeğe Yatmak*, 197.

³²⁶ Felski, *Feminist Aesthetics*, 83. For emancipation in women's writing, see Ellen E. Berry, *Women's Experimental Writing: Negative Aesthetics and Feminist Critique* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 4–5.

resistance,”³²⁷ that is, an aspiration for free agency. Her quest for resistance refers to “a process of awakening rather than learning, a recovery of what has always been present but suppressed.”³²⁸ Moreover, she needs to reinvent herself as her crisis unmakes her Republican worldview along with its ideals and ethics. Her decisive intention to resist also indicates her change of mind regarding committing suicide. After her crisis that presents the derivation of evil as the masculinist and restrictive aspects of the secular Republican ideology, hope comes into play. Aysel leaves the room and decides to give birth to the potential baby as she still thinks that she may be pregnant. It does not matter to her if the baby’s father is Engin or her husband at all. In this open-end, what Aysel will do later is not clear. The novel then does not offer poetic justice, but it tends to justify Aysel’s intimate act and its morality, and more importantly her human dignity.

To conclude, Aysel’s crisis is entangled with the issues of gender and Republican ideology and ethics, narrated in a revealing style. This style grasps the interplay of the individual and the social as the reconciliation of antagonisms while narrating her modernity experience in a tragic mode. Accordingly, this novel does not present “the tragic as a condition but rather as an explanatory structure that makes sense of the paradoxes inherent in action.”³²⁹ The process of lying down to die turns into that of Aysel’s self-confrontation that poses questions on the contradictions of Turkish modernity. This self-confrontation then problematizes the masculinist aspect of the modern Turkish woman discourse, conveying a resisting outcry, which can be considered feminist criticism. The tragic mode of the novel thus leaves space for contemplation, self-criticism, redemption, and a resistant voice instead of intimidation, utter sorrow, despair, and lasting suffering.

³²⁷ Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeğe Yatmak*, 292. See also *ibid.*, 112, 239, 268, 269, 364.

³²⁸ Felski, *Feminist Aesthetics*, 143.

³²⁹ Leonard, *Tragic Modernities*, 163.

Conclusion of Part I

Despite the three different tragic configurations in these novels, their common aspect is the reason for the tragic: it derives from the existential or ethical crisis of each protagonist and its link with his or her modernity experience in Turkey. The three novels recount the life stories of the protagonists with flashbacks or ruptures in time while depicting their current inner conflicts, dilemmas, and unjust afflictions within a sociocultural panorama of modernizing Turkey. These novels then present the tension between the protagonists' existential struggles and the enforcing implications of Turkish modernity. The source of the tragic in the novels reflects instability in the confused Western-oriented protagonists. The existential and ethical crises of the protagonists reveal, in one sense, the lack of a reconciled idea about modern Turkishness and its epistemological, ethical, gender, and sociocultural bases in Turkey. Unlike traditional *Bildungsroman*, society itself fails to create stability and to agree on certain epistemological and ethical foundations. The tragic modes of these novels narrate this instability in myriad ways.

This instability thus brings forth crisis, a sense of failure, and later on suffering at the individual level. In each fiction, the protagonist's inner conflict and self-confrontation becomes the epicenter of the plot. The striking reason for each protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis lies in the failure or fallacy of an ideal. Each protagonist has to cope with this failure, its great disillusionment, and a period of suffering after its recognition. In each case, the modernity experience of the protagonist generates a conflict of values at an individual level and an unresolved tension between the individual and their community; personal desires and moral values or responsibilities; and even his or her divided self. The tragic in these novels manifests itself as an outcome of the protagonists' way of experiencing some effects of Turkish modernity. There occurs then a strong sense of alienation and failure,

confusion, crisis, and intense suffering. These themes form the “melancholic pathos”³³⁰ of the urban character who tragically confronts the self and his or her fatal failure.

What makes the mode of these fictions tragic is that the protagonists are presented as being doomed to failure. The reasons for failure are personal, and the external circumstances in this regard, whether human or divine, are distinctly different, such as fate, ill fortune, and various socio-political conditions. Failure was, in other words, inscribed in the modernity process and its individual experience from the outset. It is therefore presented as inevitable but unforeseeable. The paradox by which the tragic occurred in the plots then indicates the disharmony within the self, and between self and the world self, going beyond the discordant East–West dichotomy, though not completely unrelated to it.

Accordingly, each protagonist’s crisis is triggered by his or her love or sexual affair with another character in the particular setting of modernizing Turkey. This affair becomes a reversal point, making the protagonist meditate on his or her way of being that requires a confrontation with his or her acts, moral values, and even past. The depiction of the crisis and self-confrontation involving suffering, recognition, and grief relies on two temporal frames in each novel. The protagonists look back in time and evaluate their pasts and fallacies and recognize their flaws. That is to say, each novel tells the protagonist’s modernity experience as a tragedy in either a back-and-forth plot construction or a meta-reflection.

In this kind of narrative structure, *Pleiades Storm* and *A Mind at Peace* present a spiritual search for meaning or place in the world. Both fictions attempt to reconcile the Western-oriented, rationalist, secular life in modernizing Turkey with a mystical tendency, individual morality, and collective responsibility. On the other hand, *Lying Down to Die* highlights female emancipation from the oppressive structure of Turkey’s top-down secular modernization, thus problematizing its masculinist gender discourse and secular ethics. While

³³⁰ Mackay, “Modernist Novel,” 314.

Pleiades Storm and *A Mind at Peace* seek to find a compromise between the spiritual way of being and the secular values in the first decades of the Republic, *Lying Down to Die* self-consciously criticizes the prominent aspects of the secular nationalist modernization.

Therefore, the tragic mode in the first two novels manifests a constructive and slightly optimistic quest in relation to Turkish modernity despite the predicament and suffering of the protagonists and their sense of resignation. However, in *Lying Down to Die*, this quest and its tragic mode involve a more critical, pessimistic, and destructive dimension concerning the modernity experience and gender of the protagonist. Due to these two different approaches in the novels, the process of suffering and endurance in *Pleiades Storm* and *A Mind at Peace* include a positive, substantially affirmative, and even necessary meaning, whereas the same process in *Lying Down to Die* is depicted as negative, dissenting, and unbearable due to the burden of the modern condition in Turkey.

The sharp distinction between these fictions highlights the generational difference between the authors and their perceptions of Turkish modernity and its implications. Erol (1902–1964) and Tanpınar (1901–1962) are the members of the last generation who were born into the sophisticated Ottoman culture and its Islamic-based values and customs, and they witnessed the dramatic transition from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey as a nation-state. The protagonists in their novels are two young, perplexed individuals in the context of 1930s Istanbul. They implicitly or explicitly reflect the authors' quest for a harmonic, metaphysical, and authentic synthesis between the past Ottoman imperial culture and the newly emergent values of the secular lifestyle and the Western-oriented mindset that builds it. This exhaustive search is manifested as the modernity experiences of the two protagonists in these crisis narratives. The depictions of these experiences as multi-faceted existential and moral crises form two kinds of the tragic vision in these novels.

Ağaoğlu (1929–2020) is a member of the following generation, who was solely educated by the ideology of the state-led secular, nationalist modernization and its values in Turkey. In *Lying Down to Die*, Aysel, a young girl in the 1930s faces the contradictions, dilemmas, and restraints of these values later, in her forties. This late recognition explicitly conveys the change in the national paradigm and the protagonist's modernity experience based on the revolutionary atmosphere of 1960s Turkey. Aysel's search excludes any metaphysical or mystical quest and any connection to the Ottoman imperial legacy. Instead, Aysel's pursuit of being a modern Turkish individual, after recognizing the masculinist limits of Republican modernity, relies on an aspiration for the left-wing movement in Turkey. Her renewed quest for a harmonic, free way of being is linked to this ideological engagement.

In sum, the idea of the tragic is directly associated with the protagonist's existential crisis in each novel due to the contradictions and ambiguities of Turkish modernity in different periods. In either case, I do not argue that these characters are the direct manifestations of the three authors, but they reflect the particular concerns of different generations and the socio-political and cultural conditions of the periods in which they were published. Moreover, the perception of Turkish modernity has changed over time. This change thus leads to its re-interpretations in and through fiction, which considers the sociocultural and political dynamics of different periods. Accordingly, the subject of the tragic and its existential, ethical, gendered, sociocultural, and even ideological context also has changed. This change also involves how the modernity experiences of similar characters are depicted as crises, depending on different literary understandings and novelistic features. The following part explores this difference in detail, focusing particularly on how each protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis in the other three Turkish fictions is narrated in a parodic mode.

Part II

MODERNITY AS PARODY

Unlike the three novels examined thoroughly in the previous part, the three novels analyzed in this section are not configured as a solely tragic vision or pure tragedy narrated in the realist modes. Instead, the same archetype of an urban protagonist in modernizing Turkey dealing with an existential or ethical struggle is narrated in a parodic mode, as parody is a powerful means with which to deal with the themes of existential crisis, sense of failure, alienation and self-confrontation, tragic fallacy, suffering, and the tensions between coincidence, fate, and uncontrollable structures.

In the broadest sense, parody as a narrative mode establishes a link between an implied norm and discourse. And in principle this mode forms or departs from either of these aspects. Margaret A. Rose's precise and concise explanation of parody can be a point of departure as it involves both the social and textual aspects of parody. As Rose argues, "[o]ne can parody another person's styles as a style; one can parody another's socially typical or individually characterological manner of seeing, thinking, and speaking," and also; "one can parody merely superficial verbal forms, but one can also parody the deepest principles governing another's discourse."³³¹ The "principles" can be extratextual, that is, the sociocultural discourses, moral values, ideologies, and worldviews in a certain context.

Within this overarching definition, parody takes shape through a wide variety of narrative techniques and rhetorical devices, such as mockery, imitation, irony, hyperbole, travesty, referentiality, satire, and grotesque, or ideally a sophisticated combination of them. Novels employing parody utilize such narrative techniques and devices in various ways. Thus, the parodic mode in each fiction examined here re-constructs the protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis through various narrative techniques or transposes it by relying on a strong sense of humor, particularly critical, situational, and verbal irony. Parody then provides

³³¹ Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 128.

new representational possibilities to depict the protagonist's crisis associated with the existential, moral, sociocultural, gendered, and even ideological implications of Turkish modernity. The story of the urban protagonist's existential angst, ethical impasse, and conflict of values in each novel is thus narrated in a new, unaccustomed context, style, and mode. In short, the three crisis narratives that employ parody expand the realistic horizon of recounting the protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis.

In this part, I will therefore explore the complex relationship between parody and the representations of the modernity experience as a crisis in the Turkish novel. This part particularly focuses on how this complex relationship is manifested in three critically acclaimed Turkish novels: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* "The Time Regulation Institute" (1961), Leylâ Erbil's *Tuhaf Bir Kadın* "A Strange Woman" (1972), and Orhan Pamuk's *Sessiz Ev* "Silent House" (1983), each of which is analyzed in an independent chapter, respectively. Through a close reading of the novels, these chapters seek to address the following questions: How and to what extent does each fiction represent the protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis in a parodic mode? More specifically, how are the existential and moral crises of the protagonists, including their downfall and self-confrontations, narrated through parodic elements or as a parody? How do these novels that employ parody relate to the set of themes that gave rise to the tragic? And finally, what is the relationship between the tragic configuration of individual modernity experiences and the use of parody in these novels?

The Crisis Narratives and the Parodic Imagination

Thematically, these three novels resemble the other three novels analyzed in Part I. Here too, the protagonists deal with a frantic or exhaustive quest for an authentic self, meaning, and inner harmony, by finding themselves within the tensions of their agencies, flawed actions,

and the radical transformation of society in Turkey. Each fiction recounts the story of a protagonist's existential (and by extension, identity-) crisis, as the protagonist wrestles with his or her inner conflict, a sense of incompleteness, failure, and a great moral questioning. The crisis of each protagonist is heavily associated with some aspects of Turkish modernity, particularly Westernization, national identity, the idea of belatedness, sociocultural reforms in Turkey, and the gender discourse of the secular Republican ideology. That is to say, each protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis remains the nucleus of each narrative; however, this experience in each novel is represented in a parodic mode.

Accordingly, the three novels analyzed here consist of two main features that differ from those whose narrative mode is explicitly tragic. The first feature is the way in which each protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis is depicted. The narrative modes in these novels partially or completely lie in different parodic elements. The tragic predicament of the protagonist (coupled with his or her sense of failure, moral dilemma, self-confrontation, and suffering) is narrated in a parodic mode through various narrative features and stylistic registers. These range from different forms of irony, grotesque, hyperbole, self-reflexivity, and dark humor to ambiguity, defamiliarization, self-referentiality, and intertextuality. Parody thus offers a new mode of depicting the protagonist's existential crisis, moral dilemma, or unresolved conflict of values related to the individual modernity experiences represented in the Turkish novel.

The parodic modes in the three novels indicate not only a crucial difference in the mode of narration but also in the perception and interpretation of Turkish modernity. Indeed, the parodic mode in each fiction problematizes various implications of Turkish modernity ironically, critically, or, in some instances, even mockingly. That is to say, like the three novels discussed previously, these novels also pose questions about the existential, ethical, and epistemological aspects of Turkish modernity. These questions substantially pertain to the

state of crisis when *becoming* a modern individual in Turkey, a country with abundant sociocultural contradictions, ethical concerns, and various challenges. However, the ways these questions are posed in such parodic modes also depend on the varying and various literary understandings and the sociocultural paradigms in Turkey. The three novels examined here were published between the 1960s and the very early 1980s, a period when the sociocultural and ideological implications of (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity were variously re-evaluated from critical perspectives. Each novel thus narrates the modernity experience of the protagonist as a crisis on a more ironic, inventive, or subversive plane. The parodic modes of these novels indicate various literary manifestations of such re-evaluation or current interpretation by three authors, each of whom belongs to a different generation in Turkey.

The second feature of these novels pertains to the difference in the mode of representation. While the protagonist's existential struggle, downfall, ethical questioning, and suffering remain at the center of the story in each novel, the emotional and psychological profundity of the inner conflict—tragic pathos—is attenuated in the plot and narration to varying degrees. Their parodic modes transpose the tragic vision and the way of its realistic configuration. Accordingly, parody not only subverts the realistic mode of each protagonist's crisis and its tragic dimension but also extends or transcends the narrative features of this mode. Parody, in this sense, possesses a versatile function in both the story and narrative structure of these novels as it is “a typical mode of double voicing, but it is not necessarily dialogic.”³³² These parodic modes reveal a particular shift from the serious and the tragic to the critically ironic and self-referential dark humor in the crisis narratives.

Accordingly, the modernity experience of each character, its tragic dimension, and the use of parody in these novels are entangled with each another. Scrutinizing this entanglement can help us to comprehend how the representations of the modernity experience in the

³³² Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London: Routledge, 2000), 94.

Turkish novel have evolved over time, particularly when considering the parodic modes of these three novels. In doing so, it is possible to discern both the narrative and epistemological aspects of this evolution in Turkish fiction and, to a certain extent, the genealogy of parody in the twentieth-century Turkish novel. This part therefore scrutinizes the narrative features, stylistic codes, and sociocultural discourses of the three crisis narratives, investigating the relationship between parody and the (re-)interpretations of Turkish modernity within them.

The first thing to underscore regarding parody, however, is that in European literature, its “modern usage is considerably less exact than the ancient, and each scholar of the subject must specify his or her definition at the outset.”³³³ Definitions may be also relative, depending on the text and its particularity so that there are no bold lines, entrenched strict rules, or, therefore, normative definitions about parody. It is even harder to define parody in Turkish fiction, for its emergence and development rely on a completely different narrative tradition and literary formations combined with the cultural transfer of the European novel. Despite these ambiguities, Part II intends to use insights from theories of parody, scrutinizing the narrative features and parodic modes of the three novels in their specificity. Otherwise, it is neither methodologically possible nor theoretically coherent to define parody and its distinguishing aspects in the Turkish novel by analyzing only three novels. In brief, my approach in this part attempts to induce criteria from the texts rather than impose any normative understanding about parody.

Some Definitions and Functions of Parody

Most definitions and functions of parody hinge on three major interrelated aspects. These aspects are the mode of writing that relies on the intention of the author and different

³³³ Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 2–3.

novelistic understandings, the different and varying modes of reading over time, and the changing reception and agency of novels that may affect the contemporary readings, or *vice versa*. Each aspect can unevenly or simultaneously gain importance in a certain literary field, depending on the literary, cultural, and socio-political tendencies of a given period. In considering these three aspects, the definition and types of parody in this thesis are based on two main outlines delineated by Martha Bayless.

Bayless defines parody “as an intentionally humorous literary (written) text that achieves its effect” in two ways and thus categorizes parody as textual and social.³³⁴ Textual parody creates this effect by “imitating and distancing the distinguishing characteristics of literary genres, styles, authors, or specific texts” while social parody makes it by “imitating, with or without distortion, literary genres, styles, authors, or texts while in addition satirizing or focusing on nonliterary customs, events, or persons.”³³⁵ This distinction between the two kinds of parody is not always explicit and easily made. However, the logic of this classification accentuates the meaning, function, and kind of parody, as a narrative mode.

Similarly, Gilbert Highet divides parody into two types: “formal” and “material” parodies. Formal parody, like textual parody, refers to “an *external* resemblance between the original and its parodic copy.”³³⁶ On the other hand, material parody stems from a satiric reference and intention “in which the form is maintained virtually unaltered, without exaggeration, without distortion, while the thought within it is made hideously inappropriate to the form, or inwardly distorted, or comically expanded.”³³⁷ Material parody, in this sense,

³³⁴ Bayless, *Parody*, 3

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

³³⁶ Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 69.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 70. Linda Hutcheon also distinguishes “satiric parody” from “parodic satire” in a similar understanding of Bayless and Highet. See Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 62. For three kinds of parody (text and personal styles parody, genre parody, and discourse parody) in English Literature, see Nil Korkut, “Kinds of Parody From

corresponds to social parody. Regardless of how they are entitled, each kind of parody indicates a deliberate intention, a particular style, a conscious mode of writing, and a different function, which may also go beyond the realm of literature to a certain extent.

Based on this binary categorization, while textual parody utilizes several narrative techniques and stylistic devices in a new form, social parody uses the targeted material and its specific feature or discourse without directly prioritizing making a new form or a representation. These two types of parody are not necessarily mutually exclusive because a narrative could potentially have both features, and the scripts could reflect the social institutions over time. Nevertheless, textual parody may be dominantly pertinent to the (post-)modernist literary formations that make one's text or style the main material of the narrative in its own playfulness and self-referentiality. Furthermore, "taking up a familiar text literally and giving it a new meaning while playing, if possible and as needed, on the words"³³⁸ becomes a major indicator when generally defining parody in literary studies, especially when considering the postmodernist understanding and its effects since the 1960s.

On the other hand, social parody is mostly associated with a critical sense of humor that may be realistically sarcastic, satirically ridiculizing, or critically ironic—this can even include tragicomedy. Social parody relies on the predominant use of irony, though it is not necessarily based on a comical insight. In contrast to textual parody that lies in the re-arrangements of the existing narrative forms or texts, social parody concentrates more on the content, discourse, or thought of its targeted material.

the Medieval to the Postmodern" (PhD Diss., Middle East Technical University, 2005), 1–17. For a more complicated distinction of parody, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 24–30.

³³⁸ Genette, *Palimpsests*, 16–17. For a conventional definition of parody as "[t]he imitative use of the words, style, attitude, tone, and ideas of an author in such a way as to make them ridiculous," see Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary*, 682.

However, it is sometimes practically impossible to distinguish social parody from satire. The main distinction may be the explicit intention of the author and its manifestations that can be evidently recognized in the text. As Roger Kreuz points out, “a parody is an intentional imitation of something else, although the goals of the parodist vary.”³³⁹ The intent of the author is significantly reflected in the mode of writing. In this line of thought, satire includes a loud and clear intention along with a bold critical discourse, which is mostly overlapped with a didactic comedy, polemical ridicule, aggressive humor, or even ironic fantasy.³⁴⁰ Moreover, satire does not necessarily rely on any generic text or norm. However, unlike satire, social parody conveys neither any corrective moral message nor a straightforwardly didactic criticism. Instead, it employs sociocultural discourses and historic-political settings as its self-referential material in the fiction. Social parody then exhibits or delineates the parodied manner, condition, discourse, or worldview in playful and ironic ways, without claiming any moral lesson and precise authority in texts.

Even so, either textual or social parody may be entangled with a slightly satiric tone, depending on the aim, story, and complexity of the narrative. By regarding the culture-specific and context-bound aspects (e.g., cultural manners, social symbols, literary references) employed in such parodic novels, as Linda Hutcheon underscores, “the reader must recognize that what [s]he is reading is a parody, and to what degree and of what type.”³⁴¹ That is to say, the definition, type, and distinguishing characteristics of parody depend not only on the mode

³³⁹ Roger Kreuz, *Irony and Sarcasm* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 99–100.

³⁴⁰ For Northrop Frye, satire involves “militant irony,” and “its moral norms are relatively clear.” See Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 223. Indeed, satire is not “a specific form” but “often a mode of writing. See Ingela Nilsson, “*It is Difficult Not to Write Satire: A Brief Introduction to the Satirical Mode*,” in *Satire in the Middle Byzantine Period: The Golden Age of Laughter?*, ed. Przemyslaw Marciniak and Ingela Nilsson (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 3.

³⁴¹ Linda Hutcheon, “Parody Without Ridicule: Observations on Modern Literary Parody,” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1978): 206.

of writing but also on the mode of reading. In this mode, the profile, knowledge, and perspective of the readers play a determinative role as they also depend on the literary tendencies and the ethos of a specific period. The reading practice then relies on the interpretations of the readers (especially on those by literary scholars and critics) who subjectively comprehend the text and even the intention of its author. The receptions of these three novels here come into play, as they designate the agency of the novels and *vice versa*.

Parody involves a double voice in its story and mode, and, in these three crisis narrative, a particular “linguistic sophistication would be assumed as a given by a genre like parody that employed irony as a rhetorical mechanism.”³⁴² Each fiction examined in this part constructs a particular discourse about Turkish modernity and its manifold implications. The parodic mode in each novel then consists of a specific perception or interpretation of Turkish modernity at a certain time, and each novel’s narrative features convey this specificity. To grasp the entanglement of the three major aspects that designate the function and type of parody, I first briefly discuss the different manifestations of parody in the Turkish novel. I then relate this discussion to Moretti’s idea of literary evolution outlined in the introduction of this thesis and approach the three novels here as the three variations of social parody.

The Manifestations of Parody in The Turkish Novel

There is a rich tradition of comedy and humor in oral and written Turkish literature. Within this tradition, the stylistic imitations in Classical Ottoman poetry and the special forms of *nazîre* (parallel or replying in kind) and *tehzil* (spoof) can be considered two different parodic forms in Turkish literature.³⁴³ However, parody and its features in the sense of Western

³⁴² Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 94.

³⁴³ *Nazire* is written with the same meter and rhyme of the targeted poem with exceptions while *tehzil* is a particular version of *nazire* that lies in ridicule and humor. For further discussion, see Walter Feldman, “Imitatio

literature did not substantially exist in Turkish literary prose until the mid-nineteenth century. The first known humorist work from that period, when European literature had begun to be seen as the emulated model, is *Av'ave* (Dog Bark) (1866), written by Edhem Pertev Pasha. The first examples of European-inspired satire found in Turkish literary prose and poetry are considered to be Ziya Pasha's *Zafername* (The Book of Victory) (1870) and Namık Kemal's *Hurrenâme* (The Letter of Molly) (1872).³⁴⁴ These works rely on harsh criticism and political mockery of the Ottoman bureaucrats and figures, so they are political satires rather than social or textual parodies.

M. Orhan Okay asserts that there is no other self-consciously written satire or parody at book length in Turkish literature until the end of the nineteenth century.³⁴⁵ However, *Boşboğaz Bir Adem* (An Indiscreet Man) (1852) written by Hovsep Vartanyan arguably can be considered the first satirical novel written in Turkish.³⁴⁶ More extensive studies are required to bring texts from this period to light and examine them, which may help us to grasp the changing meaning, function, and form of satire or even parody. Indeed, there is a terminological ambiguity of the notions related to parody and even the term “parody” itself. Turkish dictionaries and literary reference works do not display the detailed semantic and

In Ottoman Poetry: Three Ghazals of the Mid-Seventeenth Century,” *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 21, no. 2 (Fall 1997), 41–58, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43385385>; and Saliha Paker, “Translation as *Terceme* and *Nazire* Culture-bound Concepts and their Implications for a Conceptual Framework for Research on Ottoman Translation History,” in *Crosscultural Transgressions: Research Models in Translation Studies; Historical and Ideological Issues*, ed. Theo Hermans (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2002), 120–43.

³⁴⁴ For a brief discussion on humor in Turkish literature, see Alim Kahraman, “Mizah/Yeni Türk Edebiyatı,” in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2005), 30:209–11; and Aziz Nesin, *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türk Mizahi* (Istanbul: Akbaba Yayınları, 1973), 1–43. For a detailed analysis of *Zafername*, see Ali Budak, “Gülme, Komik, Mizah (Humor) ve Edebiyatımızda Zafername,” in *Osmanlı Modernleşmesi, Gazetecilik ve Edebiyat* (Istanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2019), 351–59.

³⁴⁵ M. Orhan Okay, “Hiciv/Yeni Türk Edebiyatı,” *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), 17:453.

³⁴⁶ This short novel written in Armenian script is the second Turkish novel. Laurent Mignon describes it as “a satirical work that” its author “illustrated himself.” See Mignon, *Uncoupling Language*, 80.

conceptual distinction between satire and parody in Turkish literature. For instance, *Edebiyat Lügati* (Literary Dictionary) published in 1936 defines the word *hiciv*, which corresponds to satire, but does not include the notion of parody, *parodi* in Turkish.³⁴⁷ A comprehensive etymological dictionary records 1946 as the year that the word *parodi* was first used in Turkish.³⁴⁸

Generally, parody in Turkish refers to two related meanings. The first meaning implies genre of play that relies on imitation by creating a comic effect through ridicule, and the second meaning is to make fun of serious work through humor and creates a kind of caricature as envisioned by the author.³⁴⁹ These meanings of the word include parody's relation with an implied text or targeted discourse, but they are still limited to genre of play whereas the definition of parody has already expanded across all literary genres, visual arts, and media fields. The literary reference work *Modern Eleştiri Terimleri* (Modern Criticism Terms) (1997) signifies parody as an imitation of work in a mocking way, and the imitation can be that of a book or a literary style that requires the reader to recognize and understand the implied and implicit references.³⁵⁰ On the other hand, another reference work, *Edebiyat Sözlüğü* (Literary Dictionary) (2015), only refers to the genre of theatrical play and its reconstructed form, despite more inclusive features of the term. Essentially, parody is defined as a mocking re-contextualization of a text without subverting its form, though it creates a distance between its content and form, which generates a critical effect.³⁵¹

³⁴⁷ Olgun, *Edebiyat Lügati*, 44–45.

³⁴⁸ Nişanyan, *Nişanyan Sözlük*, 686. It is important to consider how tracing the history and use of these words reflects the linguistic engineering reforms, beginning in 1928, which attempted to purify the Turkish language.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 686. See also Ayverdi, *Türkçe Sözlük*, 2496.

³⁵⁰ Boynukara, *Modern Eleştiri Terimleri*, 190–91. In this work, there is no article about satire (*hiciv*). See also Ö. Faruk Huyugüzel, *Eleştiri Terimleri Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2019), 209–12; 371–74.

³⁵¹ Püsküllüoğlu, *Edebiyat Sözlüğü*, 110.

There is still, then, neither a consensus on the definition of the word *parodi* nor a detailed explanation of it as a literary concept that contains its distinguishing aspects in Turkish dictionaries and literary reference works. This terminological deficiency is rarely addressed in detail in research on parody and satire in the Turkish novel; it is particularly absent in research on Turkish texts published in different scripts. On the other hand, parody as a research subject was not undertaken for literary scholarship extensively in English literary studies, for instance, until the late 1960s.³⁵² The increasing interest in parody in literary studies has gone hand-in-hand with the overwhelming dominance of postmodernism in arts and literature since that time. Despite the special attention to (and the heated discussions on) postmodernism in Turkey's literary field since the 1980s, with a few exceptions, there has not been much in-depth theory of parody concerning Turkish fiction.

As one of these exceptions, Serkan Özdemir's study argues that the early Turkish novels in the nineteenth century can be evaluated as parodies, for they emulated or imitated European novels and their stories by transforming them into a new context.³⁵³ However, this argument is problematic, as it extends the meaning and function of parody to apply to any possible textual reference, influence, similarity, or even adaption. Any form of emulation of a (group of) writer(s) that reveals the direction and aspects of a cultural transfer or influence between different texts and literatures does not necessarily result in parodic texts. Keep in

³⁵² Robert L. Mack, *The Genius of Parody: Imitation and Originality in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 18–19; and Steven E. Jones, ed., *The Satiric Eye: Forms of Satire in the Romantic Period* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 4–5.

³⁵³ Serkan Özdemir, "Modern Türk Romanında Parodi" (PhD Diss., Marmara University, 2019), 83–87; 95; 323–29. This thesis is the only one that studies parody in the Turkish novel as a whole, analyzing twenty-one novels published through to the 1990s. My thesis, however, explores the aspects and function of parody specific to crisis narratives. A few master's and doctoral theses and some parts of other publications examine parody in the general context of the Turkish novel. However, most of them focus on irony rather than on the features of parody, mostly analyzing the novels and stories of Tanpınar and Atay. See "Thesis Center," Council of Higher Education, accessed April 19, 2023, <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/tezSorguSonucYeni.jsp>.

mind that the Turkish novel as a literary form occurred due to the emulation of the Ottoman-Turkish writers during the second half of the nineteenth century —there were no self-conscious attempts to parody existing texts. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, many novelists at that time tended to depict morally or comically exemplary narratives against the dangers and ridiculousness of Westernization, or the authors diversely emulated the works of European literature. Many Turkish novels written in the nineteenth century can also be characterized by the adaptations, rewritings, and free-style translations of their narrative features.³⁵⁴

Social Parody in the Turkish Novel

If one claims the presence and use of parody in the Turkish novel before the 1970s, it should be predominantly considered social rather than textual parody. Social parody employed in many Turkish novels involves different degrees of satirical, ironic, and even slightly didactic tones, regardless of the themes of the novels. The examples in this respect range from the novels of Ahmet Mithat (1844–1912) and Hüseyin Rahmi (Gürpınar) (1864–1944) to that of Tanpınar (1901–1962) and Erbil (1931–2013). As concisely discussed earlier, the parodic mode of any text primarily relies on a self-conscious intention that tackles a referred certain subject, discourse, form, author, or other text. When considering the developments in the Turkish novel, this intention and its various narrative applications are also subject to literary, socio-political, and ethical aspects, or even ideological positions. That is to say, variation and

³⁵⁴ Besides those written in Arabic script, for a unique example of a Turkish novel in Greek script in this respect, see Etienne E. Charrière, “Translation, Transcription, and the Making of World Literature On Late Ottoman and Modern Turkish Scriptworlds,” in *Turkish Literature*, 36–54; Şehnaz Şişmanoğlu Şimşek, “Romanı ‘İki Kilise Arasında Bınamaz Kılmak’: Karamanlıca Edebi Üretim, Evangelinos Misailidis ve Bir Yeniden Yazım Örneği Olarak *Temaşa- i Dünya ve Cefakâr u Cefakeş*” (PhD Diss., Boğaziçi University, 2014).

selection, the two factors of Moretti's "law of literary evolution," determine another literary vein in the Turkish novel in its complexity.³⁵⁵

Due to this dynamic relation that is beyond the so-called center-(semi-)periphery model and the entanglements of many cultural, literary, and socio-political factors, I argue that this parodic vein in the Turkish literary field occurs in the loosely framed period between the 1940s and the 1980s. The three novels analyzed here can be seen as the different experimental manifestations of this vein, which materialized from the varying sociocultural conditions in Turkey, the different conceptions of the novel, the latest literary tendencies, the translated works from other non-Western literatures, and the new generations of writers. In other words, both embedded internal and external factors constitute the complex and uneven development of parody in Turkish fiction. Moreover, a proliferation of Turkish novels had come into existence, which involved various tensions and anxieties of the past. The narrative tradition and legacy of social parody then emerged in the Turkish novel that could be then referenced, re-interpreted, subverted, or re-constructed for a particular aim along with other previous and current trends influenced by Western and non-Western literatures.

However, textual parody as "the imitative reference of one literary text to another, often with an implied critique of the object text"³⁵⁶ did not arguably occur in the Turkish fiction until the early 1970s. This kind of parody mainly lies in the self-consciousness of the writer and the double-sided, referential structure of the narrative within this self-conscious intention. The emergent examples of textual parody derive from a new novelistic understanding and self-consciously produced experimental texts. These texts utilize Western literature and its legacy by combining some subjects of Turkish modernity (via a contemporary, critical lens) with elements of intertextuality, irony, and self-referentiality.

³⁵⁵ For Moretti's approach with regard to the Turkish novel, see pages 29, 31,32, 38, 58-59.

³⁵⁶ Joseph A. Dane, *Parody: Critical Concepts Versus Literary Practices; Aristophanes to Sterne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 4.

Oğuz Atay's *Tutunamayanlar* (The Disconnected) (1971) and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* (Dangerous Games) (1973) are prominent examples of this novelistic vein.³⁵⁷

Yet it took a while for both literary scholars and readers to recognize this experimental literary vein and earlier examples that used parody along with ironic, intertextual, and inventive techniques. Since the 1980s, global postmodernist tendencies have begun influencing not only how many authors in Turkey's literary field write but also how academic literary scholars and critics evaluate the Turkish novel. This change has contributed to the remarkable transformation in both writing and reading practices, a transformation that demonstrates yet another compromise and dynamic relationship between Turkish fiction and other (national) and translated literatures. Thus, the genealogical and varying functions of parody as a narrative mode have been evaluated, even retrospectively, due to these newly emergent tendencies and approaches in Turkish literary studies. A strong vein of this understanding prioritizes the literariness of the texts as a value, and as a result, textual parody gains more importance, maintaining a status higher than that of satire.

This approach has been also extended to the analysis of early Turkish novels. Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem's novel *Araba Sevdası* (The Carriage Affair) (1898) epitomizes the varying conceptions of parody and satire in the Turkish novel in this direction. This novel was commonly considered a satire of the Ottoman-Turkish dandy, and thus, of the so-called excessive Westernization by many scholars, literary historians, and critics.³⁵⁸ However, Jale Parla claims that it is a complete parody of writing and reading due to its particular narrative

³⁵⁷ For a remarkable analysis of *The Disconnected* in dialogue with European literatures and their literary legacies, see Meltem Gürle, *Ölülerle Konuşmak: Shakespeare'den Joyce'a Tutunamayanlar'da Edebi Miras Meselesi*, trans. Ümran Küçükislamoğlu (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016).

³⁵⁸ Şerif Mardin, "Super-Westernization in Urban Life in the Ottoman Empire in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century," in *Turkey: Geographic and Social Perspectives*, ed. Peter Benedict, Erol Tümertekin and Fatma Mansur (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 445; Tanpınar, *19'uncu Asır*, 293; Banarlı, *Edebiyatı Tarihi II*, 923; Akyüz, *Modern Türk Edebiyatının Evreleri*, 63; Evin, *Turkish Novel*, 170; Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 304–5.

discourse, which would thus also make it “the first modern Turkish novel” owing to its self-consciously innovative way of representation.³⁵⁹ A new tendency in Turkish literary scholarship since the 1980s interprets this fiction as parody rather than as satire.³⁶⁰ This new interpretation of the novel indicates its new reception on account of the current literary trends and reading practices in parallel with some critical approaches to Turkish modernity itself.

This tendency unequivocally relates parody as a narrative mode and style to the so-called autonomy and literariness of the Turkish novel. It therefore values parody over satire, as satire is mostly identified with direct social criticism and didacticism. Textual parody and the tendency that imbues it with literary value then occurs in parallel with the (post-)modernist developments in the Turkish novel and the new writing practices since the 1980s. While the new standards of literary value are intrinsically tied to the idea of pure literariness of the novels, the perceptions and interpretations of Turkish modernity (has) change(d) over time. The three novels examined in this part gradually come to prominence in Turkish literature, though they are not examples of textual parody in the Turkish novel. These novels become the agents of this process, as they critically approach the different implications of Turkish modernity in their parodic modes that consist of new, non-traditional, inventive narrative styles and forms.

The variability in the writing and reading practices over time indeed indicates the difficulty of making a concrete, stable, and single definition of parody in the Turkish novel. All these conceptual and terminological deficiencies discussed earlier are also due to the theoretical lacuna of parody in Turkish literary studies. Oğuz Cebeci highlights the serious

³⁵⁹ Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar*, 123. Parla argues that this novel is the first one in the history of literature that applies the stream of consciousness. See Jale Parla, “A Carriage Affair (Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem, 1896),” in *The Novel: History, Geography, and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 1:776. This feature of the novel is first emphasized by Berna Moran. See Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 76–85.

³⁶⁰ For various interpretations of this novel as a parody, see also Gürbilek, *Kötü Çocuk Türk*, 109, 111; Ertürk, *Grammatology*, 64; and Hemmat, *Turkish Novel*, 3.

challenges, especially in analyzing (post-)modernist Turkish fictions that make use of quite diverse narrative techniques and elements of parody.³⁶¹ The varying reading practices, as in the case of *The Carriage Affair*, and the indeterminate usage of the term “parody” also fortify these challenges and deficiencies. How does parody then function in each novel analyzed here, without imitating the forms and styles of any texts? How can one approach these novels, which diversely parody aspects of Turkish modernity while at the same time narrate the protagonists’ existential and ethical crises variously?

The Crisis Narratives as Social Parodies

By taking all these challenges, the manifestations of parody in the Turkish novel, and the dual categorization of parody into account, I analyze each novel in this part as a social parody. Social parody as a particular mode of narration relies on the entanglement of several crucial aspects. These aspects are the new novelistic pursuits for narrating the protagonist’s crisis and its tragic vision, the varying literary tendencies, re-interpretations of Turkish modernity from a certain perspective, and the sociocultural conditions of a specific period. All these aspects indeed bear upon the modes of writing and reading, and the reception of the novels discussed earlier. In other words, the parodic modes of these three novels embody the development of the Turkish novel in its specificity, as discussed so far.

The social parody in the three novels arises from their dual structure. The parody employed in these fictions, in a sense, serves as a mode of narrating what is considered unnarratable or not-yet-narrated and poses questions about what it was and is to be human, particularly an urban man or woman, in modernizing Turkey. On the other hand, despite the emphasis on their literariness and self-conscious approach to Turkish modernity, the novels

³⁶¹ Oğuz Cebeci, *Komik Edebi Türler: Parodi Satir ve İroni* (İstanbul: İthaki Yayınları, 2016), 10. Cebeci’s work, which is theoretically the most detailed study about humor and parody in Turkish literature, emphasizes the insufficiency of studies not only about parody but also about irony and satire.

inherently convey a social, cultural, or even satirical criticism. Each novel incorporates a specific mode of writing that tackles what is parodied without claiming a monolithic authority manifested in them or implying a moral concern in its discourse (as a satire would).

Moreover, each novel does not substantially include a practice that imitates another text; it is not, to some extent, reliant on textual reference (as a textual parody would be) but instead on a sociocultural practice, discourse, worldview, or manner in relation to various implications of Turkish modernity. The social parody employed in the three novels can then be defined as a particular intersection of embedded sociocultural criticism, self-referential irony, tragicomedy, and formalistically inventive narrative techniques. This definition of social parody underlines the literariness of these texts and their self-consciousness about this literariness, while tackling some aspects and discourses related to Turkish modernity.

The social parody in these novels bears also on language itself, particularly the linguistic registers and the stylistic vocabularies of the novels. Many of their words, notions, and phrases are loaded with the socio-political discourses and cultural aspects of Turkish modernity. Thus, the playfulness of the language in general and the imitations of such words, phrases, or discourses, in particular, create humorous, ironic, and critical effects in these novels by incorporating irony, fantasy, grotesque, theatricality, pastiche, and the hybridity of genres and styles. This variety and the application of its self-conscious narrative structure extend the ways and forms of literary expression.

Thus, the self-awareness of these novels formed in parodic modes is quite explicit. Each fiction provides a different example of a social parody on its own plane. The sense of belatedness, national identity, gender, the contradictions of secular ethics and modern life, and the Republican ideology in Turkey are not only subject matters to be depicted but also a primary cause of each protagonist's existential or ethical crisis, which is critically, ironically, mockingly, or subversively problematized in these novels. The revisionary horizon of parody

indeed embraces the tragic vision in which “*some* pain can be spoken of and understood, ‘humanized,’ and some cannot, because the words are not yet there and, so far we can know, may never be; and we also cannot know what the level of pain or horror is that is to come.”³⁶² Two main aspects form the mainlines of this parodic narrative mode. These are irony and its self-critical or subversive function.

First, the notion of irony implies neither tragic irony, which lies in the irony of fate or cosmos, nor dramatic irony, which derives from the foreknowledge of the audience or readers.³⁶³ Instead, irony refers to a humorous rhetorical device that plays a determinative role in making a parody, which transposes the representations of the protagonists’ crises and, if explicitly depicted, their tragic dimensions in the novels. Parody then predominantly overlaps with irony and its different forms in order to create an explicit sense of humor, particularly tragicomedy.³⁶⁴ As Hutcheon highlights, “parody can use irony easily and naturally as a preferred, even privileged rhetorical mechanism. Irony’s patent refusal of semantic univocality matches parody’s refusal of structural unitextuality.”³⁶⁵ The three novels analyzed here involve various forms of irony in making parody and utilizes some textual strategies.

The presence of tragicomedy and ironic humor in the novels refers to the self-awareness and particular intention of each fiction. Within this self-awareness, madness as a narrative aspect in each novel comes into prominence to varying degrees, for each protagonist is implicitly or explicitly connected to madness in the stories and plots. The state of madness in the novels generates unreliability and ambiguity, creating parodic instances by using irony.

³⁶² Williams, *Tragic Imagination*, 41.

³⁶³ For a discussion on “tragedy with irony,” see Joseph A. Dane, *The Critical Mythology of Irony* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 123.

³⁶⁴ For further discussion on tragicomedy and its relation to para-tragedy, see Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary*, 991; Rose, *Parody*, 280; Donald Sells, *Parody, Politics and the Populace in Greek Old Comedy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 1–17.

³⁶⁵ Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 54.

Through various forms of irony, parody then conveys either negative or positive implications and even mixed signals, depending on what each text aims for and offers.

For instance, Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* is explicitly different from his other works. It parodically recounts the story of the protagonist's modernity experience as a form of existential crisis, alienation, and moral degeneration from the 1910s to the 1950s. The parodic mode of the novel is derived from various aspects of irony, hyperbole, grotesque, ambiguity, and defamiliarization, all of which create a fantastic world. The difference between *A Mind at Peace* and this fiction indicates a sharp change from employing the tragic to employing parodic modes, based on my way of reading them. Nevertheless, *The Time Regulation Institute* displays a radical shift in not only Tanpınar's novelistic understanding and poetics but also in his way of perceiving Turkish modernity and its several aspects. This fiction is, however, not just a parodic novel comprised of allegoric, ironic, and satiric features depicting various phases and subjects of Turkish modernity. It also offers a unique way of representing the protagonist's crisis in this setting and therefore showcases Tanpınar's re-interpretations of Turkish modernity and its various implications from the perspective of early 1960s Turkey.

There are then two sides of Tanpınar as an author who narrated the Western-oriented, urban protagonist's existential, ethical, and sociocultural struggle in modernizing Turkey. The tragic representation of the modernity experience as a crisis in *A Mind at Peace* turns into the parodic mode of the same subject in *The Time Regulation Institute*. By examining the latter novel in detail, it is then possible to explore how the epistemological, existential, and ethical dimensions of Turkish modernity are re-evaluated and narrated in two distinct modes within the case of one of the greatest authors in Turkish literature whose works have been canonized.

Though she had previously published two short story books Erbil published her debut novel, *A Strange Woman*, in 1971. *A Strange Woman* narrates a Republican, leftist, and

intellectual Turkish woman's crisis, inevitable failure, and dramatic self-confrontation in the very early 1970s. This novel relies on fragmentary structure, narrative transgressions, and fantastical elements attached to the female protagonist's crisis, as well as on the debated subjects in Turkish history, such as the murder of Mustafa Suphi, the founder of the Communist Party of Turkey. Formalistically, each chapter of the novel is unique and told in a different style, ranging from the realistic diary form and the carnivalesque scene of the Islamic memorial service to the parody of the heroine's self-confrontation. The tragic elements are then entangled with the parodic mode of the novel. In sum, *A Strange Woman* is thematically filled with both personal, collective, and historical aspects and relies upon a critical gender perspective and formalistically fragmented plot construction.

Silent House is Pamuk's second novel and based on the technique of multiple narrators in the modernist sense. The novel depicts the socio-political tension in the summer before the coup of 1980, involving several main characters and different temporalities from the 1910s to the very early 1980s. In its particular chapters, *Silent House*, in various ridiculous ways, parodies the Western-oriented revolutionary protagonist's worldview, his excessive commitment to the positivist values of Republican modernity, and even his downfall in the first half of the twentieth century. This fiction then includes a critical interpretation of Turkish modernity and its sociocultural implications, signaling a threshold of the new socio-political and literary paradigm in the early 1980s.

These three novels were written by three different authors who belong to the three consecutive generations of Turkey and were published in 1961, 1971, and 1983, respectively. Scrutinizing these novels in a comparative manner provides valuable insights into the crisis narratives and their parodic modes, as well as the changing perceptions of Turkish modernity over the course of generations. Thus, it is possible to explore how the changes in the interpretation of Turkish modernity are narratively and discursively manifested in these

novels. In each fiction, there are innumerable parodic allusions and implicit or explicit references related to the sociocultural history of Turkey, Turkish literature, the Republican ideology, Westernization, religion, and politics. The story of each protagonist is entangled with the sociocultural conditions and values of Turkey at the time the story is set in each novel. Within this entanglement, each novel depicts the modernity experience of each protagonist who deals with existential angst, alienation, failure, a sense of in-betweenness, and ethical concern—i.e., his or her way of being.

In sum, social parody is the principal mode of narrating the protagonists' existential or moral crises and their tragic dimensions in these novels. Each chapter in this part examines how the parodic mode of each novel designates the modernity experience of each protagonist as a crisis through various forms of irony, slightly satiric tone, hybrid genres, and different stylistic devices. These chapters then scrutinize the intricate relationship between the protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis, the tragic dimension in it, and the parodic representations of them in the three novels. Accordingly, each chapter focuses on the plot structure, the character's conflict, the role of the narrator, the relation between the narrative voice and the protagonist's discourses, and playful or subversive uses of language. Like Part I, this part is comprised of three chapters, each of which examines one novel. The sequence of the chapters is based on the first publication dates of the novels: *The Time Regulation Institute*, *A Strange Woman*, and *Silent House*, respectively.

Chapter 4

The Self-Reflexive Parody of
Being Modern in
The Time Regulation Institute

Chapter Four

The Self-Reflexive Parody of Being Modern in *The Time Regulation Institute*

Tanpınar's last novel *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* "The Time Regulation Institute" was published in 1961. Just like *A Mind at Peace*, it was overlooked for almost three decades.³⁶⁶ This novel explicitly differs from his other three novels in terms of the storytelling mode, narrative conventions, stylistic devices, the striking presence of irony, and the use of parody. *The Time Regulation Institute* recounts the extraordinary story of Hayri Irdal in the mode of memoirs and is based on adventurous fantastic events, innumerable characters, and countless references to Ottoman-Turkish modernity and its various implications. It is a novel that cannot be easily defined within a single genre as it employs intricate narrative features and literary devices, ranging from irony, fantasy, and parody to a plot template of the *Bildungsroman* and the grotesque. Due to the carnivalesque content of its plot and the implicitly rich sociocultural references, there are very different interpretations of this novel.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁶ The novel was serialized in the newspaper *Yeni İstanbul* between 20 June and 30 September 1954 and published with major changes as a book in 1961. Its second publication was in 1987 and gradually acquired cult status, becoming canonized over time. It was first translated into English in 2001, and again later in 2013 by different translators. The quotes used in this thesis are from the 2013 edition. See Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *The Time Regulation Institute*, trans. Maureen Freely and Alexander Dawe (New York: Penguin Books, 2013).

³⁶⁷ For the analyses of the novel as a satire, see Moran, *Eleştirel Bir Bakış I*, 297–322; Rentzsch and Şahin, *Tanpınar'ın Saklı Dünyası*; Almond, *World Literature*, 41. For its psychoanalytical reading of the novel as an ironic allegory, see Süha Oğuzertem, "Unset *Saat*s, Upset *Sihhat*: A Fatherless Approach to the Clock-Setting Institute," *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 3–18. For the readings of the novel as the manifestation of the crisis of time and modernity, see Özen Nergis Dolcerocca, "'Free Spirited Clocks': Modernism, Temporality and *The Time Regulation Institute*," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 20, no. 2 (2017): 177–97; Avner Wishnitzer, "Modern Turkey, Real Time, and Other Functional Fabrications in Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute*," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 2, no. 2 (November 2015): 379–400. For reading the novel as the crisis of language, see Ertürk, *Grammatology*, 111–34. Parla reads the novel as a postmodern picaresque, see Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar*, 155–62.

Across four chapters, *The Time Regulation Institute* depicts Hayri's misadventures from his childhood through to the present day of the narration. Sixty-year-old Hayri is the narrator of the novel who tells his life story in the written form of memoirs, capturing the period between 1903 and 1953 which includes the six-month period in which he wrote the memoirs. In this respect, two main time frames designate the structuring principles and the texture of the narrative: the narrated time of the past events and the process of the act of writing. In this structure, chapter one recounts the story of Hayri's childhood and adolescence from 1903 to the outset of the Great War in 1914 while chapter two tells of his misadventures between 1918 and 1943. Chapters three and four narrate Hayri's relationship with Halit Ayarçı and his involvement in the Time Regulation Institute until 1953. The plotline covers Hayri's quest for meaning and agency in the changing society and his struggle to make sense of his life throughout the modernity process in Turkey. From this aspect, its plot construction resembles the narrative logic and patterns of *Bildungsroman* and depicts his life in the manner of autobiography.

This chapter explores how Hayri's modernity experience as a crisis is narrated in a parodic mode, and thus, focuses particularly on Hayri, who is both the protagonist and the narrator in the novel. By exploring Hayri's life story, the tragic dimension in it, and the several themes associated with Turkish modernity, the present chapter scrutinizes how his story—represented in a parodic mode—is turned into a self-parody of being modern in Turkey. Accordingly, my analysis of the text concentrates mainly on the plot structure of Hayri's bizarre story, his role as a narrator, and the fiction–reality conundrum in the fiction. The tragic essence of Hayri's story is depicted in relation to the absurdities of the so-called modern life in Turkey, especially in the first part of the twentieth century. Moreover, the novel combines the idea of the absurdity of life with the playful ambiguity between reality and fiction on several planes. This chapter therefore examines the several elements of the

parodic mode, analyzing how Hayri's existential and moral crisis is linked to Turkish modernity insomuch as narrated in the novel.

The detailed analysis of the narrative unfolds some inventive features and stylistic devices that depict Hayri's disharmony between himself and the social world in a self-mocking way. The first section of this chapter explores Hayri's double function as the protagonist and the narrator who forms the narrative logic and plot construction of the fiction. The fantastic content of the plot and Hayri's self-reflexive meta-commentaries establish a reality–fiction conundrum in the novel. The second section analyzes the main crises of modern life in Turkey—time, absurdity, and self-identity—that are parodied throughout the novel. This section also discusses how the fiction–reality conundrum is playfully enhanced both in the story and Hayri's act of writing it through the fantastic and its parodic mode. The third section examines how this parodic mode variously occurs through irony, exaggeration, defamiliarization, and self-referentiality. It then focuses particularly on the master-apprentice relationship between Hayri and Halit and how Halit's seduction leads to Hayri's immoral self-fulfillment. The final section analyzes Hayri's recognition of his flawed actions and the act of writing as a way to deal with his ongoing moral crisis.

The Playful Reality–Fiction Conundrum

The name of chapter one in the novel, *Büyük Ümitler* “Great Expectations,” evokes Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861). This resemblance is not solely limited to the name, however. The older Hayri recalls his childhood and youth as in Dickens' novel. Chapter two, “Little Truths,” depicts Hayri's quest for self and meaning after the Great War until 1943, with a focus on his adolescence, marriage, and his environment surrounded by some outlandish characters in Istanbul. During these chapters, Hayri could never hold on to or succeed in something that makes him satisfied in life. The turning point for middle-aged

Hayri in 1943 is meeting Halit Ayarçı at the outset of chapter three. It is only in chapters three and four that Hayri begins to recount the detailed story of the Time Regulation Institute and of his efficacious personal transformation under the tutelage of Halit. The narrative logic and plotline of the first two chapters contain the idea of the test of endurance and will that Hayri had to go through as a young man and resemble the case of Mümtaz in *A Mind at Peace*, to some extent.

Due to bad luck, odd coincidences, and ill-starred events, there is a calamitous test of Hayri's integration into the newly emerging values and practices of the Western-oriented secular lifestyle in modernizing Turkey.³⁶⁸ Hayri represents yet another confused young man who struggles to find harmony between himself and modern life in Turkey or simply to find meaning in the world. He even points to the predicament of his life and its tragic aspect at the outset of the narrative: "If to live is to endure endless pain and destitution and to suffer humiliation so deep that it afflicts each and every fiber of one's being, if it means fluttering ceaselessly against the walls of a cage that will never open, then there is no doubt that I and others like me did 'live,' in the fullest sense of the word."³⁶⁹ Despite this explicit explanation of the tragic essence of his life, his story contains bizarre and fantastical content that goes beyond the mimetic realism of its representation. Several aspects determine the mode of representation in the fiction, particularly the multiple narrative levels, the role of Hayri as the narrator, the abundance of unusual characters, and the absurd embedded stories. These aspects form the basis for a reality–fiction conundrum within the narrative.

This conundrum relies on the three narrative levels. The primary level indicates Hayri's act of narration in the form of writing memoirs, including his meta-commentaries. Hayri, as the writer of the fiction itself, is then the first-person unreliable narrator. The second

³⁶⁸ This kind of testing "for his social fitness and general worthiness" resembles the logic of the *Bildungsroman* in European narrative tradition. For further discussion, see Bakhtin, "Bildungsroman," 16.

³⁶⁹ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 8.

narrative level contains the linear story of his adventures from his childhood to the present. In this respect, he takes his place in the novel in two ways: Hayri as the protagonist of the past story and Hayri as the narrator in the act of writing. The third level consists of the various embedded stories within Hayri's life story and throughout its narration. Some of these stories are, for instance, about the watch repairer Nuri Efendi who is Hayri's first mentor, a rich noble Ottoman man Abdüsselam Bey, a counterfeiter Seyit Lütfullah, an alchemist Aristidi Efendi, a turtle for which the inhabitants of a neighborhood feel responsible when it disappears, the grotesque resurrection of Hayri's aunt, an absurd trial, and Ramiz, a weird, neurotic psychologist. The carnivalesque crowd of the characters connected to the preeminent stories of Hayri's life are present until the very end of the fiction.³⁷⁰

The multiplicity of themes, characters, and events involves the mysticism of time and clocks, daily life snapshots of the late Ottoman period and Turkey through to 1950s Turkey, fantastical folk tales, alchemy, spiritualism, telepathy, psychoanalysis, politics, theatre, bureaucracy, and so on. As all these characters, subjects, and embedded stories within Hayri's autobiographical narrative depend on Hayri as the narrator. The ways Hayri tells the events of his life story resemble different narrator types in storytelling conventions. For instance, Hayri functions as a sort of *meddah*, a customary storyteller who, in coffeehouses, tells interesting stories by imitating characters, their voices, and even dialects.³⁷¹ This kind of narrator is a significant element of the Ottoman-Turkish literary and oral culture. *The Time Regulation*

³⁷⁰ There is a list containing the twenty-three most important characters in the German translation to prevent confusion for the reader. See Martin A. Hainz, "New Ec(h)onomy: Tanpınar, Saat ve Hayal," in *Tanpınar'ın Saklı Dünyası*, 90.

³⁷¹ The realist representation in the Turkish novel is based on the narrative features of *meddah* stories. However, this does not mean that the Turkish novel originated from this tradition. See Pertev Naili Boratav, "İlk Romanlarımız," in *Folklor ve Edebiyat I* (Istanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1982), 308. For the historical background of *meddah* and folk stories, see Fuad Köprülü, "Türkler'de Halk Hikâyeciliğine Ait Bazı Maddeler: Meddahlar" in *Edebiyat Araştırmaları*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1999), 361–412.

Institute arguably transmits this oral narrative tradition, which was also commonly used in the early Turkish novel, to prose as a written form of memoir that creates its own illusion of the represented world. Seval Şahin argues that there are at least eleven main topics in the traditional Ottoman-Turkish shadow play, *Karagöz ve Hacivat*, in this novel.³⁷² On the other hand, several studies claim that Hayri resembles a picaresque protagonist in the European literary tradition.³⁷³

In all cases, Hayri's act of writing his memoirs brings his (un)reliability into question. Two key points need to be considered in this respect. The first point regards the metanarrative structure as "the plurality of narrative instances within a narrative" that constructs "the vertical relations between narrating instances" in this novel.³⁷⁴ Hayri's act of narration lies in his review of his own life and his retrospective commentaries because writing his memories is a self-reflexive process that includes his present self-confrontation. Accordingly, Hayri as the narrator has the authority of telling, which gives him limitless power in terms of narrative modes, styles, and techniques.

The second point is related to Hayri as a character of his life stories, as told by the narrator Hayri. Hayri as the protagonist serves as "the perceptual focalizer"³⁷⁵ of other people, objects, and the past events in the plot. The narrator Hayri's perspective and stylistic register therefore determine how the protagonist Hayri is represented in the fiction. In other words, the

³⁷² Şahin, *Talih, Tesadüf ve İrade*, 101.

³⁷³ See Thomas Bleicher, "Gerçeğin İcadı: *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*," in *Tanpınar'ın Saklı Dünyası*, 15; Hainz, "New Ec(h)onomy," 90; Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar*, 155–62. Some primary features resemble those of the picaresque novel, such as retrospective first-person narration, Hayri's economic and social "struggle for survival," corruption theme, ironic and grotesque elements, and "the testimony of liar." For an overview of the picaresque novel, see Alok Yadav, "Picaresque Novel," in *The Encyclopedia of the Novel*, ed. Peter Melville Logan (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 2:617–21.

³⁷⁴ Didier Coste and John Pier, "Narrative Levels," in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 295.

³⁷⁵ Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 84.

reliability of Hayri's story and its narration lies in his present "limited knowledge, his personal involvement, and his problematic value-scheme."³⁷⁶ At the outset of chapter one, Hayri emphasizes the improbability of telling everything and makes a clear bargain between the reader and the text that he writes. He declares his motivation to write his memoirs, based on his perception of reality:

You must agree that it would be unthinkable to describe things as they are. If you are to avoid leaving a sentence arrested in midthought, you must plan ahead, choosing only those points that will resonate with the reader's sentiments. For sincerity is not the work of one man alone. [...] I number myself among those who believe that the Lord, our Creator, granted us this life to be lived, for either good or evil, and not for us to write it down. Besides, it's already there in written form. I am alluding here to our fate as set down in the periodicals of the Divine Presence.³⁷⁷

Hayri directly addresses the reader and highlights "fate" as a "written" construct of the real life in which people perform. For Hayri, life itself is then as much fictional as narrating it "in written form." This statement rhetorically underscores the fictionality of reality in and through his meta-commentary and *vice versa*.

Accordingly, as the narrator, Hayri constructs the fiction–reality conundrum from the very beginning. This meta-commentary indeed prepares the reader for the extraordinary stories of his memoirs. Everything Hayri narrates then becomes possible in this logic despite the absurd events and phantasmatic contents in the plot. This early negotiation between the reader and Hayri as the narrator of his own memoirs legitimizes both the unrealistic content of the story and Hayri's authority as the "character-bound narrator"³⁷⁸ and thus resolves the matter of his (un)reliability. This strategic legitimization allows for an illusionary narration of

³⁷⁶ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 103.

³⁷⁷ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 6.

³⁷⁸ "Character-bound narrator" refers to the narrator who is or was involved in the story. See Bal, *Narratology*, 21–23. I often use this term in my analysis of the novels in this part.

the odd stories and fantastic events in the fiction. Hayri's meta-commentaries then form the "mimesis of the act of narration," and thus enhance the act of writing as meta-narration.³⁷⁹

Due to the negotiation between the narrator Hayri and the reader, the reality–fiction conundrum within Hayri's story is constructed, and this conundrum maintains through to the end.

The reality–fiction uncertainty, on the other hand, becomes a thematic ground and leitmotif of the narrative, considering the power of Hayri as the character-bound narrator who can manipulate the truth and its representation.³⁸⁰ This playful conundrum lies in "the fantastic" as a mode of narration rather than extraordinary contents or events, coined by Tzvetan Todorov, that sustains the ambiguity and undecidability in the text.³⁸¹ The fantastic mode establishes the basis for irony, defamiliarization, self-referentiality, and even a satiric

³⁷⁹ Monika Fludernik, "Metanarrative and Metafictional Commentary: From Metadiscursivity to Metanarration and Metafiction," *Poetica* 35, no. 1/2 (2003), 15. For a discussion on Hayri's "meta-perspective" as a way of creating irony in the novel, see Ims, *Conflicted Selves*, 98; 106–11.

³⁸⁰ The double function of meta-commentary can clarify a controversial claim about the role of Hayri as the narrator in the novel. In Tanpınar's archive, an unpublished *fictional* letter was found, and this letter is written by Halit Ayarçı to Ramiz, which can be seen as the paratext of the novel. The letter explains that Hayri is, in fact, mad and treated by Ramiz in the mental institution. Everything Hayri has written in his memoirs, that is, the entire novel is indeed the outcome of his mad mind. This letter was first published in 2005. See Alptekin, *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar*, 64–73. However, this fictional letter was not published as a part of the novel in its first publication. This means that Tanpınar did not intend to integrate it into the novel. Yet Süha Oğuzertem argues that the letter should be added to the end and points out that the novel turns into an "ironic allegory," not a satire due to this letter. See Oğuzertem, "Unset *Saats*," 13. Arguably, there is no need to add this unpublished letter to prove Hayri's madness and dilemmas; the symptoms of this matter can be somehow found within the novel. See Ahmet Kutsi Tecer, "Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü," in "*Bir Gül*," 130; Moran, *Eleştirel Bir Bakış I*, 298–300; Ims, *Conflicted Selves*, 114. However, this letter has been published –without Tanpınar's consent– in the new editions of the novel. The letter only cements the illusionary effect of Hayri's meta-narration and makes him a pure liar. This approach, however, reduces the powerful effect and playfulness of the reality–fiction conundrum both in the story level and the act of writing. Moran also points out that the letter would annihilate the parodic or satiric effects in the novel. Moran, *Eleştirel Bir Bakış I*, 300.

³⁸¹ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to A Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975). 24–40.

dimension in the novel. Due to the permanence of reality–fiction uncertainty, Hayri toys with reality and its relativity both in the plot and his act of writing. In other words, similar to the logic of satire, “almost anything may happen at any moment”³⁸² in the plot, depending on the narrator who willingly alludes to many sociocultural subjects and loaded discourses regarding Turkish modernity.

The reality–fiction uncertainty constructed by Halit’s narration therefore functions as a “different strategy of naturalization”³⁸³ of his extraordinary life story and the bizarre events in the plot. This kind of naturalization, however, does not prevent confusing scenes and defamiliarization effects that lead to the reader’s doubts regarding the veracity of the events in the story. Moreover, Hayri makes his own truth throughout his act of writing for his own benefit. The subtle construction of the uncertainty in the story and discourse then creates its own rules and limits of the social world represented in the novel—its self-referentiality. Furthermore, Hayri depicts various topics in the plot, such as absurdity, charlatanism, fraud, lying, falsehood, roleplaying, and the manipulation of history within the story. These themes can easily evoke something beyond the story and its “self-referential narrative”³⁸⁴ style, especially when considering the implicit references to Turkish modernity. However, due to the playfulness of the uncertainty and its permanence, the story of this fiction can be primarily read in its self-referentiality.

At the outset of his memoirs, Hayri emphasizes his disinterestedness in reading and writing. He seems to convince the reader about his sincerity before he begins to tell his life story, which is based on uneven enrichment, immorality, and fraud as told in the following sections of the novel. Hayri even confesses that he had written a biography of a non-existent

³⁸² Highet, *Anatomy of Satire*, 11.

³⁸³ Birgit Neuman and Ansgar Nünning, “Metanarration and Metafiction,” in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn, et al., (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 205.

³⁸⁴ Ims, *Conflicted Selves*, 120.

historical figure that was translated into eighteen languages. In this regard, the reality–fiction uncertainty within the novel exists in the plot and displays Hayri’s moral concern and the erosion of his previous morality: “But I had grown accustomed to lying. There was no other way for me to survive this meager silver piece I called my life. This was how people wanted me to be. I was a liar.”³⁸⁵ This confession in his act of writing in 1953 indicates his regret, self-apology, and attempt to rectify his immoral behaviors. Writing thus becomes the only conceivable way for him to re-establish his corrupt self and alleviate his moral crisis, sense of guilt, and shame.

The Crises of the Modernity Experience: Absurdity, Time, and Self

Without recognizing the constructive function of the reality–fiction uncertainty in the novel, it would not be possible to scrutinize the parodic mode and its features. Although Hayri’s meta-comments touch upon many subjects, the primary story depicts the uneven process of his self-fulfillment that lies in lying, fraud, and his moral decline as a way of being in the world.

Hayri’s life story substantially consists of three prime elements in this sense. The first element refers to the absurdity of life itself that prevails both in the main story and in the meta-narration. The word *abes* in Turkish, which is equal to the word “absurd,” is written in bold letters in the first edition of the novel.³⁸⁶ Hayri’s ill-starred adventures and the other embedded stories also contain absurd events and bizarre content. He even underscores that the absurd became the “part and parcel of [his] life.”³⁸⁷ All the stories and various characters narrated in the fantastic mode challenge the mimetic representation of reality due to their

³⁸⁵ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 196.

³⁸⁶ Kaplan, “Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü,” in *Bir Gül*, 100. Moran also draws attention to absurdity as a main theme of the novel. See Moran, *Eleştirel Bakış I*, 307. See also Fikret Ürgüp, “Tanpınar’da Abes Duygusu,” in *Bir Gül*, 127–28.

³⁸⁷ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 184.

strangeness in the story. That is to say, absurdity occurs as odd events and unusual situations in the plot that relies on oddity, unreality, hyperbole, and the fantastic mode.

The odd events and exaggerations then construct an ironic distance between the characters' behaviors and words or between an event in the plot and Hayri's meta-commentary. Hayri as the character-bound narrator establishes the reality of his self-referential world, while simultaneously undermining his own actions or discourses through situational irony, ridiculous incompatibilities, or playfully scornful mockery. These narrative aspects (particularly the rhetorical and situational irony in Hayri's tone) and the bizarre, extraordinary events "banalize their social context"³⁸⁸ and their relation to Turkey's rapid modernization process in the first half of the twentieth century. The implicit references and witty evocations concerning Turkish modernity occur within the self-referentiality of the narrative. Several playfully implied references and evocations then create different parodic allusions, most of which signal a slightly satirical dimension in some parts of the novel.

The second element regarding Hayri's story is the notion of time and directly pertinent to the parodic mode that depicts Hayri as a miserable, unfortunate man experiencing the various implications and stages of Turkish modernity. The notion of time is also linked to the absurdity of life and the elusiveness of the world, especially when considering Hayri's quest for meaning and agency in his life. In chapter one, Hayri explains the importance of clocks and how his perception of freedom changed in his childhood due to a watch he got as a gift:

Twice a day I would walk from Edirnekapı to Fatih, plunging into a new fantasy with every dawdling step. But as I approached the age of ten, a passion came to sully this happiness. My life's rhythms were disrupted. [...] by the watch my uncle gave me [...] But I was saved by my spirited nature. It even gave my life direction. One might almost say it gave my life shape. For it may well have been this passion that led me to freedom's door.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ D. C. Muecke, *Ironic and the Ironic* (London: Methuen, 1970), 94. Satiric manners and orientations in the narratives can be partial or limited to a character.

³⁸⁹ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 20.

The watch here changes Hayri's subjective perception of time and makes him fit into the measurable, quantitative timetable of daily life, which creates a permanent confusion for him. Time and clocks, however, are not just a theme or leitmotiv in the novel.

Clocks in the novel are commonly anthropomorphized in myriad ways. For instance, Nuri Efendi is an old-fashioned watch repairer and "equated people with clocks."³⁹⁰ Hayri's appreciatioiship is indeed shaped by Nuri Efendi and his worldview until his death in 1912, leaving Hayri without guidance. Hayri underscores the significance of clocks as the most confidential friend of their owner, reflecting Nuri Efendi's view: "Just as a watch can become a man's dearest friend, ticking with the pulse in his wrist, sharing the passions in his chest, and growing heated with the same fervor, until they are as one [...] and assume the essence of its owner, thinking and living as he does."³⁹¹ Thus, the clocks as both a leitmotif and an object play a significant role in Hayri's childhood and youth in the story.

Hayri describes three different clocks at their home. The first clock is "a large grandfather clock" called "the Blessed One." The second one is "a small clock sat on a table in [his] parents' bedroom. Unlike the aforementioned timepiece, this one was neither religious nor destined for the world beyond. [...] it was a secular clock with a unique spring mechanism that when properly set played a popular Turkish song at the start of every hour."³⁹² The third one is a combination of these two clocks as his father's pocket watch with "a strange contraption equipped with a compass, a hand that showed the direction of Mecca, and a calendar of universal time that told both existent and nonexistent alaturca and alafraanga time."³⁹³ The three divergent clocks represent three different perceptions of time and the

³⁹⁰ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 29.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 26.

coexistence of three temporalities in Hayri's life. When examining Hayri's modernity experience as a crisis, anthropomorphization of clocks points to, as Dolcerocca argues, "th[e] temporal diversity and their simultaneity in order to reimagine the process of change itself."³⁹⁴

Time is also a cultural phenomenon and conveys various meanings in different cultures. The three clocks at Hayri's house imply the different conceptions of time in the West and the East—that is, two different worldviews. Each worldview indicates a unique way of understanding time and space and that of being in the world. The anthropomorphic descriptions of the clocks then refer to the complex relationship between subjective time and the linear conception of the world, which Hayri is unable to internalize completely. The differences among these clocks do not just reveal not the differences between the Eastern and Western worldviews, but they also highlight the subjectiveness of (temporal) reality itself, which has confused Hayri since his childhood. His confusion, indeed, generates a sense of estrangement and existential angst because his three different clocks lead to three distinct ways of experiencing the passing of time. Dolcerocca emphasizes that "Tanpınar recognizes that the perception of time is a battlefield in cultural conflicts."³⁹⁵ The change or regulation in this perception leads to a deep crisis in the individual and even collective consciousness, especially when considering the rapid sociocultural transformations in Turkey. In other words, the rationalist conception of the world as the linear order becomes a sense of crisis and alienation that Hayri needs to tackle.

On the other hand, Hayri's descriptions of the clocks and his meta-comments on them set an ironic tone and evoke different subjects about the progressivist mindset of Republican modernity. Hayri's alienation derived from the change in the perception of time, and thus, of the world indicates his existential crisis and confusion. However, the way his alienation is

³⁹⁴ Dolcerocca, "'Free Spirited Clocks,'" 186.

³⁹⁵ Dolcerocca, "Chronometrics," 1162.

depicted parodies the regulation of time and the discourses of progressivist modernization, such as the sense of belatedness, faith in progress, rapid modernization, and the organization of daily life with the Western-style clocks and calendar system introduced to society in Turkey in the mid-1920s. Anthropomorphism of the clocks then conveys implicit references to the cultural reforms and politics in Turkey, though it always remains at the limits of self-referentiality.

In addition to this technique, parodic allusions occur with Hayri's meta-comments, as his linguistic style involving the words and phrases are also loaded with sociocultural, ideological, historical, and referential meanings related to the context of Turkish modernity. This double function of Hayri's narration becomes a way of parodying anything related to modernity and being modern in Turkey, sometimes in a mocking tone and sometimes through rhetorical or situational irony.³⁹⁶ However, whatever those words or phrases imply, they are always depicted as Hayri's comments, rhetorical questions, or thorny dilemmas. They primarily reflect Hayri's struggle to find meaning and have agency in his life. The third element of Hayri's story therefore refers to his failed quest for self-actualization: that is, the matters of self-identity and agency, which are also prevalent themes in modernist literature.

Hayri's quest in this sense bears on the complex relationship between his perceptions of time, his absurd understanding of how to be in the world —this makes him a misfit and unfortunate man. The way Hayri struggles to transcend this feeling significantly resembles the sense of homesickness and alienation of Mümtaz in *A Mind at Peace*. Hayri cannot make sense of his self-existence and the world he lives in: his tragic and confused sense of life are embedded in the story of the fiction. After his first master Nuri Efendi's death, Hayri powerlessly oscillates between different fatherly mentors and has no agency until he meets

³⁹⁶ Claire Colebrook emphasizes “the social, conventional and political aspects of language” to produce irony in various ways. See Claire Colebrook, *Irony* (London: Routledge, 2004), 15.

Halit in 1943. Chapters one and two mostly narrate his instability and sense of failure within this oscillation.

The absurdity of life in the novel comes into play as a recurring aspect of the human condition. The inevitability of fate and coincidence seem to challenge Hayri's free will, actions, and way of being. Strange coincidences, tragicomic misunderstandings, and unexpected events occur, putting him into bizarre, bitter, and unforeseen circumstances. Hayri also underlines his disrupted self as an existential crisis in his narration:

There were times when I even dressed like them, adopting aspects of their personalities. Without my quite knowing, I would on occasion even *become* Nuri Efendi or Abdüsselam Bey or, yes, even Seyit Lutfullah. They were my models, the masks I hardly knew to be masks. I would don one personality or another before heading out to mingle with the crowds.³⁹⁷

The outbreak of the Great War, however, changes Hayri's life, and chapter two begins with his arrival in Istanbul after the war. He is informed that his father passed away during the war. The noticeable pattern in Turkish fiction of the protagonist losing his father repeats in this novel as well. Ironically, Doctor Ramiz diagnoses him with a father complex in the following chapter. Although Hayri emphasizes the poverty and misery of the city, his psychological impressions and terrible experiences of war remain unnarrated. There is no single reference to any potential personal trauma, death, or suffering, or to the loss of the Ottoman lands due to the war. Hayri only depicts the events and does not describe the in-depth composition of his psychology, feelings, or thoughts at that time.

However, Hayri still states his quest for self-determining agency and reconciliation with the external world by commenting on his situation: "Escape was the only way to take flight into myself. But was there even such a place to take refuge? Indeed was I even there?"

³⁹⁷ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 51. There is no italics in the Turkish original.

This thing called ‘I’ was no more than a mess of desire, pain, and fear.”³⁹⁸ In this passage, Hayri’s retrospective self-questioning indicates his existential angst, lack of agency, and despair. The turning point for Hayri’s and his cruel fate and bad luck (or *tâlih*, as Tanpınar uses in his novels) is when, at the most miserable and vulnerable moment of his life, he meets Halit. This encounter becomes the peripeteia of Hayri’s life, way of being, and ethic because he became a self-made “modern” man of in 1940s Turkey only after he met Halit.

The Seduction and Moral Redemption of Modern Life

After a short while, Halit becomes the most influential person for Hayri and is a central figure part in chapters three and four. These two chapters describe the establishment of the Time Regulation Institute, Hayri’s involvement therein, and its operations under Halit’s mentorship through to 1953. The story of the Institute primarily lies in the master-apprentice relationship between enterprising, rich, prestigious Halit and miserably poor, misfit, and unfortunate Hayri doomed to failure. Halit serves as the peripety of Hayri’s unfortunate and tragic life because Halit helps him to orientate to the new values and manners of being modern in Turkey, especially during the 1940s and the 1950s. The seductive process of Hayri’s adaptation to this modern life, indeed, reveals the transformation of Hayri’s naïve, colorless personality and moral values through the parodic allusions, ironic instances, and defamiliarizing effects in the novel.

The relationship between Hayri and Halit develops particularly through Halit’s nonoperational watch, which parallels the master-apprentice relationship between Hayri and the watch-repairer Nuri Efendi. In other words, Hayri encounters the two most influential figures in different periods of his life by way of clocks. However, these two mentors are completely distinct, as they have contrasting worldviews and ethics. Despite Nuri Efendi’s

³⁹⁸ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 186–87.

equating people with clocks, Halit utilizes time as a commodity that must be regulated to increase efficiency, productivity, and capital. Halit's rationalist perspective occasions the idea of the Institute that regulates all the clocks in Turkey. Halit explains its urgent necessity seriously:

“We're losing half our time with unregulated clocks. If every person loses one second per hour, we lose a total of eighteen million seconds in that hour. Assuming the essentially useful part of the day consists of ten hours, we are left with one hundred eighty million seconds. So in just one day a hundred eighty million seconds –in other words three million minutes; this means a loss of fifty thousand hours per day. Now perform the calculations and see how many lifetimes suddenly slip away every year. And half of these eighteen million people don't even own watches; and if they do, they don't work. [...] It is a maddening loss of time... a loss in terms of our work, our lives, and our everyday economy.”³⁹⁹

Halit's reasoning for the rational organization of linear time prioritizes high performance and efficiency. His logic, explained in an exaggeratedly zealous tone, clearly evokes the belatedness discourse and verges on its parody through hyperbolic rhetoric of rationality. Parody, here, occurs through the double-edged aspect of a self-reference within the plot and an implied signal that transcends it. Halit's stirring speech underscores the value of time with a rational, systematic calculation in a pragmatic context, while his logic exaggerates the necessity to organize time for the sake of rapid development, evoking “the idea of progress” and “time thrift and punctuality.”⁴⁰⁰ The excessive rationalism of his logic narrated in a hyperbolic style creates an irony about the belatedness discourse linked to Turkish modernity.

By putting his absurd idea into practice via his entrepreneurial skills and bureaucratic

³⁹⁹ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 33.

⁴⁰⁰ Avner Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 152. Wishnitzer highlights the importance of industriousness at that time, giving an example of Ahmet Mithat's novels, especially *Felâhât-ı Bey* and *Rakım Efendi* (1875) and the idealization of working hard and using time effectively. For the different dimensions of the conception of time both in the West and the late Ottoman Empire, see *ibid.*, 121–61.

network, Halit offers Hayri the position of Deputy Director at the Institute and instructs him with his pragmatist advice and deliberate orders. However, the activities of the Institute contain odd applications, such as the cash penalty system that imposes a fine for each unregulated or delayed clock over the country. Hayri gets rich due to this nonsense system and gains a well-respected, high social status by utilizing such applications in a couple of years. The rationalization of time through the quantitative standardization in the story then actuates the “commodification of time”⁴⁰¹ as an absurd way of fraud. In other words, Halit’s manipulative guidance leads to Hayri’s unjust enrichment. Hayri thus ascends the social ladder due to the corrupt activities of the Institute.

Accordingly, that scene conveys a slightly satiric orientation, as it exaggerates and mocks an excessively rationalist mindset and linear conception of time.⁴⁰² Hayri’s alienation and disharmony derived from the change of the temporal understanding in Turkey ironically turn into an overwhelming advantage and personal gain for himself. Thus, “the nobility of the human soul”⁴⁰³ as Hayri says at the outset of the story acquires a more sarcastic dimension and ironizes the unvirtuous and immoral manners of people, by telling the opposite of the implied meaning. This ironic instance regarding the use of time manifests Hayri’s transformation into a new, “modern” person fit for life in 1940s Turkey, due to Halit’s utilitarian pragmatism. Hayri highlights his great change and Halit’s impact on his life: “from the moment Halit Ayarçı came into my life I became a new man. I become more at ease with reality, more accustomed to confronting it. Indeed, the man created a whole new life for

⁴⁰¹ Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks*, 24. Wishnitzer points out that “standardization of time units [...] based on timetables” leads to this commodification of time as a “conversion into money.” For an analysis of Halit’s economic discourse as a fraud and the novel as a “satiric allegory,” see Hainz, “New Ec(h)onomy,” 95.

⁴⁰² For reading the novel as “a critique of the rationality of modernity,” see Hemmat, *Turkish Novel*, 134.

⁴⁰³ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 8.

me.”⁴⁰⁴ However, recognizing this transformation, as the older Hayri writes in 1953, did not happen suddenly or contemporaneously.

Indeed, over the course of a decade, Halit teaches Hayri how to act in the order of modernizing Turkey by showing the values and manners of the so-called modern life. That is, Halit’s seducing mentorship functions as Hayri’s apprenticeship to become modern. Becoming modern for Hayri is, on the one hand, a way of dealing with his cruel fate, ill-fortune, and sense of alienation and homelessness in Turkey; on the other hand, it is a way of being a well-respected, urban, rich man under such conditions. The mentor-protégé relationship of Halit and Hayri parodies the corrupted moral content of being modern and its perception in Turkey in various playfully ironic ways.

The dynamic of their relationship is based on the compromises that Halit convinces Hayri to concede to. Halit’s mentorship gradually closes the gap between their approaches to modern life and its meaning. Initially, Halit advises Hayri to change his vision of life: “Just a few minor adjustments to your life, a little entrepreneurialism, some elbow grease, an ever so modest change in perspective—and voila! Everything has been changed.”⁴⁰⁵ Hayri cannot completely understand Halit’s worldview, in which pragmatism, individualistic interests, and entrepreneurship are prioritized. However, Halit pushes him to be open to what is considered new and modern in Turkey: “You lack entrepreneurial spirit. You’re an idealist. And you fail to comprehend the reality around you. In short, you’re old-fashioned.”⁴⁰⁶ There is a routine pattern in which Hayri questions the necessity of the Institute, and at any given time, Halit explains any matter that Hayri doubts, thereby gaining his trust.

Thus, Hayri progressively starts to lose his worldview and ethics and instead begins to adhere to Halit’s principles. Halit gradually seduces Hayri and persuades him to conduct the

⁴⁰⁴ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 50–51.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 232.

corrupt, fraudulent, and absurd executions of the Institute. When Hayri cannot make sense of the Institute, Halit manipulates him by suggesting that he should view reality pragmatically as something that can be utilized for his interest rather than as it is: “Being a realist does not mean seeing the truth for what it is. It is a question of determining our relationship with the truth in the way that is the most beneficial for us. What do you achieve by accepting reality as it is?”⁴⁰⁷ Halit’s pragmatic advice of being a realist is repeated each time Hayri hesitates to act in the way Halit directs him. The names of both characters are also related to this temptation. Halit’s surname is *Ayarci*, and it means “regulator” in Turkish. It is semantically and figuratively a playful word.⁴⁰⁸ Halit regulates not only clocks as the rational organization of time and society through the Institute but also Hayri’s willpower during his apprenticeship. The word *ayarci* also evokes the word *ayartıcı* in Turkish, which implies the word “seductive” or “tempting” semantically and phonetically.⁴⁰⁹

In the first months, Hayri sits at the office without performing any work and only waits for the news from Halit. However, no one at the office questions the function of the Institute except for Hayri. The presence of the Institute with all its absurdity creates a Kafkaesque atmosphere. Over time, Halit continues to seduce Hayri to be more pragmatic and realistic: “But the realism of today’s man is something else. What can I make with the material at hand, with this very object and all it has to offer? That’s the question to ask.”⁴¹⁰ Despite Hayri’s skepticism about the necessity of the Institute, Halit reacts to his objections in a friendly and patient manner. Indeed, Halit is always self-confident, and persuasive; his

⁴⁰⁷ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 233.

⁴⁰⁸ Hayri’s surname, *İrdal*, evokes the Turkish word, *irdele(mek)*, which refers to “(to) scrutinize” or “to examine.” See Hemmat, *Turkish Novel*, 184. It also evokes another word in Turkish, *irade*, which means first “will” and secondly “freedom.” See Philip M. Parker, ed., *Webster’s Turkish-English Thesaurus Dictionary* (San Diego, CA: ICON, 2008), 236–37. This word then implies Hayri’s lack of agency; he has no will or agency.

⁴⁰⁹ For the meanings of “*ayart(-mak)*,” see Parker ed., *Webster’s Turkish-English*, 39.

⁴¹⁰ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 233.

speeches are explanatory and didactic, though rhetorically manipulative:

Work was created by man to be executed by man. And we have created this. [...] Work is a matter of mastering one's time, knowing how to use it. We are paving the way for such a philosophy. We'll give our people a consciousness of time. We'll create a whole new collection of adages and ideas, and spread them all over the country. We shall declare that man is first and foremost a creature who works, and that work itself is time. Is this not a constructive thing to do?⁴¹¹

Therefore, Halit succeeds in seducing Hayri each time through his sly way of thinking, rationality, and playful rhetoric. In this regard, Halit can be seen as a Mephistopheles-like character in their master-apprentice relationship.⁴¹² He subtly persuades Hayri regarding the causality of work in modern life again and again.

After the Institute is established, Halit asks Hayri to author a book about a fictitious historical figure who is related to the clocks. He even encourages Hayri to use information about his previous mentor, Nuri Efendi. At first, Hayri does not want to write a book about a fake historical person, but Halit persuades him more aggressively, saying that he can resign if he does not want to do it. He adds that the imaginary historical figure, "Ahmet Efendi the Timely exists. He exists in part because [they] want him to."⁴¹³ The manipulation of the truth takes place in Halit's speeches and acts as a recurring leitmotiv in the plot. Halit acts as a professional liar and a master imposture, who plays with the sense of reality and the primary meanings of the words. Lying, manipulation, role-playing, charlatanism, and imposture are his inherent human traits. In other words, the manipulation of the truth at the story level

⁴¹¹ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 259.

⁴¹² Mehmet Kaplan mentions this Mephistopheles-like trait of Halit, but he does not comment on it more. See Kaplan, "Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü," 111. Parla also emphasizes that Hayri is a sort of Mephistopheles of modern times. See Parla, *Don Kişot'tan Bugüne*, 159; 162.

⁴¹³ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 284. The original Turkish word for "timely" is *zamânî* which means "related to time." See, Ayverdi, *Türkçe Sözlük*, 3516. It is used as a made-up name of the fictional person that does not exist in the story of the novel.

consolidates the reality–fiction conundrum in the narrative discourse.

However, the ambiguity in the fiction is derived not only from the self-referential and extraordinary events in the plot but also from the fantastic manner of storytelling, therefore reinforcing the parodic allusions about Turkish modernity and its various discourses or effects. For instance, Halit’s act of temptation pertains to his slyness and rationality. Mythologically, slyness is related to “the serpent;” however, as Bal points out, slyness is also “morally ambivalent,” and “implies cleverness, but not necessarily deceit.”⁴¹⁴ This ambiguity designates the critical direction and frequency of the parody in the fiction because it balances the degree of the ironic exaggeration and referentiality concerning Turkish modernity. Due to this careful balance, the parodic mode in the novel stops at the edge of the satiric and direct criticism.

This ambiguity in the narrative mode is valid for moral values in the story. There is, indeed, no ground for social ethics or any proposal about it. Avner Wishnitzer underlines the lack of “the boundaries between true and false in the novel.”⁴¹⁵ The reality–fiction conundrum in the narrative then maintains a permanent “hesitation”⁴¹⁶ of the fantastic for the reader. Thus, whether the novel is a brilliant satire of Turkey’s rapid modernization or an ironic allegory, or a masterful parody depends on the mode of reading the novel.⁴¹⁷ On the other hand, Hayri as the writer and narrator of his memoirs attains his goal, like a satirist, to “nurture a wish to tell everyone about the immorality, corruption, or simply stupidity that

⁴¹⁴ Mieke Bal, “Sexuality, Sin and Sorrow: The Emergence of the Female Character (A Reading of Genesis 1–3),” *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1/2 (1985), 32. Bal argues this when discussing a female character, but the double meaning of slyness is also valid here.

⁴¹⁵ Wishnitzer, “Modern Turkey,” 394.

⁴¹⁶ Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 31. Todorov points to the importance of the continuity of the hesitation until the end of the narrative as the first condition for the effect of “the fantastic.”

⁴¹⁷ See pages 173-174; 180-181.

surrounds him. His purpose is to scorn and ridicule, but also to inspire social change,”⁴¹⁸ which is implicit in his narration. The subtle balance between this satiric intention, self-criticism, parodic allusions, and self-referentiality prevails over any certain and reductive claim about this work of fiction and its genre.

Writing Memoirs as Self-Recognition and Murmuring Apology

During the writing process of his memoirs, Hayri recognizes that he had come to the point of no return after conceding to Halit’s idea of writing the book about an unreal historical character. He had begun to believe in Halit’s principles and advice, as he confesses in the act of narration: “But sadly I was no longer the same man. Over the six months I’d spent working on the book, I’d come to see the world through Halit’s eyes, so much so that I found any objection to my work intolerable.”⁴¹⁹ Their master-protégé relationship also parodies the false ideal of complying with being modern in Turkey and its secular ethics. According to Ronald Paulson, “the parodied is exposed as a false ideal against the real complexity of experience” in many satiric novels, and this element “opposes two portraits, of the good and the bad. Parody telescopes both elements into a single symbol.”⁴²⁰ The crucial question, here, is how the reader would know what the “false ideal” is and why Hayri’s ideal could be considered false. At this point, the reader’s knowledge of the literary and sociocultural history of Turkey plays a determinative role because parody requires the reader’s recognition of it.

Halit presents a well-educated, rationalist, entrepreneurial, and pragmatic man with knowledge of human nature and faith in the new, which indeed resembles the archetype of

⁴¹⁸ Nilsson, “Satirical Mode,” 4.

⁴¹⁹ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 315.

⁴²⁰ Ronald Paulson, *Fictions of Satire* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1967), 6.

ideal Western-oriented characters in the Turkish novel.⁴²¹ However, he is also a liar, manipulator, imposter, and even a charlatan. Due to this contradiction, Halit's characteristics are associated with the subversive denotations of the positively constructed features shared by previous characters in some other Turkish novels. The ways in which these positive characteristics are represented in the novel undermines the primary and conclusive meanings of being a self-made modern individual in Turkey through the parodic narrative mode. In Hayri's seduction, the definitive components of being modern signify immoral and decayed content through Halit's actions and speeches.

Accordingly, the positive definition of being appropriately modern is subverted as self-parody. The idealized content and ethics of being modern in Turkey are then ironically replaced with negative dimensions of the same positive particularities, which are loaded with the legacy of other novels in Turkish literature. This ironic subversion thus creates a parody of modern life and its sociocultural and moral values in the self-referentiality of the fiction. For instance, Hayri gains fortune, respect, and social status and leads a luxurious life thanks to Halit's seducing mentorship, which includes manipulative advice and lies regarding work ethic and pragmatism. The corrupting values of modern life have taken hold of Hayri's personality and moral judgments. Halit's powerful seduction as a Mephistophelean character involves his manipulative actions and rhetorical speeches about modern life in 1940s Istanbul. His seduction changes Hayri's way of being and his moral values over time. The ways Hayri is tempted then devalue the Republican epistemology and ethics of being modern in Turkey, thereby ridiculing them due to the moral relativism, playful self-irony, and self-referential ambivalence throughout the fiction.

Despite all the socio-economic and personal benefits, however, Hayri still feels uneasy

⁴²¹ These are also common traits of idealized male characters in Turkish novels, such as Rakım Efendi in *Felâh Bey and Rakım Efendi*, who is pragmatic, entrepreneurial, Western-oriented, and ideal man.

and trapped by Halit's worldview: "We were all puppets, with Halit Ayarçı pulling the strings. He brought us to just the place he wanted us to be, and then we acted our parts from memory. I had such mixing feelings for the man: my anger and my rage were tempered with admiration."⁴²² Hayri's epiphany during the writing of his memoirs is a retrospective and self-reflexive commentary. There appears a sudden shift and increasing anger in his narration after this recognition. Hayri even comments on Halit's negative features to explain his moral uneasiness about the past and the Institute. Thus, Hayri's motivation for writing his memoirs deviates from his aim at the outset, which was to show the value of the Institute and his respect for Halit. The process of writing his memoirs thus turns into a self-confrontation of his flaws, moral concern, irreversible guilt, regret, and shame.

At this moment, Hayri begins to tell of the increasing tension between Halit and himself. Hayri's moral concern generates an existential uneasiness as he questions his past way of being in the world and his code of ethics, as influenced by Halit. Hayri's actions, self-transformation, and worldview after he meets Halit are depicted as immoral and thus false, not only through different kinds of irony and self-referential instances within the plot but also through his self-conscious meta-comments.⁴²³ These comments reinforce Hayri's self-deprecation towards the end of the fiction. Hayri self-consciously expresses his regret he felt about all the imposture, excessive lying, and vain practices of the Institute. This deep regret led to a direct and bitter confrontation with Halit, for the first time, in the plot. In their conversation, Halit confidently tells Hayri to go back to his previous life and old-fashioned self, but he adds that:

"Let me tell you your version of the truth. You can't turn back now because you aren't willing to give anything up. Despite all your criticism and self-deprecation, you have a beautiful, forward-thinking wife and a mistress with whom you are madly in love. [...]"

⁴²² Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 343.

⁴²³ For discussion on the "false ideal," see Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic*, 90.

At the end of the day, you're an octopus, with your eight arms wrapped around the world! And you can't release your hold on anything. How could you ever go back?"
[...] Once you've entered the game, you have lost. Bargaining with virtue gets you nowhere.⁴²⁴

This dramatic confrontation displays the contrasting ideas and values of both characters about the values of modern life in Turkey. Furthermore, with his painful honesty and devilish realism, Halit implies the impossibility of Hayri's return to his earlier miserable, unfortunate but innocent self, unless he renounces all the benefits of his present luxury lifestyle.

The master-apprentice relationship intensifies the analogy of the seductive story between Mephistopheles and Faust. Hayri's growing uneasiness explicitly indicates his conflict of values and immoral corruption due to Halit's devilish seduction. Hayri expresses his regret and failure with increasing self-awareness in the present act of writing. This self-awareness bears on Hayri's immoral behaviors and fraudulent self-fulfillment, and he also critically questions himself: "So whether I knew it or not, I was enjoying a certain success in life. But what had I really achieved? Save my frustration with this strange and incongruous crowd, what else had I achieved?"⁴²⁵ Hayri's meta-comments signify his bitter regret and growing dissatisfaction with his way of existence. He self-consciously emphasizes the dishonorable aspects of the Institute and his immorality too late, but in a self-corrective manner:

I have changed so much since embarking on these memories that I am no longer in a position to claim that I view the institute —currently being dismantled— with the same eyes as I once did. [...] I am not denying the substantial benefits it offered society; I am merely noting that the passage of time has slowly allowed us to see our work from a different perspective. Perhaps this is because I am no longer dependent on the institute for money or well-being.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Tanpınar, *Time Regulation Institute*, 360.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 139–40.

The act of narration as a process of writing memoirs helps Hayri to recognize his way of being and his ethics, in the mode of confession. His confessions problematize the ontological and ethical aspects of becoming a modern, self-made man in 1940s Istanbul. However, the tragic dimension in his conflict of values and moral crisis is depicted in a carnivalesque mode of parody that involves situational and rhetorical irony, hyperbole, ambiguity, and ridicule.

Writing memoirs for Hayri functions not only as a textual space for his self-confrontation and self-exculpation but also turns into a self-reflexive parody of his absurd way of becoming modern in Turkey—the crisis of his modernity experience as parody. The playfully mixed signals, multivalent evocations, absurd situations, and rhetorically ironic comments remain within the self-referentiality of the story while sometimes implying the subjects and discourses of (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity. In sum, Hayri's act of writing becomes an emancipatory process and redemptive power for the older Hayri's ethical dilemma and existential concern. Nothing may change in his case as he is also aware of this fact, though he clearly shifts away from his immorality to a direction more sincere and apologetic. Towards the end of the novel, Hayri confesses his sincere regret concerning his flawed actions as well as his wish to be a humbler person, who recently carries the burden of his past shameful acts, which is presented as a self-reflexive parody of being modern in Westernizing Turkey.

Chapter 5

The Cruel Parody of the Ideological
and Ethical Impasse in
A Strange Woman

Chapter Five

The Cruel Parody of the Ideological and Ethical Impasse in *A Strange Woman*

Leylâ Erbil has a special place in Turkish literature due to the defiant idiosyncrasy of her authorship, her subtle way of using the Turkish language, and the narrative transgressions of her literary works that make them impossible to categorize into a single genre. As an eminent author of the so-called “1950 generation” in Turkish literature, Erbil’s holds a special, prominent position, which has grown stronger since the 2000s, due to the growing interest in her works in both Turkish literary studies and non-academic readership. Erbil’s debut novel, *Tuhaf Bir Kadın* “A Strange Woman” (1971) is inarguably the most popular and canonized work of her literary corpus. This novel had begun to be widely credited as a masterpiece in Turkish fiction in parallel with the general increasing interest in Erbil and her works.⁴²⁷

A Strange Woman consists of four independent chapters, each of which has a short title: “The Daughter,” “The Father,” “The Mother,” and “The Woman,” respectively. These chapters depict the story of the female protagonist, Nermin, who lives in Istanbul between the 1950s and the very early 1970s. Each chapter narrates a particular period of Nermin’s life and her relationship with her parents, friends, and different communities in Istanbul, beginning from her university years. The novel’s narrative structure relies on a fragmentary plot construction that combines a sort of female *Bildung* story with some significant issues of Turkish history. It depicts several phases of a leftist, intellectual, Republican protagonist and

⁴²⁷ Although the second publication of the novel is 1972, it was later published in 1980, 1989, and 1998. For more details, see Olcay Akyıldız and Esra Nur Akbulak, “Leylâ Erbil Bibliyografyası Bize Ne Söyler? Leylâ Erbil Edebiyatına ve Alımlanışına Verilerle Bakmak,” *Zemin* 1 (2021), 15. In analyzing the novel, I use its English translation. The novel was translated into English by Nermin Menemencioğlu, but this translation was never fully published. By following the instructions and notes from Erbil’s letters, Amy Marie Spangler used this existing translation and updated it with major changes. See Leylâ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, trans. Nermin Menemencioğlu and Amy Marie Spangler (Dallas: Deep Vellum, 2022).

her retrospective self-confrontation. In addition to its fragmentary narrative structure, the novel's mode of representation goes beyond realistic understanding, through an eclectic mix of fantasy, irony, parody, surrealism, and a semi-witting feminist discourse. The story, style, and narrative form of each chapter are quite unique, as each chapter is also told from a different point of view and in a distinct mode.

Chapter One, "The Daughter," lies in the realistic depiction of Nermin's university years in the form of a diary written between 1950 and 1952. The diary notes, based on Nermin's point of view, mainly contain her thoughts and emotions, as well as different events that she experienced or observed while studying at Istanbul University. Chapter Two, "The Father," recounts the story of Nermin's father on his deathbed. As he lay dying, her father confronts himself, his past, and particularly the murder of Mustafa Suphi, the founder of the Communist Party of Turkey established in 1920. The shift from Nermin's coming-of-age story and struggles to the complex depiction of her father's confrontation through the stream of consciousness technique in the first-person is abrupt and partially confusing.

The confusion of the readers, however, gains a new dimension in the following chapter, "The Mother," as it tells of the Islamic memorial service of her father in the framework of playful fantasy. The dream-like depiction in this chapter vividly encapsulates playful and ironic references to Turkish modernity and to several international figures of Socialism. This chapter, the shortest one, rests mainly on Nermin's narration, but she tells the whole chapter as if she is getting narration second hand. The last chapter, "The Woman," narrates a couple of hours of Nermin confronting herself in a hotel room in a state of crisis. In this chapter narrated by an unknown external narrator, Nermin's present crisis and the events solely unfolding in the hotel room are combined with flashbacks of her past actions.

When considering all the aspects of chapter four, there is a strong resemblance to the narrative structure and logic of *Lying Down to Die* or *vice versa*. Nermin's present self-

confrontation in the hotel room is associated with her past actions and her leftist discourse, while the socio-political climate of 1960s Turkey remains in the background. Her self-confrontation thus involves her persistent existential questioning, ethical dilemmas, and mental breakdown narrated in the mode in which the tragic and parody are intermingled. In this regard, *A Strange Woman* provides an excellent example of the crisis narratives that configures a tragic vision on several planes, while narrating the protagonist's quest for meaning, her alienation and failure, and her breakdown, with wildly unusual forms that transcends mimetic realism.

This chapter explores how the tragic and parody are intermingled in Nermin's modernity experience in Turkey over the course of two decades. The first section examines the intermingling of the tragic and parodic elements in "The Daughter," focusing on how the literary circle of the period and its masculinist structure are variously parodied. The second section explores how the novel depicts Nermin's vulnerable state as a young woman in 1950s Istanbul, concerning the relationship between her female body, sexuality, and limited agency. The third section analyzes the inner conflicts of Nermin and her father of chapters two and four, in which their moral and self-confrontations are entangled with the re-evaluation of the collective memory and history in Turkey. The final section scrutinizes how parody is at work, particularly in "The Woman," which relates Nermin's existential crisis to her leftist ideology, thus examining how her self-confrontation process turns into a parody of herself and the leftist discourse in 1960s Turkey, though her present crisis in the story is quite tragic.

The Scornful Mockery of the Uncompromising Masculinity

The chapter "The Daughter" consists entirely of Nermin's diary notes written between 1950 and 1952 and depicts her struggles of being a modern, urban, young Turkish woman while studying English literature at Istanbul University. Nermin's diary illustrates her bitter

experiences of coming of age, her quest for self-actualization and sexuality, her passionate interest in literature and her desire to become a poet, and finally her thorny relationship with her bigoted mother, who strictly limits her agency and the lifestyle she wishes to live. The literary milieu of that period and many writers whose names are unmentioned form the ground of Nermin's story. The chapter that narrates Nermin's quest for self-fulfillment and struggles as a young woman problematizes the gender, female sexuality, the masculinist literary circle, and the socio-political climate of 1950s Istanbul from her perspective.

Nermin's conflicts in the first chapter are both external and internal. Her external conflicts are more explicit and numerous. These conflicts reflect the various tensions between her community's sense of morality, particularly the masculinist attitudes of her male friends and writers, her bigoted mother, and Nermin's own newly emergent moral values and political views. On the other hand, her internal conflict is more implicit and derives from her confusion, dividedness, and sometimes her hopelessness. Nermin's diary therefore displays the complex interplay between her individual, personal formation as a young woman and the effects of her social environment on this formative process. Accordingly, this opening chapter of the novel that relies on a loose plot template and logic of *Bildungsroman* recounts a self-representation of a young, perplexed urban woman and her modernity experience while she seeks self-actualization.

In the seventy-one-page long diary, Nermin's notes are, in some parts, short and pithy but sometimes quite long. Although all these notes always reflect Nermin's point of view, they involve not only her feelings and opinions but also her dilemmas and the contradictions of life with which she deals. The uneven structure and frequency of taking notes indeed manifest Nermin's varying mood and her emotional restlessness. Keeping a diary for her,

then, is a way of recording her daily life experiences and thus serves as a written testimony of a confused, young Republican woman of modern Turkey in fiction.⁴²⁸

What is evident in the first chapter is Nermin's savage fury and rebellious streak, which mainly targets the masculinist structure of the literary milieu in Istanbul and the prevalent social realist literary understanding of that period. While Nermin experiences and observes different features of her sociocultural environment, her diary entries problematize not only the patronizing masculinity of the male writers she meets but also the patriarchal norms of Turkish society, especially those regarding the female body and sexuality in the 1950s, even after the legal and sociocultural reforms on women's emancipation in Turkey.⁴²⁹

Despite Nermin's fierce anger and partially consciously critical approach to these issues, her diary also portrays the extent to which she has been naively torn between the pressure of her mother, her own actions, the emancipatory values of the secular, Republican modernization, and the harsh reality of life that contradicts these values. This oscillation and the various ways of its depiction in Nermin's coming-of-age story constitutes the narrative mode of the chapter. Despite the traumatic events and tragic aspects depicted in the story, Nermin's linguistic style, involving bitter irony, scornful mockery, subversive dark humor, intertextuality, and offensive tone demonstrates (self-)parody at work.

Within this intricate entanglement of tragic content and parodic elements, Nermin's diary tackles several difficult subjects and taboos, ranging from the masculinist construction of modern life and its values in Turkey, incest, and violence, to the reduction of the female body into a symbol of honor, sexuality, and her way of *becoming* a woman under these circumstances. Indeed, the first chapter problematizes many aspects of what Aysel in *Lying Down to Die* copes with. From the outset of this novel, the female body is a major subject and

⁴²⁸ As Nermin is the one who writes the diary, her name is never mentioned herself in this chapter.

⁴²⁹ For similar matters in *Pleiades Storm* and *Lying Down to Die*, see pages 101-103 and 147-150.

a significant reason for the external and internal conflicts with which Nermin struggles. This major subject is variously manifested in the first chapter and mostly combined with the parody of the literary circle of 1950s Istanbul and its understanding of literature.

In its first pages, Nermin, as a young woman studying literature who also wants to be a poet, finds a rare opportunity to show her poems to a well-respected poet called “Him” in her diary. She reads several lines from her “Sonnet of Fallen Girls” out loud. Her diary describes the following:

“Shall it be always tears in the eyes that our girls are not sent off to war?” He scratched his nose. “So you want to go to war?” was his response this time. I explained that “war” was used here in a very broad sense; this poem expressed the thought that so long as women were kept from engaging in battles of any sort, they’d end up as a kind of “army of fallen girls.” It was odd that he hadn’t gotten the point.⁴³⁰

In this passage, two major issues come into play. First, Nermin’s poem is opaque due to its self-conscious symbolism. The confusion of the male poet about this symbolic poem first mocks the social realist literary understanding and ironically implies its dominance in the 1950s. This irony, along with Nermin’s icy tone and serious manner, ridicules the closed-mindedness of this literary understanding. Second, Nermin’s poem attempts to underscore the current status of women by criticizing it through poetry without falling into a trap of that ridiculed literary understanding.

The dual implication employed in this scene is the main textual strategy of the chapter and even the novel as a whole. The subject matter of the female body is problematized through Nermin’s experiences and perspective, as she mostly comments on sexuality and virginity. Nermin uses several examples to question, parody, and thus undermine the masculinist structure and ethics of society, particularly that of the literary milieu, which is

⁴³⁰ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 25.

supposedly more open, liberal, and inclusive for the young, Republican women of modern Turkey. Accordingly, the mocking irony parodies the mimetic literary understanding in Turkish literature of the 1950s and the ignorance of women's issues. This kind of irony also involves lighthearted criticism of the sociocultural issues and masculinist morals.

In the subsequent scene, Nermin begins to read another of her poem called "Blood," which vividly describes the experience of her first period:

Is this the heel of mighty Achilles
Pierced in my very bed,
Or some great gaping wound
Where eagles have collided in the sky?
Ceaseless, the blood
the pain that settles on her lungs
drowning eyes, the sea, wrists
drowning the sea shackled in chains
drowning drowning ceaselessly.⁴³¹

The male poet's immediate expression of "What blood is this, I'm not quite with you?" creates an effect of ridicule whereas Nermin's poem plays with the strong overtones about women's periods. The poet's reaction to this poem compounds the previous mockery, thus forming a parodic mode based on several features. First, the poet, whom Nermin highly respect, does not grasp the metaphor, and the inability for such a respected poet to not understand the metaphor ironically underlines the stark difference in the two mindsets. Nermin evidently attempts to depict her period by using ancient Greek mythology symbolically. This depiction could perhaps be her own self-parody. But the male poet does not even attempt to understand it, which displays the vast distance between their priorities. This distance explicitly pertains to the wide gap between their literary understandings; the male poet seemingly expects the words to convey a clear and direct meaning. That is to say,

⁴³¹ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 25.

he cannot understand Nermin's symbolism and, more importantly, the issue problematized within this symbolic mode of representation.

While this scene brings up the matter of menstruation and the female body through poetry as a fiction within fiction, it also ironically mocks the poet's attitude and concept of literature. The first method of parody in the novel then occurs as an ironic reference to a text written by Nermin within the fiction, which mocks a manner of patriarchy while it gives voice to her female body and its nature. Accordingly, these poems within the fiction simultaneously mock the literary milieu and problematize the female body. Parody is thus formed within the content of the story and, to a certain extent, at the meta-level.

After this incident with the poet, Nermin's reaction is overly melodramatic because she expresses lost hope for her poetry, which is her "sole refuge" and "lone consolation," and writes in her diary "[w]hat's the point of living after this."⁴³² This gloomy mood implies both her vulnerability and immaturity in the literary milieu of Istanbul and also indicates the extent to which she is unconsciously trapped between her ideals and the reality of life. This scene is only one example that embodies Nermin's well-intentioned attempts, disappointments, and excessive hopelessness due to the literary, ethical, and cultural values of her social environment. This emotional and mental cycle gains a more tragic dimension in the following pages of the story.

As exemplified by the scornful mockery of the literary understanding of mimetic realism in the 1950s and the problematization of the women's issues in playful humor, parody occurs in the daily events of Nermin's life. Nermin's narrative voice then conflates a self-conscious, cruel irony with mockery in her style of writing. This contrast, though subtle, forms the parodic mode of the chapter. In this parodic mode, Nermin's restlessness, defiance, hopelessness, and self-confidence all are entangled. However, there are also other different

⁴³² Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 26.

means of creating parody in the novel. One of them stems from the deliberate intertextuality in which another literary text from Turkish literature is utilized. At university, Nermin attends Tanpınar's lecture, and thus Tanpınar himself (as a scholar) becomes a part of the fiction.

Nermin comments on Yahya Kemal (Beyatlı)'s poem⁴³³ discussed by Tanpınar in the lecture:

*Last night your revels were ceaselessly gay,
The sound of lutes floated across the bay,
At dawn, when songs grew dim and waters gray,
That was my caique, oh beloved, drifting by*

So your caique was drifting by, so what? Now she's supposed to love you back, is that it? Whose property was that caique, anyway? Did Yahya Kemal have his own caique? If so, how much did he pay for it? How did he earn the money? Who was rowing it?"⁴³⁴

By referencing to a great poet of twentieth-century Turkish literature, Nermin pays attention to the male voice and logic of his poem, subverting the romantic representation of men as lovers. In the sequence of her questions, there exists a priggish tone and slightly aggressive way of questioning, which serves as a reminder of the practical realities beyond the abstract love depicted in the poem. Thus, Nermin's questions serve to poke fun at the underlying masculinist logic within the romantic style of the poem. At least (and only) in this section of the novel, it is possible to consider textual parody, as this discrete intertextuality subversively ridicules not only yet an additional male poet but also problematizes the conventional way men perceive women and love in poetry. However, in this particular case, both the text and its author belong to the social world beyond the self-referentiality of the story. Although Nermin does not seem to target Yahya Kemal directly, her rhetorical mechanism undermines the male

⁴³³ Yahya Kemal (1884–1958) was a leading poet and intellectual in Turkey. For this poem, see Yahya Kemal, *Eski Şiirin Rüzgârıyla* (Istanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti Yayınları, 2022), 69. He is the most influential figure on Tanpınar, and İhsan in *A Mind at Peace* is generally interpreted as the manifestation of Yahya Kemal. Tanpınar's book-length monograph about Yahya Kemal was posthumously published in 1962.

⁴³⁴ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 45.

voice and its superiority in his poem, forming a second method of making parody. In other words, Nermin's self-confident, critical attitude unequivocally disdains the masculine mindset and its culture with which she contends in her daily life: at home, at the university, and in the literary circle, simply almost everywhere.

After a while, Nermin comes across the poet, "Him," who did not understand her poems earlier. She expresses that she stopped writing poetry and then describes their conversation:

I told him most of the poets I knew were either crazy or pretended to be. I said some of them picked it up in France, while others were just plain idiots. "You're right, they're all a little crazy," he said. "So," I asked, "is it these psychos who are to be the creators of Turkish literature?" "Certainly," he said, "them, and people like you." You've never even read my writing, it's rotten stuff," I said. "So's the stuff they write," he said, and we laughed.⁴³⁵

In this scene, the ridicule of the literary milieu reaches its climax when Nermin's self-deprecation involves her self-awareness of poesy with self-critical humor. Nermin calls many writers "psychos" without hesitation. Her phrasing reflects the combination of her anger, disappointment, and hopelessness due to the masculinist values and hypocritical manners of the literary circle around her. The third way of parodying then occurs, due to a dialogue that involves bitter irony and a direct attack on this circle.

The Female Body as the Subject of the Crisis

Parodying the literary milieu and its masculinity is parallel to problematizing the female body in Nermin's diary. This problematization, however, is not only limited to that environment. The taboo subjects in the story appear throughout the entire diary, and some taboos, such as virginity, sexuality, and the hymen, are especially prominent in the relationship between

⁴³⁵ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 67.

Nermin and her mother. Her mother is a strictly conservative woman and creates a “tyranny”⁴³⁶, as Nermin describes it, due to her bigoted mindset and strict control over Nermin’s daily life. Her mother’s pressure is deeply embedded in Nermin’s subconscious insomuch that she first considers, in any situation, how her mother would react. For instance, when Nermin is caught by the police because she helped her friend in prison by delivering a coded message to someone involved in a leftist group, the first thing that comes to her mind is her mother: “Who knows what my mother would say if she saw me like this. I am not afraid of the police, but I am afraid of her, of home, if they hear about it.”⁴³⁷ Nermin is taken by the police to an unofficial place used to investigate and torture people involved in communism.

In the anti-communist political climate of the Turkish state during the Cold War in the 1950s, Nermin is subject to a serious investigation. A police officer beats her to elicit the messages she delivered. In this troubling condition, Nermin’s subconscious reflects instead on her mother’s pressure regarding her virginity rather than on the fear of violence and torture: “I didn’t worry so much about being beaten up, but I thought, *Suppose he throws me down and does something beastly to me. Suppose that precious bit of membrane which my mother values so highly is torn apart by a policeman. And in a setting like this to boot.*”⁴³⁸ Despite this violent incident, Nermin’s bitter irony persists, and it mocks her mother’s approach to her sexuality and female body. This dark humor refracts Nermin’s suppressed anger and utter despair nested in her subconscious. The dark sarcasm embedded within such a traumatic experience for a young girl bitterly subordinates the norm of hymen and her virginity glorified by her mother, “madam protector of membranes”⁴³⁹ as she calls her in the diary. Accordingly,

⁴³⁶ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 28.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 44. The italics in the translation do not exist in the original text. It seems that the italics serve to distinguish Nermin’s stream of consciousness from her prevalent voice as the narrator in the diary.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 69. For Nermin’s dream about the hymen, see also *ibid.*, 37–38.

Nermin's bitterly (self-)ironic attitude not only involves a powerfully critical voice against the matter of virginity but also becomes a way of tackling this matter by ridiculing its significance, which is constantly espoused by her mother.

In this regard, the social and political dimensions of the parodic mode in this fiction come into prominence, especially towards the end of the chapter, and add to the increasing degree of criticism and its severely aggressive tone, which conveys a more witting feminist discourse, though still from the perspective of Republican modernity. The apex of this discourse occurs when Nermin is unavoidably in conflict with some male writers again. For instance, Nermin reacts to the gossip about her and begins to yell at the writers in the tavern by saying that "[t]hese doors were opened for me by Atatürk [...] Who do you think you are trying to force Turkish women back into the dark caves of the past, huh?" [...] you're just a bunch of old-fashioned bigots."⁴⁴⁰ After a short while, Nermin calls them "still Ottomans."⁴⁴¹ Although the story in the first chapter does not necessarily lie in apparent dichotomies, this scene explicitly forms a modern-traditional bigotry divide that corresponds to the secular, Republican values of Turkey and the conventional Ottoman mindset. Nermin's diatribe then utilizes and reproduces the official discourse of the Republican ideology, indicating her faith in it. However, this condemnation also underscores her disillusion about the modern Republican women discourse, which emerged from this modernization process.

It is worth remembering here that the same discourse, which highlights the emancipation of women in Turkey thanks to the secularist legal and social reforms in the 1920s and 1930s, is also internalized by Aysel in *Lying Down to Die*. However, as is also problematized in that fiction, this discourse paradoxically limits women's freedom, desire, and sexuality, thus reducing women to serving the nation as good citizens. Nermin opposes

⁴⁴⁰ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 79.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

this hypocrisy at an earlier age compared to Aysel. At the tavern, Nermin raises her voice, telling them that Atatürk “opened brothels so you men would leave us in peace, but he forgot to put the money in your pockets so you could afford to go to them.”⁴⁴² Nermin’s speech echoes Aysel’s fear of being thought of as a prostitute in the hotel room, though they are quite different. Like Aysel, Nermin distinguishes herself from the sex workers and even belittles them, thus highlighting the difference in her moral values as a young, urban woman.

Nermin’s discourse thus involves a derogatory, discriminatory approach to other women in order to position herself as an open-minded, educated, independent, and faithful woman, adherent to the established Republican values of Turkey and its secular ethics.

Despite this attitude, Nermin does not care about the taboo of chastity imposed by the masculinist norm, as she often ridicules it. When she gets irritated by the patronizing and sexist behaviors of the same authors in another scene, she loathingly tells them:

I know all of you, each and every one. I’ve seen with my very own eyes the anguish that Turkish intellectuals suffer! I’ve learned how they view women. [...] Choose one from among you. The poorest, most pathetic of you all. And I shall give him this as alms. For I have no need of it myself.⁴⁴³

This excessively provocative and equally brave scolding confirms that Nermin is “against the sacralization of the hymen,” and, as Şule Akdoğan puts it, “she reduces it to an object of pity and ridicule, and frequently expresses her desire to get rid of or grant it to people”⁴⁴⁴, simply anyone as in this case. Nermin, then, like many other characters in Erbil’s works, “is capable of critically looking at man and of seeing him with all his faults and weaknesses and of

⁴⁴² Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 80.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴⁴⁴ Şule Akdoğan, “Representation of the Female Body in Adalet Ağaoğlu’s *Ölmeye Yatmak* and Leylâ Erbil’s *Tuhaf Bir Kadın*,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 23, no. 1–2 (2020), 52.

opposing him when he tries to oppress her, both intellectually and sexually.”⁴⁴⁵ However, the difference between Nermin’s two statements displays her great dilemma and lack of awareness about it. Thus, Nermin’s oscillation between the contradictions of the Western-oriented, secular values in Turkey and her dilemma puts her into a desperate plight and eventually leads to her fall, forming a tragic layer in her story. Despite her self-confident irony, harsh criticism, and dark humor, Nermin is also depicted as a perplexed and sometimes desperate young woman who struggles to comprehend her environment and its moral values.

Towards the end of the first chapter, Nermin attempts to run away from home due to her mother’s pressure and go to an unknown place with her leftist friend who has fallen in love with her. She is, however, caught by her mother and confined to her room. Nermin’s bitter irony that intertwines her anger with her hopelessness turns into tragic despair. At first, she considers committing suicide and even tries to do it twice. The act of committing suicide evokes Aysel’s case in *Lying Down to Die*, though its context is different. It then brings up the question of female suicide in Turkish literature (particularly when considering the representations of individual modernity experiences) and how it tackles the subject of female sexuality and the suppressed desires of women. An alternative to this desperate state of Nermin is to strategically marry Bedri, who is the brother of Nermin’s best friend Meral, for this marriage would enable her to get away the home and live in the way she wants to.

Accordingly, Nermin is torn between two undesirable and inescapable options, neither of which she could have foreseen. Having to choose between such unwanted choices establishes a tragic vision. This vision that lies in a sense of failure and despair evokes the different cases examined in the previous chapters of this thesis. Nermin’s crisis, which depends on the co-existence of her acts, desires, and external reasons, leaves her at the

⁴⁴⁵ Füsün (Altıok) Akatlı, “The Image of Woman in Turkish Literature,” in *Women in Turkish Society*, 231.

threshold of a crucial choice. Regardless of which she chooses, her condition is tragic due to the inherent, unavoidable nature of her circumstances. A compelling aspect of this unavoidability arises from the masculinist structure of the community that restrains Nermin's agency between these two unwanted choices, for these options are two negative values for her. In sum, problematizing her female body in Nermin's diary is also implicated in the tragic vision configured in the novel.

Contradicting Self, History, and the Other

There are other layers of this tragic vision in the following sections of the fiction, each of which depicts different characters or conditions. In the first chapter, Nermin's friend Meral shares the story of her traumatic incestuous relationship with her brother, which forms a tragic predicament involving moral crisis, deep shame, a sense of guilt, and an unbearable state of being. In her extreme case, Meral's behavior is presented as an intricate blend of contingency, elusiveness, and her semi-conscious agency that relies on neither her flaws and responsibility nor a particular external factor. The unexpectedness and secrecy of the incest also designates its irreversibility. In this section, the novel seems to depict something unnarratable, particularly "the supranarratable," which refers to something that "can't be told"⁴⁴⁶ in fiction. Textualizing the complexity and unspeakable extent of such actions or experiences is another strategy in the novel, along with all the parodic instances, that connects personal trauma, abject failure, and severe existential crises of the characters to their harsh self-confrontations, ethical questionings, and intense suffering.

This strategy gains a more complex dimension in the following chapter, as it heightens the tragic vision constructed in the novel. In chapter two, Nermin's father, Hasan, re-evaluates

⁴⁴⁶ Robyn R. Warhol, "Neonarrative; or, How to Render the Unnarratable in Realist Fiction and Contemporary Film," in *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, ed. James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 222.

his life on his deathbed, particularly the traumatic moments and crucial events he went through. Despite his semi-conscious and feverish condition, Hasan remembers the days he worked on ships for over fifty-five years. Among many different incidents, including several significant events in Turkey's history, Hasan confronts two particular events and his actions related to them. The ways he confronts these events indeed build the tragic on two planes. First, Hasan remembers the incident in which the ship he worked on sank in 1920. Hasan helps save fifty-three passengers in the chaos of the accident. However, he hesitates over whether he should help the fifty-fourth passenger, as he could also die since the ship was about to go under any minute. Hasan chooses to do nothing and watches the passenger die instead of risking his life. This fateful decision inevitably poses an ethical question about Hasan's behavior, which causes Hasan moral concern and suffering, as he had to choose between two values. By now dealing with his past choice, Hasan does not attempt to completely legitimize his action. Nor does the narrative discourse of the novel offer an easy answer about it.

However, his confrontation is followed by the remembrance of the second event: the murder of Mustafa Suphi, who was the leader of the Communist Party of Turkey, in 1921. This murder is a contested historical event, as the murder and his motive have never been proven. As often repeated in the second chapter, the question of "Who killed Mustafa Suphi?" dominates Hasan's inner thoughts and self-confrontation. Hasan's self-confrontation, initially born out of a personal moral concern, turns into an inquiry for the elucidation of the truth and collective responsibility regarding the forgotten case of injustice in Turkey's history.⁴⁴⁷

Hasan's moral uneasiness and the tragic aspect of his self-confrontation are then bound to the controversial murder of Mustafa Suphi. This strong connection indeed recalls

⁴⁴⁷ For an analysis of this part in terms of history writing and redemption, see Esra Nur Akbulak, "Leylâ Erbil Edebiyatında Tanıklık, Tarih Yazımı ve Kefaret" (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2020), 41-51.

and mourns this incident, contrasting the previous and following chapters that rely mainly on a parodic mode. The entanglement of the tragic, mourning, and truth-seeking of Turkey's history, in this sense, can be seen as a way of critically meditating on history and Turkish modernity. This entangled depiction also makes sense of the relationship between individual agency, collective responsibility, and the subject of "the other" or the underdog in this modernity process. The novel then actively incorporates the readers into this mourning and critical meditation beyond its parodic mode and the passive act of reading.

By tackling the similar relationship between the individual's modernity experience, history, and "the other" in a different setting of Turkey, the final chapter depicts middle-aged Nermin's current crisis and inner conflict in a hotel room, revealing her existential, moral, and even ideological dilemmas. In this chapter, Nermin questions herself in the hotel room and confronts her past told by an unknown external narrator. To some extent, Nermin's current situation evokes her father's confrontation on his deathbed; however, it more resembles more Aysel's in *Lying Down to Die*. Just as in that novel, the exact time and space in the story of this chapter are not explicitly mentioned. Yet the first sentence of the chapter gives clear hints: "Bayan Nermin, ten years a member of the Labor Party, had just finished skiing."⁴⁴⁸ Nermin, then, stays in a ski hotel in the winter of 1970 as the Labor Party in Turkey was established in 1961.

This chapter as a whole tells of Nermin's existential crisis by depicting her thoughts, acts, and re-evaluation of her past in the same hotel room over the course of a couple of hours. The narration in the chapter relies on the back-and-forth trajectory in terms of time and space. While Nermin deals with her mental breakdown in the room, she remembers different scenes and incidents from her past. In other words, there is a direct connection between Nermin's memories as flashbacks, which are focalized by the external narrator, and her present acts and

⁴⁴⁸ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 193.

speeches, which are narrated by the same narrator. In light of all the given information, the reader can recognize that Nermin is almost at the age of forty when she tackles this existential crisis and moral dilemma in the bleak hotel room.

At this point, the presence and function of the hotel come into prominence because hotels as spaces play an important role in several prominent Turkish novels, such as Yusuf Atılgan's *Anayurt Hoteli* (Motherland Hotel) (1973) and Ağaoğlu's *Lying Down to Die* (1973). As Ian Almond argues, hotels "constitute a space where alienation is purchased by its guests where some degree of temporary separation from a community or society is obtained as part of a commercial transaction."⁴⁴⁹ The keywords in Almond's argument, "alienation" and "separation," describe Nermin's present condition in the hotel room, too. As the story proceeds, the reader understands that Nermin had a mental breakdown earlier and therefore came to the hotel by following her doctor's advice.

Within the physical scope of this hotel room, Nermin's actions are quite limited and consist of two main acts. She either looks outside through the window or remembers her past, especially the particular period when she lived on the outskirts of Istanbul to get to know the common people better. Nermin's thoughts, memories, and expressions of emotions thus form the narration of her self-inquiry. In the state of her crisis, two different yet connected conflicts occur. The first conflict lies in Nermin's remembrance and self-confrontation of her past; it is internal and passive as it occurs in her mind. The second conflict, on the other hand, emerges between Nermin and Medain, the servant at the hotel and the only person with whom she interacts in the story.

Nermin, as an educated privileged member of the urban, middle-class society, has been involved in the leftist activities and milieu of 1960s Turkey. She embodies Turkey's top-

⁴⁴⁹ Almond, *World Literature*, 51. For the analysis of *Motherland Hotel* in a comparative sense, see *ibid.*, 55–58. See also Erdağ Gökner, *Orhan Pamuk*, 181–183.

down patronizing and paternalistic model of secular modernization as she wishes to enlighten them in the light of socialism. The disjunction between her idealism and reality indeed lead to her confusion, alienation, and mental breakdown. She has been still so angry with the existing system, which generates social injustice, particularly for the people from the lower- and working class who are unconcerned with this matter. When Medain comes to her room to bring a painkiller for Nermin's stomachache (the physical manifestation of her unstable psychological breakdown), Nermin directs her cruel temper at him. She responds to his question about his son's education mercilessly:

- He [his son] can't, Bayan Nermin replied heatedly, as if wishing to egg the man on. In this system, with that salary, you can't possibly put your children through school!"⁴⁵⁰
(...)
- You can't educate your children, not in this system we've got, she said to the man. Her voice was sincere.⁴⁵¹

The tension between them indeed derives from Nermin and her ambivalent attitude. Medain does not attempt to challenge her view. However, Nermin's reaction and anger here bear upon her ideological positioning and reflect her ongoing inability and her way of dealing with the common people whom she wants to help. Uslu pays attention to the importance of the "political position" and "reaction" in Erbil's literary works as something to be considered although this kind of positioning does not satisfactorily lead to any agency.⁴⁵² The last, short sentence emphasizes Nermin's sincerity within her cruel, realistic approach and thus displays the sharp oscillation between her hopeless insight of life in Turkey and her deep compassion for those who suffer from it. This oscillation becomes the source of Nermin's existential,

⁴⁵⁰ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 221.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁴⁵² Mehmet Fatih Uslu, "Leylâ Erbil'de Yozlaşma Öfkesi ve Siyasal Açmaz," in *Erbil'de Etik*, 239.

moral, and even intellectual crisis, for she cannot or does not take action against social injustice or any related matters.

After Medain leaves the room, Nermin stands in front of the mirror, like Aysel once again, and looks at herself. The narrator describes her and this scene:

Not daring to meet the eyes of this forceful woman who always observed her from the mirror and who sometimes exhibited an almost insane fastidiousness in moral matters, [...] and in a trembling voice asked, “Am I on the right path, am I getting closer to my people?” The woman gave Bayan Nermin a belittling look, then reached out her hands to caress her naked body, her thin waist, the semicircular of her belly...⁴⁵³

Nakedness, silence, the claustrophobic atmosphere of a nondescript room, and the mirror as the reflection of self are striking features not only in this scene but in the chapter as a whole, which, again, resembles Aysel’s case. However, Nermin’s self-confrontation here does not initially pertain to her body and sexuality. It does not involve any sense of shame either. The woman looking darkly at herself in the glass could be her alter-ego or Nermin’s critical-self, judging the present crisis. Nermin and her image in the mirror face each other inasmuch as the novel depicts, and Nermin talks to her image:

“Could it be that I am wasting my life, am I that kind of someone?” Bayan Nermin asked the mirror, her heart sinking. [...] Might it be that I am someone who bangs her head against sharp rocks in vain, incurring unhealable wounds with each blow, walks about letting her blood gush forth claiming, ‘Look, see, this society has wounded me yet again,’ hoping that society, seeing the blood, will understand its patient, whose chest swells with pride because of her wound, whose self-confidence grows with each new failure....⁴⁵⁴

Rather than as a question, this statement can be seen as a self-confession in the mirror, as Nermin’s image is not real at all. It is a self-confession that still demands both respect and

⁴⁵³ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 226.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 229.

help from society, showing her self-regarding and at the same time her suffering and deep despair. The conflicting aspects of Nermin's emotions can be also evaluated as the manifestation of her impending madness if one were to consider her previous breakdown, ongoing alienation, or current mental fatigue. Nermin's madness stems from her own dilemmas and inaction that create "a conflict of thoughts"⁴⁵⁵ in her extreme way of confronting herself. On the other hand, her madness includes a self-irony as a textual strategy by showing how Nermin, as an intellectual, leftist modern woman in Turkey, wishes to be seen from other's perspectives. What is ironic here is that she positions herself as a victim wounded by society itself.

In the ambiguous situation of the mirror scene, Nermin begins to take her clothes off and seemingly talks to some socialist figures in history. She calls them by their first names, such as Fidel (Castro), Ilyich (Lenin), and Joseph (Stalin). Nermin keeps talking to Stalin loudly and says: "I went among my people, but I couldn't bridge a gap of centuries just like that. And the people are a tough nut to crack, very tough, but I won't give up, you know me, they will not make me stray from the path."⁴⁵⁶ This extraordinary scene becomes more unreal and bizarre when she starts to masturbate while whispering the name of Stalin and her ex-husband Bedri. The sign of her madness then seems to be a sign of schizophrenia or a playful phantasmagoria that the fiction offers as a spooky ambiguity.⁴⁵⁷ Towards the end of the novel, Nermin shrieks with laughter at the threshold of going mad. To make sense of her current

⁴⁵⁵ Shoshana Felman, *Writing and Madness: (Literature/Philosophy/Psychoanalysis)*, trans. Martha Noel Evans (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 36. Felman relates madness to "a world in conflict."

⁴⁵⁶ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 232.

⁴⁵⁷ Selim İleri interprets this section similarly. See İleri, *Sevdiğim Romanlar*, 542. For madness and women's writing in Erbil's novels, see Şerife Seda Yücekurt Ünlü, "'Tuhaf' Kadınların Yazma Uğraşı: Leylâ Erbil'in Romanlarında Yazar Kadın Başkışiler" (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2014), 28–72. "[T]he schizophrenic woman stands for the alienation and fragmentation of the age." See Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture; 1830–1980* (London: Virago Press, 1987), 19.

crisis that turns into a pathological case, as well as how and why she comes to this point, it is necessary to examine how Nermin's leftist discourse and its problematic aspects are parodically narrated as her memories.

Scoffing at the Leftist Discourse and Madness

The last chapter, "Woman," is comprised of a dual narrative structure form. While Nermin stays in the hotel room and only interacts with Medain, she exhaustively re-evaluates her past through either long or short flashbacks. Nermin's re-evaluation, however, is narrated in the third person by an external narrator. In this sense, the narrator focalizes Nermin's present mind by disclosing her actions and discourses, which resembles the use of the narrator in *A Mind at Peace*. This kind of focalization not only designates the way and from which perspective Nermin is seen but also determines the parodic mode of the last chapter. This way of narration enables the narrator to show how Nermin behaves and reacts to people and events with a clear distance. This discrete direct distance between the external narrator and Nermin begins with the first sentence of the chapter, as is she called "Bayan Nermin."⁴⁵⁸ Bayan denotes "miss" in English and evokes a formal manner but also a class dimension by highlighting Nermin's bourgeoisie status, especially considering that she stays in the ski hotel.

Addressing Nermin in this way indicates her difference from "the common people" she adores and thus creates a sort of defamiliarizing effect and a slightly ironic tone at the outset of the chapter. In Nermin's flashbacks, she and her husband move from Osmanbey, where the Western-oriented Istanbul bourgeoisie live, to Taşlıtarla, a suburb of Istanbul in the unmentioned year of the 1960s. The reason for their move is Nermin's great desire and curiosity to know the people of Turkey, her "folk." This reason itself already displays Nermin's bizarre attitude and gives a strong hint about her present crisis, for Nermin

⁴⁵⁸ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 193.

oscillates between her quite abstract ideal and the reality of life in Turkey. Her middle-class status, slight intellectual capacity, and commitment to leftist ideology and its rhetoric do not help her to understand the people there. This unawareness is depicted as a bitter parody that mocks Nermin's mental, sociocultural, and even emotional detachment from those people whom she romantically admires. This depiction is enhanced with various ironic instances. For instance, Nermin's mother feels so sad due to her move, and she would tell her friends that Nermin traveled to Paris instead.

When Nermin moves to the shantytown, Taşlıtarla, she brings her piano too. Her piano, however, cannot get into the small house due to its size, and Nermin decides to put it under a tree in its garden by "uttering 'Anything for the people'."⁴⁵⁹ The common leftist discourse is here used by Nermin quite seriously, but the situation itself is ironic as the presence of a piano in such a low-class neighborhood looks quite absurd and unusual. This situational irony here also shows the sociocultural distance between Nermin and her people. Furthermore, the inhabitants of the neighborhood are obviously surprised by the presence of this piano. "That day, for the children of Taşlıtarla [...] life suddenly became surreal."⁴⁶⁰ Nermin's story is thus narrated like a legend or a classical fairy tale, by using short, simple, and descriptive sentences. When Nermin sees the children standing outside the house, she introduces her piano to them and tells of its history briefly. Afterwards, she happily begins to play a waltz by Frédéric Chopin.

The parody of Nermin's leftist ideology and its rhetoric is formed in two ways. First, the narrator's seemingly neutral style of language determines the verbal irony and its tone. Second, Nermin's actions, discourses, and short-lived experiences constitute the parodic mode by depicting her as a clumsy, ham-fisted, kind of spoiled, ideologically committed, and

⁴⁵⁹ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 200.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

leftist middle-class woman. Nermin's piano plays a vital role in the parody and also becomes a symbol of conflicting values, lifestyles, and worldviews in various ways. In this sense, music (as in *Pleiades Storm* and *A Mind at Peace*) becomes a cultural manifestation of the East–West dichotomy. The piano as a Western instrument is generally a symbol of Westernization, upper-class, and prestige in the context of Turkish modernity, particularly emphasizing the social class and ideological differences in this case.⁴⁶¹ For instance, after Nermin finished playing the waltz, “[w]ith a burst of heartfelt laughter Bayan Nermin shouted ‘Hello!’ to the people. They murmured back, ‘Hello’.”⁴⁶² Nermin's attitude seems to be self-assertive, but it is indeed self-subversive because the more she behaves or attempts to behave sincerely, the more artificial her behaviors and discourses become.

Even after such a bizarre situation, Nermin is depicted as if she has unconditional love for those people, saying “My dear, dear people!” and after her move, she tries to raise their class awareness; “Bayan Nermin plunged into an explanation of the system, the difference between this system and others, of how they belonged to a society composed of classes.”⁴⁶³ However, people start to call her a communist, telling her to go to Moscow. Her romanticized conception of the people is ironically mocked through her naivete that borders on idiocy. Thus, when taking into account the ideological atmosphere of 1960s Turkey, Nermin's love of the people and her leftist ideological discourse turn into a parody of both herself and this discourse. Nermin's approach and discourse, in one sense, generate the same approach of Turkey's top-down modernization regarding the process of enlightening the people. Her strong intention in this respect becomes “an obsessive matter of conscious-raising.”⁴⁶⁴ Her

⁴⁶¹ For the symbolic meaning of the piano, see Nilay Özer, “Leylâ Erbil Romanlarında Siyasal Söylemin İşlevi” in *Erbil'de Etik*, 192–93.

⁴⁶² Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 201.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁴⁶⁴ Uslu, “Leylâ Erbil'de Yozlaşma,” 242.

failed attempts of doing so indicate not only her ironic “abstract and misleading”⁴⁶⁵ love of the people ironically but also subvert the futility and invalidity of such leftist thinking in the poor neighborhood. The parodic depiction of Nermin then involves a strong criticism of the “glorified ethics of the middle-class”⁴⁶⁶ and the socialist movement in Turkey at that time.

This kind of parody, however, does not only target Nermin herself but also the leftist circle and its mindset. For instance, the leader of the Labor Party expresses that they are at the Second War of Salvation, referring to the War of Independence that resulted in the establishment of Turkey (1923). These serious manners and speeches parody the leftist discourses, as they sound both odd and completely disconnected from social reality and people’s lives. However, this ironic distance sometimes gains a more uneasy orientation due to Nermin’s commanding perspective. When Nermin tries to relax her husband about the social life there, she suggests to him that “he should imagine he’d gotten a job with the United States, and they’d been assigned, for instance to Congo.”⁴⁶⁷ This approach and its pragmatic implications shows the artificiality of her sympathy for “her dear people” by demolishing her naivete. As Uslu puts it succinctly, Nermin’s attempts become ironic when she espouses her views on the subaltern.⁴⁶⁸

Nermin’s unconsciousness bias is challenged by her husband Bedri, when he tells her that she has a symptomatic tendency of hating people who are not poor or in pain, and that this could be a characteristic not of a revolutionary but of illness.⁴⁶⁹ Despite Nermin’s objection, Bedri keeps warning her that she cannot raise the awareness of those people suddenly: “the gap caused by centuries can [not] be closed by spending a year or two in

⁴⁶⁵ Tülin Tınaz Tankut, “Edebiyatın Kutup Yıldızı: Leylâ Erbil,” *Evrensel Kültür* 96 (December 1999), 41–44.

⁴⁶⁶ Günül Özlem Ayaydın Cebe, “Tuhaf Bir Kadın’da Olmayan Aşkın Tutkusu,” in *Erbil’de Etik*, 106.

⁴⁶⁷ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 203.

⁴⁶⁸ Uslu, “Leylâ Erbil’de Yozlaşma,” 248

⁴⁶⁹ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 209.

Taşlıtarla, then you must be very naïve indeed.”⁴⁷⁰ Bedri emphasizes the idea of belatedness here by reproducing this discourse. This view indeed implies Nermin’s headstrong, spoiled manners, and Bedri leaves Nermin after a while. Nermin cannot adapt to the place, and the people living there are also irritated by her negative views on religion and their social norms. Towards the spring, Nermin collects the keys of her demolished piano standing outside and singly moves back to Osmanbey.

When Nermin remembers these events and her failure there, she feels furious in the hotel room. Nermin’s fierce anger at middle-class values is explicit during the last chapter. But this anger targets the lower-class as in her current attitude to the housekeeper Medain. This anger later turns into a more schizophrenic state, especially when she begins to talk to herself in front of the mirror. After the grotesque masturbation scene that forms a “mysterious and terrifying connection between the fantastic and real world”⁴⁷¹, she keeps talking to Stalin, saying “Joseph, I am going to the heartland, deep into the heartland, back to my people.”⁴⁷² She smiles at her reflection in the mirror and asks: “YOU, I WONDER, DO YOU LOVE ALL THE PEOPLE?”⁴⁷³ This question is addressed to herself, but the end of the novel is still unclear; the reader cannot understand whether Nermin goes mad or if it is a dream or what will happen next. This final self-confrontation in the hotel room only points to the teasing acceptance of her tragic fallacy and to the total failure of her behaviors and discourses. The tragic dimension of Nermin’s crisis in the last chapter then is intertwined with self-irony and the parodic instances, as in the other parts of this fiction.

⁴⁷⁰ Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 209.

⁴⁷¹ Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 122.

⁴⁷² Erbil, *A Strange Woman*, 237.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 237.

Chapter 6

The Tragic Parody of Belatedness and
Positivism as Salvation in *Silent House*

Chapter Six

The Tragic Parody of Belatedness and Positivism as Salvation in *Silent House*

Pamuk's second novel, *Sessiz Ev* "Silent House" (1983), provides yet another example of how the inner crisis and dilemmas of a modernistic protagonist in Turkey are narrated in a parodic mode. The novel recounts the multigenerational story of Selahattin and his family and how they experienced Turkish modernity over a long period of time, resembling his first novel, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* "Cevdet Bey and His Sons" (1982).⁴⁷⁴ The primary story of this novel consists of the narrations of five main characters from their points of view. Each chapter in the fiction is told by a protagonist as a character-bound narrator. These characters are Selahattin's wife Fatma, his misbegotten, dwarf son Recep, and his three grandchildren, Faruk, Metin, and Hasan. The main characters have limited knowledge about each other in the plot due to their limited points of view as narrators. For instance, Faruk, Metin, and Nilgün are Selahattin's grandchildren but do not know that Recep, who is the servant in the house, is their uncle from another mother, and Hasan, Recep's nephew, does not realize that Selahattin is his grandfather.⁴⁷⁵ Accordingly, the reader has more knowledge about the events and mysteries in the novel than all the character-bound narrators.

Selahattin was a young, revolutionary military doctor, married to Fatma in Istanbul. However, he was expelled from Istanbul in 1910 due to his political attitude towards the

⁴⁷⁴ *Sessiz Ev* was translated into English nearly three decades later: see Orhan Pamuk, *Silent House*, trans. Robert Finn (Melbourne: Hamish Hamilton, 2012). According to Erdağ Gökner, Pamuk's first two novels, telling the stories of upper-middle families in Turkey in the broad historical and socio-cultural circumstances, represent a "faithful appropriation of Empire-to-Republic historiography." See Gökner, "Occulted Texts: Pamuk's Untranslated Novels," in *Global Perspectives on Orhan Pamuk: Existentialism and Politics*, ed. Mehnaz M. Afridi and David M. Buyze (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 192. See also Gökner, *Orhan Pamuk*, 36–38.

⁴⁷⁵ Nilgün is the only main character who is not a narrator in the novel.

ruling government of the Ottoman Empire. Selahattin and Fatma, therefore, left the city for a small town close to Istanbul. Selahattin represents a rationalist, intellectual, Occidentalist revolutionary who believes in the modernizing power of knowledge and science. In stark contrast to him, Fatma is depicted as a woman of the Ottoman aristocracy holding strong Islamic morals and traditional manners with a stable conservatism against the “new”—i.e., the ideas and ideals of a progress, positivist, secular worldview, and anything that comes from the West. The completely contrasting aspects of these two characters form a conflictual relationship. This relationship is narrated with the thematic dualities employed in the novel, such as husband–wife, modern–conservative, Occidental–Eastern, rational–emotional, secular–religious, and devil–angel. The way in which these binary oppositions are depicted constructs Selahattin’s character and his parodic representation in the novel. However, Selahattin is not one of the five character-bound narrators and does not appear in the present story and narrative time of the novel.

The plot follows the events during a one-week visit from three grandchildren to Fatma’s house outside Istanbul in July 1980. Due to Selahattin’s absence in the plot, the information regarding him is provided by two narrators, Fatma and Recep, through inner monologues and stream-of-consciousness techniques in the form of involuntary memories. These memories include fragmentary scenes that illustrate Selahattin’s life between 1910 and 1942, depicting his actions and discourses from within a certain narrator’s consciousness. The way in which Selahattin is represented then rests, to a large extent, on the narration of Fatma in six different chapters and, to some extent, on that of Recep in four chapters. In other words, Selahattin’s actions and speeches in Fatma’s and Recep’s spontaneous memories dictate his parodied characterization and the tragic dimension in his story. The presence of Selahattin in the fiction then occurs as, what Stephen Kern calls in his study on the modernist novel, a “conspicuous absence” that “dominates the action” in the chapters, thereby connecting the

past events with the present time of the plot.⁴⁷⁶

This chapter explores Selahattin's essential features as an Occidentalizer, revolutionary protagonist and analyzes how his way of being and his ethical and epistemological aspects are represented in the fiction. The chapter therefore examines how his belatedness discourse is repetitively undermined by the various forms of irony, hyperbole, and grotesque that create a particular mode of parody. In other words, Selahattin's existential struggle, including his flawed actions and dilemmas, becomes a parody of himself and what he represents in the novel. This chapter investigates how his experience of modernity (as a tragic crisis) is configured as a self-parody. The transformative power of this parodic mode combines some tragic elements with various forms of irony, the grotesque, playful references to Republican modernity and its principal discourses. My analysis of this text thus focuses on how Selahattin's obsessive concern for Westernization and belatedness as a crisis becomes the main material of the parodic mode, which contains existential, ethical, and intellectual aspects. Concisely, there are different textual strategies and narrative techniques that designate Selahattin's acts and dilemmas in the state of his crisis and simultaneously transform this content into a social parody of Faustian tragedy—a tragic parody.⁴⁷⁷

A Faustian Quest for Knowledge

In the plot, Fatma is a ninety-year-old woman who lives with the burden of her past. In July of 1980, her three grandchildren, Faruk, Nilgün, and Metin, comes to visit her for a week. Fatma is physically inactive in most of the plot; she usually lies or sits in her bed while dealing with

⁴⁷⁶ Kern, *Modernist Novel*, 21. Kern gives the examples of Joseph Conrad's *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, and Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* when discussing this narrative aspect in the modernist novel.

⁴⁷⁷ The parodic and grotesque elements were briefly signalled, without deeper analysis, by two studies. See Göknaar, *Orhan Pamuk*, 11; 74 and "Occulted Text," 187–88. However, these works do not examine how parody functions in storytelling and how the tragic is related to the making of parody in the novel.

the stirring of unwanted and painful memories about Selahattin. From the outset, the presence of Selahattin exists in Fatma's memories that appear from within her consciousness. Her memories and the mode by which they are represented designate the primary features of Selahattin on two planes. Selahattin is depicted as an enthusiastic intellectual, ambitious Occidentalizer, and passionate rationalist man who desperately desires to build a new, Western-oriented life in Turkey, with values based on science and materialistic knowledge of the world. On the other hand, Selahattin is also recounted as a heretic, demonic, and sinful husband.

These two antagonistic aspects of Selahattin establish the first tension between him and Fatma. This tension bears on their differing conceptions of life and ways of being in the world: i.e., their two competing worldviews and moral values. These are the rationalist, Western-oriented, secular worldview and the Islamic-oriented, conventional Ottoman conception of the world. The sharp conflict between these two worldviews constructs the East–West duality and its contradictions in the fiction. The second tension between Selahattin and Fatma, however, lies in a more tangible matter, pertaining to their marriage. Selahattin has been unfaithful to Fatma on many occasions and has had a sexual affair with the unnamed maid of the house. For Fatma, Selahattin is therefore a lustful, unfaithful, and bad husband. This tension between them over Selahattin's affair with the maid determines the dramatic layer and climax of the story by establishing the relationality of all the characters in the novel. Concisely, these two conflicts between them form the vivid, intricate, and parodic portrayal of Selahattin, which is mostly narrated from Fatma's perspective.

As a typical Ottoman-Turkish intellectual revolutionary in the 1910s, Selahattin believes that all of the East is behind Europe in terms of scientific matters and technical progress. After moving to a small town right outside Istanbul, he decides to write a huge volume of an encyclopedia that aims at “close[ing] the gap of centuries between East and

West in a shorter time.”⁴⁷⁸ This view is repeated by him both aggressively and definitively throughout the narrative. Selahattin is ambitiously determined to create a new, Western-oriented secular lifestyle not only in the small town but throughout the entire Ottoman Empire and later in Turkey—at least, that is what he describes to Fatma:

We'll establish a brand-new world here, thinking and living things that are fresh, simple, happy, and free: a world of freedom such as the East has never seen, a paradise of logic on the face of the earth, I swear, Fatma, it will happen, and we'll do it better than the West, we've seen their mistakes, and we won't repeat them, and if we, or even our sons, don't get to see it, our grandchildren certainly will, I swear, a paradise of logic on this earth!⁴⁷⁹

The content of this speech markedly conveys the nucleus of the radical positivist worldview—a characteristic of Occidental, materialist intellectual figures in the transitional period from empire to nation-state.⁴⁸⁰ Selahattin emphasizes “the necessity of science” and a “need for a Renaissance, for a scientific awakening” because their absence is the main reason for the backwardness of his country and society, especially when compared to Europe.⁴⁸¹ He indeed believes in the indispensability and superiority of (natural) science as a milestone of progress for the Ottoman Empire. For him, this insight is the only way to help the East catch up with the West. Selahattin and his views convey and, thus, support the idea of the superiority of the West over the East, for the European states are far more developed in science and technology.

⁴⁷⁸ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 24.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁸⁰ The Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals who graduated from medical military school at that time thought that they could prescribe a solution for the empire because the Ottoman Empire was seen and named as the “sick man of Europe.” Due to the positivist thinking influenced by Social Darwinism, they considered society and state as a living organism whose problems could be diagnosed and cured as in the medical realm. This metaphorical explanation, indeed, reflects a certain understanding in the socio-historical sense so that it is not just a metaphor. For further discussion, see Şerif Mardin, *Jön Türkler'in Siyasi Fikirleri: 1895–1908*, 22nd ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2019), 20; 307.

⁴⁸¹ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 6.

He also affirms science as the only valid epistemological source and asserts its superiority over religion, that is, over the epistemological and moral aspects of Islam in the Ottoman context. Thus, Selahattin's words and actions discursively and rhetorically establish the East–West divide as a we–they contradiction.

The combination of Selahattin's preconceptions about the superiority of the West and science portrays him as a Faustian-like protagonist who desires to attain all the knowledge of the world.⁴⁸² The “new life” that Selahattin often voices aloud, just as Halit Ayarçı in *The Time Regulation Institute*, emphasizes his faith in rationality, positivism, and liberty along with the idea of scientific and societal progress derived from the Western thought, particularly in regards to the principles of the Enlightenment. Accordingly, Selahattin represents the Faust of the East as a literary manifestation of “the desire for development,” if one follows Marshall Berman's reading of Faust concerning the modernity experience.⁴⁸³ Berman argues that Goethe's *Faust* crystallizes “the desire for development” that encompasses “the cultural ideal of *self*-development and the real social movement toward *economic* development.”⁴⁸⁴ Selahattin's conflict with Fatma over their contrasting worldviews is ossified by Faustian properties and connotations. Selahattin is depicted as a rationalist, idealist, and positivist young Turkish man who desires knowledge of the world in order to catch up with the West. This desire defines his way of being in the world, his moral values, and his pattern of thinking in the story.

This way of positioning the self in life contrasts with the features of the Ottoman, traditional, slightly religious Fatma. Fatma as a character-bound narrator remembers Selahattin's words about his ideal, new modern life or, in this instance, his actions:

⁴⁸² My analysis does not directly compare Selahattin with *Faust* but highlights their commonalities. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1790) represents him as a curious man who wants eternal knowledge.

⁴⁸³ Berman, *All That is Solid*, 39–40.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 39–40. The italics in the original.

he wrote in those days that the incredible advances of the sciences in the West had now made God's existence a ridiculous question to be cast aside; ... the East's continued slumber in the deep and despicable darkness of the Middle Ages had not led us, a handful of intellectuals, toward despair but, on the contrary, toward a great enthusiasm for work, because what was obvious was that we were not obliged to take all this knowledge and transport it from there to here, but to discover it all over again, to close the gap of centuries between East and West in a shorter time.⁴⁸⁵

Selahattin believes that "a whole nation is sleeping, the whole East is asleep."⁴⁸⁶ He voluntarily takes on the responsibility of "a historic task" to awaken and enlighten the sleeping East.⁴⁸⁷ The image of the sleeping East is continually repeated as the reason for backwardness, placing the Empire and later Turkey behind enlightened Europe due to the Empire's Oriental laziness, which in turn constructs the idea and discourse of belatedness. Thus, the idea and definition of being modern in the novel start with the temporal imagination of backwardness in Selahattin's view.

This way of thinking is based on the "spatial and temporal remoteness" that creates "Europe's other" as "its past."⁴⁸⁸ While the West is seen as "the home of progress," the non-West is considered the "theater of backwardness," which is continuously present in Orientalist discourse.⁴⁸⁹ In one sense, Selahattin's exaggerated ideas mimic this idea and playfully mock this (self-)Orientalist approach. What is parodied within Selahattin's story is indeed the Occidentalist discourse of modernization that was internalized by many revolutionaries in the late Ottoman era and the ruling elites of Turkey beginning in the 1920s. In other words,

⁴⁸⁵ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 24.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁴⁸⁸ Carter Vaughn Findley, "An Ottoman Occidentalism in Europe: Ahmed Midhat Meets Madame Gülnar," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 1 (February 1998), 16. For the definition of the other with temporal aspect, see also Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983,) 17.

⁴⁸⁹ Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," 769.

Selahattin's existential and intellectual concern is combined with his ideal to make his society catch up with European civilization. Selahattin's exaggerated manners and discourses about his ideal ridicule the idea of progress and the radical top-down approach of secular modernization implemented in Turkey, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. However, there is no explicit reference to any historical fact or events in the sections of the novel where Selahattin appears but only the bombastic repetition of these same discourses.

Towards a Satire of the Top-Down Modernization

As a narrative strategy in the fiction, Fatma depicts, in the form of involuntary memories, Selahattin's actions and speeches in various situations or scenes. The diverse ways Selahattin is represented include three features. Selahattin's views and words are always extreme, overemphasized, exaggerated, imitative, and repetitive. His actions are excessive, exaggerated, repetitive, and self-contradictory. Finally, there are explicit discrepancies between his actions and speeches. Any of these three features generates different degrees of irony in Selahattin's characterization and creates a self-parody of his story, while simultaneously mocking the essential principles of Turkish modernity, such as faith in progress, the discourse of belatedness, Occidentalism, and the secular worldview.

The powerful advantage of Fatma's status as a stylistic, competent narrator determines the level and frequency of irony, thereby enhancing the satiric degree of the parody and its referential complexity in the novel. For instance, Selahattin is sometimes portrayed as having a romantic and hysterical personality despite his repetitive emphasis on rationality. This ironic contrast lies in his excessive desire for gaining the scientific knowledge that the West already has and thus underscores a paradox between his words and actions, which forms a parody of himself:

... when I've finished my forty-eight-volume encyclopedia of all the basic principles and ideas, everything that must be said in the East will have been said once and for all: I'll fill that unbelievable gulf in thought in one fell swoop, they'll all be astonished, the newsboys on Galata Bridge will sell my encyclopedia, Bank's Avenue will be turned upside down, they'll go after one another in Sirkeci, some readers will commit suicide, and, above all, the people will understand me, the nation will understand! And that's when I'll return to Istanbul, in the middle of that great awakening, I'll come back!" said Selâhattin...⁴⁹⁰

The exaggerated importance of his encyclopedia is combined with his passionate, hysterically zealous sentimentality. This combination contradicts his understanding of rationalism, which, to a great extent, pertains to reason, empiricism, and wisdom. The ironic contrast as a wild exaggeration variously parodies Selâhattin's actions, discourses, and way of thinking. This contrast also manifests the inherent aspect of his Faustian image, by pointing out the "universalist view of knowledge" and "an absolutist view of the primacy of the individual ego."⁴⁹¹ In the novel, knowledge supplants the divine and is fetishized by Selâhattin who defines his way of being by the logic of Reason and the contemporaneous secular ethics of newly modernizing Turkey.

Thus, for Selâhattin, knowledge is seen as an antidote to the belatedness of the East, insomuch as narrated in the novel. Like many Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals, Selâhattin holds the idea of an encyclopedia in high regard, due to its ability to cover a wide variety of topics—from philology to natural sciences—since the early nineteenth century.⁴⁹² Selâhattin's

⁴⁹⁰ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 101.

⁴⁹¹ Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 35.

⁴⁹² Encyclopedia is the most simple, standard, and systematic platform for the dissemination of knowledge. Encyclopedism is also an imported legacy of the Enlightenment as in the example of Denis Diderot and Voltaire which emerged with European modernity. The Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals and elites pay particular attention to "the institutionalization and organization of research" and knowledge transfer since the nineteenth century. See Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, 297. Although there is no direct indication in this text and Pamuk's other writings, the parody of encyclopedia and science in this novel evokes that of Gustave Flaubert's posthumously published novel, *Bouvard et Pécuchet* (1881).

opinions and discourses, indeed, evoke the official discourse of Turkey's progressive, nationalist, and secular modernization program implemented from the 1920s onwards. Selahattin's ironically exaggerated discourses and hyperbolically mimicking actions in the story thus parody Turkey's rapid modernization and the positivist mindset behind it. Accordingly, Selahattin's self-parody as an Occidental reformist can be considered a kind of Menippean satire that conveys "a form of intellectually humorous work characterized by miscellaneous contents, displays of curious erudition," and a slight and ironic attack as a social parody.⁴⁹³

By considering Selahattin's positivist worldview, social parody as employed in the fiction includes a double-edged attack. While Selahattin's exaggerated behaviors and discourses are ironized as inherent, at the same time, the excessively positivist understanding of the world and its materialistic moral values are sarcastically parodied. This kind of parody then ridicules the characteristics of the secular, Republican ideology in Turkey that unconditionally favored Westernization. This worldview advocates for the positivist and socially engineered vision that depends on cultural Westernization and scientific development as the emancipation of society.⁴⁹⁴ Mikhail Epstein points out the paradoxical aspect of a

⁴⁹³ Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 150–51.

⁴⁹⁴ Selahattin's rejection of religion and Eastern values, his disconnectedness with the past, and other features, such as being a doctor, is a reminder of nihilist characters in Russian literature, such as Bazarov in Ivan Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, which includes a similar kind of epistemological break that leads to a gap between generations. These novels have different contexts, but the crucial similarity is the representation of both generational and epistemological differences concerning the impact of positivist materialism, as it was dominated both in Russian and Turkish modernities. For the impact of the positivist Ottoman intellectual Beşir Fuad on Turkish literature, see Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar*, 111–21. For a discussion about positivism and Bazarov with respect to Turkish literature, see Murat Belge, *Step ve Bozkır: Rusça ve Türkçe Edebiyatta Doğu–Batı Sorunu ve Kültür* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), 237–52. The reflection of nihilism can be seen in the novels of Hüseyin Rahmi that depict an understanding of a new person, being against the religious dogmatism through pessimist characters, who attack the values of society. See Timur, *Tarih, Toplum ve Kimlik*, 134.

similar worldview and characters depicted in Russian literature that “gravitates toward the positive values of the West, toward social and technical progress and all the materiality expressed forms of civilization” but also “costs on and at times destroys them falling into a radical nihilism directed against the values of reason, beauty, freedom, utility, and order.”⁴⁹⁵

A similar paradox exists in Selahattin’s case as well. Although the ridiculed worldview in the novel is directly related to Selahattin’s actions and discourses and thus self-referential, the transformative effect of social parody goes beyond them via ironic, hyperbolic, and mimicking evocations. These evocations indicate the paradoxes of Republican modernity: that its emancipatory reforms created a new order strictly limited to secular, national identity and its masculinist practices, especially tackled in *Lying Down to Die* and *A Strange Woman*.

Apart from this implicit manner, there are more explicit ways to parody Selahattin throughout the fiction. As an extremely curious and eager person who wants to learn everything about nature, Selahattin chooses a surname inspired by his role model, Charles Darwin, after legislation on surnames passes, as part of Turkey’s sociocultural reforms in the 1930s. While lying on her bed at present, Fatma remembers that time with disgust and frustration: “When I read the family name he’d chosen, written on a piece of paper they proudly put in front of me, I didn’t wonder: it seemed a mockery that made my hair stand on end. I was disgusted to think how this ugly name, *Darvinoğlu* (son of Darwin).”⁴⁹⁶ There is multilayered irony in this parodic manner. It is worth remembering that European (vulgar) materialism was extremely influential among the Ottoman-Turkish scholars and intellectuals, and later, in the early Republican period of Turkey.⁴⁹⁷ Selahattin’s choice of surname,

⁴⁹⁵ Mikhail Epstein, introduction to *The Irony of the Ideal: Paradoxes of Russian Literature*, trans. A. S. Brown (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018), xiii.

⁴⁹⁶ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 105.

⁴⁹⁷ This mindset reflects “an explosion of Ottoman materialist activity,” which determined the main lines of “the founders of modern Turkey.” See Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 101.

Darvinoğlu, highlights his reliance on European scientism and a great admiration for positivist materialism in a mocking way because his surname refers to a son of Darwin.

The excessive imitation or emulation of Selahattin's choice in surname is playfully ironic. It semantically and figuratively points to the paradox between his beliefs and actions. He espouses rationality, positivism, and faith in progress, but his actions involve exaggerated behaviors with uncontrolled emotions, portraying him as a sort of mad, Faustian scientist, and hysterically Occidental person. Apart from this self-referential parodic feature, Selahattin can be also considered a mock-heroic character in some parts of the novel. "A mock-heroic parodist pretends to be serious," as Gilbert Highet explains, and "[h]is vocabulary is grand and delicate. His style is lofty, full of fine rhetorical devices, [...h]is sentences are long and orotund."⁴⁹⁸ Selahattin's expressions of his unconditional faith in progress are depicted seriously and sincerely, though they are sometimes hyperbolic.

Therefore, the common use of ironic and ridiculous instances mock Selahattin's discourses on belatedness and its link with Republican modernity as a "false ideal."⁴⁹⁹ The social parody in the fiction then is quite subversive and noticeably mimics the content and style of the positivist worldview manifested in Turkey's top-down cultural modernization process, while ironically highlighting Selahattin's contradictory ideas and actions about the idea of progress and rationalism in the self-referentiality of the fiction. The "mocking ethos of irony" then overlaps with a "scornful satiric ethos"⁵⁰⁰ in nearly all the parts in which

⁴⁹⁸ Highet, *Anatomy of Satire*, 103.

⁴⁹⁹ Paulson, *Fictions of Satire*, 6. This "false ideal" refers to the example of Don Quixote as "a sick madman," which fits Selahattin, to a certain extent.

⁵⁰⁰ Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 61. Hutcheon points out the overlapping of satire and parody. Highet also states that literary work may be partly satirical, for example, "only a single character" just as Selahattin, or a section can be satiric. See Highet, *Anatomy of Satire*, 158. Gökner argues that Selahattin is "a symbol of authoritarian positivism." Gökner, *Orhan Pamuk*, 75. Another claim is that Selahattin evokes an intellectual-political figure in the transition period from the late Ottoman to Turkey, and thus, the novel includes a political

Selahattin alludes to the particular worldview of catching up with the West, but not necessarily in the other parts of the novel.

Selahattin's histrionic reactions and his obsessive desire for knowledge like Faust are also associated with his love of nature as the source of absolute knowledge. Selahattin declares that "it's impossible not to be amazed by nature," wanting to "live like Rousseau in the lap of nature and keep far away from those self-proclaimed monarchs and the pashas."⁵⁰¹ He romantically and sentimentally shows his adoration for nature. Though, in contrast to this romanticism, he also perceives nature as the observable realm via empiricist observations, by which knowledge is generated. Selahattin's view undoubtedly reflects the positivist materialist understanding of the world and its secular ethics without a necessity for the idea of god or any other bigotries. Fatma remembers one of his speeches in the past:

Every day is a new world, Fatma, he would say each morning. I wake before the sun comes up and I think how the sun will rise in a little while and everything will be brand-new and I myself will be renewed seeing new things I've never seen before, reading and learning until I look in a different way at all that I'd known, and I get so excited, Fatma, that I just want to leap out of bed and run to the garden to see how the sun will appear, how all the plants and insects will quiver and change at its appearance, then I want to run straight upstairs and write down everything I've seen.⁵⁰²

Selahattin's adoration for pure nature with all the vividness and exaggeration then forms the irony of his discourses. The repetition of this emphasis reinforces the parodic mode and its stylistic register in his story. On the other hand, his contrasting views and behaviors related to his quest for knowledge create another dilemma and point to the romantic-rational contradiction. This contradiction reminds us of Faust's characteristics as both "the dreamer"

dimension as an allegory. See Engin Kılıç, "Sessiz Ev'in Sesleri," in *Orhan Pamuk'un Dünyası*, ed. Nüket Esen and Engin Kılıç (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008), 126–29.

⁵⁰¹ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 96. See also *ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 96; 142.

and “the developer” in his tragedy.⁵⁰³ Selahattin’s passionate, hysterically curious, and slightly mad personality is told in and through Fatma’s consciousness, which thereby gives a textual space for Selahattin’s voice, even though he himself is not an active character in the storyline. While Selahattin’s presence depicted from within Fatma’s consciousness builds his characteristic features, at the same time, Fatma’s negative commentaries about him dismiss his existential concerns of being modern, including his endeavors and dedicated endurance. Fatma as a character-bound narrator then suppresses not only Selahattin’s voice at every turn but also undermines his actions and beliefs beyond the ways his self-parody is constructed.

The Derivation of Evil and Grotesque Madness

In the novel, Selahattin suggests that direct access to knowledge of the world through positivist materialism is an antidote to the belatedness of the East, particularly the Ottoman Empire and, later, Turkey. However, the same terminology and metaphorical discourses of Islam are used sarcastically when he explains the anti-religious, materialist arguments of his story. By configuring this ironic contradiction, Fatma as the narrator holds a powerful position, as she remembers different scenes and events about Selahattin, telling of his actions or statements and beliefs through her consciousness. She therefore discredits his actions and discourses and even demonizes Selahattin in several ways. For instance, Fatma relates some of Selahattin’s character traits to some of the seven deadly sins, such as his greed and lust for the knowledge of the Earth, as well as his wrath through particular words and tropes associated with religion: “He’s really just a child. Yes, the devil could only fool a child that much, I realized I had married a child who could be led astray by three books.”⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰³ Faust is also a dreamer, lover, and developer. See Berman, *All That is Solid*, 37–71.

⁵⁰⁴ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 21.

Moreover, words such as “devil,” “serpent,” “hell,” “demon,” and “cauldron” are repetitively used in different parts of Fatma’s narration to describe Selahattin’s actions or personality: “No, I wouldn’t fall for a lie in the form of a serpent”; “you are a devil, Selahattin, look now, you’re in hell, with the demons in the fires of hell, the burning cauldrons”; “When Selahattin, who had completely given himself over to the devil by now.”⁵⁰⁵ These words and similes semantically and discursively create a demonic image of Selahattin, especially in his absence from the present plot. The ways Selahattin is demonized by Fatma emphasize his flawed actions and deviances regarding the conventional Ottoman-Islamic mindset and moral values.

This way of representing Selahattin associates the demonic traits with his Faustian ambitious curiosity, materialist atheism, and sexually unfaithful attitude. Fatma’s narration adds an anti-Westernist perspective to these negated traits and simultaneously ridicules positivist science, materialist knowledge, Selahattin’s writing of an encyclopedia, and his idea of progress. A striking point here is the direct connection between evil and the logic of Reason because they are paired together by Fatma. Thus, the demonic configuration of Selahattin’s image mocks Reason and conveys a critique of Rationalism and the idea of progress, relating them to, or designating them as, evil.

As imparted in the novel, Selahattin’s error or weakness in his struggle then becomes his faith in progress and science. His obdurate faith in progress and science is directed at the entanglement of “reason and power” beyond the texture of the novel and “their association with the good weakened”⁵⁰⁶ in both the plot and a socio-historical sense when considering

⁵⁰⁵ See Pamuk, *Silent House*, 16, 70, and 106, respectively. For the relations between the Devil, “creative enthusiasm, ultimate authenticity, and absolute faith,” see Eric Heller, “Parody, Tragic and Comic: Mann’s ‘Doctor Faustus’ and ‘Felix Krull,’” *The Sewanee Review* 66, no. 4 (Autumn 1958), 532.

⁵⁰⁶ Kathleen M. Sands, *Escape From Paradise: Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 25.

Republican modernity. The parodic mode of the novel that mocks such subjects in relation to Turkish modernity reflects the changing perception and interpretation of this process. *Silent House* involves a critical discourse against Turkey's method of secular modernization and its Western-centric positivist epistemology from the perspective of early 1980s Turkey and its socio-political climate.

Another crucial aspect of Selahattin's characterization is the use of religious terminology through Fatma's narration. The repetitive presence of religious jargon, however, is not limited to Fatma. Selahattin's voice itself, though Fatma is still the focalizer, employs religion-oriented concepts, tropes, or similes when he describes his positivist rationalism and his understanding of the modern, secular life as it should exist in Turkey. For instance, Selahattin gives his illegitimate son Recep some advice: "Pluck the fruit of knowledge from the tree in paradise, Recep, take it without fear, maybe you will writhe in pain, but you'll be free, and when everyone is free the true paradise will be established, the real paradise on this earth where you will have nothing to fear."⁵⁰⁷ This way of using language is an obvious narrative strategy with two functions. First, it serves as an element of Selahattin's self-parody. It is inherently ironic that Selahattin uses such religious phrases or tropes to convey his positivist, materialist, and anti-religious worldview. This ironic contrast then shows the discrepancy between his actions and claims on the linguistic level, which forges his self-parody in the novel.

The second function, on the other hand, targets his positivist materialist worldview itself, which presents its excessive secularism as a kind of new religion. Selahattin uses the same conceptual and linguistic jargon of Islam in different parts of the fiction. For example, he references the story of the forbidden apple in the Garden of Eden when giving Recep advice. This contextually and semantically ironic distance also ridicules a Faustian

⁵⁰⁷ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 310.

characteristic of “a secular salvation”⁵⁰⁸ which Selahattin pursues by writing the encyclopedia that would supposedly enlighten the whole society. The playfully linguistic and semantic irony is also manifested in the name of the small town he lives in, *Cennethisar*, which refers to heaven’s (*cennet*) castle (*hisar*). Just like his surname, it is quite explicit in regard to the central role and intention of the author as a parodist, at least in the manner of Selahattin’s self-mocking representation. However, this does not mean that there is only a single voice or perspective in this representation, for it is hard to comprehend where Fatma’s voice ends and where Selahattin’s begins in each passage or section.

The way Fatma demonizes Selahattin in her narration gains a new dimension concerning the second tension between them. This tension is due to Selahattin’s sexual affair with the unnamed maid. There is an unfaithful, sinful, seductive husband, who fornicates with a pure countrywoman on the one side, and a betrayed yet proud, noble Ottoman woman Fatma on the other side. From this aspect involving only Fatma’s perspective, Selahattin’s image of evil and its demonic traits indicate his pure lust and seduction—one of the seven sins.⁵⁰⁹ Due to their extramarital relationship, the maid gives birth to two sons, Recep and Ismail, who is Hasan’s father. Fatma was aware of Selahattin’s affair from the outset and remembers it as his “sickening lust.”⁵¹⁰ These kinds of phrases reinforce Selahattin’s demonic characterization due to Fatma’s ossified hate-filled feelings as a narrator, as in this passage:

...to immerse her completely in sin he must have given her drink, before making her . . . God forbid, Fatma, don’t even think of it! Sometimes, when I slipped out into the room overlooking the chicken house and stared at the gloomy sinful lights of the shack, I would murmur to myself [...] I would open the door of my room a crack, and from that little opening I would follow him with devilish curiosity, fear, and loathing

⁵⁰⁸ Watt, *Modern Individualism*, 206.

⁵⁰⁹ The story between Selahattin and the maid exceedingly resembles Faust’s affair with the pure, beautiful country girl, Gretchen in Goethe’s *Faust*.

⁵¹⁰ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 25–26.

until he went back into his study.⁵¹¹

In Fatma's narration, Selahattin embodies demonic, sinful, wicked characteristics, and this depiction sometimes gains a grotesque dimension. Selahattin's traits labeled by Fatma intensify his malevolent evil portrayal due to the biased, angry, and spiteful narrator, Fatma. However, Selahattin himself contributes to his demonically grotesque image too. For instance, in a scene where the villagers are afraid of Selahattin's atheist indoctrination and aggressively manipulative attitudes toward them, he describes them in his direct speech:

they say this doctor is an atheist, don't go to him, he's the devil himself, didn't you see the skull on his desk, his office is filled with books, he has strange charms for casting spells, lenses that can turn a flea into a camel, pipes with smoke coming out the end, there are dead turtles pinned to boards there, don't go, who in their right mind would submit to this godless man.⁵¹²

The scene here is grotesque not only because of the particular words and the odd setting of Selahattin's office. The "complexity and uncertainty of [the] tone" in narration also create a grotesque effect that is neither completely serious nor comical or parodic but instead is descriptively "incongruous" and slightly disturbing.⁵¹³ The description of Selahattin and his environment makes a "mysterious and terrifying connection between the fantastic and real world" within fiction.⁵¹⁴ Fatma's flashbacks confirm her vindictive feeling toward and frustration with Selahattin by using the villagers' thoughts in the form of Selahattin's direct speech.

⁵¹¹ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 224.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵¹³ Michael Gillum, "'Great God, What They Got in That Wagon?': Grotesque Intrusions in *As I Lay Dying*," in *The Grotesque*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publications, 2009), 13–14.

⁵¹⁴ Kayser, *Grotesque*, 122.

The same logic exists in other descriptions of Selahattin and his actions, particularly when indicating his curiosity and odd behaviors. For instance, Fatma describes him (and the maid) “like the devil fleeing two steps at a time, to get to their garden and stretch out on their backs and stare at the darkening clouds until they find themselves soaked to the bone.”⁵¹⁵ There are mixed signals and evocations in this scene. Selahattin seems to be exaggeratedly curious about the world and obsessed with nature. However, his obsessive attitude here constructs a grotesque effect with both “the comic or terrifying”⁵¹⁶ aspects at work, adding to his demonic image. He seems to be hysterical or even mad, which is also “one of the basic experiences of the grotesque”⁵¹⁷ and its effect.

Fatma keeps creating various grotesque scenes set with bizarre actions and playful words that implicitly or explicitly relate Selahattin to evil. Step by step, Selahattin’s Faustian features involve four of the seven sins, particularly lust, greed (for knowledge), wrath, and pride. These particularities cement Selahattin’s (self-)negation and the mockery of his positivist mindset and secular morality because, to varying degrees, Fatma builds a demonic image of Selahattin with irony, exaggeration, and grotesque. Selahattin’s wicked portrayal then ridicules his personality and actions as a self-parody. Moreover, the tone and style of Fatma as a narrator sarcastically subvert all his discourses—the belatedness of Turkey, faith in progress, and social-engineering mindset—and even mocks the probability of Selahattin’s self-realization in the context of Westernizing Turkey. Parodying Selahattin then dismisses not only Republican modernity and the positivist mindset beyond it but also the tragic dimension of his quest for knowledge and self, which involves his dilemmas, struggle, and suffering.

⁵¹⁵ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 142.

⁵¹⁶ Philip Thompson, *The Grotesque* (London: Methuen, 1972), 20.

⁵¹⁷ Kayser, *Grotesque*, 184.

Ridiculing as the Implied Author

In Fatma's narration, Selahattin's irrepressible voice emerges in two ways. First, his voice is derived from within Fatma's consciousness and functions as a kind of an embedded narrator within the character-bound narrator, Fatma. Halim Kara argues that Selahattin functions as the sixth narrator of the novel.⁵¹⁸ Selahattin's voice sometimes seemingly prevails over Fatma's narration, conveying his own thoughts, discourses, and actions. However, at any time, Fatma can interrupt his voice with her intrinsic power as the narrator. Second, how Selahattin is narrated in the fiction depends on the limited point of view of Fatma. That is to say, through her fleeting and fragmentary memories, she can, in the present moment, focalize the past actions and words of Selahattin. His ideas and behaviors are therefore narrated to the extent of what Fatma presently remembers and how she wants to recollect them. Fatma's narrator voice, indeed, competes with Selahattin's voice within her mind through her inner monologues or the stream of consciousness, which are sometimes synchronically used throughout the novel. The voices, discourses, and even perspectives are inherently multiple due to the nature of parody that is, in this novel, not based on a central point of view or narrative authority.

By considering Fatma as the counterpart of Selahattin and their conflict, it is obvious that Fatma is a biased and even deceptive narrator of Selahattin's story. She is indeed unreliable as a character-bound narrator. Moreover, she possesses the authority to divulge and describe his actions and statements, and, at any time, to subvert them through ironic instances, grotesque, demonic imagery, or a playful stylistic register, which, as discussed earlier, form the parodic mode. What is depicted in this sense then only includes the memories of the ninety-year-old Fatma; the ways she remembers Selahattin are arbitrary, intuitional, and

⁵¹⁸ Halim Kara, "Şeffaf Bilinçler ve Müphemiyetin İnşası: *Sessiz Ev*'de Bilinç Akışı Tekniği," in *Orhan Pamuk'un Edebi Dünyası*, 115.

evocative. More importantly, the truth about the story within the fiction is one-sided, as it depends only on Fatma's point of view. Mieke Bal argues that the perspective is "the prime means of manipulation" in text and has a "decisive importance for the meaning the reader will assign to" any narrative.⁵¹⁹ The decisive power of the narrator is also given to the other four character-bound narrators. However, Fatma is the only narrator who describes detailed past events about Selahattin through her flashbacks, except for few statements from Recep.

In Fatma's remembrance of Selahattin, the mixed-use of the stream of consciousness and inner monologues serves as the determinant factor because her memory is "a special case of focalization"⁵²⁰ that designates almost every aspect, function, and meaning of Selahattin. Thus, the multiplicity of the character-bound narrators does not primarily function as a way to depict alternative to Fatma's discourses and voices, at least in the case of Fatma and her relation to Selahattin. This multiplicity, rather, determines the narrative mode of the novel that merely tells a story through multiple narrators, and thus, in an unusually inventive way. Hande Gürses states that "[t]here is almost no interaction between different narrators who belonged to different temporalities, and each remains secluded within his/her respective past, present or future."⁵²¹ In other words, the technically multi-voiced construction of the novel does not contain distinct voices, characters, or discourses that engage in dialogue with one another.

There are long passages that depict Selahattin's speeches or his written texts within the novel, which were, at one time, quickly read or briefly seen by Fatma. These speeches and texts are the stirred memories that come into Fatma's mind once again. However, she

⁵¹⁹ Bal, *Narratology*, 76–77.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 150. Bal discusses memory as "an act of 'vision' of the past situated in the present," and therefore, "a joint between time and space." See *ibid.*, 150–51.

⁵²¹ Hande Gürses, "Voices of Dissent: Belonging and Identity in *Silent House* and *A Strangeness in My Mind*," in *Orhan Pamuk: Critical Essays on A Novelist Between Worlds*, ed. Taner Can, Berkan Ulu, and Koray Melikoğlu (Stuttgart, DE: ibidem Press, 2017), 74.

remembers every single detail of the events and even the long texts written by Selahattin although she superficially read them once, forty years ago:

Well, what did the devil write? In the course of ripping up those papers and burning them, I was able to make some things out: Republic—the form of government we require . . . there are various kinds of republics [...] An earthquake is a geological phenomenon, the shaking of the earth's crust . . . Woman is the fulfillment of man . . . Women can be divided into two groups . . . The first is natural women, those who enjoy the pleasures and joys that nature has given to them, relaxed, without problems, without worries, who usually come from the people, from the lower class . . . like Rousseau's wife, whom he never married . . . a servant, who gave Rousseau six children . . . The second kind of woman: ill tempered, authoritarian, supposedly refined, who insists on persuading you to accept her preconceived notions, cold women with no empathy, like Marie Antoinette . . . This second kind is so lacking in empathy that many scientists and philosophers sought understanding and the warmth of love among women of the lower orders... Rousseau's maid, Goethe's baker's daughter, or Marx's household servant . . . He had a child by her also . . . Engels adopted it. Why be ashamed?⁵²²

Passages such as this one sometimes last for paragraphs and even pages in Fatma's narration. There is, then, another implied voice in her narrative voice (distinct from Selahattin's) that sometimes steals the role of the narrator from her.

This third voice refers to the authorial figure and its narrative function as a parodist because it goes beyond Fatma's characterization and contradicts the features and realistic logic of her presence within the fiction itself. Pamuk's embedded "authorial voice" is present in Fatma's narrator voice. Indeed, Pamuk himself confesses that he did not try to hide his own voice in terms of characterization in the novel.⁵²³ This way of narrating the story, indeed, manipulates the reader intentionally and enriches the satiric aspect of Selahattin's parody,

⁵²² Pamuk, *Silent House*, 281–19.

⁵²³ Orhan Pamuk, *Öteki Renkler: Seçme Yazılar ve Bir Hikaye* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), 131. The crucial point here is not Pamuk's "confession," but its removal in the English edition published as *Other Colors Essay and A Story* in 2007. Some sections explaining the influences from Turkish literature on his authorship were removed by himself. Pamuk indeed reflects an "anxiety of literary positioning" that "emphasizes a canon of world literature" after the Nobel Prize. See Gökner, *Orhan Pamuk*, 87.

thereby showing the author's strong intention in this respect. However, what is significant here is the explicit interpenetration of Fatma's aggressively biased voice, the subversive and ironic function in mocking Selahattin's mindset, and thus, Pamuk's self-consciously satiric intention in the narrative discourse found, at least, in some chapters of the novel. The difference between the author's satiric intention and the style of Fatma coincides in the stratification of the narrator's voice. The authorial figure's embedded voice, or what Wayne Booth calls "the implied author"⁵²⁴ sometimes takes over the character-bound narrator's language and style.

In one sense, the intervention of the authorial figure's voice in Fatma's narration debilitates the reliability of the realism of the plot and characterization, as well as the multi-voiced texture of the novel. As Gürses explains it succinctly, all the character-bound narrators are "merely immersed in their internal monologues and do not seem to be aware of the existence of the reader."⁵²⁵ The same voice of the implied author exists in the other character-bound narrators of the fiction too. By considering this intervention, the parodic representation of Selahattin may be viewed as the continuation of the literary tradition that mocks the excessively Western-oriented protagonists, just as excessively Western-oriented protagonists were mocked in early Turkish novels, though now in the setting of Turkey and in an explicitly modernist frame. The narrative techniques and stylistic devices are intentionally more intricate, multilayered, and sophisticatedly used in this novel as compared to those earlier novels. However, the textual strategy that constructs Selahattin and his negated characteristics includes a strong satirical tone and scornful mockery, conveying the authorial figure's

⁵²⁴ Wayne C. Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 211–21. For further discussion about it in relation to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel, see Simon Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), 52–55.

⁵²⁵ Gürses, "Voices of Dissent," 78.

perspective to the highest degree, especially when it comes to certain topics, such as the belatedness discourse and the Republican worldview that produced it.

Yet the novel still presents a parody of a complicated, intellectual, Western-oriented revolutionary Selahattin and that of the materialist, positivist worldview that heavily affected the ruling elites of Turkey's top-down modernization program. This parodic mode, however, does not make the novel dialogic because the multiple narrators do not function to reflect on their psychological complexity, self-consciousness, in-depth inner crises or dilemmas, and competing voices. Instead, Fatma undermines Selahattin's discourses (especially those linked to Republican modernity) with ironic, stylistic, and grotesque techniques, which, thus, manifests as a cruel parody. In one instance, Fatma remembers her fatal action after Selahattin's death:

I slowly pushed open the door and there, shamelessly scattered everywhere, obnoxiously strewn about, on the tables, the armchairs, in the pigeonholes of the desk, the drawers, atop the books, and stuffed inside them, all over the floor and the windowsills, were endless piles of papers, covered with writing. I opened the door of the big ugly stove and began to stuff them inside. I waited for a little after throwing in the match before adding more papers, writings, newspapers; the stove swallowed them all up so nicely, Selahattin, together with your sins! As your sins went up in smoke I felt myself warming up. "The work to which I've devoted my entire life: my beloved sin!" Well, what did the devil write?⁵²⁶

Those texts written by Selahattin personify his passion, lifetime dedication, and faith in knowledge, science, and European rationalism. It is both ironic and an ineluctably tragicomic that Selahattin dies in fear after he comes across the article *Ölüm* (Death) in his encyclopedia. Burning all the texts indefinitely suspends Selahattin's tragic failure and underscores the

⁵²⁶ Pamuk, *Silent House*, 218–19.

futility of his quest for knowledge and self-fulfillment.⁵²⁷ His unsatisfied but dedicated life, including all his hard efforts, suffering, and acute dilemmas, is then, tragically, all for nothing.

This final act of Fatma then destructs Selahattin's "false ideal," which is narratively and figuratively mocked, ironized, and demonized at every turn in the novel. Therefore, Fatma burns not only the "sinful" manuscript of Selahattin's encyclopedia but also his excessively positivist, secular worldview and everything behind his ideals, actions, suffering, and, thus, existence. Fatma's narration and this particular act then maintain the demonic portrayal of Selahattin as the Faust of the East and, more importantly, annihilate the probability of such a Faustian presence as a manifestation of a rationalist, positivist, and Occidental mindset in Turkey.⁵²⁸ Fatma's act indeed affirms her superior narratorial position over Selahattin's voice, even after his death, and displaces his secular Republican ideology via the parodic mode comprised of various ironic, satiric, and grotesque instances. The tragic dimension of Selahattin's existential and intellectual struggle therefore turns into a parody of itself. There is no space for the tragic pathos and its configuration in this social parody because the degree of negative irony and satiric tone is so strong, since the implied author's intention and narration go beyond the narrator Fatma's style and voice.

⁵²⁷ His unfinished encyclopedia resembles the real examples in the Turkish history of encyclopedism. The first encyclopedia in the empire was published in a weekly journal, *Musavver Malumat*, but lasted only until the article *Barut* (Powder). Emrullah Efendi as a minister of education constituted a committee to publish a fifteen-volume encyclopedia, but only the first volume could be published. Levend, *Türk Dilinde Gelişme*, 173; 252–54. On the other hand, "a failed or 'missing' book or manuscript" becomes "the leitmotif" of Pamuk's novels later. See Erdağ Gökner, "Orhan Pamuk and the 'Ottoman Theme,'" *World Literature Today* 80, no. 6 (November–December: 2006), 36.

⁵²⁸ *Doctor Faustus* written by Thomas Mann (1947) is considered "the tragic parody of the first Frankfurt Faustbook of 1587." See Heller, "Parody, Tragic, and Comic," 534.

Conclusion of Part II

The three novels analyzed in this part provide three variations of social parody concerning crisis narratives. Although the story of each fiction contains a wider sociocultural, political, and even panoramic frame of Turkey, the protagonist and his or her crisis are at the centers of the parodic mode. While *The Time Regulation Institute* can be considered a social parody of being modern and its several implications in Turkey, *A Strange Woman* provides a unique example where the tragic vision intermingles with the parodic mode in a crisis narrative. On the other hand, the social parody employed in *Silent House* is limited to the sections in which Selahattin appears, which is about one-third of the fiction. In other words, the scope, function, style, and presence of social parody in these novels vary.

Despite the differences in the style, plot, and consistency of the parodic instances in these novels, a shared feature among them is that they each variously involve the act of writing as a theme, an action undertaken by the protagonist, a narrative technique within the plot (i.e., letter, diary, poetry, memoir), or as a narrative mode or narrative level (i.e., meta-narration), which designates the structure and texture of the fiction. Hayri Irdal in *The Time Regulation Institute* writes his memoir, and this forms the basis of the novel and its narrative structure. He also writes books translated into many foreign languages within the plot. The first chapter of *A Strange Woman* is comprised of Nermin's diary written from 1950 to 1952. Moreover, different texts that are either fictional or belong to another author are used in this chapter to parody certain values and mindsets. In *Silent House*, writing the encyclopedia becomes the main activity of Selahattin's existence. His life is dedicated to writing the encyclopedia, and this act underlies his obsessive concern for rapid Westernization, his state of crisis, and tragic failure in the story. In other words, the act of writing either thematically or

formalistically designates the structure, discourse, and texture of the novels to varying degrees. More importantly, it determines the content and mode of social parody in them.

Each novel lies partially or completely on the romantic understanding of writing as a process of self-realization in each story and plot. The act of writing determines how and from which perspective the story is told, including the spatial and temporal configurations of the novels, while variously depicting the modernity experiences of the protagonists and their crises. It is worth remembering here that the protagonists are either character-bound narrators like Hayri and Nermin in some parts or a character that steals a role from the narrator due to his prevalent presence like Selahattin. There is then an explicit relation between the act of writing and social parody employed in these novels. The narrators, the depictions of the protagonists, and the styles of language utilize diverse textual strategies to make a parody, such as rhetorically subverting the intended meaning by telling the opposite, exaggerating and imitating the discourses regarding Turkish modernity, imitating the language and style of the parodied concept, mindset or feature, and using a particular discourse or slogan within an unusual, exaggerated context.

These manifold strategies in the novels indeed include intertextual and referential aspects due to the re-contextualization of the discourses, jargon, styles, or the language itself. Thus, the playful and inventive style of language in them creates new material in storytelling through the parodic allusions and references not only to implications of Turkish modernity but also to both Turkish and Western literatures. Furthermore, the parodic mode of each protagonist's crisis, downfall, and suffering is not substantially narrated in a mimetic realist plane. Instead, these three fictions incorporate various examples of irony, fantasy, grotesque, theatricality, pastiche, defamiliarization, and the hybridity of styles, genres, and themes. The generic and subversive feature of parody then leads to new novelistic poetics. Due to the

sophisticated entanglement of such narrative features and techniques, their parodic modes reinforce the idea of fiction as a work of art and give rise to the novels themselves.

This kind of narrative construction pertains to the configuration of the reality–fiction ambiguity within the novels. This playful configuration not only occurs with the absurd, bizarre, or grotesque events in the plots that mock, for instance, the belatedness discourse, the features of the so-called modern life, leftist ideology, masculinity, or the idea of enlightening the folk but also depicts the urban protagonists' crises, lack of agency, and the elusiveness of the world in a new context and style. In this sense, social parody is not a counterpart of the tragic but a unique mode of transposing it by narrating the modernity experiences of different characters in Turkish fiction. Thus, these three novels as social parodies are not necessarily subversive, for each novel reifies or transmutes the protagonist's crisis, moral concern, sociocultural discourses, or even ideology by toying with them critically, ironically, and playfully. This reification self-consciously employed in the novels depicts the crises, dilemmas, and suffering of the protagonists concerning the contradictions of Turkish modernity in a completely distinct horizon of representation. Despite the socio-historical context and cultural matters tackled in these novels, parody then becomes a way of tackling such existential crises, moral conflicts, and sufferings without any commitment except the literature itself.

This generic and inventive aspect of social parody bears on a strong sense of humor, irony, and laughter as the varied manifestation of humor functions to mock, ironize, subvert, or re-construct targeted discourses, matters, or worldviews. The parodic modes in these novels then consolidate the effect of irony—either self-irony or any ironic instances—as a positive aspect, but not necessarily as a comical insight. These parodic modes pertain to two main aspects: madness and ironic humor as a cathartic effect. First, madness plays a crucial

role in the characterization of the protagonists and the stories because each protagonist signals different levels and indications of madness in each fiction.

Hayri's apparent contradictions in his narration and within his story in *The Time Regulation Institute* largely indicate his insanity, especially when considering the fictional letter discussed earlier.⁵²⁹ Nermin in *A Strange Woman* already had a mental breakdown before her holiday, but she devolves into pure madness in the hotel room insomuch as it is told in the last section. Selahattin in *Silent House* is widely depicted as a hysterical, neurotic scientist with extreme and grotesque behaviors, who breaks from the reality of the social world within the fiction. Second, the varying degree of madness in these novels is designated by the protagonists' pure naivete, idiocy, and inability to learn or incapability of unlearning in the plots. The grotesque or bizarre scenes that depict the moments of their sense of alienation and crises in these novels create defamiliarizing, critical, and ironic effects for the reader, rather than comic effects.

In sum, each fiction as a social parody not only narrates the modernity experience of the protagonist as a crisis but also reconsiders the sociocultural and ideological discourses in relation to the implications of Turkish modernity. As these three novels were written by three authors from three different generations, they thus reflect different interpretations of these implications. Regardless of how variously or critically they approach such social matters, these novels rely on their literariness and different inventive narrative features. It is why they have drawn the attention of literary scholarship and readership since the 1980s and have become the agents of this process in the varying socio-political, cultural, and literary paradigms in Turkey.

⁵²⁹ See footnote 380 on page 197.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

This thesis has analyzed the close link between Turkish modernity and the twentieth-century Turkish novel. More precisely, it has scrutinized the reciprocal relationship between the representations of how the protagonists experienced modernity as crises and the narrative modes employed in six novels. By outlining Ottoman-Turkish modernity as a subjective perception of modernization, Westernization, nationalization, and secularization in the Introduction, I have provided a framework to grasp this complex process in its own specific conditions, more particularly its direct relation to twentieth-century Turkish fiction. Instead of struggling to precisely define what Turkish modernity is or encompasses from the perspective of sociology or cultural theory, I have examined how the modernity experiences of the protagonists were variously represented in the novels. For this purpose, I have framed the Turkish novel in relation to the thematic, structural, and agential dimensions of Turkish modernity.

I have constantly used the phrase “modernity experience” to refer to the ways the protagonists existentially, ethically, and culturally react to the contradictions, ambiguities, and effects of Turkish modernity as depicted in the novels. In this line of thought, I have termed them “crisis narratives” of the modernity experience, for the protagonists’ crises dominate the stories, plots, and discourses of the novels, determining their thematic, narrative, and formalistic features.

This thesis has thus explored the different representations of the protagonists’ crises in relation to modernizing Turkey and in which mode the novels predominantly narrate such crises. In exploring these aspects, I have demonstrated how several predominant themes, such as the so-called East–West contradictions, being modern and the inherent existential and moral implications that come along with it, the idea of belatedness, the Republican ideology

and its cultural reforms, and music as a site of conflicting values, are variously represented in the novels through the tensions between the protagonists' crises and such circumstances. The thesis has also examined how gender, particularly femininity, is depicted concerning the protagonists' ways of experiencing modernity in different periods.

In considering the structural dimension of Turkish modernity discussed in the Introduction, I have underlined the varying functions and conceptions of Turkish fiction since its emergence in the mid-nineteenth century. As the rise and evolution of Turkish fiction in its specificity differs from those of the emulated European literatures, this dissertation has exposed that the relationship between (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity and Turkish fiction has been unevenly dynamic, ongoing, and dependent on the particular sociocultural, literary, moral, and even political conditions of the given period. First, I have utilized Moretti's understanding of literary evolution to reconsider the rise and development of the Turkish novel beyond the idea of the influence between the emulated literature(s) and Turkish fiction. My approach has juxtaposed Parla's argument, which claims the necessity of a "formal compromise" in every (national) literature (not just in non-Western literatures like Turkish fiction), with Moretti's conception of the evolution of the novel.

I have also expanded Holbrook's view on the nineteenth-century Turkish Occidentalists who used the novel as a new tool to tell their own conception of reality and morality and have discussed the developments in the twentieth-century Turkish novel. By arguing the limitations of the belatedness discourse and its manifestations in Turkish literary studies, I have considered the idea of belatedness to be misleading and reductive as an explanation of Turkish fiction. Thus, this study has only examined whether and how belatedness, as either a theme or a discourse, is narrated in the selected novels. As shown in Chapters Four and Six, Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* and Pamuk's *Silent House* treat the belatedness discourse and its socio-historical and referential link with Turkish

modernity in two distinct modes of social parody. On the other hand, while belatedness is tackled in a more tragic sense in Aġaoġlu's *Lying Down to Die*, it indicates a fallacious motive for the protagonist's downfall in Erbil's *A Strange Woman*, as was argued in Chapters Three and Five, respectively.

By comparatively examining the thematic, narrative, and structural features of the six novels, this thesis has dissected the predominant narrative modes employed in the novels and specifically explored the features of tragedy and parody, discussing their instances as a cultural transfer from Western literature into Turkish fiction. In scrutinizing the tragic and parodic elements in the six novels through close reading, this study has extensively laid bare not only their thematic, narrative, and formalistic aspects but also the philosophical, ethical, sociocultural, and even ideological components of the crises depicted in them. In doing so, it has contributed to insights into what I call "a poetics of modernity as a crisis" in the twentieth-century Turkish novel. I have thus reached a specific understanding of both tragedy and parody in a non-Western context and literature, particularly in Turkish fiction.

As shown in Part I, I have examined the representations of the protagonists' crises and the variations of the tragic configured in three novels. My analysis of these novels has explored the idea of the tragic specific to the implications and conditions of Turkish modernity. This study grew from the different theories and principles (mainly those established in Western literary and philosophical traditions), which used the tragic as the point of reference. However, my approach has neither imposed a certain theory of the tragic when examining the novels nor attempted to prove that the idea of the tragic emerged or has existed in the same sense as in the Western literary and philosophical tradition. Rather, I have theorized the idea of the tragic by considering how it is configured from within the protagonists' crises in the novels and how it relates to the philosophical, ethical, and literary implications of (Ottoman-) Turkish modernity in a broader sense. Accordingly, this thesis has

explored how the idea of the tragic contextually, discursively, and formalistically is constructed in the novels as a state of crisis, an inevitable condition, or a sense of life (or even combination of these).

I have therefore reformulated the idea of the tragic and its defining elements particular to the selected novels as a teleological concept that grasps the modes of the foreseen but inevitable crises, conflict of values, failures, and suffering. I based this formulation neither on an inherently universal or particularly Western phenomenon nor on a solely philosophical matter tackled in Western philosophy, though I have covered these aspects in the theoretical discussion of Part I. I have primarily demonstrated the idea of the tragic and its elements specific to how the crises, failures, self-confrontations, and sufferings of the protagonists are narrated to reflect the various contradictions, dilemmas, and effects of Turkish modernity.

By following up on this reformulation, I have argued that the idea of the tragic and its various representations in Turkish fiction bear directly on the process of (Ottoman-)Turkish modernity due to the fundamental contradictions, cultural dilemmas, unresolved conflicts of values, and moral ambiguities it caused. I identify three main observations that support and expand this argument. First, I argued that there exists a specific, local experience of the inevitable crisis and the suffering it causes narrated in and by these novels. The narrative modes of modernity as crisis establish the idea of the tragic and its elements in them. This idea directly pertains to the sense of failure and its inevitability that is inscribed in the depictions of the protagonists' crises.

In line with investigating the inevitable yet unforeseeable sense of failure in the novels, this thesis has explored how the idea of the tragic derives from the disharmony between the self and the world, between social reality and individual desire, and within the self by transcending the prevalent binary oppositions (e.g., East–West, modern–tradition, and free will–predestination). However, the idea of the tragic is not completely unrelated to such

binary oppositions and similar themes. Accordingly, this thesis has also contributed to the wide-ranging discussion of why and how the protagonists in Turkish fiction are mostly doomed to failure or are unable to fulfill their desire, which is mainly linked to *Bildungsroman* in Turkish literary scholarship.

The second observation of this thesis is that the constructions or representations of the tragic in the novels inherently or explicitly involve a criticism of the sociocultural, ethical, and gender implications of Turkish modernity. More precisely, the novels problematize the discourse of “the modern Republican woman,” the faith in progress, the indoctrination of positivism, and the cultural reforms that set aside the imperial past and its rich heritage—all these are brought into the center of the protagonists’ crises. For instance, as has been discussed in Chapter One, the overt sexuality, eroticism, and unmarried affair of Nuran in *Pleiades Storm* defies the discourse of the modern Republican woman, which states that female figures in modern Turkey are to be asexual. I have shown that the fiction dismisses the strict emancipation of Turkish women and the secular ethics valued by the masculinist mindset of Turkey’s secular modernization project. This dismissal turns into questioning and heavy criticism in *Lying Down to Die*, as argued in Chapter Three. In other words, I have exposed that the representations of modernity as a tragedy in the novels convey a semi-conscious or witting feminist discourse, which goes beyond the resignation of the female protagonists.

My third observation pertains to the different configurations of the tragic idea in the novels. The main difference between the novels is twofold. First, I have demonstrated that *Pleiades Storm* and *A Mind at Peace* tend to reconcile the Western-oriented, rationalist values and secular ethics in modernizing Turkey with strong individual morality, a kind of mysticism that toys with the elements and themes of Sufism, and a collective responsibility that is directly linked to the Republican ideology of Turkey. As I argued in Chapters One and Two,

these novels attempt to find a compromise between the spiritual or mystical way of being, which was derived from the Ottoman intellectual legacy, and the secularist conception of the world in the first decades of Turkey, which systematically rejected this intellectual legacy and its religious-cultural aspects. My analysis has shown that the idea of the tragic in the novels arises from the inevitability of this attempt and its different struggles. Moreover, these attempts that shape the narrative discourses of the two novels convey an insightful and constructive dimension despite the predicaments, sense of failure, suffering, and despair of the protagonists.

However, as argued in Chapter Three, there is no such attempt in *Lying Down to Die*. Contrarily, the tragic in this novel is derived from the unimpeachable rhetoric of the Republican sociocultural reforms and secular ethics, especially in regards to how the gender discourse and female body are problematized. Accordingly, I have highlighted that the idea of the tragic in this fiction involves a destructive, pessimistic, and critical outlook concerning some aspects of Turkish modernity. Unlike those novels in which the process of suffering and endurance lead to growth and cathartic release, thus making the protagonists emotionally and intellectually more mature, a similar process explored in Chapter Three pinpoints a negative and unbearable dimension of suffering due to some effects of Republican modernity.

Second, I have argued that this sharp difference in recognizing the protagonists' suffering as inevitable or even necessary is directly related to the varying perception of Turkish modernity and its ongoing concomitants. The shift in this perception mostly pertains to the authors' generations and their different worldviews. The novels by Erol (1902–1964) and Tanpınar (1901–1962) seek a harmonious, slightly metaphysical, and authentic synthesis between the Islamic-Ottoman imperial culture and the secular values of the Western-oriented mindset in Turkey. The mystical tendency explicitly or implicitly fills the gap left by the Islamic worldview and its spiritual culture, though not necessarily Islam as a religion. This

tendency in Turkish fiction can be seen in the works of the other authors of the pre-Republican and subsequent generations, whether their positions are supportive of or opposed to the Republican ideology and its sociocultural and moral values, such as Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu) (1889–1974), Halide Edib (1884–1964), Peyami Safa (1899–1961), Refik Halit (Karay) (1888-1965), Necip Fazıl (1904–1983), and Sâmiha Ayverdi (1905–1993).⁵³⁰ However, this subject matter goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

Future studies should address the relationship between the crises of the protagonists and the mystical, metaphysical, and Islamic views of the novels or plays written by such authors. This focus would provide insights into how the idea of the tragic is thematically, narratively, and philosophically depicted in other novels and to what extent it is associated with the subjects and discourses of Turkish modernity in them. Examining how the various reconciliations between secularity, (Sufi) mysticism, and myriad interpretations of Islam have been treated in Turkish fiction would be illuminating to gain a better understanding of the themes of existential crisis, failure, inevitability, fate, and suffering in Turkish fiction.

Like others in her generation, Ağaoğlu (1929–2020) was indoctrinated by the secular values of Republican modernity; there is thus neither a metaphysical and mystical quest nor any connection to the Ottoman imperial legacy in *Lying Down to Die*. I have highlighted that the quest or resolution depicted in the fiction relies on an aspiration for the left-wing movement in 1960s Turkey. The mystical tendency, Sufi metaphysics, and the mental or emotional suffering and its manifestation are replaced by a leftist ideological engagement. I have argued that as the perception of Turkish modernity and its major effects changes over time, the recurring theme of modernity as a crisis is variously narrated with regards to the idea of the tragic and its existential, ethical, sociocultural, and philosophical aspects. However,

⁵³⁰ Laurent Mignon also pays attention to this significance. See Mignon, *Uncoupling Language*, 187–88. See also, Noyan, “Türk Romanında Misticizm.”

some prominent authors and intellectual figures of the same and subsequent generations in Turkey maintained the mystical or metaphysical quest and sought a balance between Islamic norms, secularity, and the imperial past in various, unique ways, such as Sezai Karakoç (1933–2021), Cahit Zarifoğlu (1940–1987), Emine İşinsu (1938–2021), and Hilmi Yavuz (1936–). Future studies should compare the works of these authors with those of Ağaoğlu and other secular, Republican authors, such as Nezihe Meriç (1924–2009), Demir Özlü (1935–2021), and Ayla Kutlu (1938–). It is useful to juxtapose the works of different authors who have narratively and ideologically distinct approaches and examine them comparatively, especially when considering the representations of individual modernity experiences as crises.

In Part II, I have analyzed how the same theme in which a protagonist in modernizing Turkey deals with his or her existential and ethical struggle is narrated in the various modes of social parody. This part explored the relationship between parody and the representations of modernity as a crisis in the other three novels. In this part, I have argued that parody provides new representational possibilities to narrate the protagonists' crises associated with the existential, moral, sociocultural, gender, and even ideological aspects of Turkish modernity. By recognizing this possibility, I have explored how and to what extent the novels represent the protagonists' ways of experiencing modernity as crises in various parodic modes, focusing particularly on the ways in which their existential and moral crises are represented. By doing so, this part has provided insights into how social parody employed in the novels subverts the realistic mode of each protagonist's crisis and its tragic extent while extending the narrative features of this mode.

Rather than imposing any normative understanding of parody, my approach in this part has induced criteria and features from the texts and relocated them within the different manifestations of parody in Turkish fiction. I have therefore examined these fictions as three variations of social parody, although the function, scope, style, and presence of parody in

them vary. I have also emphasized that more detailed studies are required to address the presence and function of parody in the Turkish novel beyond my research subject and the limitations of this thesis. As explored in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, the act of writing plays a determinative role in making parody, as it either thematically or formalistically designates, to varying degree, the novels' narrative structures, discourses, and textures. My observation is that the act of writing in these fictions becomes a process of self-questioning and even self-realization to a certain extent, for it establishes how and from which perspective the theme of modernity as a crisis is tackled and narrated.

My second observation in Part II is that the generic, ironic, and subversive features of social parody lead to new novelistic poetics and refer to the self-consciousness of literariness in Turkish fiction. This self-consciousness and the sophisticated entanglement of various narrative features, literary techniques, and textual strategies imply the noun of social *parody*. What makes parody require the adjective *social*, on the other hand, is that the novels re-contextualize the sociocultural, historical, ideological, and moral discourses of Turkish modernity within these individual stories. As these novels were written by three authors from three different generations in Turkey, they acquire distinct (re-)interpretations regarding the same or similar discourses of Turkish modernity. I have argued that they, first and foremost, rely on their literariness regardless of how they variously or critically tackle such social matters, cultural discourses, moral issues, and ideological frameworks.

At this point, the relationship between the *social* aspect of the six novels and their literariness comes into prominence. As has been partially discussed in each chapter, the reception of the novels have played a significant role in rethinking both the various aspects and earlier stages of Turkish modernity and have changed over time depending on the sociocultural context and literary understanding of the particular period, especially from the 1980s onwards. This role implies the agential dimension of modernity in Turkish fiction. I

have underscored that each fiction has become an agent of Turkish modernity in the varying socio-political, cultural, and literary paradigms in Turkey, though the limited length and scope of this thesis does not allow me to cover this complex subject by examining their reception and agency-aspects in detail.

Accordingly, one question of particular interest would be why and how these novels, in addition to a few others, have been canonized by literary scholars, publishers, and different readerships much later than their original publication date. By seeking answers to this question, some studies could also address the impact of these novels (or more broadly, the entire collection of works by these authors) on the evolution of Turkish literary modernism, elaborating on their varying roles in the uneven process of (de-)canonization in Turkish fiction. Despite all the valuable insights my analysis of the novels provided in this thesis, I was not able to fully cover the representations of modernity as a crisis in the novels beyond tragedy and parody.⁵³¹ Another approach could also elaborate more on what these novels did overlook and then explore how they implicitly involve some socio-historical events or cultural issues related to Ottoman-Turkish modernity in their stories.

⁵³¹ For a recent study on the reading of *A Mind at Peace* in this direction, see Ian Almond, "Disappearing in the Ecstasy of History: Armenians and the Monocultural Sublime in Modern Turkish Literature," *PMLA* 137, no. 5 (2022): 824–40.

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A Poetics of Modernity as Crisis

Tragedy and Parody in the Twentieth-Century Turkish Novel

Summary

This thesis examines the relationship between Turkish modernity and the twentieth-century Turkish novel. With this aim, it focuses on the strong link between the representations of the individual modernity experiences and the narrative modes employed in six selected novels published between the 1940s and the early 1980s: *Ülker Fırtınası* “Pleiades Storm” (1944) by Safiye Erol, *Huzur* “A Mind at Peace” (1949) and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* “The Time Regulation Institute” (1961) by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Tuhaf Bir Kadın* “A Strange Woman” (1971) by Leylâ Erbil, *Ölmeye Yatmak* “Lying Down to Die” (1973) by Adalet Ağaoğlu, and *Sessiz Ev* “Silent House” (1983) by Orhan Pamuk. By framing the evolution of the Turkish novel concerning thematic, structural, and agential dimensions of Turkish modernity, this thesis looks at how these novels narrate the existential and moral crises of the protagonists addressed within the socio-historical, cultural, and political circumstances of modernizing Turkey. It also examines how gender and several predominant themes, such as the idea of belatedness, the so-called East-West contradictions, being modern in Turkey, the imperial legacy, and music as a locus of conflicting values, are variously represented in the novels through the tensions between the protagonists’ crises and such circumstances.

These novels are heavy with the reality of Turkey’s sociocultural or political history. They simultaneously are a manifestation of Turkish modernity from within and produce Turkish modernity in a particular context and stage. I term the novels “crisis narratives” of the modernity experience, as each protagonist’s crisis dominates the story, plot, and discourse of each novel and determines its thematic, narrative, and even stylistic and formalistic features.

This thesis thus explores the thematic and narrative aspects of the novels produced in the conditions of the particular period. By comparatively examining the link between their thematic and structural features, this thesis scrutinizes the two predominant narrative modes employed in the novels, particularly tragedy and parody, as two different ways of reading and as two particular instances of cultural transfer in the Turkish novel. In exploring the tragic and parodic modes of the novels, this thesis extensively lays bare not only their thematic, narrative, and formalistic aspects but also the sociocultural, ethical, ideological, and philosophical components of such crises depicted in them. By doing so, this thesis provides insights into the poetics of modernity as a crisis in the twentieth-century Turkish novel, reaching specific understandings of tragedy and parody within Turkish fiction based on the varying sociocultural contexts.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part I looks at how the protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis in each novel is constructed as a tragedy, by focusing on what narrative and discursive aspects configure this mode, and its three chapters offer close readings of *Pleiades Storm*, *A Mind at Peace*, and *Lying Down to Die*, respectively. The analysis of these novels explores the idea of the tragic and its elements specific to Turkish modernity and its manifold implications. Although starting out from the principles of tragedy derived from Western literature, the chapters in Part I do not solely trace the same principles and impose a particular theory of tragedy in analyzing the novels. Instead, they seek to reformulate the idea of the tragic and its defining traits specific to these novels. This reformulation hinges on how the tragic idea is contextually, discursively, and formalistically constructed in them. This thesis thus provides valuable insights into the literary, ethical, and philosophical dimensions of Turkish modernity represented in these novels. It also contributes to understanding how and why the protagonists in Turkish fiction are doomed to failure or unable to actualize their ideals or desires narrated in diverse modes.

Part II is also comprised of three chapters and examines how the protagonist's crisis is narrated in a parodic mode in the novels *The Time Regulation Institute*, *A Strange Woman*, and *Silent House*. Each chapter explores the representation of the protagonist's modernity experience as a crisis in a parodic mode. It is argued that the novels represent three variations of social parody, by considering the various contexts, changing functions, and subversive or ironic effects of their parodic modes. By exploring these different modes in relation to the subjects of Turkish modernity, Part II also analyzes the relationship between the tragic mode of modernity as a crisis and the emergent use of parody in Turkish fiction. In doing so, it is possible to discern both the narrative and epistemological aspects of this relationship in the novels and the genealogy of parody in the twentieth-century Turkish novel.

Examining the entanglement of tragedy and parody in the three novels, Part II enables us to comprehend how the representations of the modernity experience as a crisis in the Turkish novel have evolved over time. This thesis argues that social parody is not a counterpart of tragedy but a unique mode of transposing it by depicting the crises of different characters in the Turkish novel. By recognizing the generic features of parody, this thesis also claims that the examined novels rely on various narrative features, textual strategies, and their literariness, regardless of how they variously or critically approach such crises and social matters concerning Turkish modernity. This essential feature explains why these novels have drawn the attention of literary scholarship and readership since the 1980s and have even become agents of varying socio-political, cultural, and literary paradigms in Turkey. However, this thesis has not been able to fully cover this dimension in the novels, particularly how their receptions have influenced the Turkish literary field and *vice versa*. It would be worthwhile for future studies to examine this by considering how the representations of modernity as a crisis in the Turkish novel acquired new dimensions explored by this thesis.

Een Poëtica over Modernisme als Crisis**Tragedie en Parodie in de Turkse Roman van de Twintigste Eeuw****Samenvatting**

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de relatie tussen het Turkse modernisme en de Turkse roman van de twintigste eeuw. Met dit doel focust het op de sterke band tussen aanwezigheid van de individuele ervaringen van modernisme en de verhaalmodus gebruikt in zes geselecteerde romans gepubliceerd tussen de jaren '40 en de vroege jaren '80: *Ülker Fırtınası* "Plejadestorm" (1944) van Safiye Erol, *Huzur* "Seren" (1949) en *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* "Het klokkengelijkzetinstituut" (1961) van Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Tuhaf Bir Kadın* "Een vreemde vrouw" (1971) van Leylâ Erbil, *Ölmeye Yatmak* "Gaan liggen om te sterven" (1973) van Adalet Ağaoğlu en *Sessiz Ev* "Het huis van de stilte" (1983) van Orhan Pamuk.

Door de Turkse roman in kaart te brengen ten aanzien van thema's, structuur en de vertegenwoordigde dimensies van het Turkse modernisme, onderzoekt dit proefschrift hoe zich in deze romans de existentiële en morele crisis van de hoofdpersoon ontwikkelt rekening houdend met de sociaalhistorische, culturele en politieke omstandigheden van moderniserend Turkije. Het onderzoekt tevens hoe gender en andere dominante thema's, zoals het idee van culturele achterstand, de zogenaamde Oost-West tegenstellingen, moderniteit in de Turkse context, de imperiale erfenis en muziek als een bron van conflicterende waarden, op verschillende wijze zijn vertegenwoordigd in de romans, in het bijzonder door middel van het idee van crisis, waarmee de hoofdpersonen in deze romans crisis geconfronteerd worden.

Deze romans zijn geladen met de realiteit van de Turkse sociaal-culturele en politieke geschiedenis. Tegelijkertijd zijn ze een manifestatie van binnenuit van het Turks modernisme en produceren Turks modernisme in een bepaalde context en stadium. Ik betitel de romans als

“crisisverhalen” aangezien de crisis van elke hoofdpersoon het verhaal, plot en discussie van de roman domineert, en het idee van crisis is bepalend voor de thematische, verhalende, en zelfs stilistische en formalistische kenmerken. Dit proefschrift onderzoekt derhalve de thematische en verhalende aspecten van de romans geschreven in de omstandigheden van de desbetreffende periode. Door vergelijkend onderzoek naar het verband tussen hun thematische en structurele kenmerken, bestudeert dit proefschrift de twee overheersende verhaalmodi die in de romans worden gebruikt, namelijk tragedie en parodie, als twee verschillende leeshoudingen en als twee specifieke modussen van culturele overdracht in de Turkse roman. Door de tragische en parodiërende modussen in deze romans, te onderzoeken legt dit proefschrift, niet alleen hun thematische, verhalende en formalistische aspecten bloot, maar tevens de sociaal-culturele, ethische, ideologische en filosofische componenten van de crisis in elk van de betreffende romans. Aldus biedt dit proefschrift inzicht in de poëtica van het modernisme als crisis in deze selectie Turkse romans uit de twintigste eeuw. Het biedt ook een duiding van zowel tragedie en parodie in Turkse fictie, die voortkomt uit verschillende sociaal-culturele contexten.

Dit proefschrift is in twee delen verdeeld. Deel I kijkt hoe de modernisme-ervaring als een crisis door de hoofdpersoon in iedere roman is opgebouwd als een tragedie, Er wordt specifiek gekeken naar welke verhalende en retorische aspecten deze modus configureren, en de drie hoofdstukken bieden zorgvuldige nalezingen van respectievelijk *Plejaden storm*, *Sereen* en *Gaan liggen om te sterven*. De analyse van deze romans onderzoekt het idee van de tragedie en zijn bestanddelen, en zijn veelvoud aan implicaties, specifiek ten aanzien van het Turkse modernisme. Hoewel startend vanuit de beginselen van tragedie afgeleid van Westerse literatuur, volgen de hoofdstukken in Deel I niet enkel dezelfde beginselen en beperken zich niet tot enkele dwingende theorieën over tragedie. In plaats daarvan proberen ze het idee van het tragische en zijn definiërende kenmerken, specifiek voor deze soort romans, onder

woorden te brengen. Deze herformulering hangt af van hoe het tragische idee contextueel, retorisch en formalistisch in elke roman is opgebouwd. Dit proefschrift biedt daarmee waardevolle inzichten in de literaire, ethische en filosofische dimensies van deze romans en hoe ze het Turkse modernisme vormgeven. Het draagt ook bij aan het begrip over het specifieke falen van de hoofdpersonages in deze romans, en waarom ze niet in staat zijn hun idealen of verlangens waar te maken.

Deel II bestaat ook uit drie hoofdstukken en onderzoekt hoe de crisis in een parodiërende modus van de hoofdpersoon wordt verteld in de romans *Het klokkengelijkzetsinstituut*, *Een vreemde vrouw* en *Het huis van de stilte*. Ieder hoofdstuk onderzoekt de representatie als parodie van de ervaring van moderniteit als een crisis van de hoofdpersoon. Door de verschillende contexten, veranderende functies, en gezagsondermijnende en ironische effecten van hun parodiërende modi te bekijken, wordt betwist dat de romans drie variaties van een sociale parodie zouden zijn. Deze drie romans worden tevens onderzocht op hun relatie met de centrale thema's die samenhangen met moderniteit in Turkije; op die manier analyseert Deel II ook de relatie tussen de tragische modus van het modernisme als crisis, en de crisis als parodie. Zo wordt het mogelijk om zowel de verhalende als de epistemologische aspecten van deze relatie, en de genealogie van de parodie in de Turkse roman van de twintigste eeuw helder te krijgen.

Door de verstrengeling van tragedie en parodie in deze drie romans, te onderzoeken stelt Deel II in staat te begrijpen hoe de representatie van de ervaring van moderniteit als crisis zich in de Turkse roman in de loop der tijd heeft ontwikkeld. Dit proefschrift betwist dat sociale parodie het tegenovergestelde zou zijn van tragedie; in plaats daarvan is het een unieke modus om de crisis van een reeks personages in deze romans vorm te geven. Door algemene kenmerken van parodie te identificeren, beweert dit proefschrift tevens dat de onderzochte romans steunen op uiteenlopende narratieve kenmerken en tekstuele strategieën,

ongeacht hoe elke afzonderlijke roman crises en sociale problemen benadert die voortvloeien uit de ervaring van moderniteit in Turkije. Dit belangrijke kenmerk verklaart waarom deze romans sinds de jaren '80 blijvend de aandacht hebben getrokken van literatuurwetenschappers en lezers en ieder op zich verschillende sociaal-politieke, culturele en literaire denkkaders in Turkije vertegenwoordigt. Echter, dit proefschrift is niet in staat geweest deze dimensie in de romans volledig af te dekken, vooral hoe hun receptie het Turkse literaire veld heeft beïnvloed en vice-versa. Dit laatste zou het onderwerp toekomstig onderzoek kunnen zijn.

