Muslim Literature, World Literature, Tanpınar

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Abstract

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Turkish humanist, literary historian, novelist, essayist and poet Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s work (23 June 1901 - 24 January 1962) provides us with a unique opportunity to reframe the major questions of contemporary literary historiography, particularly those relating to the politics of literature and the history of religion. This dissertation surveys Tanpınar’s writings in a variety of genres (fiction, poetry, literary history and theory) with a particular attention on his masterpiece, namely the novel *The Time Regulation Institute*. It demonstrates how Tanpınar’s humanistic sensitivities, together with his dedication to social scientific scrutiny, results in a quest for an original, cross-disciplinary position for the critic, or at least an alternative “mood” in writing and representing. Alternatively, his is a quest for a new “method” for literature, literary criticism and cultural study.

Among his company in this quest are nineteenth century Ottoman-Turkish revolutionaries, poets and novelists – such as the nationalist Namık Kemal, pious Ziya Pasha, populist Ahmet Midhat Efendi and suicidal Beşir Fuad, to name some of the figures I discuss in this dissertation – alongside French symbolists, Paul Valéry in particular, but also philosophers such as Henri Bergson and even Martin Heidegger, alongside eminent sociologists August Comte and Emile Durkheim. Yet one would only do injustice to Tanpınar’s thinking and writing unless one takes into consideration his reception of modernist writing at large, against the background of Melville’s, T. S. Eliot’s or Kafka’s works; or his literary- historical and political position in contrast to Erich
Auerbach’s or Maurice Blanchot’s. Tanpinar’s account of the late Ottoman intellectual legacy and modern Turkish and European letters is most instructive today in understanding the social and political relevance of modern literary activity and its position vis-à-vis religion, particularly in the non-West. Accordingly he must also be read against the background of sociology of religion and art.

Tanpinar’s original “mode” of writing or “method” redraws the contours of the global expansion (or “globalization”) of a particular “regime” of sensibility — a particular way of seeing and saying, making and sharing, writing and reading — i.e. an “aesthetic” regime, as Jacques Rancière has it. Tanpinar’s elaborations on the social, cultural, theological and philosophical implications of this expansion — particularly in the Ottoman world and later the Turkish republic, but also in what he calls the “Muslim Orient” at large — leads to the discovery of certain zones of indistinction or ambivalence (“duplicitous” spaces, as Tanpinar has it) not only between religion and literature, but also between literature and social sciences. This enables him to “critique” social scientific writing literarily, i.e. through specifically literary writing in the novel The Time Regulation Institute. But he also critiques literary and philosophical writing with social scientific scrutiny not only in The Time Regulation Institute but also in his theoretical writings and his history, in his essays and his Nineteenth Century Turkish Literature. He thereby postulates a concept for the political history of literature on a global scale that in turn scrutinizes the relationship between writing beyond genres and religion.

Tanpinar the literary historian was hired in the late 1930s to establish Turkish philology at Istanbul University, together with Auerbach who was hired to establish Romance philology at the same institution. Auerbach, whose literary historiography
displays a similar attention to the history and politics of representation in the Judeo-Christian tradition, wrote his most influential works during his Istanbul exile. Given Tanpinar’s alternative focus on the question of verbal arts and representation in the “Muslim Orient,” reading Tanpinar and Auerbach together produces a more complete picture of the stakes of a world literature in this dissertation.

Finally, to address the relevance of Tanpinar’s writings to contemporary scholarship with clarity, this dissertation recontextualizes Tanpinar’s thinking and his unvoiced disagreements with Auerbach, among others, against the background of the productive tension between Jacques Rancière — “the humanist” of the dissertation who often traces back his literary thinking to Auerbach — and Pierre Bourdieu — “the social scientist” here whose thought is very much imbedded in the sociological tradition extending from Comte to Durkheim.
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To the long forgotten Shamach family
Prelude: Of Books and Shoes

In a recent article, Hamid Dabashi, looks back at the perplexity caused by the events of December 14, 2008 at a press conference in Baghdad: ‘‘This is a farewell kiss from the Iraqi people, you dog,’ reportedly said Muntadhar al-Zaidi when he threw his shoes at the US president […] Bush managed to dodge both shoes. So many mixed metaphors here: why would you want to dodge a farewell kiss from the Iraqi people you have just liberated, or what’s wrong with being a dog? Inquiring minds want to know.”¹

The article describes how the “inquiring minds” of Western academia and the media landscape had to tackle an astonishing variety of mysteries concerning Arabs and their shoes after the press conference.

As we know the anthropological and philosophical, theological and historical accounts of these curiosities competed with each other in the years that followed, the competition turning fierce in February 2013, when, this time a Syrian, threw his shoe at Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Egypt. By then, sheer force of repetition over the years had made statements such as the following appear comprehensible, even relevant and

meaningful: “Showing the sole of your shoe to someone in the Arab world is a sign of extreme disrespect and throwing your shoe is even worse”; “In Arab culture it’s considered rude even to display the sole of one’s shoe to a fellow human being”; “Shoes should either be left at the door of the mosque, or carried (preferably in the left hand with the soles pressed together)”; “Dogs are considered dirty by Muslims” etc.

Dabashi focuses on the cultural anthropological attitude engrained in such bizarre statements and their conceptual vocabulary, suggesting that this also explains the reason why in addition to ivy league universities, it is the US military that hires topnotch anthropologists “to study social groups in Iraq and Afghanistan.” The similarity between this setting and Napoleon’s campaign with his scholars leading the way to mysterious Egypt goes without saying, and Dabashi easily uses the occasion to remind his readers of Orientalism. Moreover, refreshing the Saidian wisdom, he describes the scientific function, plus the pain such statements inflict upon people, by equating the “technique” with which such statements are articulated to another technique:

Had it not been for this masterpiece of American cultural anthropology, the US military would have never known that we in the Arab and Muslim world are categorically and genetically lazy, sex-obsessed, owners of at least four wives and plenty of sex slave concubines, which anthropological insights were subsequently used in Abu Ghraib by the US military by way of enhancing the already enhanced interrogation techniques. No “Franz Boas Award for Exemplary Service to Anthropology” can come even close to appreciating the significance of such anthropological services. It really took a great work of art like Kathryn Bigelow’s Zero Dark Thirty to show to the public at large the invaluable services that these techniques can provide in saving American lives. (ibid.)

Dabashi asks a simple question to make sense of this overall “hermeneutic” attitude, as he would have it. Is it possible that a shoe is sometimes simply a shoe? And as for an answer, he sarcastically offers alternatives to supplement the attitude in question.
For instance, he thinks that “universities in Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, or even Turkey could provide some of their students with ‘travel grants’ for a short summer visit to New York” to understand the “fully blown shoe fetishism” here in this great city.

Because obviously shoes are a great deal of things and seldom simply shoes, and the shoes of New York prove this:

Such ethnographic works on the American or European culture of shoe-throwing and related romances, as I suggest, is absolutely necessary because they can be so much subject to misinterpretation, particularly by people who have a radically different conception of shoe throwing. Freud famously said that sometime a cigar is just a cigar – but not in the US [...] Here in North America, hitting someone with your dirty smelly shoe [...] is the supreme sign of respect and admiration. This is specially the case here in New York where people walk their dogs and street pavements are covered with animal feces which inevitably end up on people’s shoes and provides their friends, families and potential romantic interests with ecstatic opportunities to impress upon them how much you dearly love and adore them.

Sarcastically arguing for the futility and profanity of such hermeneutics and language, Dabashi in fact elaborates on the “real and concrete” function of these perfectly scholarly anthropologisms, ethnographisms, sociologisms etc. in life. They appear as such, i.e. as politics and ideology (as “-ism”s and not simply as social scientific scholarship) once one dissociates their most rational conclusions (concerning Arabs and their shoes and dogs, for instance) from the seriousness of the academic (or military) attitude by way of which they are presented as serious facts.

When one tests the relevance of its conclusions to life, this social scientific wisdom appears absurd. Yet when one questions the relevance of this absurdity to life (life in Abu Ghraib, for instance) as Dabashi does in the essay, the absurdity appears concrete, perfectly real and even painful. In fact it can even be argued, in the Auerbachian spirit, that Dabashi’s figure of Muntadhar al-Zaidi appears more real and
historical than the picture his scholars draw. Dabashi, moreover, achieves the
dissociation in this particular journalistic piece of writing by way of a shift in style, i.e.
by adding a degree of irony and sarcasm to his journalistic report. Yet despite the
stylistics and sarcasm of the report, despite the indifferent and irreverent playfulness of
this particular way of reporting the facts on the ground, as a result of the overly stylistic
experimentation, the attitude critiqued still appears as serious and as having serious
consequences in the real world. This is why the humanist Dabashi’s “literarism” here –
versus the “scientism” he mocks – is a serious matter and just as scholarly too.\(^2\)

The history of the conflict between these two intellectual positions predates Dabashi’s
journalism and even Orientalism, no doubt, and involves great many direct encounters
and open challenges too. We see it in the foundational texts of contemporary criticism, in
Auerbach’s work for instance. For Auerbach the ancient “figural view” of historicity,
alive in the modern world in the form of (realist) literature, is an alternative to what he
calls the “modern view” of historicity.\(^3\) Already Auerbach’s work can be thought of as a

\(^2\) The mixing of genres with indifference and irreverence to conventional generic determinations,
and for instance the testing of scholarly knowledge in real life situations, are ideals that inspired
great many modern men and women of letters, no doubt. For some these even constitute the
essence of literature in the Western sense. For instance, to account for the “experimentalism” in
question one can draw a direct line from Flaubert (Bouvard and Pecuchet, for instance) to
Hofmannsthal (his first play of 1893, Gestrern, which for a main character has an impressionist
adventurer whose wife cheats on him – the day after, the impressionist adventurer struggles to
find a philosophical solution to this problem of the day before, failing to put it aside as merely the
experience of a previous self). Such ideals inspired Erich Auerbach, too, who moreover traced
them back to the human content of the gospels, and considered the theologico-poetic vision they
enabled some sort of historiography too.

\(^3\) The “modern view” piles up historical facts as if they follow each other on a horizontal plane of
causality (according to “Figura”) taking facts to be secure, yet deferring their concrete
declaration of war in that regard. The conflict is certainly very much alive in contemporary academia, where for instance sociologisms of literature (even in the form of theories of “world literature”) and literarisms concerning societal facts abound. If one were to name an actor from the “other” front, Pierre Bourdieu would come to mind first, who reduced even the tension between Durkheim’s impersonal social laws and Bergson’s thought of a mystical, open society, to this very conflict. Bourdieu’s sociology of literature, his strictly sociological take on the “literary field,” in this regard, is another open challenge but from the other side. Jacques Rancière opted to rise up to this challenge on “our” front.

One curiosity about this history of conflictual interaction is that one never knows what kind of politics to encounter on which side of the divide. It sometimes appears as if the conflict is above and beyond politics, for instance, despite the political evocations and motivations of all sorts. It appears beyond religion despite the abundant religious vocabulary employed by all. It sometimes appears even independent from and beyond the reach of our daily and concrete reality, while such “historicity” is the major issue of contention to begin with. So passionate are the actors of this scene of writing that here one can always encounter the strangest bedfellows.

knowledge, since here interpretation is forever frail and in need of supplementation by more interpretation. The ancient, figural view, on the other hand, still dealing with concrete events, defers their concrete knowledge because it takes facts themselves to be frail and in need of supplementation by other facts, but here their interpretation remains secure. Figural thinking is very much alive in the modern world, according to Auerbach, in the form of the literary “attitude” to represent reality and as an alternative way of accounting for historicity, as we see in Mimesis. I discuss “figural view” in the context of a close reading of The Time Regulation Institute in Chapter Two.
For instance one could read the work of Jewish Auerbach, who inspired Edward Said to theorize about “exilic intellectualism,” together with the Nazi ideologue (and devout Catholic) Carl Schmitt. Auerbach himself could as well have written the following lines from Schmitt’s one and only literary critical work:

True tragedy [the one that “represents” “reality,” we could add], unlike any other form, even unlike the tragic play, has an extraordinary quality, all its own, a kind of surplus value that no other play, however accomplished, attains, or wants to, provided it does not misunderstand itself. This surplus value lies in the very reality of the tragic events, in the enigmatic concatenation and imbrication of human beings that are incontestably real. It is on it that the earnestness of the tragic events rests, events that cannot be object of conjecture or relativization, and consequently do not lend themselves to play. All the participants are aware of an irrevocable reality which no human brain has devised, but on the contrary, is there, thrust on from the outside. This irrevocable reality is the dumb rock against which the play [Schmitt here talks about Shakespeare, about Hamlet to be precise] breaks, and the surge of the truly tragic moves forward in a cloud of foam.  

When Rancière responds to Bourdieu’s attack, he joins the procession in an interesting way (accidentally by revising Auerbach’s and Schmitt’s wisdom concerning the

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4 Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: the Irruption of Time into Play*, trans. Simona Draghici (Corvallis, Oregon: Plutarch, 2006), 38-9. Readers of *Mimesis* will recall how it is for the reasons Schmitt explains in these lines that Auerbach sided with Don Quixote. Comparing Don Quixote to Hamlet as well, Auerbach makes it clear that his sympathies lie with Don Quixote at the expense of Hamlet. Don Quixote is curable, “redeemable,” and Hamlet is not. (*Mimesis*, 332) Schmitt calls attention to the “mythic” quality these figures, together with Faust, have acquired even in the “myth-shedding” Europe, and to their “religious” persuasions as well: “It is known that since the Renaissance, the spirit of Europe has been shedding myths and mythologies. Despite all that, European literature has created three great symbolic figures: Don Quixote, Hamlet and Faustus. At least one of them, Hamlet, has become myth. Strange enough, all three are readers of books, in other words, intellectuals. Given their frames of mind, all three see their lives disrupted. Let us stop a moment to look at their origins and extraction: Don Quixote is Spanish and a Catholic; Faustus is German and a Protestant, while Hamlet is between the two, in the chasm that defined Europe's destiny.” (44-5) This is also an explanation of Schmitt’s choice of Hamlet over Don Quixote. Hamlet is the “real” tragic figure for Schmitt. Auerbach manages to out-Herod Herod (or out-Catholic the Catholic, to be precise) when he sides with the Don Quixote in *Mimesis*.  

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“representation” of “reality”). I find Rancière’s direct response to the challenge, for instance in the following passage, quite instrumental to think about the curiosity I just described, but also to test Dabashi’s position in the aforementioned journalistic article, for instance. “For at least hundred and fifty years,” writes Rancière, in explaining the futility of the clash and the tension itself to begin with,

[...] daring critics have purported to disclose the political import of literature, to spell out its unconscious discourse, to make it confess what it was hiding and reveal how its fictions or patterns of writing unwittingly ciphered the laws of the social structure, the market of symbolic goods and the structure of the literary field. But all those attempts to tell the truth about literature in Marxian or Freudian key, in Benjaminian or Bourdieusian key, raise the same problem that we have already encountered. The patterns of their critical explanation of ‘what literature says’ relied on the same system of meaning that underpinned the practice of literature itself.

Not that the US military hires novelists or literary critics just as it hires social scientists (but then who knows; we hear about the “imbedded journalists” all the time), but there is certainly something, an attitude (as Auerbach has it) or a mood, or at the very least a point of departure that the man of letters, the novelist and the literary critic, the political scientist and the social scientist all share. Because

to analyze prosaic realities as phantasmagorias bearing the hidden truth about the society, to tell the truth about the surface by tunneling into the depths and formulating the unconscious social text that is to be deciphered there – this model of symptomatic reading is an invention peculiar to literature. It is the very mode of intelligibility in which literature asserted its novelty and which it then passed on to those sciences of interpretation which believed that, by

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5 Rancière’s Aisthesis: Scènes Du Régime Esthétique De L’art (Paris: Galilée, 2011) is his most recent work that seeks to supplement Auerbach. He considers “Aisthesis” an alternative to “Mimesis”.

applying them to it in turn, they were forcing literature to cough up its hidden truth.\(^7\)

This is not about prioritizing literary writing over other genres of writing or vice versa, and not even equating all to all to argue for some literary or otherwise relevance. Elsewhere Rancière supplements the statement above with a strictly historical observation, i.e. explaining the commonality at stake by going back to the historical moment when a bifurcation of sorts occurred, or when the specifically literary writing parted ways definitively with other genres of writing in the West:

The nineteenth century was haunted – negatively – by the Platonic paradigm of the democratic dissolution of the social body, by the fanciful correlation between democracy/individualism/Protestantism/revolution/the disintegration of the social bond. This can be expressed in more or less poetic or scientific terms (sociology as a science was born from this obsession with the lost social bond), more or less reactionary or progressive terms, but the entire century was haunted by the imminent danger that an indifferent equality would come to reign and by the idea that it was necessary to oppose it with a new meaning of the communal body. Literature was a privileged site where this became visible. It was at one and the same time a way of exhibiting the reign of indifferent language and, conversely, a way of remaking bodies with words and even a way of leading words toward their cancellation in material states.\(^8\)

Now Rancière certainly has modernist experimentalism and even symbolist poetry in mind when he speaks of the cancellation of words “in material states,” or the ideal of a picturesque language, to be precise. But we can think of the word “shoe” in Dabashi’s article along these lines as well. A shoe may simply be a shoe. But an argument about such material state, particularly when it aims at describing another state


concerning the human relationship to simple and concrete materiality of shoes (an “indifferent equality” concerning the relationship between people and their shoes) seems to equate different sorts of indifferences and simplicities to each other and for a reason too.

What is at stake with the argument concerning shoes is certainly an “object,” as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (whom we will meet shortly) has it, which is not the shoe but people from the point of view of their relationship to shoes. However, this object stands in front of the “the thinking mind,” just as the leather cut for a pair of shoes would stand before “the processing hand.”

Quite surprisingly, and perhaps in a refreshing manner too, all these would be a given from the perspective of a scholar such as Tanpınar, who simply embarks on historical analyses with such premises without discussing them at length. Because it would be redundant to indifferently exhibit the reality of an indifferent equality as reality. The argument concerning shoes begs the question of a certain equality, which may or may not be a given, through an apparently indifferent language, which is not that different from Dabashi’s scholars who make up all sorts of things with

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9 This passage that I discuss later in Chapter Four continues as follows: “Needless to say here we take words in their most general meanings, i.e. we consider the good and the thing, but also the stuff of thinking and imagining, all the material of mental and social life, which is to say we consider the ‘object’ in the face of the thinking mind and the processing hand. The Orient accepts the thing as is or as it appears in the first differentiation it is assigned at the first encounter. The first traits always suffice. In the first encounter it [the Orient] even arrives at certain perfections, so much so that sometimes after the first encounter, perfection of the same caliber becomes forever unattainable. But in traditions that take root fast this perfection freezes, it gets rigid. The Occident grabs the thing to turn it around, holds it before the mind, looks for additional traits to assign and other possibilities of perfection to pursue, wrestles to know the thing as thoroughly as possible and as a result of all this endeavor makes the thing into almost something other than itself. It could be argued that the Orient appropriates the good only generally. Sometimes it is as if the Orient simply borrows the good from nature. The Occident owns the good completely by understanding its bodily constitution and testing all of its possibilities.”
their own brand of indifferent, “scientific” language. It is for this reason that what Auerbach calls “representation of reality,” Rancière will call “the politics of literature.” Here the humanist “literarism,” just like the “scientisms” of all sorts that it mocks, is “at one and the same time a way of exhibiting the reign of indifferent language and, conversely, a way of remaking bodies with words and even a way of leading words toward their cancellation in material states.”

Dabashi’s way of making things with words is a particular way of making and sharing. This way, moreover, he shares with the scientists he critiques on all counts, although they may end up saying and making different things. Moreover al-Zaidi shares this way of making and sharing with Dabashi and his scholars as well because al-Zaidi is a journalist at a press conference to begin with, not a simple man who throws his simple shoes on occasion. He is a journalist like the journalist Dabashi the writer of the article in question. Moreover his most expressive act takes place during a press conference that an entire global public was following. Perhaps he was simply blinded by emotion, but then the possibility of such blindness is expressive. He makes things with words and shoes, as Dabashi points out, but with press conferences as well.

Soon after the event a company in Istanbul claimed to be the manufacturer of al-Zaidi’s shoes. Those were the kind of shoes they wanted to make, precisely because they were not simply shoes anymore. And then al-Zaidi was offered a job in Beirut, because he was not simply a journalist anymore. He was the kind of journalist they wanted to work with.
Dabashi describes how even within this setting, one can find ways of denying the obvious, of rendering speechless al-Zaidi (and his company) twice as speechless, and this by blatant ethnocentrism.

One may have to take shoes to be simply shoes to amend this situation. But one could take an additional step. Al-Zaidi may be a journalist in opposition, but he does not scream across the pages of newspapers “J’accuse!” like the novelist Zola, for instance. What al-Zaidi’s action, caught as it may be, paradoxically, within the same paradigm of intellectual resistance, implicates is something else, something additional.

One could take al-Zaidi to have thrown back, with emotion perhaps and even unintentionally, this whole paradigm, the fiction of liberation and the freedom of press that supposedly the occupation bestowed upon Iraq. There is nothing here that resembles the post-colonial critic’s or the subaltern historian’s strategy to out-Herod Herod either. Here we have an expression of exasperation, because there is no way out.

We can take another detour to understand this point. Dabashi published another article recently to respond to Slavoj Zizek’s implication that philosophy is a Western European matter. That essay is titled “Can non-Europeans think?”10 Dabashi’s proof that the non-European can think is the following:

Do the constellation of thinkers from South Asia, exemplified by leading figures like Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, Gayatri Spivak, Ranajit Guha, Sudipta Kaviraj, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Homi Bhabha, or Akeel Bilgrami, come together to form a nucleus of thinking that is conscious of itself? Would that constellation perhaps merit the word “thinking” in a manner that would

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qualify one of them – as a South Asian – to the term “philosopher” or “public intellectuals”? [...] We can turn around and look at Africa. What about thinkers like Henry Odera Oruka, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Okot p’Bitek, Taban Lo Liyong, Achille Mbembe, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, V.Y. Mudimbe: Would they qualify for the term “philosopher” or “public intellectuals” perhaps, or is that also “ethnophilosophy”? 

Non-Europeans need philosophy and even schools of philosophy to think. It is as if without philosophy non-Europeans cannot think nor have they ever thought, or thought “consciously,” whatever that may mean. We need “our own” “conscious” philosophers to be able to think. But what if it was philosophy itself (and yes, as a European matter) that presupposed the hierarchy that deems certain other ways of thinking “ethnophilosophies” to begin with, and other ways of making things with words “simply” religion, orality, or tradition? It is as if there cannot exist other ways of thinking and making things with words, or even if they exist they simply do not count. But such a presumptuous attitude is why shoes are thrown to begin with at press conferences, “unconsciously” perhaps, “simply” out of emotion.

For Dabashi it is not the way of thinking and being, making and sharing that can possibly be problematic. It is simply the most apparent inequality and blatant racism of this or that philosopher that is problematic. But what if the inequality that concerns him had to do with a particular way of saying and being, making and sharing to begin with? Such minimal suspicion could have opened up the possibility of a different sort of oppositional thought, a different way of approaching non-Western shoe-throwing. It could have enabled an anti-philosophical thought, for instance, which even the most European Paul Valéry could easily accommodate, as we will see. Why could we not?
What if one encountered an author consciously distancing himself from all such tension between humanisms and scientisms? And this by writing successfully in a great variety of genres and for the most part about writing and about those genres, and moreover to critique (not one at the expense of the other but) what they have in common. An author with such credentials would promise to teach a lot to the student of contemporary literature and criticism, and precisely about contemporary literature and criticism. Even to see if and how such positioning is possible would be interesting simply to define the coordinates of our own literary critical and scholastic positions better.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar (1901-1962) happens to be one such author. He happens to be (“even” as Dabashi has it) from Turkey. Moreover, this author is very much familiar with the intellectual setting I outlined. He even lived and worked in this setting (as Auerbach’s neighbor, for instance, as we will see).

But in almost all his writings, in his cultural criticism and novels, in his strictly historical works and in his journalism, Tanpinar is almost miraculously torn in between the thought of impersonal social laws and the promise of writing. So he sometimes takes the activity of writing to be governed by laws that are social facts in the Durkheimian spirit (following “the great Durkheim school,” as he calls it), and analyzes writing in a strictly historical fashion and as it relates to cultural contexts and societal differences. But sometimes, in keeping with the modern literary-novelistic spirit, he writes essays and fiction to test the relevance of those scholarly assumptions (of those assumed differences, contexts, and facts, but also of fiction and representation) to life.

He was a Francophile, that is for certain, and he was also a self-declared student of Paul Valéry, another figure in between Durkheim and Bergson. Some fascination with
poetry as literature qua literature, and as language pure and proper, only follows from this situation. Moreover, although Tanpinar did not produce much poetry, very much like Valéry, he considered himself above all a poet. But he was also a dedicated reader of Kafka and Heidegger, whom he read to learn what he can about Turkish literature. This is because around the same time when Auerbach was employed by the Turkish government to establish Romance philology at Istanbul University, Tanpinar was employed to establish the study of “new Turkish literature” at the same university, for which purpose he wrote a history of nineteenth century Turkish literature (as a series of failures to produce literature, as we will see). He references Kafka and Heidegger in his introduction to this history, which discusses premodern Muslim literature. “Chapter One: Words Enough and Time” describes in greater detail this scene of writing.

Now I mentioned the paradoxical situation concerning Dabashi’s humanist position and his opposition etc. But the main reason for beginning with Dabashi’s essay was that, I would like to make it clear that to see the promise in Tanpinar’s writing, one must be able to read Tanpinar’s fiction as fiction, his essays as essays, and his history as history. Because just as sometimes a shoe must be a shoe, sometimes a novel must be a novel, and history history, regardless of whether they were written in “Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, or even Turkey.”\footnote{Dabashi, “The Arabs and their flying shoes.”} Otherwise one risks rendering them completely speechless. That is to say I am not only interested in analyzing to what extent Tanpinar’s novels, essays and history may be instructive about things specifically Muslim, Middle

\footnote{Dabashi, “The Arabs and their flying shoes.”}
Eastern or Turkish. Such interest may be unavoidable when one reads novels. But I am also, and perhaps even primarily, interested in understanding to what extent Tanpınar’s history is instructive about history qua history, and his literature about literature qua literature. This means I simply take Tanpınar’s work seriously as literature, and take literature seriously as a way of making and knowing things too.

Readers of *Mimesis* will recall how promising such a strategy can prove to be. It is a pity that such strategies are hardly employed particularly when it comes to non-Western works. The liberties I take in the following pages, for instance with my comparisons or my telegraphic commentary, are modeled on Auerbach’s and for instance Rancière’s “methods.” Now I cannot claim that I did not have access to books or libraries to explain my telegraphic commentary. But then we know that Auerbach too had access to all sorts of books in Istanbul.

I could not have possibly surveyed Tanpınar’s writings in a few hundred pages with such strategy. This is why I chose to take one of his novels, namely *The Time Regulation Institute* (serialized in 1954) as my focus, and moreover the main character of that novel as my guide in this study of Tanpınar’s essays, history, and fiction.

That main character, who is also the narrator of the novel, is named Hayri İrđal. The novel is his fictional memoir. İrđal tells us about how he got involved in the dealings of a sham of that institute, among many other things. He gives us his birth date as *Hijrî* 16 Rajab 1310.

Now Ottomans used the Muslim *Hijrî* calendar until mid-nineteenth century. *Hijrî* calendar is lunar and starts from the prophet’s migration to Madina, i.e. the *Hijra* of 622
16

A.D. In the second half of the nineteenth century, reform movements introduced the Ottomans to the Rūmī calendar, which was a solar version of the Hijrī calendar based on the Julian calendar.

Hijrī time remained in use for religious matters alongside the Rūmī calendar. In order to prevent confusion between the dates, both calendars were used for decades. Modern Turkey used both calendars until 1926, when the Gregorian calendar was adopted with a parliamentary decree. Still it took twenty years to replace the Rūmī names of the months (“Teşrinievvel,” “Teşrinisani,” “Kanunuevvel,” “Kanunusani”) with rather more Turkish sounding names.

İrdal tells us about his father’s and grandfather’s dedication to build a mosque for which purpose even a huge clock was bought, namely Mübarek, meaning “the sacred” (the English translation of the novel has it as “the Blessed One”). Mübarek introduces İrdal already in his childhood to the secrets of clocks’ most mysterious inner workings. He later works as an apprentice at a clock repair shop.

This simple man, later in his life when he was unemployed, meets a strange fellow named Halid Ayarcı (his surname meaning “regulator”), the political economist of the novel, trained in the US, who in turn singlehandedly comes up with the scheme of a time regulation institute.

In the mean time, having nothing to do, İrdal becomes a regular of a variety of societies and salons, and even encounters a psychoanalyst, all of them a novelty in this part of the world. The psychoanalyst comes up with a story about İrdal’s very particular paternal complex, defining Mübarek the mosque clock as a father figure for İrdal.
When we take a closer look at the services of the institute where the simple man İrdal finally finds a decent job with a decent salary, the institute turns out to be a rather scholarly enterprise. Its deeds consist mainly of acts of writing. İrdal himself ends up writing a bestseller, a (completely fictional, yet presented as real and concrete) history of a Turkish innovator named Zamani, who supposedly had already invented the modern sense of temporality centuries ago, “during our golden age.” Most of the characters in the novel turn out to be writers, producing psychoanalytical and sociological, economic and philosophical, journalistic, historical and otherwise works.

But İrdal just cannot take any of these seriously. He cannot even take his own fictional-historical writing seriously. He even feels guilty since he thinks he is lying, and others have to convince him of the legitimacy of his act of writing. At the end of the novel it is an American envoy that discloses the embezzlement. But İrdal does not take the envoy seriously either. There is only one thing that he seems to take seriously, and it is to earn a living. “Chapter Two: Setting the Times Right” is a close reading of the novel.

This brings me to the second reason for beginning with Dabashi’s article. It must have become clear from the summary above that Tanpınar in this novel writes about writing in the modern sense in general, about literary and scholarly writing, about all the genres of modern writing, and to stage an indifferent and irreverent protest. In a way, Tanpınar the novelist’s novel writing is similar to al-Zaidi the journalist’s way of making things with press conferences, words and shoes.
Just as to see that the shoes are thrown for a reason, one must understand that sometimes a shoe is simply a shoe, to understand for what reason Tanpınar wrote this novel, one must understand that a novel can simply be a novel. This is what I try to do.

To achieve this, chapters Three and Four compare İrdal with the simple man Bartleby; Tanpınar’s sense of secrecy with other ways of engaging secrecy; and for instance Tanpınar’s interest in the simple man İrdal with the contemporary discourse on subalternity, and more specifically with the anthropologist Partha Chatterjee’s interest in the simple of this world. I look back at philosophers and novelists Tanpınar reads in his works, among them Valéry, and address their legacy in contemporary criticism too, for instance as Bourdieusian sociologism or in Rancière’s philosophical criticism, to understand what Tanpınar has to teach us about our present critical preoccupations.

I also go back to some of the major figures of nineteenth century Turkish literature that Tanpınar discusses in his history to see if they can clarify Tanpınar’s oppositional position or our present critical preoccupations that I believe Tanpınar would treat with irreverence. These figures are Namik Kemal the Ottoman poet-prophet (1840-1888); Ziya Pasha the first anthologist of Ottoman literature (1829-1880); Ahmet Midhat Efendi the most popular of all the late Ottoman fiction writers (1844-1913); Beşir Fuad the suicidal positivist (1852-1887); and Ömer Seyfeddin the Turkish nationalist novelist and essayist (1884-1920), among others.

I employ one of the key concepts in Tanpınar’s historical work as an organizing theme for the overall dissertation. This concept is “duplicity.” For instance, one of the subtitles of Chapter Two is “A Cross-eyed Vision,” and seeks to supplement Tanpınar’s
historical vision. But duplicity can be found in every chapter, either employed implicitly or explicitly discussed.

Tanpınar uses the concept to describe the intellectual position of late Ottoman and modern Turkish men and women of letters. The consensus in Tanpınar scholarship is that he takes those intellectuals to be caught in between European ways and oriental “content.” However as we will see, for Tanpınar duplicity has to do with the tension between two different forms, two different ways of making things with words, and never with something resembling “content.”

Now as I indicated Tanpınar uses the concept to explain Ottoman-Turkish modernity, but critics have overrated its relevance to explain “modern Turkishness.” In fact duplicity is not an exclusively modern Ottoman-Turkish phenomenon in Tanpınar. He references even Kafka, the German speaking Jew, as caught in some sort of duplicity.

Moreover a closer look at his writings will show how Tanpınar the nationalist uses the same concept to account for the “Turkishness” of the pre-modern, “Muslim” (Turkish) literature, too. In short, for him the pre-modern “Turkish” literature was neither specifically literary, since it was prayer-like and nothing distinguished it from worship, nor was it specifically “Turkish,” since it employed Arabic and Farsi as well as Turkish. The discussion of Ziya Pasha’s trilingual anthology of Ottoman poetry in Chapter Three elaborates on this topic. Even when the medium was Turkish in “our old poetry,” according to Tanpınar, “alien” linguistic sensitivities dominated its way of making things with words (particularly the prosodic laws of Arabic and Farsi). Yet those sensitivities were somehow domesticated over time, which for Tanpınar is the most surprising and impressive achievement of “our old poetry.”
Duplicity takes a different form within Ottoman-Turkish modernity, but it survives. There is duplicity, then, within the undifferentiated social conditions shaping the pre-modern Muslim (Turkish) poetry, just as there is duplicity within the differentiated society of modern Turkey and its differentiated societal organization and its specifically literary literature. Duplicity in collective experience is not characteristic to Turkish or otherwise modernity, it is more of an organizing principle in Tanpınar’s thinking. Turks were in duplicity before modernity, because there was nothing Turkish about them. And paradoxically, modern Turks, even their specifically literary works in “pure and simple” Turkish, are caught in duplicity too, because everything about them and even their history has become specifically Turkish in full contrast to the historical reality. The power of this argument is in part due to Tanpınar’s fixation on the form. One way of making things conveys an amorphous state, the other is too much of a squeeze, it over-specifies all the way to contradict historical reality.

As a nationalist he must keep an eye on “unity” (I discuss this in the conclusion also to explain the name choice of the last ruling Ottoman political party, i.e. “Unity and Progress”) and this is precisely why, wherever he turns his scholarly gaze, he cannot but see duplicity. Needless to say, for someone looking to find one, duplicity means a legion. Thus Tanpınar is also a disgruntled, sad scholar. Duplicity is a problem for Tanpınar, but its problematic stature also makes it visible historically, which in turn is Tanpınar’s scholarly achievement.

Much has been written about the so-called non-Western modernities with simplistic theoretical assumptions about “form” and “content.” There are even theories of world literature according to which for instance Tanpınar’s novels and even The Time
Regulation Institute would count as “Turkish literature” due to some assumed “local content” in them presented in “European form.” With Tanpinar we will come to understand better that the question is always that of form to begin with. What is at stake is the conflict between different ways of making things with words and with other things.

This brings me to my final point. Rancière, in the passage quoted above, describes literature (and the sciences of the social) either as a symptom of or as dealing with the “dissolution of the social body, [...] the disintegration of the social bond.” Insofar as such state had to do with a revolutionary ideal of an indifferent equality, it was also a cause to pursue. This cause involved challenging a “representational regime,” a particular way of making things with words and other things, whose generic determinations buttressed inequality.

Yet this was also an impossible cause insofar as language as such could never avoid “representational” attitude completely, despite the modernist experimentalism assuming the contrary. One could only end up making up new bodies (and images, symbols, figures) according to Rancière. Such ideal, in Rancière’s terminology, was an ideal of an impossible “conversion.” Rancière will read Deleuze’s Bergsonism, his march to the “desert,” with the same spirit. The desert is an impossible destination and yet a destination to march toward, and this formula summarizes what Rancière calls the alternative, “aesthetic” movement.

Now Tanpinar’s writing and his fiction is either a symptom of or a way of dealing with the exact opposite state, that of embodiment. Tanpinar’s point, then, will be that, for better or worse, the desert was an impossible point of departure to begin with. But the
trouble is that Tanpinar too has embarked on the journey, he is in the same boat with those traveling in the exact opposite direction. It was the journey, the movement or the march itself, the “aesthetic” campaign that was the problem. I go back to this topic in the “Conclusion: The Desert,” in which I also draw a map of the place where these two trajectories meet. That place may as well be the space of world literature.
Chapter One: Words Enough and Time

One of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s most mysterious accomplishments, namely the novel *The Time Regulation Institute* (serialized in 1954, published in Turkish in 1961) offers two ways of looking at the activity of writing that Tanpınar was involved in throughout his life, even in writing this novel.¹ I outline the development of these perspectives in Tanpınar’s writings, contextualize them, and explain their relevance to contemporary scholarship in this chapter before taking a closer look at the novel in the second chapter. I also start reading, among other texts, his short stories, and his history of nineteenth century Turkish literature as for an introduction to his worldview.

I also elaborate on the difference between Tanpınar’s “duplicitous” way of thinking and two contrasting ways of viewing literary activity, one of them social scientific, the other humanistic. The former involves particularly the sociological take on literary activity, the latter the literary and philosophical objections to what has been deemed sociologism or scientism in

cultural study. Tanpinar, by contrast, will formulate for us a question of literature literally, i.e. by writing in a way that is specifically literary.

**Insufficient means**

Tanpinar already considers his fiction a rational, objective, even quasi-scientific, psychological and sociological inquiry, yet also a conquest of sorts of the depths of human psyche and society, or at least his own psyche and society. He associates the combination of these two moods with Paul Valéry, the skeptic man of letters. Unlike the kind of writing that only “attempts to act with insufficient means,” to pause to gloss over or explain sense and sensibility, for instance, while sense of any worth is possible only in saying and hence acting, Tanpinar’s literary writing, his “poetic saying” is both experimental (hence “scientific”) and political in an explicit opposition to philosophical writing, or rather to the *explicative* mood of writing in general, which Valéry takes

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2 See for instance Tanpinar, “Paul Valéry,” in *Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler* [“Essays on Literature”] (Istanbul: MEB, 1969), 483-92. Henceforth *EÜM*. Tanpinar did not write much specifically on Valéry or any other great European writer, yet he quotes or references them and particularly Valéry frequently. He references Valéry usually when he needs to address or explain the almost natural, quasi-scientific aspect of the kind of intellectual activity (of writing) he takes himself to be involved in. He represents Valéry as “the great skeptic” in the above essay, which retrospectively looks a bit too easy an epitaph to account for Valéry’s work. Yet the skepticism in question leads Tanpinar to elaborate an urge for precision and specificity, very much the way it led Valéry himself; as an impossible task, moreover, which inspires Tanpinar to theorize Valéry’s “great silence” in very productive ways that I will address shortly. Valéry’s anti-philosophical mood Tanpinar embraces wholeheartedly, but like Valéry, he takes this attitude itself to be philosophical in a different way, perhaps truly philosophical unlike the philosophy of the professional philosopher, which is also to say almost (social) scientific in this mental theatre. For a “philosophical” yet sympathetic summary of Valéry’s anti-philosophical philosophy and scientism, see Jacques Bouveresse, “Philosophy from an Antiphilosopher: Paul Valéry,” trans. Christian Fournier and Sandra Laugier, in *Critical Inquiry* 21:2 (Winter, 1995), 354-81.

3 Paul Valéry, *Cahiers*, ed. Judith Robinson, 2 volumes (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 1:501. It is philosophy that attempts without sufficient means, of course, and all the realms of knowledge contaminated by its metaphysical bracketing of meaning, and its urge for the explicative mood in engaging life.
to be a specifically philosophical endeavor. Tanpınar’s writing, by contrast, both says something and in saying does something. This requires for Tanpınar, as it did for Valéry, the acknowledgement of his own “insufficient means” as the sine qua non of writing in whatever genre; and sometimes, as in his fiction, writing proper appears to be simply this acknowledgment itself, writ large, as it were.

He wrote fiction, poetry, and criticism. But he also wrote, in an immediately academic, “scientific” fashion, the history of these three as they developed in his own language. He theorized their social and political relevance, along with their social and economic conditions of possibility. It appears as if his fiction was closer to sociology and psychology in his mind, so one step ahead of his own historical writing. But fiction was still more insufficient than those genres of writing that, according to Valéry as well, were supposed to provide only gnomic laws, thus radically instrumentalizing speech to move forward toward the thing and the image. Poetry was close to mathematics for Tanpinar as it was for Valéry, both forms distilling the pure instrumentality of the logos, while the narrative or the novel, and fiction in general, was closer to history, and fiction and history together close to social sciences but only in their common opposition to philosophy and “theology.”

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4 In a nutshell: “À cause des mots qui jamais ne sont et ne peuvent être des fins. La formule la plus remarquable n’est jamais qu’une transition, un commencement, un instrument, – et il faut en arriver bon gré, mal gré – à l’image, à l’acte, à la possession de fait, ou bien que le philosophe se résigne à la condition d’artiste, et son système à celle de symphonie,” Cahiers, 2:854.

5 For a discussion of Valéry’s hierarchy of the genres of writing, see Robert Champigny, “Valéry of History and the Novel,” in Yale French Studies 44 (1970), 207-14. In short, poetry and mathematics, insofar as they are linguistic forms furthest away from the explicative mood, are the purest in their detachment from meaning and hence, paradoxically, in their proximity to life in their ultimate artificiality and meaninglessness; social sciences and psychology, history and the novel, with their minimal hermeneutic intentionality, are in between, and hence already contaminated or “impure;” then comes the zone of sickness, of disaster and joke, i.e. philosophy, theology, and all the related fields.
He was dedicated, as was Valéry, to clarity and precision, but other than in the purely
rule-governed, yet unpredictable game that is poetry, he found approximations of clarity and
precision in Balzac as much as in Durkheim, in the “great Durkheimian school” of sociology.⁶
But this was not to equate aesthetics to science or social science; or even worse, to reduce
literature to technique.

These for Tanpınar are simple misunderstandings, which is why he mocks those who
write as if they were making clocks as much as those who write “before nature” or wander
around with notebooks in hand. He complained already in the forties about how novel writing
had become a matter of technique, suggesting that Balzac the artist, with the “almost impossible
sense of reality” of his outmoded writing, had made “man, nature, place and society synthesize
naturally like in life itself.” (42)

Like the scientist, and unlike a technician or the clock maker, the poet and the novelist
had to test with sterilized tools (purely artificial, naturally instrumental, and indifferent language)
and had to be ready to deal with whatever test result, with the unpredictability of life and writing
alike, even if this meant turning against writing. This is what Balzac had achieved through a
productive contradiction. Balzac had chosen life and action over the distance of writing
according to Tanpınar.⁷ It is as if, according to Tanpınar, Balzac’s entire work is a declaration of
this choice alone, constantly turning, and in most unpredictable ways, writing against writing.

Unpredictability is the only justification of the experiment to begin with, be it literary or

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⁶ See Tanpınar, “Hayat Karşıında Romancı” [“The Novelist before Life”], in EÜM, 42-45. Originally
published in Ülkü 43 (July 1, 1943), 2-3.

⁷ For a more recent discussion that clarifies how Balzac’s writing turns against writing in writing, see
scientific: “[...] I am tired of everything behind which, instead of the human being, a wind up
clock, or simply a mainspring works, whose ticking grates on the nerves.” (43)

On the other hand, if the artist fails to acknowledge his/her necessary distance from the
scientist, he ends up “isolating” things a bit too much, his words “leaving a bad taste in one’s
mouth like wine that smells of labs or the drugstore. In true wine the sun and its light dances.”
(ibid.) Balzac did not use a microscope to achieve his “almost impossible” sense of reality,
explains Tanpinar, he was “simple and carefree.” (42) It was as if literature had come naturally to
Balzac’s way of saying.

It is silly, accordingly, to make an effort toward realism or naturalism of any sort in
writing, it is silly for the artist or the critic to walk around with a notebook or a microscope, or to
set up mechanisms like the highly predictable Russian novelists while calling one’s activity
artistic. The man of letters had to model the scientist in objectivity and indifference, which is to
say in the freedom from those “painstaking and hysterical enthusiasms or abhorrences that make
one hate art.” (43)

Purely instrumental language of pure literature had to be like wine, its experience ecstatic like
that of good wine, neither overburdened with depths of meaning nor working like clockwork; yet
sterile like the chemist’s tools and precise like mathematical equations, and unpredictable like an
experiment in the lab. It had to say something and this saying had to amount to acting, but acting
flawlessly and carelessly, almost “naturally.”

Because this acting here is not some Nietzschean ideal either; it is more of a humble
thing. It is certainly nothing like “poeticizing” life, reason, the world or anything of that scale
either. Nor is it in line with the world-forming (weltbilden) activity of fundamental ontology. It is the act of saying that comes almost naturally, as an extension or expansion of living in this world as a speaking being. Valéry almost approves Nietzsche for his way of saying, but cannot bear what Nietzsche has to say: “En lisant Nietzsche, je retrouve la sensation du vide – que ces mixtures de prophétisme, historisme, philosophisme et biologie, me procurent.” As for Tanpinar, the choice of wine and action over distant, observant writing, and the ecstasy of life over clockwork literature, had to do with not doing something, not killing or letting writing kill the “joy of life,” of the life in common, to be precise. This, paradoxically, seems to require some effort on behalf of the writer. It is as if to say the joy of life comes naturally, and writing has to do with either killing it or cherishing it. On all counts, the joy of life and its survival depends on a particular faith according to Tanpinar.

He says, in 1943, that Balzac’s “social critique,” which appeared to him (as it did to many of his contemporaries) to be a silly pretension only twenty years before, appears under a different light to him now, (41) not because such criticism can be effective in any way or meaningful in every social context, it looks like, but simply because it meant above all to take life and the people seriously over and against the solitude of writing, and to let one’s writing be marked by this choice:

[...] That day I was liberated of my pity [...] for the people who knew how to see and comforted and entertained themselves with what they saw. The power of the great novelist begins precisely with not killing in himself this joy of life. Pages filled with it, like a mirror reflecting the sun, are the real miraculous side of art. The novelist

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9 Valéry, Cahiers, 1:739.
must believe in the people. It is this faith that produces art. Wherever there is life, there is also the joy that is nothing other than lights and colors overflowing this faith. Let us see our life, and know what we lack. I do not think that we can do this nation’s literature without reducing the human to reality, and the reality to the problematic ingrained in it. Moreover I believe that when we recognize these issues in their actuality, we will find ourselves elsewhere, in a place where we don’t anymore take life to be something we bear, something like fate. A place where we take hold of life, looking around us with the self-confidence of the great makers. Yet to find this spirit of making we need first to find the pleasure of life. We need to taste the happiness of life in the exact same way the great nature appears to be happy simply to be. This is only possible by believing in the people of this society. It is futile to look at this society under alien lenses, or to recreate it as if it was a product of intellect, as if it did not have a reality of its own. (44-5)

There is a sense of reality in this passage, and a sense of action and agency not easy to understand without surveying all of Tanpinar’s writings. All these figures (wine, ecstasy, reality, action, art, the people etc.) will appear under a different light as we look at Tanpinar’s writings in a variety of genres. We will also have to spend some time analyzing that most mysterious statement about “being happy simply to be,” since Tanpinar is very much preoccupied with this thought almost in all his writings, and particularly in The Time Regulation Institute.

Suffice it to say that the reality at stake here is not accessible to an immediately social scientific and/or humanistic gaze, perhaps not even to writing in the modern sense, which is a topic Tanpinar will address explicitly in the novel The Time Regulation Institute. Because this “taking life and the people seriously” (which is what Tanpinar’s idiosyncratic realism is about) requires a readiness to give up on all sorts of “enthusiasms or abhorrences” one may encounter in modern art, politics and the sciences of the social alike. These enthusiasms and/or abhorrences may include those concerning “reality,” but at times they may appear rather more “political,” just as they may be purely aesthetic or taste related. Hence the need to talk of “reducing the human to reality, and the reality to the problematic ingrained in it.” Paradoxically, this utopic “literary” resignation may as well require giving up on literature.
Tanpınar inherited from Ziya Gökalp (who is the only systematic philosopher of the late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey) the tension between Durkheim and Bergson.\textsuperscript{10} He certainly shared, as Valéry did to a certain extent and also Ziya Gökalp, the Bergsonian flare for the mystic.\textsuperscript{11} Tanpınar’s and Valéry’s take on Bergson is similar to their position on Nietzsche, with a little difference. They approve what Bergson has to say, but not the way he says it.

For Bergson symbolic representation of temporal reality is pretty much impossible, given that all symbols, and language along with them as the ultimate site of symbolism, only “slice up” duration, creating a necessarily poor state of saying in distance from essentially temporal being.\textsuperscript{12} Given the immense attraction of Bergson for almost all the Muslim intellectuals of early twentieth century,\textsuperscript{13} it is impossible not to think of his “duration” while reading these most famous lines of Tanpınar, the first two of which adorn his tombstone:

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For Ziya Gökalp, see Taha Parla, \textit{The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp}, 1876-1924, (Leiden: Brill, 1985). Gökalp is considered, in short, the architect of modern Turkish nationalism. Tanpınar describes how, due to his scientific education and religious upbringing, Gökalp suffered from a chronic depression, one that almost led him to an “anomic suicide” (in Gökalp’s own Durkheimian terminology). Gökalp found a way out of this conflict, like many other “Oriental” thinkers, by reading Bergson (\textit{EÜM}, 108), yet he eventually distanced himself from Bergson, ending up a serious sociologist and a self-declared disciple of Durkheim. Yet he could also argue that the Turks were the “supermen” Nietzsche had announced, for instance, and his understanding of solidarism is a bit twisted given his somewhat Muslim-mystic take on this subject matter. So perhaps he could never make a choice between philosophy, sociology, and religion, or between Bergson and Durkheim. For a general discussion of the tension between Durkheim and Bergson, a topic that hardly inspired critics until recently, see Alexandre Lefebvre and Melanie White, “Bergson on Durkheim: Society \textit{sui generis},” \textit{Journal of Classical Sociology} 10:4 (2010), 457–477. I will address only one aspect of this disagreement here.
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For the Bergsonian flare for the mystic see Henri Bergson, \textit{The Two Sources of Morality and Religion} (New York: Henry Holt and company, 1935).
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I am neither in time
Nor outside of it completely
In the indivisible flow
Of a vast moment of unity.\(^{14}\)

One can take this thought of symbolism as also the basis of Bergson’s objection to
Durkheim, whose impersonal social laws Bergson considers only an enclosure. Bergson offers a
view of the quasi-mystical, open societal interaction as an alternative, an interaction leading to a
social movement of constant evolution. Openness is possible as the recognition of the truly
temporal, durational structure of being and saying, and the limitless potential inherent in these
and their essential state of constant expansion. Moreover, stylistically speaking, it is as if
Bergson’s own language is different from Durkheim’s in that he does not speak the language of
symbols, but has access to the language of images, a second language that speaks duration. This
is the reason why Bergson’s philosophical explanations typically involve descriptions of a
variety of images whose combination is supposed to deliver his meaning.

It is easy to see how Valéry, and along with him Tanpınar, would be closer to Bergson in
this matter. Yet neither Valéry nor Tanpınar seems to be happy with the sense of entitlement in
Bergson’s own bombastic, philosophical language, which constitutes their only objection, and
which is the reason why when they say more or less the same things, they choose another way of
saying, i.e. the one that instead expresses an indifferent immediacy, a literary humility. This is
what Valéry writes about Bergson:

Bergson me dit hier qu’il avait fait sa table rase en 1890 – et commencé de se faire
un système en étudiant la mémoire et assemblant les données relatives à l’amnésie

\(^{14}\) It is as follows in Turkish: Ne içindeyim zamanın / Ne de büsbütün dışında; / Yekpare geniş bir anın / Parçalanmaz akışında.
qu’il considère comme le positif de la question. J’ai remarqué in petto que je me suis mis à ma propre philosophie, deux ans après (en 1892) – et sans besoin de table rase, puisqu’il n’y avait rien sur la mienne. Et, comme méthode, je ne me suis fié qu’à ma manière de voir les choses mentales – ayant une sorte de répulsion pour les documents.” (Cahiers, 1:594)

Tanpinar’s recognition of and sympathy for Valéry’s choice of immediacy and instrumentality is clear in “Paul Valéry.” There Tanpinar also accounts for Valéry’s turn to mysticism with quotes from different volumes of Variété. Both Valéry and Tanpinar describe mysticism, in the final analysis, as a realm where one finds nothing other than one brings with oneself.

So this kind of Bergsonism is radically different from the Bergsonism of Tanpinar’s contemporary T.S. Eliot, for instance. The isolation of Tanpinar’s Bergsonian inspirations would have given an easy comparative scheme to relate the work of “Tanpinar the conservative” to the work of conservative Eliot. It is true that Tanpinar was a reader of Eliot. Yet he was no Turkish Eliot, neither a Christian conservative nor a Muslim Eliot of sorts. Tanpinar was a

15 The names mentioned so far were of interest to T.S. Eliot as well, inescapably. For an account of his own of Valéry and Valéry’s “pure poetry,” see T.S. Eliot, “From Poe to Valéry,” in The Hudson Review, 2:3 (Autumn, 1949), 327-42. For one of the few but exemplary studies of Eliot’s indebtedness to Bergson, see Mary Ann Gillies, Henri Bergson and British Modernism (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 78-106.

16 Tanpinar’s time and society were not short of grand projects one can easily describe in terms similar to Eliot’s devotion to revitalizing the Christian civilization, but Tanpinar was not invested in them as religiously as many of his contemporaries. I am referring to the grand cultural projects overtaken by the Turkish state in the 1930s and 40s to create a Turkish brand of humanism, a movement that the legendary minister of culture Hasan Ali Yücel himself called “the humanist culture reforms,” and which mainly involved translation and publication of European classics as cheap paperbacks, sometimes even distributed for free, and establishment of academic humanities (hence Auerbach’s “Turkish exile”) in Turkey. That Tanpinar was not totally invested in humanism of this sort does not mean that he resisted it as a Muslim conservative or as a reactionary. In fact he was more of an “occidentalist” (garpci), more devoted to the European enlightenment than Hasan Ali Yücel, for instance. Perhaps his concerns about his “culture,” which is what his conservatism is about, were identical to the ones Auerbach expressed in his letter to Benjamin and in his writings on world literature. For an interesting juxtaposition of Auerbachian “exilic” humanism and the humanism of the Turkish ministry of culture in this context, see Kader Konuk, East West Mimesis: Auerbach in Turkey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).
reader of Heidegger as well. But he did not share for instance the anti-Semitic flare with Eliot
and Heidegger. He rather considered his universe, even the cultural universe of his Ottoman
ancestors, closer to Jewish Kafka’s cultural universe.\textsuperscript{17} One could make the case that Tanpinar

\textsuperscript{17} It is interesting that of all of Tanpinar’s works, it is in The History of the Nineteenth Century Turkish
Literature, the untranslated Ondokuzuncu Asır Türk Edebiyati (Istanbul: Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, 2006
[1949], henceforth \textit{OAE}), that we encounter Heidegger, right after Kafka, both quite enlightening about
Tanpinar’s way of thinking. Heidegger is the German-writing German philosopher, referenced for taking
language to be the “house of thought” there, while Kafka is the German-writing Jew describing how the
German words for mother and father never have any true warmth for the Jew. (20-1) [The Kafka
reference to the journal entry of 24 October, 1911: “[...] Yesterday it occurred to me that I did not always
love my mother as she deserved and as I could, only because the German language prevented it. The
Jewish mother is no ‘Mother,’ to call her ‘Mother’ makes her a little comic (not to herself, because we are
in Germany), we give a Jewish woman the name of a German mother, but forget the contradiction that
sinks into the emotions so much the more heavily, ‘Mother’ is peculiarly German for the Jew, it
unconsciously contains, together with the Christian splendor Christian coldness also, the Jewish woman
who is called ‘Mother’ therefore becomes not only comic but strange. Mama would be a better name if
only one didn’t imagine ‘Mother’ behind it. I believe that it is only the memories of the ghetto that still
preserve the Jewish family, for the word ‘Vater’ too is far from meaning the Jewish father.”] Turkish
criticism has long been fixated on Tanpinar’s definition of what I translate as “duplicity” in this
dissertation (ikiilik), the usual understanding of this term relating to a paradox consisting of the Western
orientation in the writings of modern Ottoman revolutionaries (the late nineteenth century, “Tanzimat”
intellectuals) but one with an Oriental (“religious,” “traditional”) twist. Tanpinar does speak of such
duplicity in a later essay, for a reading of which see Nergis Erturk, \textit{Grammatology and Literary
has a different take on this matter. Tanpinar here thinks duplicity through Kafka the German-writing Jew,
and Heidegger, for whom language is the house of “thought.” This thinking, moreover, has nothing to do
with modern Turkey or modernity and Turks or Muslims; he references Kafka and Heidegger to explain
how the pre Modern Turkish Muslim writer was necessarily trilingual (thinking and writing in Turkish,
Arabic, and Farsi), which necessarily led to a division “of thought.” This presumably is also the reason
why this writer could not feel the warmth of his mother tongue. There is obviously a reason why
Tanpinar’s Heidegger speaks of language as the “house of thought” and not as the “house of being,” since
the latter, in Tanpinar’s own logic, would only suggest the non-Turkishness of the Turk before modern
Turkey, and along with this, the non-Jewishness of Kafka the German speaking writer, for instance.

Coming right after the Kafka reference that acknowledges the “warmth” of the real and undeniable
mother tongue, Tanpinar’s house of thought implies that it was because Turkish was not spoken as the
mother tongue in the Sublime State that the Turk, very much like the German-writing Jew, was caught in
duplicity in the middle of his own motherland. But so long as language was not the house of being but
that of “thought” alone, he was still the Turk or rather already the Turk, only perhaps duplicitous; very
much the way Kafka was Jewish because his mother was so. I will say more about these later. For the
time being, suffice to say that it is even more interesting that these references are right at the beginning, in
the “Introduction” of Tanpinar’s history. That introduction describes how and why Muslim writing could
not develop into literature in the modern sense and was doomed to remain poetic. It covers centuries of
writing in about fifty pages, and is quite a fascinating read especially alongside Jewish Auerbach’s
“Figura,” for instance, which covers a longer history in a rather more condensed fashion. The story
Tanpinar gives us there enables one to juxtapose Auerbach’s “figurality” of writing and its development
in the (Judeo-) Christian “tradition,” to another, Muslim (even Greco-Muslim) “tradition” of strictly
figurative writing, i.e. one that in its historicity was affected by nothing other than historicity itself,
shared with Heidegger the contempt for the social scientific vision, and *The Time Regulation Institute*, as we will see, could certainly be read in that direction. But the truth is that what brings him to Heidegger in that respect is nothing other than his recognition of the “insufficient means” of all sorts of interpretive, explicative schemes, including those of literature, which he thinks occupies a very idiosyncratic position with regard to such schemes. Despite their obvious differences when it comes to the nature of language (Bergson being skeptic and Heidegger enchanted) the two philosophers shared such contempt for the social scientific vision in practice, at least at the register of philosophical intuition according to which it was senseless to simply choose concepts and take sides in academic debates, to turn rationalist or idealist or empiricist for instance, while calling one’s activity thinking. This is where Tanpinar meets them.

*Writing and politics*

I have mentioned Tanpinar’s poetry, fiction, and criticism. But he is a writer of travelogues and political commentary, as well, and his mastery in deftly moving from one genre to another is evidenced no less by his journalism. One should consider his teaching, no doubt, teaching

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fiction and its history, and how these two relate to collective experience and identity in Turkey, only an extension of his humble, literary-scientific activism. Tanpınar the novelist, poet, and journalist was an academic and a historian, a literary historian whose *Nineteenth Century Turkish Literature* is the bible of Turkish literary criticism. He wrote this history after being appointed the chair of the newly established New Turkish Literature at Istanbul University in 1939, while Auerbach, accidentally, charged with founding the department of Romance philology, was writing his most famous works as an academic affiliated with the same institution.

By way of contrast, his colleague Auerbach, for instance, appears a bit too engulfed by his own discipline and genre of writing, in the doxology of his field, as Bourdieu has it, a bit too religiously literary and historicist. This is not only because Auerbach did not have many options as for non-academic cultural activity in his Istanbul exile during the war, but also because the kind of activity Tanpınar was involved in was either a thing of the past in those days or far ahead of Tanpınar’s time, while Auerbach was more of a man of his time. Tanpınar was a complete, perhaps even old school man of letters, yet sometimes appearing ahead of his time. He obviously did not write in the spirit of encyclopedists, as a Jack-of-all-trades, which is how the sociologist Serif Mardin translates *homme de lettres* when he uses the term to describe late nineteenth century Ottoman revolutionaries.20

But he was certainly not a literary scholar like Auerbach or a novelist like Pamuk would become. He was an intellectual, an Occidentalist münevver, literally enlightener. In that, his activism and literature was closer to Sartre’s, perhaps. However his “political politics,”

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immediately political activity was hardly oppositional. His art, by contrast, highly oppositional at another register, was hardly appreciated in his lifetime. But he was no Kafka, although he was a dedicated reader of Kafka as well. He actually became a member of the Turkish parliament at one point, but as a man of political politics he was quite the failure. He just did not have the sort of intellectual ability or desire to organize and mobilize, yet nor did he have the Kafkaesque or Auerbachian faith in or dedication to literature. He was quite humble when it came to speaking of his “art,” yet at least in spirit, he was more of an authoritative figure.

As an activist and a münevver he took himself to be blessed with a certain destiny that set him apart from the “crowd,” while, quite inexplicably, burning with a passion to melt with the crowd. Such ambivalence can be explained in sociological terms, of course, but Tanpınar has alternatives to offer.²¹

It is just that it appears as if Tanpınar was not always very happy about being set apart from the crowd either, as if he felt like his was not really a choice or the right choice. Or perhaps it was for him the only choice, and not necessarily a path to happiness or “joy of life.” In that he is pretty much like our contemporary Bourdieu, and Bourdieu’s work – embedded as it is, with its anti-intellectual tendencies, in the sociological tradition all the way from Comte to Durkheim – may perhaps provide one with a key to approach Tanpınar.²² Here is a typical Tanpınar social

²¹ Such ambivalence is one of the main themes of Bourdieu’s sociology of art, but for a commentary along the lines I will discuss Tanpınar in the following, see Pierre Bourdieu, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (London: Routledge, 1984), 228-230.

²² Bourdieu elaborates on his own brand of anti-philosophical mood in his late “philosophical” work Pascalian Meditations as follows: “I have never really felt justified in existing as an intellectual; and I have always tried – as I have tried again here – to exorcise everything in my thinking that might be linked to that status, such as philosophical intellectualism. I do not like the intellectual in myself, and what may sound, in my writing, like anti-intellectualism is chiefly directed against the intellectualism or intellectuality that remains in me, despite all my efforts, such as the difficulty, so typical of intellectuals, I have in accepting that my freedom has its limits.” (7) But this seems to have been the case already at the
scene in which all actors almost miraculously fit into an almost ready made grid, positions

The newcomers were so tired that I thought they would just fall asleep. However this is not what happened. The youngest of the women opened a fashionable novel and started reading it. The one with the child started a casual conversation with the common folk. She answered all questions at length, and once her responses came to an end she turned to someone else to start another conversation with a casual question. The one with the large black eyes, the darker skin, wiry, and truly beautiful third woman was already at work trying her eyes’ charms around. These looks had already made the anticipated effect on the travelers stupefied by the two day long train ride. The gendarme sergeant, standing his back against the corner of my seat, was already twisting his moustache. His overly male body invited the woman in a silent zone of magnetism. The bald and middle aged officer with the thick framed glasses stopped telling us the story of how he was suspended due to a malediction inflicted upon him by a trusted colleague, focusing instead on the woman with the child. Everyone immediately chose according to his or her positions and dispositions [imkan ve vaziyet]. It was as if the corresponding positions were by themselves assigning a certain organization, older age, baldness, and weariness of the body dictating a different sort of love, humility and less pickiness.  

Yet Tanpinar is much more brutal than Bourdieu when it comes to “exorcising” his own intellectualism, since he displays a more radical awareness of the fact that he is after all an intellectual and does most of what he does in writing. This is why he writes short stories and novels to begin with and not philosophical inquiries.

Tanpinar was a political failure, then, he failed in political politics and perhaps did not even care about it due to his artistic mission; yet he himself took his art, his activity of writing


23 I use Tanpinar, Bütün Öyküleri [“Complete Short Stories”] (Istanbul: YKY, 2003) [Henceforth BO] for my own translations from Tanpinar’s short stories.
with a grain of salt as well, i.e. not as a mission strictly speaking, and this despite the extraordinary body of work he produced.

He was a failed activist, and he knew that; he also thought, on the other hand, that there was no victory, perhaps not even a fight in writing to begin with. So if not Bourdieu alone, then the disagreements between Bourdieu and Rancière, on the distance between literature and politics, and writing and action, may give us a better context to discuss Tanpınar.24

Now Bourdieu, in his writing, constantly points to the distance between writing, action and reality, assigning himself the intellectual mission to debauch in writing all the irrational and non-scientific, philosophical or literary pretensions to close those gaps. Those pretensions are for the most part “religious” or quasi-religious games, or even worse illusions, hence outright madness for him, all serving in the end to the hand of the powers-that-be (“political politics,” which is simply war, and “economic economy,” or simply exploitation, in his terminology) in legitimizing oppression. All sorts of intellectual games, including literature, are caught in this paradox, i.e. completely idle in scholastic leisure while pretending to do something, thus only

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24 Bourdieu summarizes them by pointing to the fact that some simply continue responding to his own scientific, Durkheimian position by implicitly replicating Bergson’s conservative, quasi-mystical responses to Durkheim: “If ‘personalism’ is the main obstacle to the construction of a scientific vision of the human being and one of the focuses of past and present resistance to the imposition of such a vision, this is no doubt because it is a condensed form of all the theoretical postures – mentalism, spiritualism, individualism, etc. – of the most common spontaneous philosophy, at least in societies of Christian tradition and in the most favoured regions of those societies. It is also because it encounters the immediate complicity of all those who, being concerned to think of themselves as unique ‘creators’ of singularity, are always ready to strike up new variations on the old conservative themes of the open and the closed, conformism and anti-conformism, or unknowingly to reinvent the opposition, constructed by Bergson against Durkheim, between ‘orders dictated by impersonal social requirements’ and the ‘appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons’ – saints, geniuses and heroes.” (Pascalian Meditations, 132)
complicit with power and authority. They all come down to words and speech, to “cheap talk” in reality, there is no action in them.

This is the case so long as they are articulated with a blind faith in intellectual purity and the worth of words alone. Bourdieu himself offered to close certain gaps by writing about a universal corporatism of intellectuals that would bridge writing and acting, by creating a political body beyond the naive competitions of those delusional souls who get lost in their obviously provincial, “national” or religiously disciplinary or generic, artistic or humanistic lifeworlds. This would also take the intellectual closer to the reality of life and the people as opposed to the powers-that-be. It was a very difficult task because it would require for the men and women of letters to give up on faith in writing, in the purity of intellectual activity, yet to continue to write, perhaps to write with outright hypocrisy, but rightfully so or for the right cause (as Bourdieu himself took himself to be doing). Hypocrisy is inevitable for the writer-intellectual on all counts, but at least in Bourdieu’s way it could serve the right cause and action, as opposed to oppression and idleness.

Tanpinar would say Bourdieu too is a writer in the end. If Bourdieu is in search for the “limits” of his “freedom,” as he puts it, Tanpinar would ask if there is anything other than limits and limitations in writing.

So Bourdieu too writes, and wants to conquer life, “with insufficient means,” as it were.

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An expansive mysticism

Rancière responds to Bourdieu’s position by implicitly arguing us back to Bergson’s notion of “open society,”²⁶ pointing out that modern writing marks life by expanding the sensible world without limits, by continuously making certain things visible and others invisible (visible as in words in italics or bold, easily distinguishable from the rest). For Rancière, moreover, writing and attesting to the truth of writing in this fashion, i.e. living by books, believing in writing, letting books frame and/or hide things in life by taking books and scripts to be one’s guide, may be a madness like the madness of the madmen of God (or of Bergson’s “mystics”), which is where he meets Bourdieu. Yet for Rancière there is a difference between religion as such and the quasi-religion that is modern culture. The madmen of God attest to the truth of the Book by willfully suffering and hence bringing the truth of the Book to real life and in action (which produces the “human content of religion,”²⁷) while the madmen who are the modern intellectuals and their readers, following the very same pattern, attest to the truth of books in general.²⁸ This leads Rancière to the conclusion that writing and reading, thinking and interpreting, insistently working to bring reality to writing despite the obvious distance between the word and the thing, all of these that the modern men and women of letters (and their readers, of course) do are already acting and acting politically as well. In fact politics is all about this kind of activity for

²⁶ Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, particularly pp. 229-75 for this context.


Rancière, and the human is the political in this sense. Thus the human is something like the literary-political animal.²⁹

This disagreement on the distance between writing and acting, or this tension between “‘orders dictated by impersonal social requirements’ and the ‘appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons’ such as saints, geniuses and heroes,” originally between Durkheim and Bergson, never ceases to return according to Bourdieu. For him the tension is in fact between the “spontaneous” Christian philosophy of the mystic, sometimes replicated as philosophical nagging (like Rancière’s) while owing its power to the spontaneity in question, and the rational world view of the social sciences. Bourdieu of course was taking part in the incessant reproduction of this tension even with this explanation of his, siding with Durkheim against Bergson, which did not make him less of an intellectual.

Tanpinar does not really take sides, at least not religiously, and yet is caught in this tension, very much like his teacher Valéry. He is too humble, too anti-philosophical and too suspicious about (first his own) writing to take sides in this matter. Because he knows that, as a writer, he himself appears duplicitous.

In the same story quoted above (“A Train Ride”) he gives us a picture of two young actresses waiting at the train station under cold rain, which describes very well his take on the writer’s or the artist’s position as an individual among the people; on the distance between art and life, writing and politics, the mystic or idealist and the realist:

[T]hey were easily set apart from the crowd swamping the station. One could tell at first sight that they among all people were blessed with a very particular fortune. In their faces, in their hands, in the way they opened their mouths to talk, and in their

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silences, it was easy to see that they had lived wearing out, if not an ideal, at least a great hope, that they had found refuge in the ruins of something very pretty and bright, like hiding underneath a hole riddled umbrella. (BO, 253)

I will get back to this “hole riddled umbrella,” but let me give a bird eye’s view of the mental theatre at stake as for a summary of what I have said so far.

I did not mention all these great European men to show how Tanpinar prefigures some of them while others prefigure Tanpinar. In fact I am not the least interested in making sense of Tanpinar’s writing in this fashion. All these names may suggest confusion on Tanpinar’s part to a certain extent, and perhaps on my part to a larger extent. But that is not the case either. Most of these are his interlocutors. I added Bourdieu and Rancière, which is hardly an addition, as Bourdieu has just explained.

Bergson’s and Durkheim’s most decisive influences Tanpinar admits wholeheartedly, while also admitting that he read them only a little (which is quite a relative notion, no doubt). Valéry is for him a teacher. Auerbach, on the other hand, is hard to dismiss in this setting, at least retrospectively.30 The rest of the names I mentioned, Tanpinar references here and there and sometimes in the most surprising contexts. He hardly addresses the works of his European thinkers in a critical way. He is more of an audience member in the great global theatre of modern writing and literature. And he sometimes complains about this too, for instance in his

30 Although we do not have evidence of their interaction it is hard to believe that Francophone and Francophile Tanpinar would be uninterested in Auerbach’s foundation of Romance philology at Istanbul University. In fact, as we will see, one can read his work as a response to Auerbach’s histories and historical thinking.
diaries he writes, “Turkey, you have devoured me,” suggesting he would have done better somewhere else writing in another language. (GI, 321)

He does not respond to any of his interlocutors, that is to say, unless of course one takes his novels and short stories, perhaps his style in general as well, as real and political responses, or at least as explosive responses which could not take any other form of expression in real life. Thus still somewhat “silent” (to develop Tanpinar’s own terminology that I will address shortly).

He is not loud and clear, neither in his dealings with his interlocutors nor in his immediately political activity, unlike for instance Bourdieu’s Zola screaming across the pages of newspapers “J’accuse!” So perhaps he is not political enough, not on the side of action as Nietzsche, or alternatively Bourdieu understood it. Unless, that is, one thinks of his literature as strictly political in a different way, the way Rancière takes literature to be political qua literature; or his writing at large indifferently political in the same vain, indifferent as to whether what he has to say can make a difference or not. Thus, perhaps, “silently” political. In this sense he is both a man of letters and a man of politics as an artist. Yet he does not silently affirm literature or celebrate writing, or put aside the reality of his sad distance from life as Rancière and his novelists do.

Tanpinar the realist clearly takes himself to be a shareholder in an international corporation whose truth Bourdieu emphasizes, he takes himself to be an accomplice like Bourdieu would. In that respect, his silent resentment, his belief that Turkey devoured him could

31 Tanpinar’s diaries were recently published under the title Günlüklerin Işığında Tanpinar’la Başbaşa [One-on-one with Tanpinar in light of his diaries] (Istanbul: Dergah, 2008). Henceforth GI.

be explained additionally by his literary “destitution,” for instance, as Casanova has it, by his peripheral position in the world republic of letters. But he comes up with other explanations himself. We will see what he says directly about his silence and his sadness. But to understand their literary and political, or literary political implications, one must look at for instance *The Time Regulation Institute* as possibly an explosion. Or better still as an explosive response, perhaps, and one that we should try to detonate to see its full potential, which is what I seek to do in the following. This novel both says something, something like the truth about its time and place, and silently does something, something like politics. In fact Tanpinar has a great deal to teach us, with his critical investment in all genres of modern writing and in his reluctant and resentful involvement with the corporation of intellectuals, about the difference between Bergson and Durkheim, or about the disagreement between Bourdieu and Rancière, on the one hand, and on the other about the distance between writing and reality, literature and politics. But let us continue with our background check for now.

*A realist morality*

The activity of writing Tanpinar was invested in *critically* is the one that brings together, and already in his own writing, the humanistic, novelistic and social scientific positions and sets them apart from life, from reality, and from “the people.”

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There are many ways of accounting for this particular positionality, of course, but for our purposes we can simply remember two of them, one humanistic the other social scientific. For Auerbach the invention of this positionality corresponds to the Christian providential moment of relegating the intelligibility of the world to a background in a vertical relationship to the mundane historicity, to life in its ultimate simplicity. Writing in the modern sense finds its model in the gospels in this manner in Auerbach. The “literary gaze” in this narrative is the one that turns to life in common, to the people. By contrast, the classical writer had fixated his gaze on the glorious ideals of the privileged few among the people and their glorious acts or failures, in epics and tragedies, taking the life in its simplicity to be a subject of mockery; nothing serious, only a comedy. This was because the pagan world lacked the kind of intelligibility and the means of meaning making introduced by the providential vision within which all things and events and persons are equal in the face of God’s glory. The thing is both positions require “distancing,” the writer as onlooker is detached in both accounts in the act of looking as opposed to doing. One of them is distant fantasizing, for Auerbach, the other looking for a relationship to reality, a distant proximity of sorts (Rancière picks up on this contradiction in “Theologies of the Novel” and elsewhere). Bourdieu, in a surprisingly similar fashion, explains this kind of distancing and distant vision above all with skholé that dates back to times immemorial (he will speak of “Greek philosophy” as its genesis): “the situation of skholé, the time, freed from the urgencies of the world, that allows a free and liberated relation to those urgencies and to the world.” (Pascalian Meditations, 1) Bourdieu of course seeks to critically engage with this matter,

not to celebrate its historical evolution like Auerbach. Auerbach’s response would have been that it is true that the distancing in question is a preliminary requirement, but there is a fundamental difference between the Christian distance and the pagan distance in that respect. Christian distance seeks to render meaningful the reality of all life down to its ultimate, mundane simplicity (hence is far more pervasive, we can add, although for Auerbach this is a good thing) while the pagan distance already disregards the reality of life, fixated as it was on the fantasy glory of the few living at the expense of the great majority of the living. So both Auerbach and Bourdieu would emphasize the distance of writing, i.e. the common positionality, from our contemporary point of view, of the humanistic, novelistic and for instance the social scientific positions of writers. Henceforth I will refer to the literary and the scholastic, or in short the “literary-scholastic” vision in this sense.

Tanpınar’s perspective can be read a variation on this theme. His poetry seeks to overcome his short stories and novels in this context, which in turn mock his history etc. in an endless chain or continuum. He runs from one wall to the other, only to fall back on writing at every attempt. This is not very different from what Bourdieu, after Pascal, took to be the rationalist ideal of never ending auto-critique, which is how Tanpınar reads Valéry on all counts.³⁵

³⁵ For the clearest exposition of this ideal see the chapter “The Historicity of Reason,” in Pascalian Meditations, 93-127. For Tanpınar Valéry’s skepticism, his infinite power for auto-critique, first leads to the “great silence” of the writer, after which comes a return to language and speech, the ability to say the right thing at the right time. “Paul Valéry” also describes how although this saying may consist of personal and emotional explosions from time to time, this does not change, for Tanpınar, the sacredness of Valéry’s endless search for a non-personal, “objective” position in writing. Since one cannot simply assume that such a position is possible to begin with, and since one cannot write as if one can “explain” anything, let alone the truth of life in this world, from this position on all counts, the only thing left for the actor-writer is to endlessly write, to endlessly speak. This is the difference between Bourdieu’s activism and that of Valéry, by the way. Bourdieu thinks he can still explain things.
Tanpinar writes with the awareness of the overall perspective or vision, of a common position that enables all sorts of writing in the modern, Western sense, on the one hand, and on the other with the awareness of the way in which this vision, despite being after all a particular and historical vision, both displays a claim to universality and expands globally. And it expands almost invisibly, like ivy that covers everywhere without one knowing it. The last stanza of his tomb poem, quoted before for its Bergsonism, may now be quoted for its historical rationalism:

The world has become ivy
I feel, its roots are inside me,
A blue, utterly blue light
I am swimming in it

There is a sense of historicity, artificiality and worldliness in these lines, in this blue world that almost naturally grows, in this world that just emerges by itself, as if out of the blue. Yet this world, despite everything else, has its roots in one’s own self. If we were to explain Tanpinar’s position in terms more familiar to our present, we would have to say that he is on the side of “historical reason,” he is a rational scholar and a rationalist literary visionary who subscribes to the historicity of reason, or how “Reason is a product of history that has to be incessantly reproduced through historical action aimed at guaranteeing the social conditions for the possibility of rational thinking.”

One needs to water this ivy for it to grow. The nutrition comes from oneself, but then the ivy covers everywhere without one knowing it.

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36 My translation. Original Turkish reads: Kökü bende bir sarımsık/Olmuş dünya sezmekteyim,/Mavi, masmavi bir ışık/Ortasında yüzmekteyim.

37 Bourdieu, “Fourth Lecture. Universal Corporatism,” 661. But then Bourdieu too is a reader of Heidegger, whom he cares to despise as too philosophical and literary at times, while Heidegger’s Nietzschean understanding of the “poeticity of reason” comes very close to what Bourdieu has to say about the “historicity” of reason. See Martin Heidegger, “The Poetizing Essence of Reason.” The thing is for Heidegger making rational history in this manner is exclusively and artificially linguistic, i.e. it is a
Tanpinar explains this circle of production and reproduction through continuous “humanistic etudes” inspiring a certain collective “realist discipline” (“terbiye”). He uses the word *terbiye* consistently in his history. Here is example of how he explains the reason why the “old prose” of the Muslim world (an almost inexistent thing, even negligible in the Muslim cultural universe since Muslim “poetry” always surpassed in quality and quantity the Muslim prose) could not turn literary in the modern sense, stuck as it was to the almost poetic intransitivity of “verbal arts” (to the “form” and the figures of speech):

No doubt one of the important reasons for the obsession with the verbal arts overwhelming the old prose was that it was deprived of the *terbiye* [manners, habit of mind or discipline] that plastic arts and painting had enabled in other languages, paving the way to the possibility of a clear vision. [...] In a literature [or a “regime” of writing, perhaps], and particularly a prose tradition that had never settled accounts with the line, the image or the sculpture, or simply the volume and the color; in a writing that had never before tested in these the order [“nizam”: also system, or regime] of attesting to the real and the accompanying notion of proportion [“nisbet”: also relativity, ratio], hence deprived of their *terbiye* of isolation [“tecrî”: also abstraction], the contact with the thing and the external world would obviously remain very superficial. (*OAE*, 46)

The absence of this discipline, he explains in his history, was what had crippled the Muslim way of writing in advance, making it impossible for Muslim writing to turn literary in the modern sense, to evolve into novelistic heights for instance.

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poetic making, or a mystically realist endeavor in Bergson’s or Rancière’s sense (although, as explained above, Bergson takes himself to be speaking and writing in a language that is not the common tongue but an alternative language that speaks images and duration). It looks like for Bourdieu there is nothing poetic about this making, nothing specifically literary or linguistic or mystical either, since it has to do with taking real, almost bureaucratic measures, with regards to educational institutions for instance. But both Heidegger and Rancière emphasize the reality, the historicity of those non-real, non-tangible things that they take to be poetry or properly literature. Heidegger and Rancière too are concerned with “real” things, that is, and it is reality that defines their understanding of the literary. We can understand this type of reality by relating it to Feuerbach’s concern about the “human content” of religion. Just as faith has and can be made to have real consequences, desirable or not-that-desirable in real life, poetry and literature have real consequences, for instance when they are taught in schools to the masses and when people begin to live by books (as opposed to the Book). So what we have here is the same line of thought, but a simple disagreement on terms.
This absence disables the kind of psychological and sociological depth in writing, in discourse that engages life that is, but more importantly due to the absence of such depth, such “interiority,” such “morality” in life itself. “But prose,” he says, “is only a means, and it only evolves in man and accompanies him.” (45) And later, “for the constitution of prose in Turkish, the people and the societal institutions had to change, along with the educational system that had to turn to Turkish language.” (46)

Quite reasonably, without the necessary social conditions and without such depth in life, rationalist positions and discourses, and along with them literature – salons and societies, but also the humanities and the social sciences, i.e. all the cultural institutions of the European enlightenment – become irrelevant socially and politically, according to Tanpinar. The “historicity” of reason that Bourdieu must underline in his day and age was obviously a self-evident matter from the perspective of Tanpinar, who in his lifetime witnessed a radical modernist program in Turkey, which must have made the contours of the contingent reason clearly visible for him.

In his history, first comes the production of conditions for rational thinking, for a realist morality, with Tanzimat declaration (1839) to be precise, a perfectly arbitrary source of law in full contrast with “custom.” It is the law and its legal push toward an overall institutional transformation that enable such conditions and morality. And then comes writing and literature, the literary-scholasticism of the moderns, or at least its first stages of development with great difficulties, which is the overall topic of Tanpinar’s Nineteenth Century Turkish Literature. Elsewhere he juxtaposes what he deems an “idealist” account of “our failure in literature” with a
“determinist” one. His idealists argue that the Turkish men of letters do not know their society nor do they show interest in learning about it. Tanpınar proves this position to be faulty. He accepts that there is a great deal of simply copying Western examples in modern Turkish letters, yet he also thinks that this issue should not be exaggerated, since all art forms travel from culture to culture and tradition to tradition. His determinists argue that the Turkish letters fail because “our communal life” is not fit for an aesthetic regime of writing, for a genre such as the novel. Tanpınar agrees with this judgment as well, but proves it to be faulty with the following argument: “Our life is narrow, it is intricate. This said, in the final analysis it is and we are living it, we love and hate, suffer and die. Is this not enough for the novelist?” (37) Both positions being faulty, Tanpınar uses elimination to identify the one and only observation that remains valid: the observation that “we failed.” He suggests searching for the “communal” material for the novel not “among the people” but in one’s own personality, in the singular that is always already plural. Here the argument is that “our life” has already transformed into one fit for novels, it is just that “our writers,” fixated on watching the people from a distance, fail to turn to themselves to see what has become of our being-in-common. Tanpınar attempts to do precisely this, to turn to himself to view this cultural universe in The Time Regulation Institute.

Nineteenth century Turkish literature is a beginning, accordingly, hardly literary due to the difficulties of such transition. These initial difficulties were related to the questions relating to the source of law, to the arbitrariness of the law enabling the social conditions for rational thinking.

The enabling of these conditions was primarily an educational business, and at the beginning Western style education was extended only to a few due to most reasonable, material issues of feasibility. The arbitrary violence of the Tanzimat declaration, while producing for them the conditions for rational thought, causes immense troubles for this initiated minority, i.e. the first modern writers of the Muslim world. Because these writers were torn in between rational thought and the realities of the life in common. They were inculcated with the realist morality, yet life on the streets of Istanbul had nothing to correspond to this way of looking at words and things, distant from it in every respect. There was some other way of reasoning, some other way of saying and being out there in the real world.

This is the reason why the first generation of revolutionary intellectuals even chose to resist the law and the rational thinking it enabled. One of the main objections of the conservative, yet perfectly rational Young Ottoman writing to Tanzimat’s promise of rights and equality is exemplary in that respect.

Young Ottomans pointed out that the bureaucrats of 1839, and even the child sultan whom they had duped into signing the firman and promising rights and equality, must have thought that until then Ottomans had been slaves without any rights whatsoever. But this was madness according to Young Ottomans. Muslims were not slaves, nor had they lived like slaves until a declaration was read in a palace garden at the pleasure of a child sultan and his guests:

If the purpose [of the Tanzimat declaration of equal rights] is to imply that up to this day the people in the Sublime State were the slaves of the sultan, who, out of the goodness of his heart, confirmed their liberty, this is something to which we can never agree, because, according to our beliefs, the rights of the people, just like divine justice, are immutable.39

39 Namik Kemal, “al Hakk Ya’lu wa-la Yu’la ‘alayhi,” Hüriyet, June 29, 1868, 3 (translation by Mardin [slightly modified] from The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought, 119). Mardin elaborates at length on
In fact the *Quran* was the source of law before which all persons were already equal, and this source was better than Tanzimat *firman* in its non-arbitrary and extra-historical stature. Moreover this ancient source as a binding force was real, not something on paper; it was already on the streets of Istanbul. It was more democratic and even parliamentary than the *firman*, which is what Namik Kemal, Ziya Pasha, and Ali Suavi (the Young Ottoman triumvirate)\(^40\) could not stop explaining by turning to the Book itself and the *hadith*, but also to the streets of Istanbul.\(^41\) They developed political concepts such as *biat* (*bai’ā*) and *meshveret* working on the textual sources of *sharia*, arguing through *biat* (originally the “election” of the caliph by the community of Muslims) for the parliamentarism of Islam and in Muslim history, or through *meshveret* the Islamic sources of a politics of consensus.

These revolutionaries then were involved in an endeavor to unveil the arbitrary source of law, in the same way our contemporaries cannot stop doing. They thought they could find a solution to this arbitrariness, to the arbitrariness at the source of their own thought and its social conditions of possibility, by turning or returning to their “religion,” in a way similar to Rawls,

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\(^40\) In addition to Mardin’s *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, see Nazan Cicek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York and London: Tauris, 2010), and particularly pp. 24-49 for the triumvirate.

\(^41\) See Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, and particularly “The Islamic Intellectual Heritage of the Young Ottomans,” pp. 81-106. Cicek gives a more detailed political context for the setting within which such concepts emerged in *The Young Ottomans*, 109-167.
for instance, turning to the “origin myth” of the democratic religion,\footnote{Now in fact their intellectual position is not at all inaccessible to us, as Mardin seems to suggest in his Genesis. It is similar to – perhaps simply a reversal of – the one we know very well today, for instance through John Rawls’s theory of justice, which is dedicated precisely to the origin myth of “the democratic religion,” as Bourdieu has it. See A Theory of Justice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). Bourdieu in his Pascalian Meditations shows that this kind of “rationalism” that denies the “historicity” of reason is one and the same thing as “religion.”} making out of writing and their “religion” something that neither of these was ever meant to be.

Thus, if we give ear to Tanpinar, the conservative-revolutionary Tanzimat thought and writing, which even produced novels, were only quasi-literary, only a mixture, a mixed writing and a blurry sight, or a “new writing” that was at the same time reactionary and literarily poor, diluted, characterized by a fundamental paradox or “duplicity.”

Now this is the first trend of thought in his writing. By the time Tanpinar writes toward mid-twentieth century, the social conditions enabling rational thought had been equally rationed among the members of his society through the immense project of Turkish modernity. But this leads to another line of thought in Tanpinar’s work.

The first trend of thought relies on a rationalism invested in the historicity of reason, hence in an incessant auto-critique that also reproduces the social conditions for the possibility of such rational thinking and skepticism, which Tanpinar thinks the Tanzimat intellectuals could not take to its rational conclusions. The second trend in Tanpinar’s writing, however, relates to a crisis of reason and its historicity. The first trend distances him from Tanzimat writers, makes him despise them even; the second trend, however, pushes him in the exact opposite direction. It is as if for Tanpinar, at least sometimes, the moment of writing is the moment of an unpleasant
awaking on the hard yet insecure ground of reason, as in opening one’s eyes having fallen off the bed into real and historical time.

Now he knows that his writing, his rational thinking and activism, is the product of an incessant reproduction and dissemination of certain social conditions. But he also knows that he himself takes part in this reproductive logic whatever he writes, which was what the Young Ottomans did not know, hence naively thought they could write back to resist, turn or return to their religion in their rational writing.

Yet modern writing, the literary-scholastic position of the modern writer, has something about it that covers everything, like ivy covering up everywhere before one knows it. And someone waters this ivy obviously. Young Ottomans and their followers did not know that making out of Islam a democratic religion, and later even a positivism (which is what Ahmet Rıza, one of the first leaders of CUP argued: Islam is positivism), and this simply because they could not observe any conflict between Islam, democracy, or positivism, was doing something to Islam, or writing on Islam as if it were an empty page. Or that they were writing Islam as a religion. They thought they were returning to Islam, but in their revolutionary mindset they were retreating toward the future, distancing themselves from Islam they still had within their vision. Facing the good old Islam while “traversing à reculons,” as Valéry puts it, they just managed to distance themselves from Islam, while the insistence to keep eyes fixated on Islam also produced an unnecessary resistance to face their historical situation, very much like Benjamin’s angel’s hopeless resistance.

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So the rational skepticism Young Ottomans practiced, the one that pointed to the arbitrary source of law, was not skeptic enough to turn truly rationalist, yet was caught in the skeptical mood, which is to say it was not “religious” (or rather Muslim) either. It is as if to say resistance would be fine if one could both engage in writing in the modern sense (with its qibla in Paris, as Gibb says) and do such a thing. But one could not. The resistance writing Young Ottoman revolutionaries practiced was only traversing à reculons, “advancing” in the wrong direction (according to their own trajectory).

Tanpınar subscribes to the historicity of reason, very much like our contemporary Bourdieu. He is not like Rawls, for instance, not religiously rationalist, nor is he a conservative revolutionary like the Young Ottomans. But what is more interesting is that Tanpınar sees no reason whatsoever to celebrate or affirm this history of the “historical reason” in the Bourdieusian key either. The arbitrariness at stake does not provide one with any alternatives, not even an alternative arbitrariness. The problem is that one cannot wake up one fine morning and give up reproducing its reproductive logic, that is for sure, which in this setting is a tragedy that gives Tanpınar a sense of imprisonment, a self-imprisonment moreover; a choice but a sad, inescapably sad and wrong choice.

45 The British Ottomanist Elias John Wilkinson Gibb, a friend of the Young Ottomans, who also put together the first anthology of Ottoman literature in English at the turn of the century, is the one who uses the term qibla when he discusses the emergence of literature qua literature in the Ottoman Empire, suggesting that it meant for the Turk to turn from one qibla to another. See E.J.W. Gibb, “Review of A Turkish-English Lexicon by J.W Redhouse,” The Academy 27:672 (March 21, 1885), 209.

46 Now one can combine, as Agamben does, Valéry’s angel’s (since that too is an “angel of history”) views with Enzo Melandri’s “Dionysian” angel. Tanpınar himself is very much interested in Dionysius, but in the context of his discussion of the way “wine” figures in the exclusively poetic Muslim literary tradition. I will discuss Ziya Pasha and his “tavern,” an important topic for Tanpınar as well, at length later, but suffice it to say that according to this Greco-Islamic tradition, the only way to undo the distance between life and writing, which is the sole objective of the writer-poet, is to write in a state of pure
This uneasiness causes great trouble for Tanpinar. His short stories typically depict impossible moments of awakening from this most rational dream. “A Path,” (BO, 81-88) for instance, describes how one fine evening a middle aged man, in the midst of his middle class comfort with his family (and while “reading”), finds himself disturbed by an inexplicable truth, throwing himself to the streets, finding himself face to face with the truth of life among the humble in a coffee house.

That night teaches the narrator how human faces can be meaningful, although he never explains what that truth or meaningful truth or truthful meaning is.

ecstasy, in the wretched drunkenness of the wine. Words of this poetry are like wine itself as pure imagery and rhythm. Neither overburdened by meaning, nor elegiac or celebratory like the common prayer, these words only unburden the poet and his/her readers of the gaze that separates one from life, enabling a simple and nondescript experience of being in this world (and being the way God intended us to be, i.e. to simply be, and let others be; Tanpinar will ask the same thing in The Time Regulation Institute from all sorts of scholars; he will ask them to let him be). See Tanpinar, OAE, 25. Now as for Melandri, unlike Valéry’s angel that traverses the future backwards, Melandri’s Dionysian angel traverses the “past” backwards. See Enzo Melandri, La linea e il circolo: Studio logico-filosofico sull’analogia (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2004): “To take up a very well-known expression of Nietzsche’s, which has nevertheless not yet been understood (and if what we are saying is true, then it is also true that it will unfortunately never be possible to understand it entirely), we may say at this point that archaeology requires a ‘Dionysian’ regression. As Valéry observes, nous entrans dans l’avenir à reculons [...] To understand the past, we should equally traverse it à reculons.” (67) Perhaps one can think of Tanpinar’s position as the one Agamben describes by combining Melandri’s angel’s view with Valéry’s angel’s view in The Signature of All Things: On Method, trans. Luca d’Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009): “The image of a procession in time that turns its back on the goal is, of course, found as well in Benjamin, who must have been familiar with Valéry’s citation. In the ninth thesis, the angel of history, whose wings are caught in the storm of progress, advances toward the future à reculons. Melandri’s ‘Dionysian’ regression is the inverse and supplementary image of Benjamin’s angel. If the latter advances toward the future with a gaze fixed on the past, Melandri’s angel regresses into the past while looking at the future. Both proceed toward something that they can neither see nor know. The invisible goal of these two images of the historical process is the present. It appears at the point where their gazes encounter each other, when a future reached in the past and a past reached in the future for an instant coincide.” (99) Now one could of course remember, despite Agamben’s equation of Benjamin’s angel to Valéry’s angel, that Benjamin’s angel faces ruins, nothing meaningful, not a “story” but pile upon pile of destruction. So perhaps Benjamin had already put these together. Valéry’s “history” is closer to Ottoman revolutionary gaze surveying the past Muslim glory, while Tanpinar’s gaze, like Benjamin’s but also Agamben’s, is fixated on the “present” in the collusion of two trajectories. The thing is, once again, both Tanpinar and Benjamin would describe this collusion as not having anything to show, nothing meaningful. In Agamben it seems to transform into an alternative vision.
This awaking our narrator equates with another experience. During a train ride (again on a rainy day) he sees a path, which he assumes leads to yet another nondescript Anatolian village. He knows that if he takes that path (clearly a Heidegger-weg, clear on a cloudy day) all his troubles will be resolved, he will find peace on the security of the earth, facing finally the real life the real people lead in the daily routine of the real world, i.e. the country.

But he also knows that this is an impossibility, that he can never stop the train:

Yes, I knew very well that if one day I gave up on everything else and took that path, at the end of it I would find all the happiness, all the desires of my heart fulfilled, all the weary dreams I have lived through become real, myself turning clean and fresh and happy. I knew this, but I also knew that I could never do this. Yet a life is something worth living. (BO, 88)

He cannot jump off the moving train. Besides, there is nothing at the end of that path other than death, nothing that is in fact meaningful, since the temptation of meaning in question is possible only on the train, only in accordance (in “contrast”) with the strict railroad schedules and his rationally organized urban life. The meaning of the path here is a “hole” made in his time and place (a strange expression Tanpınar invents in The Time Regulation Institute that we will encounter later), in the urban and industrial time, only a break from the overly meaningful life one leads according to the industrial schedules of the highly rational, urban world. The consciousness of the “historicity” of reason, which, as explained, is clear for Tanpınar, is similar to the clear vision of this path from a passing train.

The path is tempting precisely because it is meaningless, perfectly anonymous from that perspective. It is in fact death, yet (“let’s be real”) life is worth living. Minimally, there is a difference between living an anonymous life and looking at the path leading to it from a passing train. Its sense or senselessness, its anonymity, is simply not containable in the rational world and its writing, that is for sure, which is the only writing Tanpınar knows and practices, perhaps
with the exception of his poetry (and like Valéry Tanpınar did not write much poetry despite his
fame as primarily a poet).

Now of course one can argue that modernist literature, in a lineage of radicals one can
trace from Hugo von Hofmannsthal all the way to Tanpınar’s contemporary Maurice Blanchot,
with its articulation of those never ending crises (among them the crisis of language), stages
similar tensions. But Tanpınar’s “resistance” to writing does not resemble Hofmannsthal’s, the
one Hofmannsthal formulates in his letter. Nor are Tanpınar’s characters similar to Lord
Chandos who actually buys into moments quite similar to the enigmatic moments of “A Path”
and embraces them as moments of worldly or “creaturely” (hence “real”) revelation. For
Chandos, if these moments do not constitute a final resolution, they are at least its promise, a
promise of reality in writing and of a meaningful life in the world. Tanpınar is not a
“conservative revolutionary.” He knows that such revelation, such vision in fact simply
designates an impossibility. Nor is Tanpınar like Blanchot, who, despite his enthusiasm to test
writing and literature at every turn, was also devoted in advance to affirm writing and literature
whatever the test result (if we are to accept Derrida’s assessment of Blanchot’s work).

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47 For a canonical study of the “epoch-making reflections on language” extending from Hofmannsthal to
Karl Kraus and Ludwig Wittgenstein, see Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Wittgenstein’s Vienna (New
York: Touchstone, 1973). It is possible to extent this “epoch” to Blanchot, which is what Derrida did.

48 Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Chandos Letter and Other Writings, trans. Joel Rotenberg (New York: New
York Review Books, 2005), originally in Der Tag in October 1902 [Hofmannsthal, Gesammelte Werke,
trans. Lydia Davis (New York: Station Hill, 1985), was first published in Empédocle (2 May 1949) under
the title “Un récit?” Derrida’s by now canonical reading of it in “The Law of Genre,” in Glyph 7 (Spring
1980), shows how Blanchot, while resisting storytelling, manages to affirm storytelling, despite the
ultimate protest as well: “A story? No. No stories, never again.” One could easily render this conclusion
“Literature? No. No literature, never again,” in which case Blanchot would appear as a literary figure
who, despite his resistance to narratives in favor of the real thing, describes an inevitability concerning
writing, very much like Hofmannsthal, although Derrida is not intent on doing anything like this.
Silently writing

This particular unease, this particular anxiety about the historicity of an immense yet almost invisible expansion, is what enables and inspires Tanpinar in the novel *The Time Regulation Institute* to articulate further the implications of the historical reality of a total, literary-scholastic vision.

Unlike his previous work to read literature through more “objective” doxologies (sociologically, historically etc), he will turn the tables in this novel, in the very same spirit that had enabled Bergson to dismiss the differences between idealist, rationalist, and empiricist visions. Tanpinar will not care anymore about the social and economic conditions and dimensions shaping literary activity and fiction. This time Tanpinar will account for criticism, humanistic and social scientific criticism and history from the point of view of fiction, that is from a novelistic point of view, which is to say literarily, from the point of view of specifically literary writing, which for him seems to be the zero degree of his literary and scholastic, rationalist writing.

Unfortunately, and certainly in extremely beautiful ways, Derrida shows how Blanchot draws an image, that of an eye, with his words that tell a story about blindness. This image, moreover, supposedly drawn with words, supposedly enables the storyteller and along with him us the readers to see, and even despite real blindness, “in a blink of an eye,” as it were. Derrida shows this image as well in that essay. Needless to say, it takes a huge leap of faith to think that Lord Chandos’ revelations have anything whatsoever to do with that which is beyond language, with something like the real thing, just as it is pretty much impossible to take Derrida’s “vision” of Blanchot’s novella seriously as offering anything other than some exceptional thoughts about the unavoidable institutionality, or the “closedness,” as Bergson has it, of literary activity. This is to say the way of “opening” one’s eyes to blindness as Derrida has it does not have to happen, and actually, to be commonsensical about matters, cannot happen in writing. Needless to say, nor such blindness or “vision” *must* be taken as an ideal.
This “zero,” as we will see shortly, suggests a quantity both smaller and larger than Hofmannsthal’s or Kafka’s, Scholem’s and perhaps even Benjamin’s “zero” in the “zero degree of meaning.”\(^{49}\) The Time Regulation Institute is a funny, sarcastic even, yet tragic and ultimately suspicious, all in all questioning, tragicomic take on the totality of the activity of modern writing, on modern literature and scholasticism. It is an allegory of writing at large, a culmination of the attitude I have depicted, an allegorizing paradoxically possible only literarily, only at the register of purest writing, at the “zero degree of writing.” In that one can easily mistake this attitude with one that was developed within the modernist tradition. One can locate it within that tradition, as I have indicated, but what is more interesting is that it is at the same time outside this tradition or at least it seeks to step out, as in jumping off a moving train, and in that sense perhaps a little suicidal too.

\(^{49}\) The expression Nichts der Offenbarung or “revelations” at the “zero degree of meaning,” as Scholem formulates it, is quite helpful indeed to understand not only Kafka, but also Hofmannsthal and even Blanchot. This is still an attempt to rescue a meaningfully real content beyond writing in writing. Tanpinar’s fiction, and particularly The Time Regulation Institute, opposes this position with a “zero degree of writing.” There is meaning here. Because the fact is that it is meaningless and pointless to write as if one can write meaninglessly (as Kafka is supposed to have done according to Scholem). Rancière makes this point clear over and over again by describing a fundamental paradox in modern literature (see The Politics of Literature, for instance). It is just that meaning, even its zero degree, i.e. the meaninglessly enchanted worlds of Hofmannsthal, Kafka, or Blanchot, would appear as a problem from Tanpinar’s point of view. Rancière thinks this “paradox” is a productive one. I do not see, and I believe nor would Tanpinar, what is so productive about it. Why not take it to be destructive instead? See Scholem’s letter to Walter Benjamin for Nichts der Offenbarung of September 20, 1934 in The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem, 1932-1940, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevre (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 142. Benjamin, again, is an exception here, since for him to assume a zero degree of meaning, where there is nothing meaningful but the sheer force of the potentiality of meaning, is problematic in that it amounts to “overturning of the Nothing”: “Whether the students have lost Scripture or cannot decipher it in the end amounts to the same thing, since a Scripture without its keys is not scripture but life, the life that is lived in the village at the foot of the hill on which the castle stands. In the attempt to transform life into Scripture I see the sense of the ‘inversion’ toward which many of Kafka’s allegories seem to tend.” (180) For a discussion of these passages and the thought of a “zero degree of meaning” as it relates to law, literature and religion, see Agamben, Potentialities, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), particularly “The Messiah and the Sovereign: The Problem of Law in Walter Benjamin,” 160-75.
But there are other potential misunderstandings one should address before we finally turn to the novel. One could go beyond the modernist paradigm and think, like Rancière does, a modern “aesthetic regime of art,” one that struggles to break with the “representational” regime of art, and contextualize Tanpinar’s work in that setting. For instance, one could easily draw parallels between the tragic stupidity of Bouvard and Pecuchet and the sad indifference of Irdal, the main character of The Time Regulation Institute. But Tanpinar’s is not a “naive” literary investment like Flaubert’s, there is no affirming literature or aesthetics in Tanpinar.

This novel was written by a “scholar,” by an “intellectual” who does not necessarily consider the specifically literary, or novelistic point of view, which is only one among many of his points of view, as somewhat privileged over the others. Provisionally, we can say that for him the scholar’s tragedy is the tragedy of literature or these two tragedies are in fact one or at

50 For Rancière, literature in the modern sense, also modern art and thought in general, is an attempt to break away from the “representational” regime of linguistic and otherwise interaction. Going beyond simply representing, this “aesthetic regime” does things in life, the way I described above when explaining the disagreement between Bourdieu and Rancière. Accordingly, literature qua literature, writing itself as action, has a history of accomplishments that are not easily perceivable historically, history being available thanks to this mode of writing to begin with. This is to say the “aesthetics” Rancière has in mind does what it does silently. For instance, Rancière is in full agreement with Auerbach when the latter emphasizes the difference between the gospels and classical literature, the former having changed the rules of the representational game by engaging the petty lives of the simple but as a serious matter, something that could not be possible within the generic petrification of classical literature that only took seriously the acts of nobility, allocating a space for the humble only in comedy. Rancière’s criticism of Auerbach concerns Auerbach’s thinking that taking the humble seriously has something to do with “reality,” i.e. something out there as given and not made. For Rancière, the gospels become a model for modern literature only when one considers them a proof of the power of writing and writing alone. See The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).
least of the same fabric and texture. Literature may be the “exit” in this context from a particular house of being, but then who can argue that the door does not belong to the house?

The way Tanpinar explains the difference between his poetry and fiction may help understand his position better. For him the basis of his art, (“if one can speak of such a thing,” he adds) is poetry, which is a way of remaining silent. He says his prose narrates the things that he keeps silent, while his poetry is simply silent. His novels and short stories speak those silences. He does not mention his history here, but one can presume that it too would have something to do with silence. Perhaps it was a way of articulating silence. On all counts, Tanpinar, despite thousands of pages he wrote in his lifetime, considers himself in truth silent.

*The Time Regulation Institute* will articulate for us the silence, the senselessness and the pointlessness of literature, but also the silence of the humanities and the social sciences alike when they account for literature or for each other, or for life itself for that matter, not only the

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51 For the “scholar’s tragedy,” see for instance Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks*, trans. Michael Metter and Chris Cullens (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 3-24. In Kittler too, the scholar’s tragedy is the tragedy of literature. In fact the opening chapter of *Discourse Networks*, i.e. “The Scholar’s Tragedy: Prelude in the Theatre,” is a reading of Goethe. For Goethe, already, literature was a way out of writing in writing, something like the zero degree of meaning. “German poetry begins with a sigh,” sighs Kittler, pointing out that Goethe had already figured something like an alternative hierarchy for the genres of writing we have encountered in Valéry. Goethe sighs at the face of something like the “insufficient means” of different ways of writing and reading: “Habe nun, ach! Philosophie, / Juristerei und Medizin, / Und leider auch Theologie / Durchaus studiert, mit heissem Bemühn.” The chapter describes Goethe’s “testing” of all sorts of writing, moving from inactivity to action, only to end up giving up on all of them to face poetry, which is where we start anyway, as an ultimate destination and a site of saying where saying is already acting. Already in Goethe, we have most of the “modernist” themes we encountered so far. And here too there is the paradoxical overturning of the Nothing, which is at the same time the overturning of writing, all of course to celebrate and to affirm writing in the modern sense despite itself.

52 Tanpinar, “Antalyali Bir Gene Kiza Mektup,” [“Letter to a Young Girl from Antalya”] in *EÜM*, 567-572. “O zaman size derim ki, şiir söylemekten çok susmak işidir. İste sustugum şeyler hikaye veromanlarimda anlatirim.” (570) The verb “susmak,” meaning “to keep silent,” is intransitive, although Tanpinar uses it as transitive here without sounding artificial the slightest bit. Again, the comment here is an explanation of his take on Valéry.
life Tanpınar imagines in the nondescript Anatolian village but also the one in the urban centers. Tanpınar writes a novel to *fail*, then, to experience the ultimate literary scholastic failure, but thereby to reframe for us a question of literature. The literariness of the moderns will turn out to be senseless and pointless, as indicated, even irrelevant socially and historically *but* only in so far as it simply cannot deliver what it promises.

As we have seen, in his criticism, Tanpınar elaborated on an ideal of literary writing that naturally and effortlessly overcame the gap between writing and reality, thinking and acting. This is how he thought of Balzac for instance. His take on Balzac’s “almost impossible” realism brings together all the different ways of affirming literature despite literature. I have already described how his short stories point to some other direction. Now it looks like Tanpınar responds to his own concerns here in *The Time Regulation Institute* by showing how literature or writing of that “indifferently realist” sort was nonsense on all counts. This “great hope” of his, if not an “ideal” that is, turns out to be a hole riddled umbrella in the cold rain, useless yet without an alternative. One cannot simply take a rain check either. The immense infrastructure built for it, which is very similar to the train tracks of steal, leaves room only for some suicidal mode of writing as for an alternative. The only alternative is to jump out from the moving train, as “The Path” makes clear. And suicidal as this novelist may appear, and particularly in this novel, it is important remember that *The Time Regulation Institute* is still a novel, which means Tanpınar is still on the train in unease and sadness. Perhaps he also thought that this is “our” unease and “our” sadness, which may be the reason why he wrote the novel.

Senseless and pointless as this literature may be, Tanpınar’s novelistic experiment itself will offer another way of framing the question of social and historical relevance of writing, which will make visible the contours of a different *history* of literature, one that cannot be
distinguished from a modern history of religion. Literature will have delivered, according to this narrative, something other than what it promised, perhaps something “religious.”

One must also keep in mind that the Nineteenth Century Turkish Literature was meant to be the first volume of Tanpinar’s history of modern Turkish literature. The first volume only narrates the beginnings of the literary humanistic undertaking and the related institutions of civil society (salons and newspapers, cultural journalism and citizens’ associations) in the late Ottoman era. This was the history of the radically volatile age of transformation; a generic transformation, true, from the archaic, pre-literary, quasi-mystical and exclusively poetic topoi of writing, to modern literary genres, which were also the topoi for rational thought and action in Tanpinar’s account. For Tanpinar the generic conversion necessitated the reconfiguration of ways of saying and being, addressing and interacting in life itself, the life on the streets of the Sublime State. This was the only way it could arrive at its telos and finally become properly literary and relevant socially and historically. During the late Ottoman era, or within Ottoman modernity, this was accomplished only partially. Presumably, the arrival of this properly literary, socially and historically relevant literature, along with the social conditions for rational thinking for the masses, was going to be the topic of the second volume. The first volume is only the history of one failure after another to turn properly literary in the late Ottoman era. However the second volume never came up. One could risk offering fiction as history, then, and consider the possibility that instead of the second volume of his history, Tanpinar writes The Time Regulation Institute. So on top of being novelistic theory and sociological fable, this novel may also be simply history.

Here Tanpinar’s rationalist and suspicious perspectives will find its ultimate conclusion, taking lightly the champions of the so-called historical reason, including himself no doubt,
denying as well the mystical poeticy of reason, and lamenting his subjection to a literary-

scholasticism, out of which he finds no way, neither in psychoanalysis nor in sociology, nor in

faith, literature or political economy. Nor has he anywhere else to go.

As we will see the writer-characters of The Time Regulation Institute find themselves
rushing from one explanation to another about this world, its events and its peoples, only to hit,
like Tanpinar himself, in every attempt, those walls that isolate them from reality, from the world
and its people, from life; walls that never cease to throw writers back into their all too
meaningful words and their specific fields of writing and knowledge. This is also how Tanpinar
will succeed in finally touching the zero degree of writing, thereby demonstrating the relevance
of the walls built for this activity for his society at large.
Chapter Two: Setting the Times Right

Now having seen the background of this scene of writing, we can start reading the novel from scratch. The “regulation” in the English title already glosses over the mocking mood of the book. The title Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü is already a joke. This is indeed a joke of a book from the beginning to the end. Saat is hour, from Arabic, but also timepiece, used exclusively for any instrument measuring time, and it also means time, but not time in the abstract. One asks what hour it is in modern Turkish (as in Arabic), not what time it is. So it is time as measure. One uses the other, rather lofty Arabic word, zaman, or the even loftier vakit, when one speaks of the right time to do something, for instance, although these too have colloquial uses. But for decades now, the “conservative” (and nowadays pro-government) Turkish newspaper is Zaman, while the modernist newspaper is Cumhuriyet, meaning republic.

As we will see the institute Tanpinar speaks of in this novel is more of an academic, or more broadly scholastic or intellectual, literary endeavor, owing its relevance for the most part to the books it produces. As for the expression saatleri ayarlama, it is more like “setting the time(s) (or timepieces) right.” So the title to a native speaker sounds more like this: “The Institute for Setting the Time(s) Right.” The
institute’s highly ambivalent mission is to establish a collective consciousness or moral awareness of modern temporality.

The hero, Hayri İrdal, gives us his birth date as Hijrī 16 Rajab 1310. Until the 1839 Tanzimat reforms, Ottomans used the Muslim Hijrī calendar, which is lunar and which starts from the prophet’s migration to Madina, i.e. the Hijra of 622 A.D. After 1839 Rûmî calendar was introduced, which was a solar version of the Hijrī calendar based on the Julian calendar. But Hijrī time remained in use for religious matters alongside the Rûmî calendar. In order to prevent confusion between the dates, both calendars were used on many documents. Rûmî dates are sometimes impossible to convert to Gregorian dates with precision. Modern Turkey used both calendars until 1926, when the Gregorian calendar was adopted with a parliamentary decree. Yet for instance the Rûmî names of the months remained the same (“Teşrinievvel,” “Teşrinisani,” “Kanunuevvel,” “Kanunusani”). Finally in 1945 these names too were changed.

Hayri İrdal lives through times during which the culture into which he was born was getting integrated to the world at large, its notation systems Latinized, its calendar Christianized, its sartorial habits modernized, its language standardized, while its postal service, railroads, and economy, all of the latter a novelty in that part of the world, were under constant construction and renovation.

Gradual integration of course entailed gradual differentiation, both internally and externally, i.e. nationally and internationally, both of which Tanpinar himself witnessed. All this was to achieve reciprocity, to meet the requirements of the global community for smooth interaction or transaction, for smooth exchange of all sorts.
More than half a century after the publication of the novel Turkey is still there thanks to the negotiations for its membership to the European Union, with numerous committees and associations charged with creating legal, political, social and cultural reciprocity with European conditions even at the municipal level, working day and night as we speak.

İrdal was born when the question of reciprocity and integration was already the regulative idea, according to which life in his hometown was arranged and rearranged on a daily basis. He was not born into that other world that was simply incompatible with the communicative infrastructure of the world at large.

He is not well educated he says already at the beginning of the novel, and he does not read Arabic or Farsi nor does he speak or write the language of the well-educated Ottoman, that is he speaks the language of the simple, or simple Turkish. When he sees Arabic and Farsi words in the few books or articles he has access to, he just skips them. He does not read much to begin with.

Not only was he not born into a world that was once incompatible with the world large, he also hardly has access to it, he was not acculturated with it. He was acculturated with the necessity to produce reciprocity, in the world of reciprocity and exchange. Due to a number of unfortunate events, while working in a post office, he finds himself before the law, and he spends the rest of his life facing one modern institution after another, including the forensic institute that treats him, after a diagnosis of some psychosis relating to his father, with the latest psychoanalytic methods, which Doctor Nazim takes to be the answer to all the troubles of the modern world.
İrdal then gets involved in alternative, non-governmental institutions, coffee houses that function like the modern salons and citizens’ associations, *(SAE, 127-8)* including later the Spiritualist Association and the Psychoanalytic Association. Finally he starts working for The Time Regulation Institute, since he always had had an interest in clocks and had familiarized himself with their inner workings, having even worked in his childhood in a repair shop.

In fact he grew up with a clock. One of the major figures of the novel, namely *Mübarek*, meaning “sacred,” is a clock originally bought by his grandfather to be placed in a mosque he had meant to build, and which, since the family never had the means to build the mosque, his father kept in their house. Mübarek is dear to İrdal, he remembers it with love and compassion. This is how he describes it:

> It used to wander aimlessly on its own, lost in thought, like a pilgrim left behind his caravan, not a bother to anyone. Which calendar did it follow, which year did it chase, what exactly did it wait for during those days that it simply stopped working, which secret and great event did it announce when out of the blue it started working again with its full baritone sound that filled everywhere? We never knew. Because this highly independent clock knew no regulation, no repair and no adjustment. It was a particular time isolated from human beings, going on its own course. *(SAE, 27)*

There was also a “secular” clock in their house, one that played songs to announce every hour. What İrdal cannot stand, on the other hand, is the radio for instance. Radio has made clocks redundant and useless, he says. It only makes people waste time. People complain how short life is all the time, but then they do all sorts of things to waste their days listening to accounts of events they would never perform or attend. *(SAE, 28)*

Given that he cares about time and has experience in time keeping and management, the institute seems ideal for him. This institution is one that thrives on
governmental funds and the market of cultural goods, as its president will explain shortly. But it is neither completely academic, nor governmental, nor simply economic. It enjoys some sort of autonomy. It is free to hire whoever for its ranks for instance.

It has some degree of autonomy thanks to its claim to a certain objective function and knowledge. So it is within the universe of those citizens’ associations and non-governmental organizations, but it also has a distinctive, universal claim that makes it quasi-scientific.

But it is also quasi-religious, which is what İrdal seems to be suggesting when he observes the following oddity about “our old life”:

As everyone knows our old life was all about time. [... Supposedly] the great majority of the customers of the European clock makers were Muslims, and our own people, the most pious of all Muslims, more than others. From daily prayers to iftar and sahoor during Ramadan, all sorts of worship depended on clocks. There were time keeping rooms everywhere. Everyone, even if in devilish hurry, stopped in front of their windows, taking out their pocket watches [...] with a basmala, praying that the time they would measure brings wellness to them and to their children, after which they winded up their watches and took them to their ears, as if to hear what good news of days near and far the watch announced. [...] The sound of the watch assigned the present and the tasks at hand, on one hand, and on the other opened the pure and immediate paths to the infinite happiness to be pursued. (SAE, 24)

The Time Regulation Institute seems to claim the same function as a central time keeping room, or mutakkithane. The thing is there is no need for one. Time can no longer be locked up in those rooms. It has overflooded those centers long ago.

The social fact that time is in these modern times is not the same as the one in our old life.¹ There are industrial, economic and governmental schedules to say the least.

¹ Tanpınar’s thought, as I have indicated, was very much imbedded in the “sociological” tradition, and particularly in what he calls “the great Durkheimian tradition.” The time at stake
People live in accordance with each other’s schedules. There is time to go to work or lunchtime, there is the time to catch the train, there is time when government offices and the banks open and close, there is time to listen to the news of the radio. The time such as the one Mūbarek dictates cannot assign the present anymore, nor can it assign tasks. It is a thing of the past kept within the household, in one’s private space, perhaps sometimes with nostalgia. The tasks it used to assign, those disinterested tasks like fasting and prayer etc, are not tasks anymore but symbolic acts. The real tasks are in the offices, factories, and the market place. So there is already a modern consciousness of time among the crowds, which makes Mūbarek more of a souvenir. This is to say the self-declared mission of the institute, which is to distribute consciousness of modern temporality, when it is not redundant, only places the consciousness it wants to distribute in opposition to the already irrelevant time of Mūbarek.

Redundant as its mission concerning time measures, one can presume, then, that its political ambition is reducible in fact to a simple opposition, not an opposition to the powers-that-be or to conventions, but to the already irrelevant Muslim way of life. It is here certainly looks like a “social fact,” while there seems to be other “times” as well, some of them not so social or factual, or at least not anymore. It may be useful to remember Durkheim’s famous 1895 definition: “A social fact is every way of acting, fixed or not, capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint; or again, every way of acting which is general throughout a given society, while at the same time existing in its own right independent of its individual manifestations.” Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, trans. Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller (New York: The Free Press of Glenco, 1964), 13.

²The best definition of the Bourdieusian “symbolic activity,” one that addresses relevant questions of time, religion (even Islam in particular), and Western and non-Western “modernization,” is to be found in *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 112-122.
itself irrelevant and redundant, then, but it is also in competition, in an apparently
senseless competition, with the ancient, Muslim time.

But how does it do that? And why exactly? How is it that the institute’s time,
which is exactly the same time as the one that is already a social fact, or as the dominant
and efficient modern sense of temporality, manages to confront the Muslim time? Clearly
the tasks assigned in the offices, factories, and the marketplace do not have to quarrel
with other sorts of tasks, the task of the daily prayer, for instance.

Offices, factories, and the market place would only be indifferent to the symbolic
acts of religion so long as these acts remained symbolic and did not interfere with the real
tasks and responsibilities. People do not stop in front of the windows of the
muvakkithane anymore to know when they are supposed to pray or when to break the
fast. Those who pray go to the prayer house during the lunch break, for instance, or
before they take the shuttle to work.

The institute manages to do this by postulating a time that is both a social fact,
one that is already out there in the industrial, economic and governmental schedules, and
is not arbitrary at all, not arbitrary like the time of Mübarek. This modern muvak
kithane wants to dictate modern, “contemporary” sense of temporality in exactly the same way
Mübarek dictates time, while also shortcutting the arbitrariness that came to be associated
with Mübarek in modern times.

The difference then is that it also claims to be in line with the truly human
experience of time, while Mübarek was simply isolated from human experience. In other
words, the institute wants to make sure that everyone knows that they do what they do for
a reason, that it is meaningful to catch the train and for the train to leave without delay, for instance.

It is not enough, accordingly, to catch the train while having a watch that is five minutes ahead. It is not enough to simply make sure to catch the train or make sure to be at work on time. One also needs to believe that this is the thing to do. Such belief cannot be simply the clockwork adherence to schedules. One must also have a sense of this time in one’s own life, bring this time into one’s own life, make this word, time, flesh. This is possible by attesting to it with faithful care, for instance by systematically setting one’s time right in a ritualistic manner.

Now one can of course look at this matter as another social fact, and like the philosopher does, propose that in secular times, daily life tends to be sanctified. One could perhaps even speak, like the critical theorist and the literary critic do, of the intertwinement of myth and enlightenment, how enlightenment and along with it its affilial bonds, its affilial ways of being in common, tend to return to myth and filial ways of bonding, of filial ways of being-with. But I do not think that Tanpinar is the least interested in such explanations.

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3 I have in mind the idea that the celebration of daily, ordinary life, producing something like an enchanted experience of modern temporality, is the essence of modernity. See Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

From the perspective of the novelist nailed to the writing desk, for someone who looks at the ultimate reality of writing as the distance from the reality written about, it looks a bit funny to arrive at such generalities and to assume that one has left the drawing board and arrived somewhere else, at the reality of the train station for instance, swamped by crowds. Indeed there is nothing “real” about this philosophical way of looking at things, other than the words printed on paper that is.

What matters most for the suspicious novelist is that, in the final analysis it is absolutely senseless for the train to leave the station on time. People catch the train to go to work, they go to work to make a living, they make a living to survive, they tend to survive because the living tend to survive. People also imitate each other, follow other people to find the right track, for instance. To take the departure of the train as sensible is not their concern, but there seem to exist certain other people, like philosophers, literary critics and novelists, but also journalists, for instance, or the employers of the radio station, whose main concern is precisely to impose a certain way of making sense. Perhaps for some, making a virtue out of necessity, and sense out of senselessness, makes it easier to live as well. On all counts, in this novel, the members of the institute want to invent such sense and to enforce it as well, simply to make a living out of this activity of theirs, which is senseless on its own right:

In the end it was something that was born out of a few words. It resembled a fable in that way. I told Halit bey a few stories. Halit bey looked at the clocks that were not in accord, while remembering that he was unemployed. And others believed him. In the mean time just because the clocks in the city were not in accord a notable missed another notable’s funeral. This is why they found a building for us in ten days, allocated a budget for our work, furnished an office to the best of their ability, and as if this was not enough, they did their best to provide us with our needs every day after that. What the heck was that all about? What was its place in life? (225)
As we will see the main activity of the members of this institute is writing in the end. This is the only part I am interested in, and I believe, so was Tanpınar: there is an attitude and a writing, or a writing with attitude, that makes sense out of senselessness, and this writing with attitude also dictates sense and sensibility. There is something very modern about this writing and attitude as well, or at least it has to do with modernity in this part of the world. It is in conflict, moreover, in a senseless conflict with the Muslim way of life or whatever remains of it. It is in full contrast with another sort of writing, the kind of “Muslim” writing Tanpınar theorizes in his history, which I will address later.

It is never clear in the novel, however, what exactly the institute and the other “civil” quasi-institutions are supposed to do, including that of psychoanalysis. We can say that this is the case for all the institutions of the civil society in this novel. All we know about psychoanalysis is that since its invention everyone is supposed to be sick one way or another, and psychoanalysis is the cure and the explanation according to analysts, which is why we need psychoanalysis. (SAE, 19, 105) In Turkey no one cares about it, but in places where specialization matters, for instance in Germany, psychoanalysis is practically the daily bread. (SAE, 100)

It is never clear what exactly Time Regulation Institute does, although it opens an office with government support and grows each and every day afterward, and beyond its own expectations after it starts fining people because of their times running too fast or slow. All we know is that since what makes one human is work, and since work is time, time matters, this is why the institution is relevant. (SAE, 243)

The institute is supposed to regulate time, given that time runs sometimes too fast sometimes too slow, depending, according to İrdal, on the temperament of the owner of
the device that measures time. But this is a matter of freedom, says İrdal. For some, time lags behind while for others it runs too fast.

But then particularly in a society like Turkey this seems to be a problem, where one reform after another had ensured an unprecedented progress, which in turn, perhaps, had radicalized temperamental and hence temporal differences. Given that political persuasions of the person, whether he is revolutionary or conservative, backward or forward thinking, for instance, determines whether his clock will run too fast or too slow, this seems to be a serious issue. (SAE, 14-15)

They all come to the same thing from the point of view of the institute, which in due time even hires people, as I mentioned, who would fine other people whose time runs too fast or too slow, although imperfection in time measurement is inevitable according to our narrator. He still finds it surprising that eventually the institute is accused of corruption.

We do not know then what exactly the institute is supposed to do, other than waste government funds and pass judgments and fine people for no good reason, or make sure that clocks work properly. But what we know for sure is that the institute issues fines and publishes books, books on time, history, nature and society. (SAE, 13)

This is what the psychoanalyst too does, he writes a book about our narrator, a book in which he shows how İrdal takes Mübarek the clock (which, according to Doctor Nazim, was what a complete mosque was reduced to due to economic constraints) to be a father figure. (SAE, 271) İrdal himself writes one book eventually, making up a story about the discovery of “Graham calculations” by an Ottoman Turk named Ahmet Zamani (SAE, 293-4) in the seventeenth century (“the great inventor of the seventeenth century, a
man of the age of Mehmet IV, right in the middle of our classical age,” *SAE*, 261), only to be compared to Voltaire and to claim international fame.

Moreover the idea of the institute becomes a model for others across the world, first in the US, then in the Middle East and Far East, followed by others in Europe. But eventually industrialized nations shy away from the idea, their leaders arguing that the measure of time required by work in the industrial world makes such an institution redundant. It looks like only developing or underdeveloped countries are convinced that they are in need of such an institution and enforcement of time measures, that they must put those who are forward or backward in line. (*SAE*, 343)

An American delegation invited to question the dealings of the institute, upon dialing 0135 from the institute’s headquarters, points out that one can always learn what time it is in Istanbul by simply dialing this number. (*SAE*, 363-64) There are indeed well established time measures according to which the Turkish society works, and these measures happen to be compatible, they happen to have been built in accordance with world time, which already enables the Turkish society to work in accordance with the world. Turkish banks and stock exchange, for instance, already engage in all sorts of transactions with the markets of the world. Everything is already in accordance with the global measures of time, work, and exchange. Everything already works. The reciprocity is already established socially, economically, and politically. What then is this talk of adjustment, what then is the function of the institute, and if it does not have one, how is it that it survives? Or as İrdal formulates: “What that heck was this all about? What was its place in life?”
Something out of nothing

The fines the institute issues make people laugh at best. (SAE, 14) In fact our narrator tells us that this is what distinguishes their penal system from any other, i.e. that people laugh at them, that people invite them to their houses for the sake of amusement. The fines, the penal system at large, prove to be a joke, then, some sort of entertainment, but there are still the books.

If the fines do not work for the institute, then the books do, they bring the institute credibility and even symbolic interest, on global scale as well. Books appear to be what the institute lives on, and our narrator, being the best-selling author of the overall operation, knows that the books they produce are all but nonsense, that they are all lies. They only matter because they bring recognition to the institute, not only locally but globally as well, and this symbolic capital is what the institute bets on. Recognition makes the local relevant globally, which multiplies the value of the institute in its locality at least by two, winning it governmental and economic means for development and autonomy as well.

But there is no Ottoman Turkish wise man who invented “Graham measures” before Graham. İrdal made this up. Our novelist made the whole thing up.

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5 Now at the local scale, those who must on all counts abide by schedules entertain themselves with the institute and its articles, debates and books. Moreover these items enable them to feel in their own time, for instance through what they read in İrdal’s “nationalist” book. On the international scale, the “findings” of the institute provides a point of access to the local world while the very local point of access is necessarily an attestation to the truth of global standards.
But then Ayarcı, the president of the institute whose name means “regulator,” explains that these are not lies at all. Such a Turkish Muslim inventor was what our age needed, it was even a requirement for the present to be meaningful, while it made sense historically and even made sense of history.

What our age needs from the past can and actually must be retrospectively constructed. The past too needed the present in that way, i.e. to be meaningful. What İrdal did was precisely not to lie. It was just to say the probable, but since what İrdal made up makes sense, it only follows that it is in accordance with the sensible truth of our time, hence truly truthful. It would have been a lie, since it would have been utterly senseless, had that Ottoman Turk from the end of the seventeenth century, about which İrdal wrote his best-seller, truly invented the “Graham measures,” which is what Ayarcı explains. Because Zamani would have contradicted his own age with this accomplishment, he would have “made a hole” in time with his invention. What a blatant lie that would be, such an invention out of its time!

It is as if Ayarcı is explaining a strange logic according to which to invent something is one and the same thing as to say something, or to “tell” something, a lie for instance. To make something is already to say something. To build something, to invent a mechanism by bringing pieces together, to make a clock, for instance, itself has the character of “marking,” moreover that of “writing” of some sort, or at least it can be accounted for, read as if it were writing, meaningful like writing.

Acting or even living is already writing according to some logic of writing, it can be saying the truth or lying. It is just that İrdal does not know it. Had Ahmet Zamani really existed and invented the things İrdal credits him with inventing, now that would be
Ahmet Zamani lying. What İrdal does when he writes is to act as well, and this acting, by virtue of being in accord with its own time, with “history” and its meaning, is truthful. “Everything that has a name exists,” says Ayarcı, “even Ahmet Zamani exists, in part because you and I want him to exist.” (SAE, 267)

That is to say Ayarcı, the president of the institute, is teaching İrdal a certain regime of writing, which does not only concern marks printed on paper but has further implications in life, and which is in full contrast with what İrdal takes writing to be. He is involved in something that he does not know or understand completely, perhaps he is involved in it unintentionally or unknowingly, or perhaps he knows but does not care. İrdal knows that he is lying in his own book, but Ayarcı explains that he is not, at least according to a certain logic of historicity and writing.

So the issue, according to the president, is what our age needs, and if this need is to be fulfilled retrospectively in writing, that is “at the end of the seventeenth century,” so be it. (SAE, 294-5)

If this kind of writing is not truthful to the letter, this is because such truthfulness could not possibly make sense. It is beyond that sort of truthfulness on all counts. It is truthfully truthful, not simply literally truthful. It is credible as story and acceptable, moreover desirable at this point in history for this history to be sensible. This is what makes it, if not the opposite of at least other than a lie.

Now this regime of writing according to which things, events and persons can have the character of writing, which is to say can be meaningful like the words of writing, can be truths or lies, is one that Saint Augustine, but during Tanpınar’s time Auerbach (who,
accidentally, also wrote at length and in this context about Augustine) described as the “figural” view of historicity. The thinking behind such notions can be dated back to the concept of “phenomenal prophesy,” no doubt, and this is what Auerbach does in “Figura.” Yet there in the world of these ancient concepts, Auerbach also found the source of modern literature and novelistic reality. Rancière, with this genealogy in mind, would later call Auerbach’s representational realism the “Christian/novel realism.”

Augustine thought that Noah, building an Ark, had in fact written in indelible letters on the flesh of the world, as it were. The ark was both his work and his prophecy, an announcement of things to come in the great tragedy of salvation. Noah, on the one hand, had cut the wood and put together pieces to literally, that is to say figuratively, give shape to the Ark. But on the other hand, due to his role in the tragedy of salvation, he had also made the Ark literally or rather figurally into a “real and historical” announcement of another, a future historicity. That other historical figure, itself to announce yet another one, would in due time fulfill Noah’s prophesy.

Auerbach also thought that the figural view was involved in a particular conflict in modern times. The conflict had to do with the tension between the literary take on historicity, which in this scenario claims this most human legacy of the Judeo-Christian civilization, and the modern historical take on historicity, which, according to Auerbach, despite being enabled by figural thinking to begin with, looked rather pagan. One can indeed read Tanpinar’s story not only as an allegory of a novel and an allegory of writing, but also as a parody of figural thinking. It is important to note a few more characteristics

6 For a summary of this “philosophy,” see Rancière, The Flesh of Words, 79-84.
of this thinking then, which, according to Auerbach, is a millennia old endeavor in the West. According to this logic facts themselves were forever incomplete, but their interpretation was secured.\(^7\) This was because every event in history announced another event as its fulfillment, just as every word announced another as its meaning.

The difference between this thinking and modern historical thinking was that according to the latter, facts themselves were complete and solid on their own, while their interpretation was taken to be forever incomplete and in need of further supplementation by more interpretation:

> In the modern view, the provisional event is treated as a step in an unbroken horizontal process; in the figural system the interpretation is always sought from above; events are considered not in their unbroken relation to one another, but torn apart, individually, each in relation to something other that is promised and not yet present. Whereas in the modern view the event is always self-sufficient and secure, while the interpretation is fundamentally incomplete, in the figural interpretation the fact is subordinated to an interpretation which is fully secured to begin with: the event is enacted according to an ideal model which is a prototype situated in the future and thus far only promised. (59)

This is why meaning was never complete in the latter, although, to follow Auerbach’s thinking to its rational conclusions, so long as it even aspired to mediate meaning, modern historical thinking too had to involve a certain degree of figularity in its functioning or in writing, in its organization of facts in a narrative. The figural writing however did nothing other than to distribute concrete and real meaning.

> Western literature, in Auerbach, western “fiction” in fact, insofar as it engaged historicity figurally, was more truthful historically than modern history, which pretended

simply to pile up facts as if they did not need interpretation and as if modern history did not interpret them. It was not exactly true that Virgil was simply an infidel, for instance, just as Jews are not simply Christ-killers, which is how things look from a modern historical perspective. Christian Dante, in his figural writing, had told the truth about Virgil better when he made him his guide:

In Dante’s eyes the historical Virgil is both poet and guide. He is a poet and a guide because in the righteous Aeneas’ journey to the underworld he prophesies and glorifies universal peace under the Roman Empire, the political order which Dante regards as exemplary, as the terrena Jerusalem; and because in his poem the founding of Rome, predestined seat of the secular and spiritual power, is celebrated in the light of its future mission. Above all he is poet and guide because all the great poets who came after him have been inflamed and inspired by his work; Dante not only states this for himself, but brings in a second poet, Statius, to proclaim the same thing most emphatically [...] (68)

Very much like Noah for Augustine, “the historic Virgil was for [Dante] a figura of the poet-prophet-guide, now fulfilled in the other world,” according to Auerbach. (69) As opposed to this figurality of Western fiction, modern history seems too “allegorical” in Auerbach’s account. Inquisitively scrutinizing the text and senselessly so, it leads to awkward positions. There is also a widespread “symbolism” in the modern world that Auerbach contrasts with the figural realism of literature. This concerns the flag, or “national symbols” in general. If allegory senselessly scrutinizes writing, “symbols” of the modern world require some pagan faith in magic. (59-60) Allegory and symbol are rather pagan for Auerbach, rather immature and primitive. One had to make a choice between the senseless scrutiny of pagan allegorism/symbolism and the “figure” of the Judeo-Christian civilization in thinking historically and in accounting for historicity.

8 Rancière’s “Theologies of the Novel,” can be read as a commentary on this statement alone.
Tanpinar was an academic in the same institution with Auerbach, as I have indicated. It was in the same academic setting, in the same university that Auerbach wrote “Figura” and Mimesis. Tanpinar too sponsored numerous theses about how this or that author had prefigured this or that great Turkish man of letters. Everyone in Istanbul at that time was looking for a measure of time to make sense of things, for instance by making up stories about past Turkish “figures” prefiguring contemporary ones or their European counterparts and vice versa. The entire academia, let alone the institution of literature, was a Time Regulation Institute in this sense.

*A contagious madness*

The psychoanalyst in the novel writes in the exact same way Ayarcı describes when he relates one figure (Mübarek) to another (İrdal’s “symptoms”). The factuality, the senseless actuality of these things, of the clicking of Mübarek’s mainspring or İrdal’s ruminations, does not matter. They are not complete things by themselves, or as facts they are not complete things. Once they are related to each other, though, once one took Mübarek’s untimely clicks to have announced İrdal’s behavior, they both become full of meaning – not completely full, of course, since İrdal’s behavior in turn only announces another historical event and the complete meaning of everything in this world is only available at the end of history.\(^9\) What enabled meaning in this way was Providence, or

\(^9\) This can be read as a short summary of the “figural structure” described in “Figura.”
minimally something like the regulative idea of Providence, in whom there was no past and no future.

İrdal does not theorize the kind of activity he is involved in when he writes his “fictional” history about the Turkish pioneer Zamani and Zamani’s thoughts. Yet his fiction, presented as history, is described as social psychological and sociological, at least in the way it engages “meaning,” in terms of the method with which it supposedly interprets things. (SAE, 19) The president of the institute, the person who teaches the “figural” view, seems to have based his thinking rather on the side of the market as the ultimate explanatory stake, which is to say that he is more of a political (or perhaps “theological”) economist. His engagement with “realism” seems to confirm this: “To be a realist is not at all to see the truth as is,” says Ayarcı, “perhaps it is to determine one’s most beneficial relation to it”:

What is the point in seeing the truth? What is the use of it, other than to drive great many conclusions that by themselves would be meaningless and without value as well? What can you do, other than to make a list of those things that you miss and need, a list that you can expand forever? Does this change anything? On the contrary it would turn into a hindrance along the path. You would turn into a pessimist, immobilized, oppressed. To see the truth as is... meaning to become a defeatist. [...] You are poisoned by words, this is why I told you that your thinking is old fashioned. The new man has a different realism. What can I do with the good or object that I possess, or

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10 For “theological economy” and how it may figure in our contemporaneity, see Giorgio Agamben, _The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government_, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011). Agamben rephrases the “poetics” that he develops throughout his work here, which seems to be inspired by Nancy and Blanchot’s notion of “inoperativity.” For “inoperativity,” also see Jean-Luc Nancy, _The Inoperative Community_, trans. Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), and particularly “The Myth Interrupted,” 43-70. This may be useful to approach Tanpınar’s silence as well, and his understanding of “pure saying,” itself related to Valéry’s notion of “purity,” as indicated. See also note 11.
with its attributes? This is the question. [...] If Newton had taken the apple that fell on his head as an apple, he could have come to the conclusion that the apple was rotten. However this is not what he did. How can I benefit most from this apple, he asked himself. What is my maximum benefit in this matter? (SAE, 219)

All of these writers come up with explanations and interpretations of all sorts, about the world, about facts and fiction, but also about each other’s writing, and all of them sound as reasonable as the other, all of them make sense. They all employ varying degrees of figurality in their thinking and writing, which makes what they say sensible. This is not to say that they are necessarily false or fraudulent. Perhaps all of them are right. And most likely so, because ultimately they all explain that actually everything, the entire world – this part of the world being a part of the world – all of this works and works pretty well.

Alternatively they explain what one needs to do for things to work according to the ways in which life in this world in reality works. They all make sense, even too much sense; there is too much meaning in these accounts. But they make sense because this life, which is not the only possible life and is but a novelty in this part of the world, works in a way that enables its psychoanalytic explanation, it works sociologically and psychologically, politically and economically.

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11 Poetry, Agamben tells us in *The Kingdom and the Glory*, suspends the principle of efficacy in language. As such poetry has a mission, or at least a function, that of producing a model for action: “*What the poem accomplishes for the power of saying, politics and philosophy must accomplish for the power of acting.*” (252) What poetry accomplishes in saying is none other than to produce some sort of subjectivity. But this subjectivity is different than the divided subjectivity of the individuals who write and read poems, subjects who are subjected to the opposite ends of the saying, even in the case of one hearing oneself speak who thereby becomes both “the subject and the subject” according to the famous formula. Poetic agency is a strange thing, since it appears as what it is precisely when the individuals involved in it are bereft of the capacity to speak, when they can no longer afford to be fully fledged individuals (“agents”) who
On the one hand this kind of writing is irrelevant, then, it is redundant. There is no real conflict or confrontation in it. No resistance but only reaction. No contribution
but unnecessary and uncalled for affirmation. It simply mirrors, there is no action in it but mere reflection. On the other hand in this mirror everything appears as if it had to be exactly the way it is, as if everything was meant to be as it is. In this mirror everything promises sense, and life in this mirror, modern life to be precise, appears meaningful, or at least appears as if it promises meaning. It is as if a sense of temporality such as the modern one has always been the destiny of the people of this part of the world. It is as if everything that happened had happened to pave the way to the train station, thereby the departure of the train on time assuming meaning. The essence of this mirror, of this kind of mirroring or do-nothing writing is the zero degree of meaning at best, so much so that meaning is prior to the fact, the senseless, or as Auerbach has it the “insufficient” fact. This is why so long as it makes sense, İrdal can write a fiction, a sociological and social psychological fable, and present it as history, as something that gives the truth, a truthful and meaningful truth.

All kinds of writing in this novel then have a quality to them that makes them somewhat literary with their abundant sense. Some of these writings are truthfully meaningful and truthfully truthful, like İrdal’s fictional history. Some of them are truthful to a lesser extent, which is also to say less sensible. But on all counts, writing of this sort, modern writing in general, has a literary quality to it.

This also means that Tanpinar takes Auerbach at his word. This logic of truthful fiction, which Auerbach champions, is one we are familiar with, before philosophy or theories of literature, through literature qua literature, for instance through the first novel ever written, i.e. Don Quixote.
Before Tanpınar, another Turkish novelist, namely Ahmet Midhat Efendi engaged such thinking around the turn of the century, even bringing Don Quixote himself to Istanbul, but in disguise, with the Turkish attire, so to speak, changing his name as well to Daniş Çelebi.12 Now Ahmet Midhat Efendi describes truthful fictions, such legitimate madness in these words:

When a mundane thing or event caught our Çelebi’s attention, he immediately thought of a story to which he could attach the matter. And he always managed to find a story in his mind. And when he found the story and applied that which he saw right in front of him to the story to magnify the thing, so to speak, he also gave the whole thing a real body in its exteriority, which is to say he embodied the story, ending up finding himself right in the middle of it. (16)

Tanpınar explains to us, then, that there is something of a madman in all these people of books, in all these scholars and writers. The psychoanalyst is just as mad as the sociologist, historian is just as mad as the economist, all of them are mad like Daniş Çelebi and Don Quixote combined. The story that the psychoanalyst finds in his mind has to do with sexuality, libido, and fulfillment, for instance, while İrdal only has in mind stories that he heard in his childhood from clock makers. (SAE, 19) They are mad in varying degrees, yet they are all inflicted by Don Quixote’s madness.

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12 This is not an “enforced” reading of Midhat’s “İstanbul´da Don Kişot.” Midhat explains how he could not have possibly brought knight himself to Istanbul, i.e. to translate the novel word by word, because it would not have made sense in Muslim Istanbul given the Christian context of the overall adventure. So he changes his name and lineage a bit, presenting the knight as a çelebi chasing, alongside sheiks, deamons and elfs, in whose reality Daniş Çelebi had convinced himself because he had read too many books, too many of those books of magic and alchemy popular in Istanbul back in the day. I use the following volume of the complete novels of Ahmet Midhat Efendi: Çengi, Kafkas, Süleyman Muslî, ed. by Erol Ülgen and Fatih Andi (Ankara: TDK, 2000), 1-40. Çengi, which contains “İstanbul´da Don Kişot” [“Don Quixote in Istanbul”], was first published in 1877 in Istanbul (Kirkambar, 1294).
Now we understand better what Tanpınar’s institution is about, but here is another comparison drawn in the novel between this institution and another one, which brings us closer to a clearer understanding of the stakes of this fiction. Ayarı is comforting İrdal who feels guilty when his (fictional) history becomes the critics’ choice:

– Is it my fault that you are compared to Voltaire or Faust? They [the critics] just want us to have something in our possession in the final analysis. Is it easy, you think, to catch up with an entire civilization with all its history in a matter of fifty years? Of course some exaggeration will be involved in this matter. If this or that novelist of ours was compared to Balzac or Zola, obviously they will compare you with others. (SAE, 271)

“This is the product we will distribute,” says the founder of the institute, moreover, “we will throw out a bunch of new words and new ideas.” (SAE, 243)

This is what the “new writing” or the modern institution of literature (edebiyat-i cedide: “new literature”) did in the Ottoman empire in the second half of the nineteenth century, choking out new words to describe, and enable supposedly, new experiences and distribute new ideas, among them, of course, “freedom,” or “nation,” for instance, allegedly first introduced by Namik Kemal.

* A cross-eyed vision

One need also remember, however, that the entire history of nineteenth century Ottoman literature, of this “new literature,” is the stage upon which writers accused each other of being backward or ahead of their time. This history is to be found in Tanpınar’s history itself, in which he himself, in turn, joins this procession.

The romantic poet-prophet Namik Kemal accused Ziya Pasha of being backward and reactionary, because of the Pasha’s anthology of Ottoman poetry (the first of its kind)
that had brought together what Kemal took to be the worn out rhythms and rhymes of the ancient Muslim poetry. Naive and sentimental novelist Ahmet Midhat Efendi, the writer who smuggled Don Quixote to Turkey under disguise, accused the positivist essayist Beşir Fuad of being a bit too ahead of his time. Toward the end of the century young scholars, Beşir Fuad being one of them, ever more attuned to the things happening in Paris, accused those incapable of understanding Zola and writing like him, or those who could not digest realism and naturalism, as reactionary occidentalists, as old fashioned fabulists of the hayaliyyun (romantics), or as disciples of the Dumas brothers or the Christian Hugo. They themselves, on the other hand, were more attuned to their time, on the side of the hakikiyyun (realists).

Ahmet Midhat Efendi spent much of his energy explaining to these young folk that there were certain things that never changed, that insofar as romanticism was about human dignity, it was also better to think a future with; that it would never get old like a

13 Ziya Pasha, Harabat, 2 volumes, (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1874). Parts of the anthology has been published in transcription, but for reasons we will see shortly, it is impossible to do that for the whole anthology. Namık Kemal’s “Tahrib-i Harabat” was first published in 1879. “Harabat” means both “the tavern” and “ruins,” and it is a mystic gathering place of poets (who are called the “harabati” or literally the wasted) singing wine poetry, literally getting ruined and wasted with the divine ecstasy of the words of poetry. Such ecstasy could only be formulated as the drunkenness of the wine-drinking blasphemer. “Tahrib-i Harabat”, ironically, means the destruction of the tavern or the ruins. Harabat is the first somewhat systematic “anthology” in Ottoman Turkish, while Kemal’s “Tahrib-i Harabat” is considered the first serious work of literary criticism.

14 Very much in the same spirit Tanpınar accuses Fuad of being too ahead of his time. Midhat also published a biography of Beşir Fuad, which is where he puts forward his evaluation of him, originally published in 1886, but recently transcribed as Beşir Fuad (Istanbul: Oglak, 1996).

15 Almost all of Beşir Fuad’s writings that address these topics have been brought together in an impressive volume titled Siir ve Hakikat [“Poetry and the Truth”] by Handan Inci (Istanbul: YKY, 1999).
thing of fashion. Thus romanticism was always already far ahead in time than the
depressing realism of Zola that only made visible the ugliness of this world. Moreover
realists for him were more reactionary, since the splendor of the truths they depicted only
hid their real intentions, which were either related to the Christian mission or to the anti-
Christian mission. They boiled down to the same thing for the revolutionary Muslim.  

Young Turks in general accused Young Ottomans for being stuck to the
“Muslim” past despite their revolutionary thirst. All of these writers were compared to
this or that Western genius back in the day as well, and according the needs of the age,
obviously. Beşir Fuad to Voltaire, for instance, and Namik Kemal to Goethe. One only
needs to consider that the terms of this debate are still intact in our day and age to see
how far ahead of its time Tanpınar’s novel was. The sociologist Şerif Mardin, who wrote
an intellectual history of the Young Ottoman movement at Stanford in the sixties, was
still trying to prove how these Ottoman writers, toward the end of the nineteenth century,
were only imitating the turn of the nineteenth century European thinkers, as opposed to
the thinkers of their own time; while Mardin was imitating the up-to-date American
sociology of his day while writing this. More recently, even in the nineties, the literary
critic Jale Parla could come up with an idea about how until early in the twentieth
century, Ottoman intellectuals just could not get hold of the scientific, realist habit of

16 See Midhat’s preface ("Kariinn ile Hasbihal") to Mışahedât, ed. by Özlem Mutlu (Istanbul:
Özgür, 2011). Originally published in 1890. Mutlu’s edition is most useful due to its glossary,
without which a native speaker of modern Turkish would have difficulty understanding Midhat’s
language. This language was once considered revolutionary due to its “plainness.”


18 Mardin, Genesis, particularly his conclusions where he summarizes his position (396-409).
mind and epistemology, stuck as they were to the ancient, Muslim way of knowing and doing.\(^\text{19}\)

In (the first volume of) his history Tanpınar himself mocked all of those Ottoman revolutionaries for not knowing what time or year it is or rather being incapable of deciding which calendar to look. This too looked like madness to Tanpınar, perhaps similar to Don Quixote’s madness, which in the end had to do with reading too many books, and forgetting where one comes from or where one is headed or one’s head is. But Tanpınar described nineteenth century Ottoman literature as that of a crisis, of an identity crisis to be precise, due to which authors of the era did not know what to do when they did literature or where to turn, having too many languages and calendars, too many books. They were either reactionary or too ahead of their time according to Tanpınar too.\(^\text{20}\) But there is a different judgment in this novel; not on the Ottoman revolutionaries but on Tanpınar’s own vision and writing.

His earlier position in the first volume of his history is explained by his mentor and role model, the great poet Yahya Kemal, in a conversation about temporal measures with the mastermind of Turkish nationalism, namely Ziya Gökalp whom we have met in a different context.


\(^{20}\) See Chapter One, note 17. For Tanpınar’s shorter history of modern Turkish literature, “Türk Edebiyatında Cereyanlar,” which begins with the famous subtitle “Turkish literature begins with a civilizational crisis,” see EUM, 102-131.
Yahya Kemal was backward in thought and literature in the sense described above. Gökalp tells Yahya Kemal that Yahya Kemal is ruined (harabi), meaning Kemal was living in the ruins of the Sublime State; and not even wasted (harabati) like the Ottoman harabat (tavern) poets, who, in the classical Muslim tradition of wine poetry, idealized divine ecstasy, which they articulated as the drunkenness of the wine.\(^{21}\) Yahya Kemal responds to Gökalp by saying that he is neither harabi nor harabati, but a revolutionary, a future-oriented person (ati) with his eyes fixated on the past (mazi).\(^{22}\) But this was also the position of Young Ottomans, the early revolutionaries we have already met. Yahya Kemal was just doing what they did, passing another judgment in his own moment, which meant passing a judgment on these revolutionaries as well. So it is also adding something to the Ottoman revolutionary premise. It is as if Yahya Kemal, to define his “present,” was simply saying something like this: “Every instant is the instant of judgment on certain moments that precede it.”\(^{23}\)

Tanpınar looks for his present in the same manner in the first volume of his history. He passes one judgment after another on the Ottoman revolutionaries there. They were all failures according to Tanpınar, like Newton’s rotten apple, yet Tanpınar

\(^{21}\) See note 13, and Chapter One, note 46.


\(^{23}\) “The apocryphal saying of a Gospel, ‘Wherever I encounter someone, I will pronounce judgment on him,’ casts a particular light on Judgment Day. It recalls Kafka’s fragment: the Day of Judgment is a summary judgment. But it also adds something: according to this saying, the Day of Judgment is not different from others. In any case, this Gospel saying furnishes the criterion for the concept of the present that the historian makes his own. Every instant is the instant of judgment on certain moments that precede it,” Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1:1245.
had made use of them, those rotten apples falling on his head, mainly to make sense of his own present. The history narrates a story according to which step by step Turkish language becomes purer and simpler, more practical, closer to its pure state in its instrumental use among the humble, until of course we reach Tanpinar’s time when allegedly pure language had become the norm and a means for Tanpinar to employ.

But Tanpinar did not write the second volume of his history. He left it with these failures. Now, perhaps as for a second volume of his history, as I have suggested earlier, he ends up giving us *The Time Regulation Institute*.

Like Yahya Kemal, Tanpinar had once fixated his gaze on the past to write stories and pass judgments. He had even written a history of the Ottoman modernity, complaining about the Ottoman revolutionaries, accusing them of lacking such clarity of vision, of being incapable of conjuring up stories properly. He himself had a temporal measure, like Yahya Kemal and a little like Valéry, which enabled a historical vision and a sense of the past; a literary-providential perspective, as Auerbach has it, or a scholarly “fixed point,” as Bourdieu has it.24

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24 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 21-2: “Perspective, in its historical definition, is no doubt the most accomplished realization of the scholastic vision. It presupposes a single, fixed point of view – and therefore the adoption of the posture of a motionless spectator installed at a point (of view) – and also the use of a frame that cuts out, encloses and abstracts the spectacle with a rigorous, immobile boundary. (It is significant that, to construct a model of vision, Descartes – who, as is well known, gave a privileged place to intuition understood as vision – uses, in his *Dioptics*, the image of an eye placed ‘in the expressly made aperture of a window’, on the back of which the observer, situated within the camera obscura, will see ‘perhaps not without admiration and pleasure, a painting that will represent most naturally in perspective all the objects that are outside’.) This singular viewpoint can also be regarded as universal, since all the ‘subjects’ who find themselves placed there –bodies reduced to a pure gaze, and therefore indifferent and interchangeable – are, like the Kantian subject, assured of having the same objective view, the one of which perspectival representation, as a ‘symbolic form of an objectification of the subjective’, in Panofsky’s phrase, performs the objectification.”
But now he critically engages his own historical vision in this novel. Now, perhaps a little like Blanchot, he says “A story? No. No stories, never again.” Who was he to claim such vision, and over against the vision of those whose history he had written?25 Alternatively, could his possibly be a “summary judgment”? Why would he judge and join in this procession leading to something like a summary judgment? He too was as blind as those whom he accused of madness, Ottoman revolutionaries and all modern writers alike.

So Tanpınar is little bit like Blanchot, but unlike Blanchot he does not make as if he can both play the blind and tell stories of most colorful visions.26 Now the same eyes see nothing but wreckage, pile upon pile of destruction, loss upon loss, everything disappearing in the senselessness of passing time, even those things that were dear to both Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar.

And this is the simple story Tanpınar wants to tell. Yet, despite its simplicity the story cannot but stage a challenge.

No more games, no more pretensions or allusions to revelation or Providence. Now Auerbach’s theory of democratic Christianity, his Christian/novel realism, as

25 At a particularly interesting moment in his introduction to OAE, Tanpınar accuses Muslim thinkers and poets of having inherited the classical philosophical tradition only as an early announcement of the true wisdom of Islam. Christianity, he says, got over such teleological determination early in its history: “But in Latin and Greek lands, until the fifth century in Western Rome, and until the very end in Eastern Rome, Christianity lived and developed under the rule of the same state formation using Latin and Greek. Divided as it was into the Eastern and Western churches, thanks to the great works yet alive in these languages, Christianity got over this sort of anachronism quickly, receiving a sense of past, which in turn led, perhaps for the very first time, to the idea of history.” (38-39)

26 See Chapter One, note 48.
Rancière would have it, had to do with the way the gospels took the simple seriously, representing the trivialisities of their lives with the dignity emanating from a great tragedy. Tanpınar checks if his simple, his “people” take the book seriously, and what it means if and when they do so. At this zero degree of writing, he discovers a truth about this writing and the meaning of its history. Comedy or tragedy, the story of this “attitude embodied in the figural interpretation […] i.e.] one of the essential elements of the Christian picture of reality, history, and the concrete world in general” (“Figura,” 53) has also come to define “our” lives one way or another. In the face of this truth, he can either mourn or laugh. He can either be grumpy and indifferent.

So Tanpınar’s democratic literature turns the tables, and makes out of dignity itself an ultimate comedy. Tanpınar takes literature itself with a grain of salt. This is an attempt of a writer to take himself and writing lightly; perhaps, in this sense, even an attempt to be literary-critical.

Once, then, Tanpınar, following Yahya Kemal and Valéry, thought that one could traverse the future à reculons, with a view of the past, but now he realizes that to understand the past one must traverse the past à reculons as well.27 These two movements, to remember Agamben’s commentary, “proceed toward something that they can neither see nor know. The invisible goal of these two images of the historical process is the present. It appears at the point where their gazes encounter each other, when a

27 Ibid.
future reached in the past and a past reached in the future for an instant coincide,” and I would add, collide. Agamben’s vision provides with an extraordinary setting to engage Tanpinar’s vision. The thing is this coincidence involves some miraculous enlightenment even for the philosopher, a philosophico-archeological awakening, if not “understanding.”

And here is the amusing genius of Tanpinar’s irreverent novel. He seems to suggest, in his peculiar awakening, that there is nothing to unearth here, but only collision. Tanpinar is already there, and he sees, like Benjamin’s angel, nothing but ruins in the past. The same applies to his vision of the future, though, ruin upon ruin.

As for the present, it is senseless and pointless, but neither so good nor so bad, perhaps not too bad. In the final analysis it should not be anything other than the carefree rush for the departing train.

There is no illusion of an Augenblick here. There is no ultimate vision, but at best a cross-eyed vision, plus perhaps a novelist making a funny face crossing his eyes to

28 Agamben, Signature of all Things, 99.

29 I have referred to the “blink of an eye” with reference to Derrida’s commentary on Blanchot. But one can go back to Kierkegaard, among others; for instance to Attack Upon Christendom, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944). In his articles of 1850s describing “the moment” and related issues, Kiergaard formulates the “mystical realism” to come of modernism with these lines: “Quite simply: I want honesty. [...] The leniency which is the common Christianity in the land I want to place alongside of the New Testament in order to see how these two are related to one another. Then, if it appears, if I or another can prove, that it can be maintained face to face with the New Testament, then with the greatest joy I will agree to it. [...] I have quite distinctly pointed out the difference between preaching Christianity in such a way that the preacher is “a government official, a man of rank, and his preaching his own glittering career, rich in enjoyment,” and on the other hand a “suffering witness to the truth,” without maintaining in any way whatsoever that suffering must signify suffering unto death. [...] Inasmuch as Christianity is spirit, the sobriety of spirit, the honesty of eternity, there is of course nothing which to its detective eye is so suspicious as are all fantastic entities: Christian states, Christian lands, a Christian people, and (how marvelous!) a Christian world.” (30-7)
mock the philosopher. Tanpinar is not a comedian, though, and he writes in this manner for a reason perhaps even on a mission: “Comedy is great insofar as one does not make a profession out of it. If you replace it with everything else you will end up reducing the whole universe into a smirk. One needs to be a simpleton to simply smirk.”

So the present should not be anything other than the carefree rush for the departing train. The thing is the philosopher, the critic, and all the rest of the employees of the time regulating institute, plus those secularized Christian civil societal institutions, the academia and the radio and TV, those salons and societies, the humanities but also social sciences, sociology and psychoanalysis etc – they just do not let Tanpinar be. They delay him on his way to the station swamped with crowds. They just do not let him go about his business. All he can do is to mock them all. Even indifference would be a response under these circumstances, in the face of the overly loquacious “address,” as it were, which is enabled by the “impersonal social laws” that condition our sense of a life in common on all counts.

In short, in this novel of a hole riddled umbrella, all writing but also literature, this promise of an exit from the enclosures of writing, this thing that Tanpinar had taken to be a great hope and a last resort all his life, turns out to be a joke, like a sham of a time regulating institute at best, but a joke that is not even funny because it hurts.

Because the madness that he diagnosed in Ottoman revolutionaries turns out to be also quite contagious. He himself has the symptoms to begin with. Not only literature

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30 “Romana ve Romanciya Dair” [“Of the novel and the novelist”], in EUM, 58. First published 1944.
but most of its neighboring institutions, including those secularized Christian civil societal institutions, salons and societies, the humanities but also social sciences, sociology and psychoanalysis, all of them are madness. They are the time regulation institute. But then they are not any madness but a very particular kind of madness. Tanpinar describes the main movement of thought in pre-literary Muslim writing in his history in ways similar to the way he describes the literary-scholastic failure of the moderns, but suggesting that this movement is the reason why Muslim writing did not evolve into literature in the modern sense. The fixation on “form” in speech, one that shadows the content, prevents the Muslim saying to go beyond, to the real thing, thus the saying runs from one wall to the other failing to embrace reality, in Tanpinar’s account. (OAE, 37-8) Tanpinar even explains how, the pure artificiality of language in traditional Muslim poetry, or the Muslim “pure poetry,” did not make the saying richer (as Valéry thought it would, says Tanpinar) but on the contrary impoverished the human experience. But then that kind of saying never promised wealth to begin with, and even idealized poverty. Moreover that madness, unlike Don Quixote’s, was meant to cure an illness. It was meant to pave the way back to the life-in-common for anyone led astray by the power of writing, but this is the topic of the next chapter.

Suffice it to say that this only proves how, for Tanpinar there is a difference between one madness another. There is a difference even if there is no conflict of sorts.
Chapter Three: The Wine

To answer the question of literature that Tanpinar’s novel has articulated for us, which we can now formulate as that of the social and historical relevance of literary activity in his part of the world, I would like to focus on the two failures Tanpinar formulates in his writing, one of them the writing of those he takes to be his ancestors and the other, as *The Time Regulation Institute* shows, of literature itself, of his own writing.

The former was the failure of nineteenth century Turkish literature to turn properly literary. I will take a closer look at this failure. This was *not* a complete failure, though, which is what we have to keep in mind, since in the end there is a literature modern Ottoman writers produced and their ideas inspired many a generation of Turkish writers too, including Tanpinar’s. Tanpinar himself obviously was influenced and inspired by them as much as by his European interlocutors. It is just that Ottoman revolutionary writing was somewhat poor literarily, it was something of a blurry sight, some unpleasant mixture, which, as mentioned earlier, may appear as a more felicitous failure from Tanpinar’s perspective. So was the language of this writing, a language that was in its course to become plainer and purer, somewhat more immediate, shedding its foreign (Arabic and Farsi) elements to turn simply Turkish according to Tanpinar.
Laughter

By contrast, clearly Tanpınar takes himself to be able to do and indeed doing good literature, even “pure” literature, a very particular species of failure. His writing is specifically literary, and not simultaneously worship, as was the quasi-literature of the modern day harabati, which had only ruined the classical poem that was once simply prayer. Nor is his writing journalistic or propagandistic, or caught in the banality of daily, profane world and words of exchange.

There is an intransitive quality to his saying, be it poetic or novelistic, which is what his silence is about; and yet this saying still communicates something, which is to say that, regardless of the literary-poetic intransitivity of his saying, Tanpınar still speaks in the very same language of the streets and daily communication and exchange. The absence of communicative aspect is impossible on all counts. However, if one of these

1 Rancière makes this case quite insistently in his readings of Kafka, Melville and even Deleuze. In fact I take his reading of Deleuzean aesthetics as by far the most creative and useful – “a literary misunderstanding” as this reading may involve. See Politics of Literature for a lengthy definition of the literary misunderstanding, which is repeated summarily in the introduction of “Existe-t-il une esthétique deleuzienne?” in Gilles Deleuze, Une Vie Philosophique, ed. by Éric Alliez (Paris: Institut Synthélabo, 1998). For instance, Deleuze’s notion that Kafka speaks a second language, a language beyond the language of exchange, is simply “allegorizing” language for Rancière. This is because, had Kafka in fact registered Gregor Samsa’s insectile noises in his novel, none of us would be able to receive what is being “communicated.” Deleuze, moreover, will have to refer us for instance to the storyline and stylistic peculiarities of Kafka’s novels and parables to point to the existence of this second language. The fact is, this second language, the language of the “desert,” as it were, a language within language, is nowhere to be found other than in storylines, in those most conventional of all elements of any narrative. I will discuss this in the next chapter in the context of Tanpınar’s historical imaginary. See also “From One Image to Another? Deleuze and the Ages of Cinema” in Film Fables, trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 107-124. For an explanation of Rancière’s position on Deleuze in “daily” language, see “Deleuze accomplit le destin de l’esthétique,” in Magazine littéraire 406 (February 2002), 38.
two aspects, the intransitive and transitive aspects, makes the other impossible; if literature qua literature does not say something (do something, as Valéry has it, get involved in something like “communicative action”), or if the saying only says nothing under its literary garb, then we have the literary failure, but that of literature qua literature.

Well, if we follow Valéry (but also Adorno, for instance, whose take on Valéry I will address shortly) this is the paradoxical condition of all modern art and literature. Adorno had a solution for this paradox, which involved an alternative form of artistic enchantment (just as Bourdieu had a solution, as we have seen, which was the exact opposite; not complete disenchantment, but an activism that is outright hypocrisy in its self-righteous instrumentalism, and which simply looks like embezzlement from Tanpinar’s perspective). The former, again, is a philosophical account of literary activity. By contrast, again, Tanpinar’s account is specifically literary; it takes place in a novel after all. Yet despite his literarism, Tanpinar has no interest whatsoever in “solutions,” not for literature, not for writing in whatever genre. For him there is restlessness in this modern world of ours, one that is more acute in this part of the world than any other; so there can be nothing other than restlessness to put on paper. For Tanpinar the whole question seems to be precisely this: how to put restlessness on paper, or how to do literature in such a way that restlessness would come naturally to one’s way of saying. But to make such a case one must consider the alternatives.

Indeed one can compare for instance Valéry’s complaints about the barbarity of “the museum” to Tanpinar’s criticism of Ziya Pasha’s compilation of poems in Harabat to
show how Tanpınar takes this kind of literature, i.e. Ziya Pasha’s canonical literature, primarily to have killed the joy of poetry by canonizing it, museumizing it, taking it away from the immediacy of life, rendering it speechless, like some “commercial decoration” of sorts.2

Tanpınar celebrates Ziya Pasha, on the other hand, for having introduced some “restlessness” into the world of Ottoman literature with his own poetic saying. On the one hand Ziya Pasha was caught in the worn out rhythms and rhymes of ancient Muslim poetry, simply repeating them even in his poetry and his compilation, on the other hand he introduced something new, some disturbance into this tradition. It is as if Ziya Pasha just laughs, incapable of praying like the harabati and incapable of doing literature. In all this there is something extraordinary so long as there is at least the laughter and restlessness, a joyful resignation, some sad celebration.

At least Ziya Pasha laughs, loud and clear, as Tanpınar explains under the subtitle “in between his humor and his thoughts”:

Having spent a highly eventful life in misery in the middle of the tension in between his ambitions and passions and thoughts, this intelligent and sociable man of the palace, this lover of freedom, this rind or kalender according to circumstance, who was always ambitious and who always displayed a weakness for luxury, who apparently by birth had an aura of the great statesman and yet, doing his best to fulfill this destiny, was also utterly incompetent when it came to seizing the opportunity, hence forever scheming and yet at the same time honest, impatient perhaps and oppressive, even vindictive yet at the same time loyal and always ready to forgive, this Ziya

2 For a canonical discussion of Valéry’s trouble with the Louvre, see Theodor W. Adorno, “Valéry Proust Museum,” in Prisms, trans. Samuel Weber and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 175-85. Adorno explains Valéry’s concerns about the “joy” of life there as well, which are quite parallel to Tanpınar’s, unsurprisingly. Tanpınar makes similar comments about Harabat, suggesting for instance that Ziya Pasha does not even know what to do with some of the items in “his” museum. See for instance OAE, 310-1.
Pasha of ours died of hectic fever, far away from the centre and the fortunes he had pursued for ages, far from all the fights and struggles he so loved, almost on top of the ruins of his great expectations, [...] laughing out loud at all his past misfortunes. [...] Ziya Pasha is the prototypical intellectual of the second Tanzimat era. His life and work, just as his times, were caught in a bizarre duplicity. (OAE, 283)

This is also to say that in this great man there is something childlike, an incompetence that is amiable, some blind ambition that is only innocent. Alternatively there is something barbaric about Ziya Pasha, something unrefined and immature. He is a revolutionary and a reactionary, “according to circumstance.” This barbarity and immaturity is also somewhat charming.³ It is as if there is something more real about it. Because “the truth is that Ziya Pasha lives through the indecision and resistance that this age had disseminated across all the facets of life.” (285)

That his art is inescapably marked by his time and place should not prevent us from loving him, says Tanpinar. The restlessness had to be included in the equation because Ziya Pasha’s relationship to the real and concrete world had turned restless. The pasha’s barbarity is sometimes charming in the following way:

³ There are different ways of taking this sort of immature barbarity seriously and to recognize its charms. Tanpinar’s (sometimes nostalgic) approach to late Ottoman literary world and its “barbaric laughter” can be compared to Carl Schmitt’s fascination with Shakespearean barbarity of literature, for instance, which he formulates in Hamlet or Hecuba. That would make Tanpinar appear quite the conservative. Schmitt’s fascination, which he shared with Auerbach, had to do with defining the relationship of writing to “reality,” of the reality of the life in common. But an even better comparison, surely far beyond the scope of this dissertation, would be between Tanpinar’s novels and Witold Gombrowicz’s novels. This long forgotten, “eastern European” novelist’s Ferdydurke, trans. Danuta Borchardt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000 [1939]) is a “novel of institution” that addresses precisely the issue of the charms of immaturity and barbarity. Ferdydurke never grows up in that novel even as he gets old, which causes him great trouble as he faces one institution after another, very much like İrdal. But the ultimate exposition of Gombrowicz’s (alternative) fascination with immaturity is to be found in the novel Pornografia, trans. Danuta Borchardt, (New York: Grove Press, 2009 [1960]).
Perhaps one of the reasons why he appears charming for us is that, unlike many of his contemporaries, he does not try to hide this duplicity, but on the contrary lives through it right in front of us like an affliction, willfully embracing all the suffering inflicted on him. Thus he is perhaps the liveliest man of his age.

So we have a barbaric and loud laughter, literally poor, “philosophically restless,” yet somehow, even paradoxically relevant socially and historically, hence charming. By contrast, Tanpinar is polite, more “chic,” as we will see shortly. He raises his voice literally, even if this means, again quite paradoxically, to say nothing or speak silence, as he suggests. The Time Regulation Institute seems to be suspended between these two positions. It is at once a barbaric laughter that resembles Ziya Pasha’s laughter in his deathbed, and silent like literature proper. Because Ziya Pasha has nothing to hide, Tanpinar has something to hide. That Ziya Pasha has nothing to hide, that he is incapable of hiding, is because he is literally poor, which is also charming because it suggests that in his “affliction” at least he has some connection to the reality of the world he lives in, to the reality of the life in common. What exactly does it mean that Tanpinar has something to hide? What exactly is he hiding? What kind of silence and hiding is this?

But let us put everything together before moving forward. Tanpinar’s gaze surveys the world with the “confidence of the great makers.” This kind of making, the making of the “great makers,” is not one that simply makes up things. It requires faith in life at all cost to begin with, and a dedication to the joy of life, which is a simple thing, something that belongs to the simple, to the people, to the life in common, not to the scholar or the writer who steps away from the people, or the critic of “empathetic” relationship to the work of
art, for instance. The people, or rather the life in common is not a “product of intellect.” One cannot make up lives or a people while doing literature proper. True literature has to do with faith in the people, and it has to do with some kind of making, confidently making, with the confidence of the great makers and their laughters. It is the “colors and lights” overflowing the faith in the people. The makers in question know how “to taste the happiness of life in the exact same way the great nature appears to be happy simply to be” and they simply make things, like the “artisan in Valéry” of whom Adorno speaks, without making up things. Very much like a shoemaker, yet outside the quotidian world of exchange and communication.

4 See Ulrich Plass’s Language and History in Theodor W. Adorno’s Notes to Literature (New York: Routledge, 2007), and particularly “Rauschen: Eichendorff” (49-72) for a discussion of Adorno’s reaction to hermeneutic tradition, his understanding of the “enigma” and fireworks. Plass summarizes Adorno’s position as follows: “Adorno ... unceremoniously rejects Dilthey’s hermeneutics (so important for German literary criticism in the early twentieth century) because of its central emphasis on subjective, lived experience [Erlebnis], which Adorno, following Walter Benjamin’s theoretical lead, distinguishes from experience in the sense of Erfahrung. While in Dilthey’s theory artworks are documents that allow the reader to enter into the experience of the creative subject, who authored the work by means of empathy [Einfühlung], Adorno presents his aesthetic theory (which can, of course, in no way be restricted to questions of understanding) as addressing the experience of the aesthetic object: the experiencing subject is eclipsed in favor of the aesthetic object [Gegenstand], the work of art itself. This structural limitation on aesthetic experience is historical. The trouble with understanding is that it presupposes a continuity of meaning [Sinnzusammenhang] that the recipient can reconstruct [mitvollziehen] by means of empathy. Yet modern artworks do not offer an unbroken Sinnzusammenhang, and empathy will leave the recipient at a loss. Consequently, Adorno seeks to grasp aesthetic cognition as ‘the form of knowledge that is not knowledge of an object.’ The work of art is not an object that allows itself to be subsumed under universal categories of objective knowledge. Because an element of truth is essential to artworks, they are said to ‘participate in knowledge.’ Adorno’s phrase ‘knowledge of the artworks’ [Erkenntnis der Kunstwerke] must be read as a double genitive: On the one hand, the artwork is something to be known (objective genitive); on the other hand, the artwork, as Adorno puts it, ‘participates’ in knowledge (subjective genitive). Artworks are not mere objects of knowledge, things that can be known by a subject exterior to them; they are also personified ‘subjects’ of knowledge, entities that know. This paradoxical double character is at the heart of aesthetic experience—it marks the limit of aesthetic understanding.” (49-50)
So perhaps one could argue that conjuring up stories of the sort Tanpınar wrote, to produce a real work of art in this sense, is similar to making fireworks that gather people looking up at them. Valéry was very much interested in fireworks.\(^5\) Literature is perhaps similar to the work of a great artisan for Tanpınar, of a magician or illusionist, which is what another admirer of Valéry, namely Adorno would articulate further.\(^6\)

\(^5\) “He tried, I thought, finally to raise a page to the heights of the starry sky,” is only one famous quote from Valéry one can discuss in relation to his fireworks. Yet this one is the most useful for the dialogue between Mümtez and Nuran that I will refer to shortly. See *Variete II* (Paris: Gallimard, 1930), 199. For fireworks and their place in Valéry’s master Mallarmé’s work, see Rancière, *Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren*, trans. S. Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2011). Although this is beyond the scope of the chapter, there we also find the theme that I address only in passing in this dissertation, namely that of the “relationship” between literature qua literature and religion, the one that Rancière tries hard to redress by making literature into a religion of books in general, as opposed to the religion of the Book. Here is a plain explanation, in the context of “fireworks” as well, from Mallarmé: “Literature, then, rediscovers the circle of the Christian proof of Scripture. […] The Book and the Body have to confirm each other indefinitely. And the inheritors of the Book were obliged to carry endlessly on with confirming it: by the infinite return of the Book on itself, by the sacrament which is overloaded with symbols in order to confirm the identity of the text and the body or, conversely, by the sacrifice which goes to the extreme of dispossessing so as to expose a body to the verification of the letter. […] Mallarmé] wanted to uphold a twofold requirement: to make the poem into the religion of the future, and simultaneously to refuse all incarnation for this religion or a body of any sort to guarantee the poem, whether that of the subject it represents or of the community that it animates. The poem must be the ‘hymn, harmony, joy, a pure cluster grouped together in some shining circumstance, tying together the relations among everything’. But ‘the man charged with seeing divinely, because of the willed limipidity of the links, has only, before his gaze, the parallelism of pages as model’]. The ‘proof’ of literature thus achieves its radicality in the paradox of Mallarmé, which can be stated as follows: the poem must contain, uniquely in the materiality of its arrangement, the incorporation which guarantees it. Its form must simultaneously be the body and the idea of its idea.” (57-8)

\(^6\) Orhan Pamuk’s *White Castle*, trans. Maureen Freely (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), a gem of a novella, telling a story about the introduction of the Turk to the European “techniques” of story telling, gives us a development in stages of the capacity to tell tales like a Westerner. Fireworks are one of them.
The phenomenon of fireworks is prototypical for artworks, though because of its fleetingness and status as empty entertainment it has scarcely been acknowledged by theoretical consideration; only Valéry pursued ideas that are at least related. Fireworks are apparition κατ εξοχήν: They appear empirically yet are liberated from the burden of the empirical, which is the obligation of duration; they are a sign from heaven yet artifactual, an ominous warning [Menetekel], a script that flashes up, vanishes, and indeed cannot be read for its meaning.

There are many such passages in Adorno’s writings about art and literature, and concepts such as Rätsel, which he shares with Heidegger, all suggesting more or less this same distance to hermeneutic, but also, as we can say now (after Rancière), “representational” undertaking. Heidegger, for instance, also emphasizes the “silence” of poetic saying in a way that could be taken to resemble Tanpinar’s embracing of silence.

Heidegger moreover describes the work of reading and writing poetry in such a way that

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8 See Heidegger, “On the Origin of the Work of Art” in Basic Writings, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 2008) 143-212. The famous Rätsel moment is this one: “The present considerations approach the enigma of art, the enigma that is art itself. There is no pretense to solve the enigma. The task is to see the enigma.”
every notion we have encountered so far in Tanpınar’s thinking (silence, clarity, form, purity, the “people” etc.) seems to find its equivalent in this passage:

Every great poet creates his poetry out of one single poetic statement only. The measure of his greatness is the extent to which he becomes so committed to that singleness that he is able to keep his poetic Saying wholly within it. The poet’s statement remains unspoken. None of his individual poems, nor their totality, says it all. Nonetheless, every poem speaks from the whole of the one single statement, and in each instance says that statement. From the site of the statement there rises the wave that in each instance moves his Saying as poetic saying. But that wave, far from leaving the site behind, in its rise causes all the movement of Saying to flow back to its ever more hidden source. The site of the poetic statement, source of the movement-giving wave, holds within it the hidden nature of what, from a metaphysical-aesthetic point of view, may at first appear to be rhythm. Since the poet’s sole statement always remains in the realm of the unspoken, we can discuss its site only by trying to point to it by means of what the individual poems speak. But to do so, each poem will itself be in need of clarification. Clarification is what brings to its first appearance that purity which shimmers in everything said poetically. It is easy to see that any right clarification itself already presupposes discussion. The individual poems derive their light and sound only from the poetic site. Conversely, the discussion of the poetic statement must first pass through the precursory clarification of individual poems. All thinking dialogue with a poet’s poetic statement stays within this reciprocity between discussion and clarification.9

One can go further to question these two ways of looking at the literary-poetic address as they relate to an understanding of the life in common, i.e. in terms of what Tanpınar calls “faith in the people.” One can think of Adorno’s literary experience as that of a crowd watching fireworks. Bound as the members of such a crowd may be to each other, even with a magic-like enchantment, their being-with would still be somewhat ephemeral like the fireworks that bind them. The “roots” of this common experience, of

this brilliant and colorful collectivity, would be up in the air, very much like the fireworks.

One can contrast this to Heidegger’s primitive poetic “spear” that gathers everything at its pit. The poet-hunter would be on a quest to catch his addressee according to this latter, himself the pit of a spear thrown to stick to our hearts, in turn making out of us a spear, all of us thrown, together as one, at the ultimate aim, flying out in the open with the poet-Führer in front of us.  

10 “Ursprünglich bedeutet der Name ‘Ort’ die Spitze des Speers. In ihr läuft alles zusammen. Der Ort versammelt sich ins Höchste und Äußerste. Das Versammelnde durchdringt und durchwest alles. Der Ort, das Versammelnde, holt zu sich ein, verwahrt das Eingeholte, aber nicht wie eine abschließende Kapsel, sondern so, daß er das Versammelte durchscheint und durchleuchtet und dadurch erst in sein Wesen einlässt.” Heidegger, Unterwegs zur Sprache (Stuttgart: Günther Neske, 1993 [1959]), 37. The translation of this crucial passage in Heidegger, On the Way to Language, is flawed. The subtitle of this essay is “Eine Erörterung von Georg Trakls Gedicht.” Heidegger plays with the Ort (place, but also etymologically, as Heidegger explains, the tip of the spear) of Er(ört)erung (which is “discussion,” etymologically suggesting something resembling “contextualization,” but a word that is commonly used in the sense of “debate,” or simply engagement to understand, not simply academic or scholarly). Here is another, certainly equally flawed, but rather more interpretive translation of mine: “Originally the name ‘Ort’ meant the tip of the spear. In it comes everything together. The place, site, the tip of the spear gathers unto itself supremely and extremely. The gathering permeates and pervades everything. The place of the gathering gathers in and preserves the unity, not as a final (enclosing) capsule, but so that it shines through the assemblage, only thereby releasing it to its essence.” The expression “durchscheint und durchleuchtet und dadurch,” one of the most dramatic moments of Heidegger’s discussion of Trakl, makes one think of a spear going through one’s body, almost without touching it. The “place” of the gathering gives a sense of publicness, one can think of a demonstration in a “square,” for instance. But one could even think of this setting as one of a modern “salon,” since the topic is poetry here.

11 See “Bizde Roman I-II.”
The former could be read as an attempt to theorize poetry, literature, myth and “enlightenment” after Auschwitz, while the latter could easily bring to mind Hitler saluting his mesmerized audiences in black and white footages.

These would describe two different ways of “believing in the people” to do literature, setting yet another plane as Ort, “stage” or “context” or “place,” to discuss Tanpinar and his silence and faith in the people, his fascination with “colors and lights.” This would be the setting for a secret, displayed either in black and white or in color for those who have the eyes to see, a secret either uniting them in dissolution in urban squares or uniting them as one out in the open.

12 Is it not shocking that the debate on “literary communism,” as it developed in the Nancy-Blanchot interaction of a few decades ago, took place in the very same “place” Adorno occupied? Even the inspiration of this interaction for Derrida (Politics of Friendship, trans. George Collins [London: Verso, 1997]) and Agamben (his notion of “poetry” as a performance of inoperativity, as discussed above) boils down to one single question: how to do literature, what to do with the “literary address,” after Auschwitz. What is shocking is that it is always as if only literature needs saving in these narratives. Even Adorno’s most “poetic” statement about “literature after Auschwitz” seems to be caught in this paradox. But perhaps Adorno never even meant to say “no poetry after Auschwitz”: see Klaus Hofman, “Poetry after Auschwitz: Adorno’s dictum,” German Life and Letters 58:2 (April 2005), 182-94.

13 The fireworks figure can be traced further in contemporary thought, of course, all the way to Foucault. In a 1975 interview he says this: “I would like my books to be sorts of scalpels, Molotov cocktails or minefields and that they would explode after use like fireworks.” Translation from C. O’Farrell, Foucault: Historian or Philosopher? (London: Macmillan, 1989), 93. Fireworks that explode after use may sound somewhat ephemeral, like Adorno’s fireworks. I think this ultimately “poetic” statement places Foucault right next to Bourdieu, however, with his insistence on the tangible and the real. Fireworks as fireworks (or literature as literature, for that matter) are not enough for him. Nor are they enough for Tanpinar, obviously, just as they were not enough for Valéry or even Adorno. But Tanpinar’s and others’, and in the contemporary scene Rancière’s literary politics do not necessitate the replacement of fireworks with Molotov cocktails. Indeed, Rancière’s search for politics in “literature qua literature” (most explicitly in Politics of Literature) involves more elaborate terms for a comparison. As I have indicated, though, this latter takes us to an expansive mysticism in the final analysis, and a very particular one.
After all, all these words, the words of the philosophers and the words of Tanpınar, were written around the same time, in more or less the same place, moreover, in the same cultural and historical “climate” and responding to more or less the same events. All of these figures were concerned with technology and the state, for instance, education and the people, the war, tradition and art, European literature and its future etc. The Time Regulation Institute was serialized short after Tanpınar’s first long literary-intellectual pilgrimage to western Europe in 1953, and was published separately in 1961, which is the period during which our two philosophers, along with so many others, philosophized about secrets. Tanpınar too, unsurprisingly, was interested in the relationship between secrecy and art.

In an interview published right before the serialization of the novel, which the interviewer introduces with comments about how “we all know” that Tanpınar had become more “chic” since his return from Europe, Tanpınar says he does not write novels that come with keys to open them, nor does he believe, moreover, that such writing is possible.14

Nor is İrdal, the narrator and the protagonist of the novel, a real person. He does not stand for or resemble anyone or any people. It is silly to compare him to a real person, or to take him to be a model of sorts representing this or that (Turkish or

14 Ayşe Nur, “Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar Yeni Eserini Anlatıyor,” [Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar speaks about His new novel”] Yeni İstanbul Gazetesi no 1646 (June 19, 1954). The interview was republished in EÜM, 553-5.
modern, Muslim or humble) people. Tanpınar adds, though, that he believes the dictum that “nature imitates art.”

One “encounters” art, accordingly, only after its creation, and in the real world. İrdal, Tanpınar says, is a humorous, jolly good fellow, and “perhaps,” he adds, “he also knows how to see. He enjoys speaking, even if this entails speaking against himself.”

Enclosures and disclosures

The Time Regulation Institute, accordingly, was meant to be something like a book of secrets, a secret disclosed as secret, like fireworks or a riddle. But it ended up staging the profanity and emptiness, as opposed to the “divination” of the secret as secret. İrdal the narrator, after his creation, is someone we can meet in the real world, in the sense that this figure “conditions the way that we perceive life.”

Indeed in this interview, Tanpınar says that the whole thing was about himself missing the ferry because the clocks of Istanbul were not in tune: “I met him [İrdal] in

15 “Even those who hold that Art is representative of time and place and people, cannot help admitting that the more imitative an art is, the less it represents to us the spirit of its ages,” as already Oscar Wilde suggests in Intentions (London: Osgood, McIlvane & Co., 1891), 44. Michael Patrick Gillespie, in Oscar Wilde and the Poetics of Ambiguity (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996) comes up with the following comment about Wilde’s position, which is helpful to understand Tanpınar’s position as well: Wilde’s dictum “does not simply say that nature imitates art. It extends the concept to suggest that art conditions the way that we perceive life,” 38. It is easy to see the resonances of this evaluation with Rancière’s take on the history of modern literature.
front of the ferry in Kadıköy, after which he never left me. I wrote this novel to get rid of him.” (554-55) What kind of madness, what kind of “affliction” is this?

İrdal certainly conditions Tanpinar’s way of perceiving his art. After this experiment, the result is not happy news at all, at least not for the writer. And this is what he has to tell us, secretively perhaps but not as a secret, quite openly actually. Perhaps, then, a little like Ziya Pasha, Tanpinar lives through his particular affliction right in front of us, and for us to see.

For Tanpinar is not interested in dis-enclosing secrets to set stages such as the one for Adorno’s fireworks, or in “places” such as the “open,” which is where Heidegger’s spear flies toward its aim. What if Tanpinar was concerned with such places themselves and more precisely with the divination they bring about? What if Tanpinar was pointing to the Janus face of the discourse on secrecy?

Perhaps he is not so naïve as to think that the secrets of a novel can be disclosed, or that a novel can disclose the secrets of a life in common. Perhaps he too is interested in dis-enclosing the secret as secret, which does not necessitate the divination of the secret. Perhaps he simply points to the possible difference between these two statements: “It’s secret!” and “It’s a secret.”

16 “In the end it was something that was born out of a few words. It resembled a fable in that way. I told Halit bey a few stories. Halit bey looked at the clocks that were not in accord, while remembering that he was unemployed. And others believed him. In the mean time just because the clocks in the city were not in accord a notable missed another notable’s funeral. This is why they found a building for us in ten days, allocated a budget for our work, furnished an office to the best of their ability, and as if this was not enough, they did their best to provide us with our needs every day after that. What the heck was that all about? What was its place in life?” (SAE, 225)
One could ask another question to clarify this point: Is Tanpinar one of Frank Kermode’s unhappy writers who, against all odds, “prefer antinomianism and the unhappiness of ... complete isolation”? But this is not Tanpinar’s position at all.

Tanpinar’s writing is a declaration of faith in a life in common. He is just not interested in the square where the “public” gathers for this or that purpose, for acclamation of whatever sort. He looks at this gathering or celebration from a distance, together with those who continue to live in the daily routine of their nondescript lives, the “people” who are not necessarily mesmerized by fireworks, for instance, but “who knew how to see and comforted and entertained themselves with what they saw” in daylight.

17 Frank Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative (Harvard University Press, 1979). “[...] Some suppose that it is right to inquire strictly into the question of what the text originally meant. Others wish to discover what it originally means, a more charismatic quest. Some seek to liberate texts from all historical constraint by a process of ‘deconstruction,’ others speak of foregoing the banal pleasures of continuity with the original sense for the sake of a joy more acute, if more dismaying, a jouissance that goes beyond the pleasure principle and arises from a quasi-sexual experience of loss and perversity. Yet all practice divination, however intermittently, erroneously, dishonestly, or disappointedly; most of all, disappointedly. For whether one thinks that one’s purpose is to recognize the original meaning, or to fall headlong into a text that is a treacherous network rather than a continuous and systematic sequence, one may be sure of one thing, and that is disappointment. It has sometimes been thought, and in my opinion rightly, that the world is also like that; or that we are like that in respect of the world. Yet we have ways of working through the world, and ways of explaining unfollowable texts. There are certain conditions which make the task more comfortable: more or less acquiescent in the authority of institutions, more or less happy that we have an acquired taste for fulfillments, for a state of affairs in which everything hangs together, we accept a measure of private intermittency in our interpretations — unless we are unhappy because such acquiescence is an acceptance of untruth, and prefer antinomianism and the unhappiness of an even more complete isolation. In any case, a sense of mystery is a different thing from an ability to interpret it, and the largest consolation is that without interpretation there would be no mystery. What must not be looked for is some obvious public success. To see, even to perceive, to hear, even to understand, is not the same thing as to explain or even the same thing as to have access. The desires of interpreters are good because without them the world and the text are tacitly declared to be impossible; perhaps they are, but we must live as if the case were otherwise.” (126, it. added)
If we were to compare Adorno’s crowds watching fireworks to Tanpınar’s crowds, we would have to point to those who, in their rush for the soon departing train, could not care less about fireworks. If we were to compare Heidegger’s “open” to Tanpınar’s “country,” we would have to say that Tanpınar is interested in the non-places such as those one looks at from a passing train, or better still those little islands, small pieces of land at the intersection of highways, nondescript little corners that are doomed to remain untouched. It is as if to say that there is nothing disturbing about the colors and lights, in all those artistic explosions; restlessness and awakening, enlightenment and seeing have to do with the non-descript and meaningless colors of the so-called everyday reality that cannot possibly be contained in any story.

We are indeed familiar with secrecy such as the one Adorno and Heidegger speak of in the passages quoted above through Frank Kermode’s plain and genuine engagement with the subject matter. His figure of “the man in the mackintosh” perfectly explains the main hunch of this literary theology. Tanpınar was not even throwing in a book of secrets like Ulysses when he published The Time Regulation Institute, his intention was not to keep critics (or anyone for that matter) busy for ages; nor had he such ambitions or even the confidence. That sort of confidence would not have anything to do with the faith in the life in common. It would be the confidence of the thief or the embezzler. Tanpınar’s confidence is of a different sort, as we have seen; it is the confidence of a maker of things.

His “hole riddled umbrella,” moreover, does not function like Kermode’s mysterious mackintosh. Tanpınar is loud and clear about his strong opinions, perhaps a
little like Heidegger in his Spiegel interview. Yet his novel is not a journalistic or philosophical exposition of these opinions either.

His strong opinions concern the fact that “we have ways of working through the world,” which for Kermode was something of a consolation. If there is a sadness involved in Tanpınar’s attitude, it is not one that drives from the solitude of writing, but one that drives from how things actually work.

*The Time Regulation Institute* shows how Tanpınar has no restraints whatsoever in declaring his faith in the people, certainly no “painstaking enthusiasms or abhorences,” not even when it comes to writing and literature, fireworks, squares or the open. He does not choose solitude, on the contrary he battles with it and he ridicules it. He is not unhappy in that way.

One of his previous novels, namely *A Mind at Peace* (*Huzur*, simply “Peace”)\(^\text{18}\) is an extraordinary exposition of this attitude. That novel, in turn, is a novel of an inexplicable suspension, of an infinite anxiety and an impossible resolution, in short of everything one can contrast with “peace” and peace of mind. Every character in the novel is afflicted by some strange restlessness. It ends, moreover, with the announcement of a world war, of Hitler’s decisive attack on the Turkish radio (this thing that İrdal hates most).

This is no simple irony. Looking for peace, surveying the world to find peace with the “confidence of the great makers,” Tanpınar finds something else, namely

madness, restlessness and war. He is “confidant” enough to observe that there is no peace in this modern world of ours, confidant enough to observe that peace of mind is not possible here: he can smirk, if not laugh out loud, at the idea of peace and the peace of mind in this day and age. He is, then, in peace with this “reality” to a certain extent, which is the reason why he can write about it indifferently.

He can write indifferently even about writing and literature, which is what he does in *The Time Regulation Institute*. One of the main characters of *A Mind at Peace*, namely Mümtaz, writing a historical novel about the Mevlevi poet Shaykh Galib, raises the questions Tanpinar would address in *The Time Regulation Institute*:

“[… ] Does a story have to start at one point and end at another? Do the characters have to move rigidly like locomotives on fixed rails? Maybe it’s sufficient if the story line takes life itself as a framework, gathering it around a few characters. It’s enough if Shaykh Galip appears in this framework amid these people through the effects of his outlook and a few biographical scenes.” Then, looking at the opposite shore, he added, “Under one condition…”

“Under what condition, Mümtaz?”

“The story should describe us and our environment. […] Only this way can I avoid getting stuck to the page. [And going beyond] like the flesh of fruit that clings to the pit, to the essential idea…”

[Interrupting him.] Nuran said, “I’ve got it! The entire Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, Istanbul, the seen and the unseen, and all of us are like the fruit around the pit of the moon. We’ve always clung to it. Just look at these hilltops. […] Your so-called essential idea, what is that?”

“The hidden face of life that smiles within us,” he said. (213-4, trans. modified)

So we have here the flesh of the fruit that clings to the *pit*, which, read backwards, would give us the *tip* of the spear anyway. Nuran buys into this story for a second. “He tried, I thought, finally to raise a page to the heights of the starry sky…”19 But then, sensing the

19 See note 5.
reversal, perhaps, she is smart enough to pose the “hills” and the moon against the
fireworks. Mümtaz wants to go beyond the page, after all, beyond the story, like
Tanpinar. But all he can do is lightening a few firecrackers, if he can. And faced with
Nuran’s unobjectionable objection, he ends up, very much like Tanpinar would, with a
secret smile (not even a laughter; he is too polite, too “chic” for that, and perhaps a little
shy too. The translator of the novel has no option to translate the word “aşk” that follows
– which is love, erotic and otherwise – and which is what Mümtaz’s “smile” is about, as
“Eros.” This is how Mümtaz comes down to the “life at the foot of the hill.”) Tanpinar
will respond to Mümtaz in The Time Regulation Institute in a similar way. Not with
laughter but with the “hidden face of life that smiles within us.”

The answer, of course, is that there is no such thing as a story that does not “start
at one point and end at another,” and yes, in a story characters “have to move rigidly like
locomotives on fixed rails.” There is no such thing as a story taking “life itself as a
framework.” It is simply impossible. Ziya Pasha had tried to do that, actually, and even
in an “anthology,” which, as we will see shortly, was not only doomed to fail as an
anthology, but also ruined everything it was meant to animate.

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20 As, again, Benjamin points out: “Whether the pupils have lost it or whether they are unable to
decipher it comes down to the same thing, because, without the key that belongs to it, the
Scripture is not Scripture, but life. Life as it is lived in the village at the foot of the hill on which
the castle is built. It is in the attempt to metamorphize life into Scripture that I perceive the
meaning of ‘reversal’ […]” The Correspondence, 135. It is as if Nuran says: But taking life as
framework would simply be a reversal, we are “at the foot of the hill.” Scholem’s point was that
“those pupils of whom you speak at the end are not so much those who have lost the Scripture
[…] but rather those students who cannot decipher it. And it seems to me utterly compelling that
a world in which things are so uncannily concrete and in which not a step can be fulfilled will
present an abject and by no means idyllic sight.” (127)
But then perhaps the question is not about the relationship between the word and the thing, life and writing. Perhaps the question is more properly how to live, as a writer or an intellectual, or as a reader of novels, in accordance with the premises The Time Regulation Institute formulates. Ziya Pasha’s laughter has to be translated, it cannot be simply imitated. Tanpinar could not have expressed his restlessness and unhappiness like Ziya Pasha did. To laugh like Ziya Pasha, Tanpinar has to grit his teeth.

İrdal, after all, is a simple man who, despite all his extraordinary adventures, simply wants to earn a living, he simply wants to be and wants everybody to let him be, which is the overall message he tries to deliver in the novel. The trouble is, only fifty years before, he could not have possibly earned a living making up stories like the one he made up about Ahmet Zamani. Ziya Pasha could not have written novels such as the one Tanpinar writes.

Nor could Tanpinar decide to become a Ziya Pasha, or write like him in his own time. If Tanpinar wrote like Ziya Pasha in his own day, he would have appeared simply reactionary. Ziya Pasha’s revolutionary discourse of restlessness would appear reactionary in Tanpinar’s mouth. It works in Ziya Pasha’s own day, poor as it may appear literarily only retrospectively. Tanpinar’s world works in a different way.

To do what Ziya Pasha did, he has to adjust his voice a little bit, all the way to silence. If Ziya Pasha failed in laughter, Tanpinar would fail smirking. Ziya Pasha did not do this by making up stories, and even his compilation only attests to the impossibility of compiling an anthology of “Ottoman poetry” in this way, which is also why it was a mad undertaking.
He had to put together poems in three different languages, and write another poem in Turkish as for an introduction to his compilation. This kind of thing did not work for him. Because without a story, with only something like life itself as a framework, poems could not follow each other “rigidly like locomotives on fixed rails” or in any other way to make up a proper anthology, from cover to cover, as it were. Nor did the Pasha feel like reversing things, make a story out of what he had in front of him.

In Tanpınar’s world, though, everything works, and works precisely that way. So Tanpınar aligns with Ziya Pasha, but for him it is too late for the laughter.

_Everything works_

Perhaps Tanpınar’s trouble is that he is overly capable of literature and perhaps even unintentionally. He knows all the ingredients and he has the proper measuring cups as well. He can even write an “absurd novel” such as this one (as Turkish critics have been calling it for generations, as if it means anything) and get away with it, think along these most elaborate and abstract terms and even voice his thoughts seriously and in an articulate manner.

Such a thing would not be possible for his ancestors whose history he wrote. Even those among them who were ahead of their time, coming close to Tanpınar, were accused by Tanpınar himself for being a threat to the life in common, to the “national life,” like a “hole made in time,” perhaps. On all counts they did not have enough readers to begin with nor a “public” to address strictly speaking, not even the infrastructure for it (an efficient media technology, or “public” squares for that matter).
Now Tanpınar has readers and even fans here and there. He can write a novel of world literary caliber. But there is a price to pay for this, perhaps even a price paid in advance. One only gets caught in that storm. To open one’s wings, to set to work to write such a novel, only blows one away meaninglessly in the face of the wreckage, and meaninglessly into the wreckage. All Tanpınar has to do is to sit at the writing desk and the rest follows. All he has to do is to set to work and everything works that way.

The thing is once upon a time things did not work that smoothly. As I have explained, Tanpınar is the theorist who looked at nineteenth century Turkish literature as the site of a crisis, of an identity crisis, of something like a chemical reaction that has to do with the wine, resulting from what Tanpınar called duplicity. It was about how the first modern men of letters of the Muslim world, the Ottoman revolutionaries of the late nineteenth century, just could not get it right when they set to work to do literature, since they were caught in a tension between two different ways of living and thinking, of saying and being.

Some of these people were backward-thinking and wasted, or harabati, whose work was hardly literary in the modern sense. Yet they did write for a medium that had never existed before, and small as it may have been or even fictional, for a reading public, even compiling anthologies, which is to say they did something like literature, they were not simply wasted harabati but perfectly sober.

Others were simply ruined completely since they were far ahead of their time, too ati, the best example being Beşir Fuad, who committed suicide after a discussion about the truth of the world as opposed to the truth of poetry, devoting his masterpiece, his own body to a hospital for scientific research (he was buried in a Muslim cemetery, obviously.
I discuss his life and work in Chapter Five). One can also mention Tevfik Fikret, another poet-prophet to whom at one point moving to New Zealand looked like the only viable option, since it was impossible to be the man of letters he wanted to be in Istanbul. These two were men of letters too, the first simply ruined, though, the second homeless. All these revolutionaries could not do literature proper, because literature itself was a site of crisis back in the day. As a result they became vagabonds, ruined and homeless, or simply harabi.

Now this novel, as I have explained, is about the lack of crises, and the inability of the man of letters, of Tanpınar himself, to instigate or perpetuate a crisis, or even to suffer, inability of literature to cause trouble or at least to remain the site of trouble. So everything works, and this is Tanpınar’s problem, the world, this corner of the world included, runs like clockwork. Everything makes sense, everything runs smoothly nowadays, this is why Tanpınar is sad. Literature works too, it works like clockwork, quite incomprehensibly. Everything works like clockwork.

Shall we say then that Tanpınar is the Turkish Heidegger, like Tanpınar’s Irbal being the Turkish Voltaire? Of course not, such attitude is exactly what The Time Regulation Institute mocks.

Nor would Tanpınar ever suggest that only a messiah or God, as would say Heidegger, or a poem or literature in Agamben’s account, could save us:

Everything is functioning. That is precisely what is awesome, that everything functions, that the functioning propels everything more and more toward further functioning, and that technicity increasingly dislodges man and uproots him from the earth. I don’t know if you were shocked, but [certainly] I was shocked when a short time ago I saw the pictures of the earth taken from the moon. We do not need atomic bombs at all [to uproot Its] – the uprooting of man is already here. All our relationships have become merely technical ones. It is no longer upon an earth that man lives today. Recently I had a long
dialogue in Provence with Réné Char – a poet and resistance fighter, as you know. In Provence now, launch pads are being built and the countryside laid waste in unimaginable fashion. This poet, who certainly is open to no suspicion of sentimentality or of glorifying the idyllic, said to me that the uprooting of man that is now taking place is the end [of everything human], unless thinking and poetizing once again regain [their] nonviolent power. 

Alternatively, if Tanpinar is left in a situation in which only a God or a book could save him, and us with him, then precisely this is the problem.

Nor is Tanpinar’s issue that of facing, finally perhaps, the unavoidable truth of the experience of one’s own language as the ultimate experience of the uncanny in the Freudian key. “Give it up for God’s sake,” says one of the main characters, “God damn your psychoanalysis. We’re drinking raki here.” (205) We’re doing literature here!

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21 “Only A God can Save Us,” in Heidegger, the Man and the Thinker, ed. Thomas Sheehan (Chicago: Precedent, 1980), 56. It is no newsflash that Agamben’s project can be viewed as taking the fundamental ontology to its rational conclusions, which is how one can relate everything I have said about Agamben’s “poetics” to this quote above. See Chapter Two, notes 10-11.

22 Erturk’s Grammatology in Turkey suggests that since the pure tongue proved impossible to find, impurity in speech, some feeling of uncanniness in one’s own speech, was the last resort as the literary experience for a novelist of Tanpinar’s caliber, which supposedly is the direction Tanpinar points at with this novel. But the idea of a language that is naturally the experience of the uncanny as one’s own language is full of contradictions anyway, and these contradictions are the topic of the novel to begin with. Whether one wants to come to terms with it or resist it on the side of what Erturk calls “grammatology,” for a problematic such as the uncanny to be possible, both language and uncanniness, let alone homeliness, should have been problematized in a certain way first. An uncanniness that is homely cannot be uncanniness anymore, that is to say. Another way of putting this is that there is no general problematic of representation. The experience of representation as problematic suggests a historical shift. I do not think that scholarship without such minimal historical sensitivity takes us anywhere, particularly when one reads writings from “our” part of the world. Mary Poovey’s Genres of Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008) explains this with perfect clarity in the context of Britain. Once there was representation, and none of its implications constituted a problem. Then came a crisis, and representation, the very feeling that one is at home in the world, became problematic. Remarkably, Poovey just dismisses in advance any ahistorical and abstract, universal problematic of representation. For her the problematic of representation is the becoming visible (significant, identifiable, hence socially and epistemologically relevant) of “the gap that separates the sign from its referent or ground (of value or meaning), whether the gap takes the form of deferral, substitution, approximation, or obscurity,” as an inherent “property of all systems of representation.” (5) From the perspective of
The analyst gives up on psychoanalysis to grab the lobster. As for the sociological and psychological account of things, when one says things without knowing what one says, when one is too much of a man of the people while trying to write about the people, one’s perspective is described as sociological or social psychological in this novel, like İrdal’s. The issue is that everything works, even literature. Irrelevant as it may appear to life in this world, and particularly to this part of the world, it does something or at least wants to do something and even violently, it produces an unnoticed tension that silently resonates across all the facets of life, and for some reason, resonates more in this part of the world than the rest.

And this man of letters has no say in this matter. He cannot make literature deliver its promise nor can he contain or domesticate it. Even this scheme, the scheme for writing an absurd novel in Turkish, runs perfectly, and perhaps Tanpınar had already figured that the novel would one day be translated to reach other markets, and dissertations would be written about it. If “Ziya Pasha lives through the indecision and resistance that this age had disseminated across all the facets of life,” Tanpınar lives through the impossibility and irrelevance of indecision, impossibility of resistance. Like

social functioning and historically, those narratives of ahistorical and abstract, universal problematic of representation means almost nothing: “Instead, I argue that representation becomes problematic – it presents problems that are both social and epistemological – only at certain times and under conditions that are historically and socially specific. A system of representation is experienced as problematic only when it ceases to work – that is, when something in the social context calls attention to the deferral or obfuscation of its authenticating ground.” (6) Neither writing nor representing one thing by another of any other sort is problematic in itself, and its experience as problematic has a history. Tanpınar’s last word is about the irreversibility of this history at best. But Tanpınar also had other concerns, such as the implications of this irreversibility.
Ziya Pasha, though, he has no secrets about this matter; he lives through it “like an affliction,” silently perhaps but right in front of us, not in solitude.

All this is to say that Tanpınar’s mockery of writers was also meant to address the absurdity of accounting for such writing and efficacy in the Freudian key or the Bourdieusian key, or the Heideggerian key for that matter.

Of course they work, these keys! And yet critics pick up one theoretical toolbox after the other to open up this or that compartment of Tanpınar’s, or anyone else’s “literary” work or writing. Of course these keys work, of course they make sense, this is because the screws were made compatible with them to begin with. That is the problem the novel articulates. It is a mockery of the attempts to approach it, and along with it literature at large, with those methodological fictions. One needs to be a little mad to think that Tanpınar is the Turkish Heidegger or Benjamin. One needs to be a mad to think that Tanpınar is the Turkish Balzac, Flaubert or Kafka, or even the Turkish or Muslim, revolutionary or reactionary Tanpınar.

“Poetry and Prose”

So Tanpınar knew that once things did not work so smoothly in Turkey. Literature just could not turn properly literary. People tried yet failed. For instance, according to Tanpınar, who in his history shares the great orator Namik Kemal’s wrath for Ziya Pasha, the pasha failed in the following way.

Ziya Pasha wrote one of the first essays, a great treatise in terms of breadth and ambition, on reading and writing in Ottoman language, and the difficulties in front of
these that delayed the creation of a modern, efficient media technology. The title of the essay is “Poetry and Prose,” which was meant to stand for literature in the absence of this word in this lifeworld. The question that the essay addresses is this: Do we have a language of our own, if so which one is it, and additionally do we have, as for historical evidence, a literature, as in an archive of wordy material?

The pasha lists a number of conditions for these things to exist before sharing his observations. He supports the formation of an orthography, standardization of grammar, literacy education, even canonization of the oral tradition as Turkish literature, where the true Turkish language was to be found. These were the measures to be taken. The suggestion is that the language and the literature are there in an ambivalent, non-tangible way, and so we are, like a promise or a potential. It is just that the words have to be made flesh, the cultural capital needs to be “objectified,” organized in a rational and conventional manner in actual books, for instance. As it stands poets write in a language that has nothing to do with the language spoken on the streets of Istanbul, and the men of the pen, those prose writers, meaning for instance those bureaucrats writing and copying stately documents, only understand each other’s writing, and this only among the members of the same generation.

23 Ziya Pasha’s essay, “Şiir ve İnşa” was published in the London based Hürriyet (no. 11, September 7, 1868). For the story of the newspaper, see Mardin, “Young Ottomans,” in Genesis, 10-81; the story of Hürriyet begins on 47. Among other sources in Turkish are Ebüzziya Tevfik, Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi (Istanbul: Kervan, 1973); Mehmet Kaplan, Namık Kemal, Hayatı ve Eserleri, (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1948). Tanpinar’s history addresses the significance of the essay in the context of “duplicity.” (307) Kazim Yetis, Dönemler ve Problemler Aynasında Türk Edebiyatı (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2007) has a comparative literary discussion of the pasha’s essay and its significance.
The real issue in the essay is that one cannot address the people in Ziya Pasha’s language. Better still, one cannot address these people at all. When one calls out to the people, no one turns around. When one writes such an article in a paper, for instance, and addresses the people the way our pasha does, i.e. through the London based newspaper Hürriyet (meaning “freedom”) that could only be smuggled to Istanbul via the British consulate, people do not take themselves to be the addressee. So the essay is an excellent performance, reading it is like listening to a blind man describing his most colorful visions.

So the interpellation does not work. Does this mean then that we do not exist? the pasha seems to be asking. And then he discovers that there is a huge distance between writing and life, and that this is the problem. To call out and achieve the desired end, this gap has to be closed. Poets should say their verses in the language of the common folk, where our language is to be found, and the men of pen should decide how to write what word once and for all. But that is not enough for the pasha, on top of that every man has to learn to read and write in this “simple” manner. There is a promise, we can be if we learn how to dream colorful dreams all together. In that respect, i.e. potentially, we may have always already existed.

This is more or less to say that these things require conventional measures, which in turn require rational acting and thinking on behalf of individuals. The social conditions for rational thinking are not in place yet. Reason being a historical matter on all counts, these conditions have to be produced to enable rational thinking, and along with it proper writing and reading and hence a successful interpellation in the future. This is how
literature too would work, and how the literary space would be built. As it stands things
do not work. At another register, this is not very different from building “railroads,”
another novelty in this part of the world whose planning began around this time. This
may be why Tanpinar’s Mümtaz raises the question about whether “the characters have
to move rigidly like locomotives on fixed rails.” When Ziya Pasha set to work to compile
an anthology later, he would give us the kind of story or history whose characters,
figures, or “poems” in this case, would not “move rigidly like locomotives on fixed
rails.” There was no infrastructure for that kind of thing.

*An Anthology in Ruins*

So then Ziya Pasha published an anthology, one of the first anthologies of Ottoman
literature, in which he collected verses of the ancient *harabati* in Ottoman-Turkish that
hardly anyone understood, and moreover he added to this verses in Arabic and Farsi of
the same genre. He knew what he had to do, then, but once he set to work, what came
out had nothing whatsoever to do with what was to be done. It just did not work.

He could not even choose one language as his own. Having set to work he found
himself repeating those worn out rhythms and rhymes in languages that in this setting
belonged to no one in particular. If he had followed his own prescription, as Namik
Kemal pointed out, he would have had to compile the poems of the Turkish oral tradition
instead. He would have put together those poems spoken or sung in the language of the
people, in the language of the humble, of the country and the market place, i.e. in the live
language of the flesh and blood people. He would have written a historical introduction
to his compilation, which would have explained where this language and literature come from and where they are headed. Yet he did not.

Obviously putting together an anthology was not the same as meeting other poets to get drunk with the divine ecstasy of the sacred wine either. Unlike the poets of the ancient harabat, Ottoman revolutionaries wrote not to be one with the world, to evaporate into thin air, but to leave indelible marks. Ziya Pasha’s Harabat (“the tavern” is also the title of his “anthology”) was an inspiration and a major source for E. J.W. Gibb who would put together the first anthology of Ottoman poetry in English, and then write a six volume history of Ottoman literature, which in turn Tanpınar would teach at Istanbul University few decades later. 24

But Ziya Pasha had not even called his “anthology” Ottoman, it is just Harabat, nor could he write a proper introduction to it. It is first Gibb, and then following him the like of Tanpınar who made the anthology work that way. The pasha’s introduction to that compilation, unlike Gibb’s historical introduction to his compilation, is another poem, one of his most famous. 25

Now Ziya Pasha knew what was needed for things to work. An efficient media technology had to be in place, made available to all, and he himself had to comply with the laws of that technology while writing. The thing is no such technology was in place and not even the infrastructure for it, which was his observation already in “Poetry and


25 The introduction, the “mukaddime” of Harabat was transcribed separately and is even taught at high school level in Turkey as one of Ziya Pasha’s greatest accomplishments.
Prose.” When it comes to observing what there is, and explaining where, as it stands, our language is and our literature, and us along with them of course, what Ziya Pasha did was to look into what he himself has been given since his youth, which is how he describes the course of his com-piling in his introductory poem. The humble anthology bears witness to the absence of one mother tongue, and the absence of a Turkish poetry isolated from Arabic and Farsi, or in short from the overall “Muslim” tradition. Nor did the pasha even aspire to depict some “Ottoman” poetry or literature. What he saw when he looked at his “archive,” the objectified cultural capital,⁶ as it were, was not the live language of the living people. In fact there was only distance between life and language in that poetry, and an attempt on the part of the poet to overcome that distance as for its content but by giving up on himself and his words and not the other way around.

This is precisely what our pasha’s “historical reason” was meant to do with its media technology and rational living. But the harabati’s overcoming of that gap had nothing to do with sobering up, with awakening from the mesmerizing routine of life or a centuries long slumber to see what life really is, by writing and reading a language that is supposedly already alive in the mouths of the living, or by calling each other and responding to given names. Because there is no live language.

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There is life, which is already dying, and there is language, which is already dead in this tradition. Writing is already overkill, let alone the pasha’s rational writing of his “Poetry and Prose.” On the contrary, the poems of the harabati directed one to the drunkenness of the wine, where one gives up on such concerns about life and death, where one gives in to whatever one is to go about one’s business and inspire others to do so as well.

This amounts to turning and turning in circles, like the whirling dervishes, to forget about writing or reading, or reading too much into this world, and to go about one’s own business in divine ecstasy, make shoes for instance like writing poetry and vice versa, which is how this mortal world works on all counts, and wine is the cure for anyone afflicted with a solitary distance of one’s own thoughts, reason or words.

This is why he calls his compilation Harabat. To become a harabati is to join in the senselessness of the world with the ecstatic drunkenness of the wine, not to pretend one can distribute meaning at will, which would require a great leap of faith to live accordingly.

And the world Ziya Pasha sees, as opposed to the one he wants to make with his thinking, is a world of things, some more fleshy than others (very much like Nuran’s hills and moon). It is nothing more than a mesmerizing set of routines. This “traditional” poetry he sees on paper only wants to get accustomed to these mesmerizing routines that is life itself.
Here is the contradiction: Ziya Pasha was just being a scholar, a man of letters conducting his own humble business of editing, perhaps a little bit in the spirit of the harabatı too, but very much like a modern man letters, simply surveying and archiving, failing to take the final step that the social trajectory dictated for the solitary writer/reader, i.e. failing to reach out to the wine.

This already takes him out of the tavern, distances him from the shoemaker, and makes the tavern into something new, something that it had never been and was never meant to be. His tavern becomes something very similar to the touristic “whirling dervish shows” of contemporary Istanbul, the tekke becomes a museum, like Valéry’s Louvre, but actually even worse. The Louvre at least has something of an organization for display, here that too must be absent. For Tanpınar Harabat is more properly like the attic of a museum or a basement, where there are only piles of artifacts, devoid of memorial allure, perhaps with some “commercial” allure but in the end cheap too.

Building an anthology must be already conjuring up a story, and Ziya Pasha, failing to build something like a historical narrative, ends up producing a worthless archive. Because Ziya Pasha is incapable of conjuring up stories. In his scholasticism and distance, in his literary-figural resignation that does not know how to operate the figural machine, the Pasha has to discover, perhaps even disclose, the irrelevance of thinking a Turkish or Ottoman language or literature.27 Unlike Tanpınar’s Newton, he only discovers and discloses that the apple is rotten.

27 “What is the point in seeing the truth? What is the use of it, other than to drive great many conclusions that by themselves would be meaningless and without value as well? What can you do, other than to make a list of those things that you miss and need, a list that you can expand
Because this way of saying and being, the way of the *harabati*, had nothing to do with being Turkish or Arab, Persian or Ottoman for that matter, just as it did not have anything to do with the virtues or the truth of the language of the living. This is because in this tradition only the exchange lived, which was not sharing but simply consuming. The routine of exchange was the self-consuming life itself.

Language did not enable exchange, it was the exchange that enabled language. The “oral tradition” would have meant nothing from this perspective, nothing other than the never-fully-accomplished consummation of exchanges. Ziya Pasha did not have a proper sense of “history,” this is to say, which Tanpınar will explain to us later. But this was because there was no history in his world.

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28 One can of course argue, following Auerbach’s lead, that Ziya Pasha is too much of a “modernist” in that his anthology amounts to piling up poems and languages, like Auerbach’s modern history piling up facts at the expense of interpretation. But for Auerbach, in the final analysis, every historical research involves some degree of figurality. Even modern history, in the end, is caught in the figural logic according to Auerbach. So his modern historians are in fact not blind, but have rather more benign troubles concerning their vision. In fact Ziya Pasha wrote a proper history too, not an Ottoman or Turkish history, but a history of Andalusia: *Endülüs Tarihi* (Istanbul: Takvimhane-i Âmirane [first volume] and Tercüman-i Ahval Matbaası [second volume], 1859 and 1863). Now for a long time this history was thought be a translation of Louis Viardot’s *Histoire des Arabes et des Mores d’Espagne* (Paris: Paulin, 1833). Only recently was it discovered that it was not a proper translation, whatever that might mean, but more of an adaptation, very much like Ahmet Midhat Efendi’s translation of Don Quixote into Daniş Çelebi. Ziya Pasha adds a great deal of anecdotes and commentary, likely using sources in Arabic as well referenced by Viardot, but to build a radically “inaccurate” history and a great story. This is the other face of Ziya Pasha’s failed historical vision. For an excellent comparison of the pasha’s
Nor did this “Ottoman” poetry point toward or “symbolize” anything (like Auerbach’s “pagan” flags), certainly not something like Ottomanness. On the contrary it only recognized the distance between words and the world. It was nothing more than an amusing recognition of that distance, which also means that it was a mockery of a presumptuously meaningful life in this world, representable in poetry or in language at large, let alone in something like “history.” A poem by Ziya Pasha, translated by Gibb accidentally, explains this perfectly:

A tavern which each moment takes a life as pleasure’s pay is world;  
A glass which for a thousand souls doth sell each drop of spray is world.

The world’s a Magian that adores the flame of power and fortune high;  
If thou should brightly shine, a moth about thy taper’s ray is world.

Anon one is, anon is not—thus ever runs the course of time;  
From end to end a warning-fraught, a strange, romantic lay is world,

‘Twixt sense and frenzy ‘tis indeed right hard to draw the sund’ring line,  
Ah me! if understanding’s wise, demented sooth alway is world.

The desolation of the world beside its weal is truth itself;  
Just as prosperity it seems, so ruin and decay is world.

How many Khusrevs and Jemshids have come, from its bower have past!  
A theatre that vieweth many and many an act and play is world.

Ziya, a thousand caravans of wise men through its realms have past;  
But yet not one can tell its tale, and all unknown this day is world.  

The only life humanly possible for us, accordingly, and the only life that is also beautiful for that matter, like a beautifully metered and rhyming poem, is the life of the glorious

history with Viardot’s, see Zehra Gözütok, Ziya Paşa’nın Endülüs Tarihi (Unpublished MA Thesis, Marmara University, 2008).

letter as opposed to the profane word. This is not about secrecy. The point is not to invest in such oppositions as life and death, speech and writing, meaning and non-meaning etc to describe a longing for meaningful living or lamenting its absence or impossibility. Dead letters are more real, more of this world, and hence more fleshy than the supposedly meaningful, illusory word. One needs to be a “thing” of this world, if not like an inanimate object at least like an animal that is poor-in-this-world. One needs to learn to go about his business. This is quite different from turning weltbildend, which is what Heidegger’s human is supposed to be. One needs to be poor in this world, embrace the poverty of the world to live properly, to animate as it were one’s humanity to live with true human honor and dignity. Pretending as if one can build worlds, or giving into such ambitions, is the exact opposite of this thinking.

Only by turning and turning, and turning poor that one would truly live while dying, otherwise one just gives into death, to illusions of power and fortune. Anon one is, anon is not. Hence the wine, the happy ecstasy of things in this world, the wretched joy of the wine drinking blasphemer. Here is another poem by Ziya Pasha, a “tesdis” right from the heart of the tavern.30 This genre is one in which the poet would say his/her verse simply to keep pace with the rhythm of rhyme patterns of another verse, quoting from it, as it were, and commenting on it to a certain extent, but all in all joining in the saying the way it flows, continuing the poem and to let one’s saying be molded and formed accordingly. The gesture was meant to model the gathering of the harabati in the

30 Tanpinar has a great deal of commentary on the obsession with the form in that way, which he considers self-imprisonment.
tavern, the figure of the wine corresponding well enough to the form. This “tesdis” by Ziya Pasha was sung after a beyit (couplet) by a fellow harabati, i.e. Mahmud Nedim Pasha’s then famous lines in harabat circles: “Our coming to this world is one, man must know / Care [dismay] must one banish, and look out for joy.”

Heart! heart! how long shall last this sorrow, anguish and dismay? All things upon earth’s ruin-cumbered waste must needs decay. What was the splendor of Jemshid? Where Khusrev and where Key? Hold fast the goblet and the wine, let chance not fleet away!

Our coming to this world is one, man must know Care must one banish, and look out for joy.

Be he Khusrev, or Rustem, or Neriman, or Jemshid, Or be he beggar; be Islam or heathenesse his creed; A few days in earth’s inn a guest is he, then must he speed: Something to render gay that time is surely wisdom’s need.

Our coming to this world is one, man must know Care must one banish, and look out for joy

When viewed with understanding’s eye, the mote hath no repose; The world must thus be imaged for exemption from its woes: Of my coming and my going it no lasting picture shows— That a departure surely is which no returning knows.

Our coming to this world is one, man must know Care must one banish, and look out for joy.

Events the workings of the Lord Most, High make manifest; Being the mirror is in which the Absolute’s exprest; He who this mystery perceives in every state is blest; The exit of each one who enters earth decreed doth rest

31 “Tesdis-i Matla’-i Mahmud Beg Müsteşar-i Hâriciyye” (Muharrem 1271[1854]). This “tesdis” develops around the couplet “Tefekkür etmeli de bu cihana bir gelisi / Gidermeli kederi bakmali safaya kişi” by Mahmud Nedim Pasha (then a bey). Gibb translates the couplet as “Our coming to this world is one; man must reflect, survey/Care must one banish, and look out for calm and quiet aye,” which is the opposite of what Mahmud Nedim Pasha says: “Our coming to this world is one, man must know / Care [dismay] must one banish, and look out for joy.” I modified the translation accordingly. Somehow translated by Gibb, all these poems acquire an aura of resignation, sometimes with explicit mistranslations such as this one, making the joyful blasphemy into monastic trial.
Our coming to this world is one, man must know
Care must one banish, and look out for joy.

See that thou grievest not thyself with sorrows all unwise;
‘Tis need all pleasure to enjoy as far as in thee lies;
Alike is he who lives in joy and he whom trouble tries;
If thou be prudent, ne’er thine opportunities despise.

Our coming to this world is one, man must know
Care must one banish, and look out for joy.

Since first the banquet fair, this world, was cast in form’s designs,
How many rakes have passed away and how many libertines!
As counsel meet for revellers, when he perceived those signs,
Around the goblet’s rim the Magian priest engraved these lines:

Our coming to this world is one, man must know
Care must one banish, and look out for joy.

At length, Ziya, shall joy beam forth, and grief an end shall find;
But yet, O man, these ever enter Fortune’s feast combined.
This hidden mystery learn thou, by Mahmud Beg defined,
Who has the secret of the same within this verse enshrined:

Our coming to this world is one, man must know
Care must one banish, and look out for joy.32

Now as opposed to this way of resignation, of which as we see Ziya Pasha is perfectly capable, Ziya Pasha’s alternative survey of Ottoman poetry, his Harabat, gives us the directions to the tavern, mapping it out for us, while Ziya Pasha himself remains outside. He is not wasted anymore.

Nor can he find a new ground where he stands outside the tavern. Because his anthology is only an attempt to make an anthology, which long before Tanpınar, almost all the Ottoman revolutionaries complained about. Ziya Pasha knows how things work, he himself sets to work to compile an anthology, but only to fail. He cannot even call this compilation Ottoman or Muslim, or call it an anthology for that matter, nor can he choose

32 Ibid. 160-1.
a language for it. He wants to identify, contain, and structure to a certain extent, only to fail. He cannot even build a proper museum, giving us more of a touristic entertainment. He is ambivalent, that is, neither “traditional” nor “modern,” like Kafka’s Jewish fathers. This is also the reason why he is in misery. Yet he is inspiration enough for others, he shows the door through which others would know how to enter and exit.

His own poetry is fine as traditional, “classical” poetry, but only mediocre, even reactionary already from his own “modernist” position that has ruined the tavern. Hence he looks just like a drunkard fool, a filthy wasted soul, which is how Fuad Köprülü, Tanpinar’s teacher and his (and Auerbach’s) boss at Istanbul University, describes the

33 To understand Tanpinar’s account of Ottoman revolutionaries such as Ziya Pasha, or the “duplicity” that he theorizes with reference to them, we can look at a similar take on these matters by none other than Kafka (see Chapter One, note 17 for Tanpinar’s reference to Kafka, his Jewishness and language). In fact, the way Kafka describes Jewish writers writing in German, caught as they were in between two worlds, is quite similar: “The wit principally consist of Yiddish-German, Mauscheln: no one can Mauscheln like Kraus, although in this German-Jewish world hardly anyone can do anything else. This Mauscheln—taken in a wider sense, and that is the only way it should be taken—consists in a bumptious, tacit, or self-pitying appropriation of someone else’s property, something not earned, but stolen by means of a relatively casual gesture. Yet it remains someone else’s property, even though there is no evidence of a single solecism. That does not matter, for in this realm, the whispering voice of conscience confesses the whole crime in a penitent hour.... But why should Jews be so irresistibly drawn to this language? German literature existed before the emancipation of the Jews and attained great glory. After all, that literature was, as far as I can see, in no way less varied than today—in fact, today there may be less variety. And there is a relationship between all this and Jewishness, or more precisely between young Jews and their Jewishness, with the fearful inner predicament of these generations. Psychoanalysis lays stress on the father-complex, and many find the concept intellectually fruitful. In this case I prefer another version, where the issue revolves not around the innocent father but around the father’s Jewishness. Mostly young Jews who began to write German wanted to leave their Jewishness behind them, and their fathers approved of this, but vaguely (this vagueness was what was outrageous to them). But with their posterior legs [Hinterbeindien] they were glued to their father’s Jewishness and with their waving anterior legs [Vorderbeinchen] they found no new ground. The ensuing despair became their inspiration.” See Kafka, Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors, ed. by Max Brod, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Schocken, 1977), pp. 286-289. Now there are differences between Kafka’s Jewish writers writing in German and Tanpinar’s Ottoman writers writing in Turkish, Farsi, and Arabic. We will soon have to discuss these differences, which I believe are most helpful to identify Tanpinar’s concerns better.
late Ottoman harabati.\textsuperscript{34} They were drunkard fools who did not know where they were exactly, nor could they keep pace with the world, still giving directions to others around them, though, as if anyone should or could listen to them: very much like Müberek the clock that İrdal still remembered with sympathy. This is why Tanpınar diagnoses in Ziya Pasha the “duplicity.” What he has in mind is something like an ambivalence of these Muslim fathers.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} See Fuad Köprülü, “Harabat,” \textit{Yeni Mecmua} 10 (April 12, 1917).

\textsuperscript{35} Tanpınar’s “duplicity,” for Jale Parla, is a rather retrospective reconstruction (Parla, \textit{Babalar ve Öğullar}). It is only the in the Republican Turkey that a scholar could look behind and come up with such a description. Moreover for Parla, the notion of this duplicity was made up in order to justify and verify, or simply to “explain,” the eventual Republican health of mind, the victory of those who were “ahead of their time,” as Tanpınar would put it, in the late Ottoman era. I have tried to explain above that for Tanpınar this situation, the health of mind, appears to be a little like a tragedy in the final analysis. There is a victory according to Tanpınar, but I do not think that he himself writes his name under the victors, or at least he himself takes himself to be a victim, perhaps also an accomplice, of a certain violence. But on all counts, Parla’s objection is that there is no duplicity whatsoever in the Tanzimat mindset. For her, Tanzimat writers are all too Muslim, even conservatively Muslim. (12) But they are Muslim! Parla tells us. These people are Muslim before being men of letters. The Muslim voice of the first generation of Tanzimat reforms is weak. This is because the modern reforms (Tanzimat) were in full contrast with the only way of being and saying Ottoman revolutionaries knew, the Muslim one, according to Parla. This creates a power vacuum. Their words are fatherless. Whether they want to change or preserve things, they simply do not have a father to support them, to stand behind them. The orphaned words of writing, then, set to search for the father figure. This is why Tanzimat literature is obsessed with fathers, lack of fathers, virtues and perversity of fathers, or sons and daughters led astray in the absence or presence of the father but by wrong instruction etc. (“God damn your psychoanalysis,” would say Ayarcı). There are indeed even treatises on the “art of being a father.” Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha; the rather more Parisian Samipasazade Sezai, but even the \textit{legitimate “father”} of modern Turkish thought and literature Şinasi himself all speak of “childhood,” the age of reform as the “child” to be protected and instructed – instructed according to the values of what Parla considers the “old epistemology,” of course, i.e. the Muslim one. Accordingly, that the children of the Ottoman revolution find themselves fatherless, and that thereby they start looking for and even find father figures, that their orphaned words are in search of the power to make meaning, a meaning that could bind the children of reforms and the community of the Ottomans, all this tells us one thing and one thing alone: that these authors are actually Muslim. Theirs was an “Islamic epistemology” in crisis, hence in need of a certain degree of epistemic violence on the part of these Muslim writers to remain in power. But there is another “epistemology,” according to Parla, that does not need or seek such violence. It is the one that was based on the “empiric” and “scientific” revolutions, those that had led in “literature”
Ziya Pasha, as we see, had nothing to hide about his poetic tradition, his language and identity. He testifies to their ambivalence with his attempted anthology. But he is ambivalent in that he cannot decide between what Tanpınar would call the “old fashion” realism and the realism of the new man:

The new man has a different realism. What can I do with the good or object that I possess, or with its attributes? This is the question. [...] If Newton had taken the apple that fell on his head as an apple, he could have come to the conclusion that the apple was rotten. However this is not what he did. How can I benefit most from this apple, he asked himself. What is my maximum benefit in this matter? (SAE, 219)

So Ziya Pasha gives us the rotten apple. He was Muslim, indifferently or simply Muslim, as it were, so were most of the people among whom he lived and to whom he spoke in at least three different languages, for him not distinguishable from each other. He also shared a way of being and saying with those around him, and not all of them necessarily “Muslim” by the way.36 This overall societal setting, “traditionally,” as it

to the “realist” and “objective” ways of looking at things. This latter does not even need the epistemic violence of which Tanzimat intellectuals were responsible. It is almost naturally powerful. Indeed, this is her trouble: these authors, the authors of the Tanzimat reform, are more in favor of the “romantic” and “Catholic” way of looking at things, as she formulates. They choose Christian Hugo over the realist Zola as a model. So paradoxically, although they are simply or even too Muslim, they end up looking rather Catholic in the face of the scientific truth. Yet Parla only sees Islam. It is as if beginning to “preach Islam” like Hugo preaches Catholicism has no implications whatsoever for “being” Muslim.

36 Hanioğlu reports the following dialogue from I. A. Bogorov, Niakolko dena razkhodka po búlgarskite mesta (Bucharest: K.N. Radulescu, 1868), 53: “[T]wo upper-class Bulgarian merchants could have the following exchange in three languages at a café in Varna: ‘Dobrutro vi, gospodine’ (Bulgarian for ‘Good morning, Sir’), ‘Ulan, Bulgar burada yok, Καλήμερα desene!
were, also enabled and required a certain vision and trajectory for the poet, the “intellectual” stepping away from the people, a trajectory whose ultimate destination was the tavern. Even pausing to think what it entails, what it “means” to be “Muslim,” even a curiosity concerning this issue that only retrospectively appears to be crucial, would take one to the tavern in this universe, since “be Islam or heathenesse his creed / A few days in earth’s inn a guest is he, then must he speed: / Something to render gay that time is surely wisdom’s need.”

On the one hand he is indifferently or simply Muslim, but on the other hand Ziya Pasha does not follow that simple social trajectory either, as I have indicated, he leaves the tavern, outside which he needs to compete with the sobriety of modern literature, and as a result he fails to do good literature, but fails to remain harabati too, and becomes at best a conservative revolutionary, some drunkard fool who still tries to give others direction, and whom people still listen out of misplaced piety.

This is why this apple is rotten. Yet the harabat, and along with it the reality of life on the streets, and the harabat circles of Istanbul, is still within Ziya Pasha’s sight. People still listen to him, taking him to be wise, thinking that he is one of those madmen of God risking blasphemy to reach out to the ecstatic truth of life. This is why, absent “sacred wine,” Ziya Pasha is reduced to a populist, drunkard fool, neither “religious” nor rational, at best speaking with a hangover.37

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37 This is not simply a literary historical matter either. One of Ziya Pasha’s comrades, the third in the Young Ottoman triumvirate, namely Ali Suavi, whom Serif Mardin discusses under the
His words of poetry are like “commercialized decoration” at best of which Adorno speaks, faith for him has become “custom.” Perhaps he himself is still pious, even takes himself to be conservatively “Muslim,” which is to say perhaps he still “believes,” whatever this may mean: but he does not attest anymore according to Tanpinar’s logic.

Now, finally, we can compare Ziya Pasha’s madness, ambivalence or duplicity, with the “young and extreme” views of the writers whom Tanpinar accuses of causing a threat to the continuity of “national life.” That too was a failure to do literature for Tanpinar, there too was madness, ambivalence and duplicity.

The other kind of madness has to do with failing to see that one’s language and reality belongs to the life in common on all counts, or that a writer or poet writes with words that in the end one only borrows from the people. Later, another group of Francophile aesthetes, led by Tevfik Fikret, even talked of moving to New Zealand for this precise reason, i.e. to do literature qua literature, to choose the way of being and saying, addressing and interacting within which literary activity would be relevant.38 Because it did not make sense to do it for their own people. The life on the streets of Istanbul had nothing to do with the way they wrote or interacted, i.e. “politely,” as it were. These latter intellectuals hid all sorts of secrets beneath everything, including their title “The Zealot” in The Genesis, died in a riot that he himself instigated among the faithful in Istanbul.

38 Accidentally, Fikret’s son, whom he had sent to Scotland for his studies, and for whom he had written poems about how he would bring back light to Istanbul, converted to Christianity. This is one of the most traumatic events in the intellectual history of late Ottoman era, the other one being the positivist Beşir Fuad’s suicide.
words and goods and even the things of daily life, but the thing is no one cared about these bizarre actions, nor did anyone took that sort of ritual seriously.

Now they still wrote in Turkish. So that literature did not work in the end either. Nor could they move to New Zealand where, obviously, they would only write for each other, and perhaps finally produce the purest poetry possible.

A sociological explanation for this trajectory, from one madness to another, entailed a story according to which the Ottoman intellectual gradually distanced himself from the people, and along with them religion, in the late Ottoman era, in a typical move toward the formation of modern, specialized fields of a differentiated societal interaction.39 Young Ottomans were more of the people, their literature was not specifically literature but in between prayer and poetry in Ziya Pasha’s case; journalism, propaganda and literature in Namik Kemal’s case. Their followers later in the century and in early twentieth century, by contrast, became too modern, too Western (Mardin even speaks of over-Westernization, whatever that might mean). Young Turks ended up as mere technocrats and bureaucrats and aesthetes in their highly differentiated fields of specialization.

But this is to give too much agency to the thinker and the activity of thinking. What we have here is trajectory like this: a literary world that was a stage for a malfunctioning yet paradoxically relevant (i.e. conflictual) socially, hence somewhat literary in Tanpinar’s imaginary; gradually becoming functional literarily (reaching the

heights of “pure poetry”) but turning completely irrelevant socially, hence, again, only quasi-literary. According to Tanpinar they were all failures, they all shared the same symptoms, their literature(s) did not work. They were ambivalent literarily, neither properly literary nor pre- or non-literary, or they were ambivalent socially. They were either too much of the people or too distant from them to be able to do literature in real. The literary address did not work in both cases.

As for Tanpinar himself, the literary address works perfectly in his universe. But this also means that literature cannot even produce any tension; nor does it have anything to do with action. It cannot change anything but only confirm. The literature that works, “pure” literature, literature proper in the modern sense, “good” literature, the literature that says something and in saying does something, is more or less the same literature that says nothing in dis-enclosing secrets carelessly, effortlessly, indifferently and in the final analysis, efficiently. This is also the “inoperative,” do-nothing literature of which many contemporary critics and philosophers speak as an ideal.40

But then why write or read novels? Tanpinar is not happy about all this, that is for sure. The literary poverty of the modern day harabati at least had something to do with the life in common; “the young and extreme” Turkish literature at least involved some tension between collective being and the solitary activity of writing. They all managed to express something resembling restlessness, although this also amounted to turning literarily poor. Their restlessness was perhaps like Hamlet’s restlessness, something real. Perhaps it was like the restlessness of Schmitt’s and Auerbach’s “Shakespearean people,”

40 See Chapter Two, notes 10-11.
i.e. the emotional outcome of hitting the dumb rock of a reality, which in turn had taken
the form of Hamlet the madman on paper. *(Hamlet or Hecuba, 44-5)* Perhaps the men of
letters – for Tanpinar as for Schmitt and Auerbach – cannot be Hamlets anymore, and can
only play Hecuba.

But then we will have to reverse this logic in the next two chapters. Perhaps
Tanpinar does not want to play Hecuba, but knows that he cannot play Hamlet either.
The stage itself is the problem. So maybe he just wants to throw away the play and set the
stage on fire. Not that in this way he can indifferently turn toward the non-descript pieces
of land he sees from the passing train, a little sad perhaps but in motion and smiling on
occasion too. Because a stage on fire is still a stage, and Hamlet is just as fictional as
Hecuba. Perhaps in the face of this aporia, he has no option other than laughing out loud
at his misfortune, very much like Ziya Pasha, wealthy yet poor, smirking yet sad,
scheming yet honest, accomplished yet a failure. Perhaps looking for a way in which he
can put restlessness on paper, he discovers how to make writing itself restless.

So Tanpinar’s unhappiness is not like that of Kermode’s solitary writer, nor like that of
Adorno’s Valéry who seems to have made a tragic and extremely beautiful mistake not to
watch out for art’s (or alternatively his own) “dignity:”

For Valéry art is lost when it has relinquished its place in the immediacy of
life, in its functional context; for him the ultimate question is that of the
possible use of the work of art. The craftsman in him, fashions poems with
that precision of contour which embodies attention to the surroundings, has
become infinitely sensitive to the place of the work of art, including its
intellectual setting, as though the painter’s feeling for perspective were
intensified in him to a feeling for the perspective of reality, in which it
becomes possible for the work to have depth. His artistic stand-
point is that of
immediacy, but driven to the most audacious consequences. He follows the
principle of art for art’s sake to the verge of its negation. He makes the pure
work of art the object of absolute, unwavering contemplation, but he
scrutinizes it so long and so intensely that he comes to see that the object of
such pure contemplation must wither and degenerate to commercialized
decoration, robbed of the dignity in which both its raison d’être and Valéry’s
consist. The pure work is threatened by reification and neutralization. This is
the recognition that overwhelms him in the museum. He discovers that the
only pure works, the only works that can sustain serious observation, are the
impure ones, which do not exhaust themselves in that observation but point
beyond, towards a social context. And since, with the incorruptibility of the
great rationalist, Valéry must recognize that this stage of art is irrevocably past,
there is nothing left for the anti-rationalist and Bergsonian in him but to mourn
for works as they turn into relics. (Prisms, 180, it. added)

Adorno’s solution to Valéry’s dilemma was the fireworks, which suggested both
public entertainment, “commercialized decoration,” and artistic dignity and distance and
enchantment; something like “pure acclamation.” Heidegger has a similar solution with a
different emphasis.

Tanpinar seems to agree with the spirit of the time on the paradoxical situation of
art in contemporary life, suggesting at the same time, though, that what looks like a
paradoxical solution or better still a productive paradox from a philosophical point of
view may simply be a paradox. It is as if to say: a paradox is sometimes simply a
paradox. Tanpinar does not seek “divinity” in the secret or dignity in writing or reading.
He claims the secret, because this is his lot in the modern world, but he takes it with
restlessness at least.

He does not mourn for the work of art, he does not mourn for literature. Indeed, if
“the only pure works, the only works that can sustain serious observation, are the impure
ones, which do not exhaust themselves in that observation but point beyond, towards a
social context,” and if “this stage of art [too] is irrevocably past,” why mourn for art? Is
it art that needs mourning here, in this most particular moment of European modernity, or
saving for that matter?
Chapter Four: Novels, Goods, and Things

It is indeed still difficult, though, after all we have seen, to understand why exactly Tanpınar writes poetry or novels to begin with. Why does he not simply remain silent? Would not to prefer not to write, to go about his business – despite the obvious distractions – like everyone else, come down to the same thing? Why write despite the duplicitousness of this act of writing? Or minimally, why does he not write about the ideal of silence, for instance, on Bartlebies as opposed to İrdals? Why does he write about those who prefer to write? Why does he himself prefer to write if writing or not writing, indifference and protest, grumpiness or celebration, all come down to the same thing in this mental theatre?

In his own account, his tutor Valéry at least went through what is called “the great silence,” during which he devoted himself to mathematics, and after which he came back to writing, apparently upon discovering a secret about writing. Tanpınar writes about this matter (in Turkish) to celebrate the publication of the second volume of Variété in 1930.¹

¹ Tanpınar, “Paul Valéry,” 486-7.
It is difficult to understand whom Tanpınar addresses with this essay, though, which adds a different context to think about what he means by his silence. The review essay may not involve a critical distance, as I suggested earlier, but it is an extraordinary exposition of Valéry’s thought, and could as well have been published as an introduction to *Variété* in French. Indeed I do not think that, even in English, there existed scholarship of this caliber around that time on Valéry. Tanpınar’s quotations from the newly published second volume of *Variété* and the way he contextualizes these in Valéry’s overall work shows how carefully and enthusiastically he reads Valéry, and how he is completely in tune with everything happening in Valéry’s (somewhat distant) literary cultural universe. We should remember that Tanpınar had never left Turkey when he wrote this review.

But the scholastic scrutiny with which he approaches the subject matter is interesting too. The point is Tanpınar writes as if he is writing in French, as if for an academic journal published in Paris. He explains Valéry’s return to literature (from “silence”) in this way:

>Skepticism always carries a secret certainty. This was the same for Valéry. Already in the early years of his career, skepticism led him to deny the world of thought and sentiment as central to art, while also forcing him to affirm the significance of the instrument, of language. Because despite all denial, there existed a body of work, a pile of art-works that one had to account for. If one rejected to account for this body of work through the mystic, then one had to find another explanation. Valéry found the explanation for poetry in language itself. This is one of the truths that he says he captured, in his preface to *Monsieur Teste* and elsewhere. Thus when he tells us that “writing, above all, in its most concrete and true form, is to build a machine with words,” he reduces all the activity within the field of poetry to this essence. But what leads Valéry to such conclusion? Above all necessity. Because there was nothing else to account for the reality of art work, which we are always ready and willing to regard as an enigma, certainly out of sheer laziness. An intellect of his caliber could not have explained an abstraction with another abstraction. Ambiguous terms such as inspiration, genius, and secrecy had no
place in Valéry’s vocabulary. The poet who says “Oh ma mère Intelligence!” accepted that the power called intellect is the one and only drive behind creativity. And he found the most unique trait of humanity in consciousness. Therefore he could not have possibly opened this perfection called art to the true house of intellect through opacity and ambiguity. Under these circumstances, it was left to language to carry the entire burden, enlighten all the darkness. (486)

But Tanpinar himself never went through such silence, i.e. a silence involving turning away from writing, some sort of “submission” or resistance on the part of the writer as not writing. On the one hand Tanpinar takes himself to be silent, fine, but on the other hand he never stops writing.

If we were to compare Tanpinar’s own life story to Tanpinar’s account of Valéry’s life story, i.e. a life of silent writing to the trials and tribulations of Paul Valéry, we would have to say that, by contrast, the latter appears to be of epic proportions. Perhaps Tanpinar considered this tragic exile out of literature and the eventual home coming (out of “necessity,” as it were) a bit too dramatic, too literary a story.

It is as if the trials and tribulations of Valéry have no place in Tanpinar’s lifeworld, as if it is too late for Tanpinar for such experimentation and adventure. Tanpinar seems to say: “Obviously, the writer came back to writing, and the poet to poetry.”

What legitimizes this indifference then? What exactly is Tanpinar’s silent speech? What is this mysteriously submissive yet insistent action? It is certainly not a choice in the negative key like Bartleby’s, nor is it a search for a second language in language, like Valéry’s, or Kafka’s according to Deleuze.

Tanpinar writes and writes about those who prefer to write, and he seems to have no interest in “transforming life into Scripture” either. I look for a clearer exposition of
what Tanpinar takes his writing to do in this chapter and next, going back again, for this purpose, to some of the late Ottoman figures he discusses in his history in this chapter, and to his short stories in the next, one of which, accidentally, is titled “Submission” and addresses more or less the question I have formulated.

I also go back to the “place,” the Ort, the “context” I described in the first chapter as the one that may be most helpful in making sense of Tanpinar’s position, which concerns, in the final analysis, the distance and/or proximity between politics and literature, writing and acting.

As I indicated, Tanpinar’s position may be instructive for many of our contemporary disagreements, for instance to understand better what is at stake in the disagreement between Bourdieu and Rancière, which is not any disagreement but is quite symptomatic, as Bourdieu explained for us.

That disagreement, according to Bourdieu, was an expansion of the tension between the thought of “orders dictated by impersonal social requirements” and the ‘appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons’ such as saints, geniuses and heroes” in theorizing the life-in-common, which was the only life for us all. We will see the tension expanding in different directions in this chapter.
Books that kill

What we have seen so far suggests that Tanpınar does not believe in the sanctity of daily life, or alternatively the “humanization of greatness,” as Partha Chatterjee puts it.\(^2\)

Moreover in *The Time Regulation Institute* this matter appears as an absurd problem, some incomprehensible madness.

This is in part because Tanpınar’s writing and thinking is not invested in the “representation of reality” that, already according to Ahmet Midhat Efendi (1844-1912), while pretending simply to attest to what is and what happens in the world, in fact did something like politics, even a secret politics, carrying out “secret” agendas according to Midhat.

Novels are like secret agents or missionaries in Midhat’s thinking, as he explains in *Attestations*.\(^3\) Books are “silent” for a reason, or as Rancière puts it, Don Quixote is mad out of duty or on a mission.\(^4\) “Dazzling the readers with the splendor of the truths they attest to,” Midhat writes, those so-called realist or naturalist novels, for instance, always went beyond attesting to the truth of the world, shaping the ways of saying and seeing, sensing and attesting. This is more or less the wisdom with which contemporary


\(^3\) Midhat addressed directly the question of representation of reality in literature in a novel of 1890 entitled *Attestations* (*Müşahedât*), whose “Preface” I have addressed before in a different context.

\(^4\) Rancière, *The Flesh of Words*, 86-89 and 136-41. Also see *Mute Speech* and *The Politics of Literature*. 
criticism of all colors, from subaltern studies to rather more philosophical accounts, too, elaborate on the so-called politics of literature. But Midhat adds something to this wisdom. What others embrace he protests.

Here is a short summary of Midhat’s reaction based on his preface (“Kariîn ile Hasbihal,” literally: “Conversation with the reader”) to his Attestations. For Midhat, to think that the novel can represent reality was absurd, even if the novel consisted of nothing but attestations to what is and what happens in the world right in front of the author. Attestations with such presumptions carried out agendas beyond attesting to the ways of the world, while dazzling the audience with the splendor of the truths they attested.

Socialists wanted to destroy the Christian civilization to build another one, and this is what their novel did. Many novelists had only anti-Christian agendas and all they wanted was to produce hatred for Christianity, while others only defended and promoted Christianity. Very few novelists were really concerned with human dignity, and they were mocked for being a thing of the past, of being romantic as opposed to realist or naturalist.

Ottomans had not yet contacted the “ills” widespread in Europe, yet some Ottomans, knowing very well what ills novels served – socialism or Christianity or anti-Christianity alike – spoke of novels and novel writing, and even of this so-called realism, as good things. In fact for the sake of the representation of the “real thing,” those novels attested to all kinds of ills prevalent in Europe, while the world most obviously had good things in it as well.
The reality was that the realist talk of ills served other ills. One could speak of good things instead, moreover one had to do so if the point was to serve any good. One had to set examples and lift up spirits. This is why if those novels, those European works of art, were to be translated into the Ottoman language, they had to be rewritten, and perhaps in some cases from scratch. For what could be the purpose of inspiring love or hatred of Christianity among decent Muslim gentlemen? Or of Western governments or civilization among the great Ottomans for that matter?

Ottomans needed novel of some sort, according to Midhat, but if that novel was to serve any good, it had to be the national sort of novel, by which Midhat here means Muslim. It had to be relevant to the Muslim way of life, still uncontaminated by those ills Europe suffered from. But that sort of relevance and that sort of novel was yet to be discovered. Midhat does not yet sound too confident as to the possibility of such relevance either, but understands how the national novel would serve a certain Muslim agenda. Yet attempts to produce national novels were destined to fail since novels that spoke only of Muslims were boring and lacked color. None of that so-called realist talk of ills or romantic rumination would do, neither to be truly realist nor to be useful for Muslims, that is for sure. Midhat could not yet write the national novel he mentions (he would attempt do so later, as we will see shortly), because what he wanted more to do here was to produce a novel that is truly realist, a writing that would be radically different from the fake realism of the European novel.

He wants real attestations, for which reason he rejects speaking only of ills of this world but also only of the virtues of the Muslim folk. So he looks for a position that would appear truly indifferent. His novel would be neither European then, nor national.
*Attestations* is not Christian nor anti-Christian yet contains Christians, French speaking Ottoman Christians as characters. To Midhat’s thinking, it is not national, not Muslim, not European either, but simply “local,” truly relevant socially and literally, hence truly useless, but hopefully entertaining. But there is another price Midhat has to pay for this “relevance.” Having taken the gesture that is dubbed the “representation of reality in the west” to its extreme, Midhat discovers that such gesture, in the final analysis, can only attest to its impossibility. The very gesture that seeks simply to unfold the truth of writing ends up folding upon itself. The first aim of *Attestations* is to be truly realist and naturalist, for which purpose Ahmet Midhat, the author, decides to include himself in the novel as a character who writes his novel together with other characters, all of whom contribute to the writing, some even object to Midhat’s accounts of things in the novel from time to time.

There existed novels, impossible as it may be, and even categorically so, for them to deliver what they promised. Novels delivered in real time something other than what they promised. It was because books did real things in the real world, in other words it was because literary figures were in fact *real* that it was crucial for Midhat to make everyone read the right books; and interact with Daniş Çelebi as opposed to Don Quixote, for instance.

This in turn is the reason why he wrote books, dozens of books; alternative books that sought to challenge the duplicity of European literature. His novels moreover typically tell stories of unfortunate readers led astray by books, sometimes even by books they have never read. Nevertheless *Attestations* was still a novel. All his anti-novelistic
novels were still novels, still caught in the novel’s generic determinations. Perhaps this, in turn, was the “duplicity” of his work that Tanpınar theorizes.

Another novel of Ahmet Midhat Efendi, which is quite typical in terms of this understanding of the politics of literature, can help us understand better the stakes of his literature and his politics. This novel is titled *Jön Türk: A National, Social, Political Novel.* It is about Ceylan, the daughter of a progressive, rather liberal father; a young Turkish (“Muslim”) girl who comes out quite liberal in matters relating to sexuality, and who is a childhood friend of Nurullah’s. Nurullah is a student of law, i.e. someone who is in the know about the law of his people. He is gender sensitive in a particular manner, since he is also in the know about Western books. Ceylan is in love with Nurullah.

But Nurullah wants to marry Ahdiye, since Ahdiye is a decent Muslim girl with a strong Muslim upbringing and an equally strong education as Ceylan, but a conservative Turkish, Muslim education.

Names are important. Nurullah is the sacred beam of light, literally the light of God, and Ahdiye the feminine of word that means the bond. Ceylan is the figure of beauty in classical poetry. Now Ceylan comes out as she does because of the books she has read, it appears, and her father’s library is full of liberal, Western stuff and Young Turk publications of all sorts.

5 Ahmet Midhat, *Jön Türk: Millî, Içtimai, Siyasî Roman* (Ankara: TDK Yayınları, 2003). The novel was originally published in 1326 (1910) after it was serialized in the newspaper *Tercümân-ı Hakikat.*
Now Midhat compares, at the beginning of the novel, Ahdiye the good Muslim girl to one of her friends, namely Remziye who, a little like Ceylan, was constantly exposed to “new books” in her family’s private chambers. Ahdiye, it turns out, joins Remziye from time to time to get acquainted with those new books, while, thanks to her mother, it is absolutely forbidden for that material to enter Ahdiye’s own household.

Midhat addresses his reader directly, as he usually does whenever he feels like it in his novels, to give this warning:

You do not doubt that this ban that Ahdiye’s mother tried hard to implement was best for the girl. Had she grown up with the liberty Remziye grew up, and in the midst of new ideas alone, she would have found herself wanting in terms of Muslim manners. In the midst of new ideas! We would have you understand this very well. The lowliest of those new ideas throw the most fastidious souls to doubt. The heights of those new ideas are so wondrous that those who reach such heights can hardly be called “Muslim,” and if they are, that is only by virtue of their own avowing thus, although a review of their actions would easily prove otherwise. Shall we say then, God forbid, they are converts [to Christianity]? But there is no Christianity in such thoughts. Ideas having expanded to such an extent do not leave room for Christianity either. It may be acceptable to call them “Europeans,” but then to be direct about matters, such progress of thought is not even found among those who strive for good manners in Europe. (464)

Ahdiye however has read the righteous books, the books that teach Islam for what it is and the Qur’an of course. The novel begins with Nurullah’s absence at his own wedding, Ahdiye left alone on one of the most important days of her life, her family completely ruined in utter embarrassment. Then comes a flashback, the rest of the novel explains how this tragedy happened.

In short, Ceylan had seduced Nurullah, abusing his weakness for her, but in addition to her feminine charms, employing a gender equality discourse that she had learnt from those new books; she wants him and he her, so no more talk of decency on either side or of protection of Ceylan’s chastity on Nurullah’s side.
She gets pregnant, and upon being rejected by Nurullah, places some of her father’s Young Turk publications, *books* that is, in Nurullah’s chamber, and then reports Nurullah to the authorities. As a result, the law being what it is, i.e. banning Young Turk publications, Nurullah is exiled to Akka (Akko in today’s Israel). Eventually Ceylan commits suicide, of course.

But this is how Nurullah misses his wedding, traveling to Akka on his wedding day. The meeting of the sacred light, the sacred knowledge, with the sacred bond, the way of living under this light, was interrupted. Knowledge does not follow action in Nurullah’s case, he gives in to seduction, and the one living a righteous life is left in darkness.

Ahdiye pays the price of Nurullah’s and Ceylan’s sin. She does not even live according to those books that so inspire Nurullah and Ceylan alike, yet books find a way to destroy her too. Of course the seducer, the apparent cause of this tragedy, had to be punished by Midhat. Midhat’s book leaves no option for Ceylan other than to commit suicide.

Yet according to Midhat’s thinking, it is also obvious that what the *Qur’an* does for Ahdiye, other books *can* do for Ceylan. They *could* shape two different ways of being, saying, seeing, making and sharing. All these are in the end a matter of books, and of knowing or not which books to read and which books to avoid.

This is to say Midhat knows the power of writing, and this novel is about the power of writing alone, about books in general as opposed to the Book, which, in modern times, seems to need a hand from the novelist to do things in life. Conservative Midhat is
already nihilist. The fact that the whole tragedy here is in fact caused not by Ceylan, the seducer, but by the books she places in Nurullah’s chambers is another proof of this. People do things in this novel, but the real actors, the ultimate agents are books.

As for Nurullah, he too is caught in between books, Ceylan’s books which he adores and his own books, the books of law plus the righteous books of Ahdiye.

Books draw the boundaries of the moral universes, which is what their politics is about, and this is why it matters which books to read and which to avoid or to read with a grain of salt. Midhat does not even consider that the way of reading and writing may have something to do with “religion” as well. In the case of Nurullah, the issue is which books to imitate, or the truth of which book to enact, since he has access to all sorts of

6 Again, for Parla all this means that Midhat is thinking along Muslim-epistemological lines. He just cannot think beyond his embeddedness in a Muslim way of living and thinking and knowing things. He is so insistent on this matter that he ends up sounding like the Catholic Balzac who punishes a woman for more or less the same reasons, for reading books and thinking different thoughts, some of them relating to lust. Midhat, accordingly, just wants fathers to act like fathers (unlike Ceylan’s father), i.e. like Midhat’s omniscient Muslim father in the Ottoman Empire, who also happens to be absent in the real world but to whom Midhat is dedicated on all counts. So his novel is that of the search for the father in the face of fatherlessness. He in turn acts as the father to his readers, the novel in question taking the place of the father’s role in terms of proper instruction. Since such novels were a thing of the past even back in the day in Paris, according to Parla, this makes Midhat backward epistemologically. It was not the time for Balzac in the late nineteenth century. So he is not only a conservative Muslim, but too Muslim to keep up with his contemporaneity, which made him appear rather too “religious” at large for his modern and secular world, i.e. anachronistically religious. Those in Paris who would still read such novels were the backward thinking Catholics, which is why Parla takes Midhat to sound rather Catholic (as opposed to Protestant, that is). So he is more like a bad Christian (but then there is also a good Christianity?). The thing is for Midhat, at least in this novel, the issue is not the truth of Islam in which he would have an unquestioning faith, by virtue of being a pious Muslim person that is, which in turn would make him epistemologically backward according to Parla’s thinking. First of all this is a novel we are reading. The medium itself has nothing whatsoever to do with the pre-modern Muslim way of articulating such matters, matters such as sacred knowledge and the path to salvation. Moreover, and even more significantly, the issue here is reading and writing, the issue here is books in general. Midhat is not concerned here with anything like a truth beyond books, Muslim or otherwise. He has no concern other than books. There is no father here other than books. It is the truth of books in general that concerns him, in short, not the truth of the Book.
books. Nurullah cannot decide, and all this is the source of this tragedy. Books blur his sight. He could not have had a bond with Ahdiye and another one with Ceylan. He had to choose one, which he could not. Yet one needs to make choices.

This crime scene that is literature is not simply a fictional matter for Midhat. In one of his biographies, Midhat suggested that his illustrious junior, Beşir Fuad, had committed suicide because he had read the wrong books, distancing himself, very much like Ceylan, from the Muslim way of life and the Muslim cause. Books had pushed these people away from the Muslim world, out of which there was no life, neither for Fuad nor for Ceylan. Books could be murderous. Books had killed Beşir Fuad.

Midhat’s Beşir Fuad, published in 1887, is a biography, yet can also be read as detective fiction, for instance. To get a sense of the original setting in which the biography was written and read, one should keep in mind that Fuad’s death had deeply inspired his generation. In fact suicide became pandemic in those years in Istanbul. Some newspaper headlines from the era: “Tentative de Suicide!” “Encore une Tentative de suicide!” “ Toujours Suicide!” (83-91)

The events leading to Fuad’s suicide are quite complicated, although in the letter he left for Ahmet Midhat Efendi, Fuad speaks of some personal matters such as his troubles with his mistresses and some financial difficulties. (67-83)

7 Another biographer of Beşir Fuad, namely Orhan Okay, illustrates this in Beşir Fuad: İlk Türk Pozitivist ve Natüralisti (Istanbul: Dergah, 2008 [1969]) by quoting the newspaper headlines I borrow above. In fact for Ahmet Midhat’s Beşir Fuad, a title such as “Who killed Beşir Fuad” would be more appropriate. I have already suggested who the culprit is from Midhat’s perspective. Many objected to Midhat even back in the day, whose articles and letters Okay references in his book.
But we also know from a long series of debates about the cause of his death that the suicide was a great shock for the late Ottoman intelligentsia. The shock is very much alive in modern Turkey with poems written about him every now and then. In fact no one seems to believe that an intellectual of Fuad’s caliber, given his proficiency in Western languages, could have been in serious financial trouble. We also know that his mother was diagnosed with some madness, “délire de persécution” to be precise, and Fuad was concerned about how this madness was hereditary.

But the suicide came after his long debate on the distance between the truth of literature and the truth of the world, during which he antagonized many of his seniors, including Ahmet Midhat Efendi and Namık Kemal.

Fuad’s suicide actually gives us another account of writing as acting, writing as politics. This account, like others we have seen so far, addresses the issue of immediacy and scrutinizes further what it means to instrumentalize fiction. It also gives us an opportunity to reevaluate Midhat’s claim that books had killed Fuad.

Midhat and Fuad together, moreover, may help us understand İrdal and Tanpinar a little better.

Fuad’s suggestion was quite simple. In the age of science and technology and Zola, it was ridiculous for poets to speak nonsense, to speak of “the sun turning into shadows” for instance:

“The possibility for the sun to turn into shadows or dark as a girl’s hair [as thought by the poet] could not have passed a scientist’s head,” you argue. I would say that this possibility cannot pass anyone’s head, let alone the scientist’s, not even the one uttering these words can think it, since there is nothing in our brains that does not come through the five senses. The ultimate limit of luminosity for human beings is the sun, since they have not seen
anything brighter. Let us experiment as we speak and try as hard as we can. Can we really think a light that would make the sun look on the darker side? […] On the other hand] when one says the word “sun,” reads it or hears it, the word enables that thing of brightness to make a luminous effect on our brain and without much mental effort.⁸

The reference here is to Namık Kemal’s following lines: Mihr olsa eğer peyinde sâye / Gisusu gibi kalırdı muzlim [If the sun was after her like a shadow / It would turn dark like her hair]. Fuad responds in the passage quoted above to the suggestion that no scientist could come up with such (“poetic”) presentation of the subject matter, i.e. love.

We have already met Namık Kemal in a different setting. He is the great poet-prophet of Ottoman modernity, credited with having introduced words such as freedom and nation into the Ottoman lifeworld. Beşir Fuad had a son whom he named Namık Kemal after the poet, which only shows his high regard for Kemal. His son died at an early age, and Namık Kemal was furious at him at the end of this debate, which Okay considers one of the reasons of the suicide.

As for novelists, Fuad thinks that they should be held accountable for their words just like historians. History, for him, is a small-scale map of human nature and condition, while the novelistic cartography simply requires the use of larger scales. (174) He despises the idea that novels and poems can be regarded instruments to be employed for this or that purpose, which in turn would justify speaking all sorts of nonsense to achieve the desired ends.

⁸ Fuad, Şiir ve Hakikat, 175. It would be interesting, by the way, to compare Fuad’s position on literary language to Sartre’s, for instance, who too had some issues with intransitivity.
On the other hand, he admits that all writing, history and literature alike, requires imagination. His point is that one needs to imagine realistically. (173)

All history and storytelling require fiction and imagination. “The real must be fictionalized to be thought.” To fictionalize realistically, then, presupposes a difference between one way of fictionalizing and another. One is imaginatively real, the other instrumentally fictive. Fuad wants to unearth the prosaic realities of the world, and if need be, he is ready to sacrifice writing and its powers for this purpose, i.e. to make prose meaningless, or words naked in their insane, pictorial reality to make room for life itself in writing.

“The truth is unwelcome when it is naked, acceptable only after it meets the story, you say,” tells Fuad to the men of letters, which for Fuad is reminiscent of the way the French “gloss over love” and is an acceptable formula insofar as such submission is out of necessity, i.e. insofar as “the real must be fictionalized to be thought.” There is a difference between submitting to this logical requirement within a rational discourse and making up all sorts of nonsense, though. Fuad explains this as follows:

Where Voltaire is excused, Hugo must be chided. If a poet is able to make his own dreams and delusions publicly acceptable for the love of good taste, and if, moreover, he has the power to accuse those who disagree with him with having developed bad taste, why would he be obliged to manipulate the truth? Where does he get the privilege? Where does the necessity come from? (174)

What legitimizes literature? Why make up nonsense anyway, gild the lily as it were? And here we find the crux of the issue in Fuad’s rhetoric:

9 Rancière, Politics of Aesthetics, 38.
You argue that “the purpose of the poet and the men of letters alike is to produce the desired outcome whatever the means.” I knew about the Jesuit dictum, “the end justifies the means,” but I had no idea poets and men of letters took this to be their guiding principle as well. Nor do I want to know about it. (184)\(^{10}\)

This debate begins after Fuad’s accusation, in his biography of Hugo, that Hugo the romantic rebel had betrayed his own mission by turning against Zola who, in Fuad’s mind, had already replaced Hugo with his own progressive positivism.\(^{11}\)

The biography was written to commemorate Hugo, apparently, but by way of describing Hugo’s datedness, it instead addressed Istanbul’s literary circles, their Hugo-inspired sentimentalism and romanticism. Along with Hugo, contemporary Ottoman poets and novelists were Fuad’s target, stuck as they all were in some romantic (or its equivalent) mindset according to Fuad.

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\(^{10}\) Here is a contemporary, bibliographic account of this matter from Otto Henne an Rhyn, *The Jesuits: Their History, Constitution, Moral Teaching, Political Principles, Religion, and Science* (New York: J. Fitzgerald & Company, 1895), 47-8: “Herman Busembaum, in his *Medulla Theologiae Moralis* (first published at Frankfort-on-the-Main, 1650) gives this as a theorem (p. 320): *Cum finis est licitus, etiam media sunt licita* [when the end is lawful, the means also are lawful]; and p. 504: *Cui licitus est finis, etiam licent media* [for whom the end is lawful, the means are lawful also]. The Jesuit Paul Layman, in his *Theologia Moralis*, lib. III., p. 20 (Munich, 1625), quoting Sanchez, states the proposition in these words: *Cui concessus est finis, concessa etiam sunt media ad finem ordinata* [to whom the end is permitted, to him also are permitted the means ordered to the end]. Louis Wagemann, Jesuit professor of moral theology, in his *Synopsis Theologiae Moralis* (Innsbruck and Augsburg, 1762) has: *Finis determinat moralitatem actus* [the end decides the morality of the act].”

\(^{11}\) The book on Hugo, originally published in 1885 and a few months after Hugo’s death, was republished in *Şiir ve Hakikat*, 33-156. Ahmet Midhat speaks of the book on Voltaire as a translation of sorts, which is an interesting topic that I cannot discuss here. The book is Fuad’s own composition. Midhat also describes how it was best that Fuad took over the job of working with these authors, since otherwise “an Armenian or Greek” speaking French would have to be assigned the task of “translating,” and their work, of course, could have never equalled Muslim Fuad’s Muslim “translation.”
Fuad describes Zola as having inherited Hugo’s mission, and Hugo having turned reactionary by turning against realism. The next biography Fuad wrote was of Voltaire, whom he presents as a proto-positivist and a defender of Islam against Christian missionaries and all sorts of Jesuit perversions and misrepresentations.

In his full-blown anti-Christianity, Fuad identifies Christianity as the religion that is the hindrance in the path of positivist progress in the book on Voltaire, while he presents Islam as always already “scientific.” Realism and positivism are more Muslim than Christian in his mind. Islam has always had the space for realism and positivism, which is why the Muslim revolutionary should not have any difficulty thinking along those lines, while the Christian had to settle accounts with Christianity to advance. This latter also explains, for him, the tribulations of Hugo who could not understand Zola.

It did not matter what one’s objective was if the question was the legitimacy of the action as action, for instance the action of writing. The legitimacy of literature as instrument was the problem.

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12 Fuad, *Voltaire* (İstanbul: Şirket-i Mürettibiye Matbaası, 1304[1886]). Transcribed and translated versions of the book exist in modern Turkish.

13 As we have seen, Ahmet Midhat Efendi responds to this by turning the tables. Midhat will accuse the likes of Fuad with doing more or less the same thing, i.e. having turned reactionary, but in a different way. For Midhat, Christianity and anti-Christianity come down to the same thing: “Shall we say then, God forbid, they are converts [to Christianity]? But there is no Christianity in such thoughts. Ideas having expanded to such an extent do not leave room for Christianity either. It may be acceptable to call them ‘Europeans,’ but then to be direct about matters, such progress of thought is not even found among those who strive for good manners in Europe.” (*Jön Türk*, 464)
Ahmet Midhat, for instance, clearly justifies the means (his novel writing) with ends (the Muslim cause), which would make his literature more of a Jesuit endeavor from Fuad’s perspective, although Fuad never speaks of his senior in this way.

On all counts, Fuad in turn was accused of turning irreligious for admiring an infidel such as Voltaire, to which he responded by pointing to how he had shed blood for the Muslim cause as a soldier. But writing was a different matter. He would eventually do the same for love of truth and writing, as a “mystic of science,” as Tanpinar calls him. (OAE, 275)

Writing as game, the value of game as game would be illegitimate from Fuad’s perspective, since for him writing is a serious business. There can be no ecstasy and no wine here either. Those who take poetry or novels to be a game are charlatans from this perspective, those who look for the tavern simply drunkards.

The dreamer, he says, to get the attention of the reader to details, to an ant for instance, makes the ant carry marble columns, while the lover of truth spends time right in front of the ant hole to attest to the ant’s life and reality. (180-1) And the smallest things in this life may turn out to be the most significant.

As for one of his critics’ comment about the absurdity of holding in high regard the humble simplicities of life in writing, since such regard would make writing redundant and one could simply choose to be content with the real novel one lives instead of making an effort to write or read, Fuad answers with a question: “While there are great

many novels and plays in front of us in our daily lives, and while we cannot understand any of them, what can be the rationale behind imagining other novels and plays instead of trying to understand what we have?” (Şiir ve Hakikat, 181)

The “understanding” in question involves translation, since according to Fuad, realism “translates” from the incomprehensible language of life into “our” language. On the one hand Fuad thinks realism makes space for life in writing, on the other it is as if life is always already prosaic and living, even being, has the character of writing and reading. The artist imaginatively translates from one language to another.

Perhaps he would say that the prosaic truth of life is the one that has a “luminous effect” on the brain, through the use of simple words such as the “sun,” which, accordingly, how understanding would work in this scenario, i.e. immediately, through an impossibly simple language.\(^{15}\)

Prosaic realities shine without gilding outside the world of writing. The writer-translator must know how to contain language and avoid the shadow of purple patches so that the prosaic truth of life can make the luminous effect without interruption (yet through “language”). According to Fuad, the love of truth in the form of novelistic cartography and realism seems to achieve precisely this goal in the context of the human nature and condition.

The secret of life, which is about shining, is the secret of writing. The thing is, when one reduces sense and sensibility to luminous affects, and takes the sun to silently

\(^{15}\) Fuad has a fixation on this metaphor of illumination in all his writings. The two journals he himself published were named Güneş (the sun) and Hâver (the horizon).
speak, but in a language beyond language, nothing differentiates understanding from living, writing from being, and meaning from non-meaning. This we already know from Benjamin’s criticism of Kafka. But here there is another difficulty.

Writing is no instrument nor game or worship. For the love of the truth of life, the writer should be ready to sacrifice all glossing over and gilding, but to expose the prosaic truth of the thing, of the body or the lily, of life itself, which accordingly could only appear in its pure form at “the zero degree of meaning.” The writer must somehow know how to render the thing, the body, the lily, life itself paper and ink.

On the one hand prose is subject to everything non-prosaic. On the other hand there is a condition for this subjection. The condition is the codification of everything in life at the expense of life. Prosaic realities overwrite life and being. It is as if the flesh, like “the stone,” is “worldless”:

Can we transpose ourselves into a stone? […] Here we do not ask ourselves whether we factically possess ways and means of going along with the stone in its way of being and kind of being. We ask rather whether the stone as a stone offers us, or could ever offer us, any possibility of transposing ourselves into it at all, whether something like a going-along-with still has any sense at all in this case. Now we generally have a quick and ready answer to this question: No, we reply, we cannot transpose ourselves into a stone. And this is impossible for us not because we lack the appropriate means to accomplish something that is possible in principle. It is impossible because the stone as such does not admit of this possibility at all, offers no sphere intrinsically belonging to its being such that we could transpose ourselves into the stone. I say emphatically that we usually answer in this way because in fact there are ways and means belonging to human Dasein in which man never simply regards purely material things, or indeed technical things, as such but rather ‘animates’ them, as we might somewhat misleadingly put it. There are two

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16 See Chapter Three, note 20.
fundamental ways in which this can happen: first when human *Dasein* is determined in its existence by myth, and second in the case of art. But it would be a fundamental mistake to try and dismiss such animation as an exception or even as a purely metaphorical procedure which does not really correspond to the facts, as something phantastical based upon the imagination, or as mere illusion. What is at issue here is not the opposition between actual reality and illusory appearance, but the distinction between quite different kinds of possible truth.\(^\text{17}\)

Representation *qua* representation presides over the thing. Living itself, human life in its “existential determination” even, becomes representing. But to live accordingly, one has no choice but to write over the dumb rock of a reality, as it were, to gild the lily, the one that “offers no sphere intrinsically belonging to its being such that we could transpose ourselves into” it. Fuad seems to have taken this thinking to its extreme.

He prefers not to write anymore but give us, in writing, the real thing by turning his own body into something resembling an empty page. He simply replaces the animated stone with a body petrified. In this way he writes over his flesh, over life itself. On the one hand this is *to write* to prefer *not to write* anymore, to write at the zero degree of meaning, on the other hand it is to write at the expense of the dumb flesh.

So Fuad takes the game too seriously. So much so that he makes out of it his ultimate reality. To prefer not to write in this setting is to prefer to die, which, accidentally, is what the famous Bartleby did. Fuad’s heroically indifferent suicide is quite similar to Bartleby’s heroic preference in the negative key.\(^\text{18}\)


\(^{18}\) Bartleby the philosopher’s hero is of interest to Deleuze, Agamben, and Rancière alike, among others of course. By contrast, of interest to Tanpınar seems to be those who write, these philosophers included. See Deleuze, “Bartleby; Or, The Formula”, in *Essays Critical and*
While reading Fuad’s suicidal notes and his comments on literature, “with each instance, one has the impression that the madness is growing: not [Fuad’s] madness in ‘particular’, but the madness around him, notably that of the [writer], who launches into strange propositions and even stranger behaviors.”

Fuad ended his non-prosaic life writing. We easily say he committed suicide, following the wisdom the Istanbul police came up with on the night of February 5, 1887. But in fact he was simply writing, testing the ultimate limit of a life of writing. This is the most famous quote from the papers the police recovered from the crime scene:

I performed my operation. I did not feel any pain. As I bleed it tingles a bit. As I bled my sister-in-law came down. I said I was writing, that the door was locked, to ward her off. Thank God she didn’t come in. I cannot imagine a sweeter death. I raised my arm with passion for the blood to run faster. Dizziness is coming.¹⁹

Fuad’s writings contain at least the seed for a theory of literary language; his book on Hugo, which instigated his battle with the poets and novelists, and his book on Voltaire, all deserve to be discussed separately, which is beyond the scope of this chapter. What I would like to do is to situate İrdal in this setting.

What is interesting is that in a paradoxical way, Fuad meets Midhat at a crossroads. Midhat indeed suggests in his biography that Fuad’s life had become

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¹⁹ Okay, Beşir Fuad, 69. Ahmet Midhat quotes these lines and more in his Beşir Fuad, 31-4.
meaningless, without cause or purpose, because of those books Fuad had read, which according to him is the reason why Fuad committed suicide. Fuad says more or less the same thing, but in attesting to the truth of this by cutting his wrists, presenting the nothingness of his body with the ultimate meaning. Fuad too embraces “the naked truth,” the truth of life and the truth of writing, and in writing attests to the priority of prosaic realities over everything non-prosaic. He just attacks the literary thinking from the rear.

It is as if the suicidal writing quoted above is the ultimate limit of living for this writer, the sweetest life without any gilding whatsoever and the sweetest death. Now Midhat, in turn, writes to make the Muslim life meaningful and full of purpose and cause and even to make it prosaic, and this to save the like of Fuad from books, the books that kill. Midhat writes to live and to make live, that is, which comes to the same thing as dying to write. If Bartleby is a little like Fuad, Midhat the liar is more like Melville. In both cases one writes over life. While Fuad and Bartleby give us the empty page (in his will Fuad gave his body to the school of medicine so that someone could make good use of it, although this request was considered null and void due to his hereditary madness), Melville and Midhat fill the empty page.

And it here that we encounter another instance of Tanpınar’s genius. İrdal the simple man prefers to write, and write like Ahmet Midhat, but unlike Midhat, without believing in writing, without making a cause out of writing. Like Beşir Fuad he is suspicious about literary writing, but unlike him he does not consider his body worthless, like “a dumb rock of a reality.” He does not make not writing into a cause either. So he simply chooses to live, and his writing becomes a way of earning a living, shamelessly as it were. On the one hand he says: “What the heck this all about, what was its place in
life?” But then he would add: “I knew this, but I also knew that I could never do this. Yet a life is something worth living.” (BO, 88)

This is more or less to say: But who decided that a life that is non-prosaic, without cause or purpose is not worth living? Who decided that life had to be at the zero degree of meaning, waiting to be filled like a piece of paper at the writing desk? Where does this insistent idea come from? What were these authors thinking? How do they think most people live “in most of world”? What madness is this?

In his history Tanpinar, unsurprisingly, thinking along the lines Fuad does, mocks the way Midhat instrumentalizes literature, celebrating him though for having established, for the first time in the history of Istanbul, something called “the reading hour.” (OAE, 412-16) So he is not so derisive as Fuad would have been had he openly considered Midhat’s instrumentalism.

Midhat is fine, Tanpinar seems to suggest, silly as he may have been, his is not too much of a crime. Tanpinar is even nostalgic about how families once gathered together every evening to read Midhat’s novels. He does not write much about Fuad, this member of “young and extreme” writers causing a threat to the continuity of national life. Tanpinar simply calls him a “mystic of science.” But Fuad too is fine in the end, silly as

20 Perhaps Fuad was right in his insinuations about how the writing Ottoman revolutionaries practiced had something to do with things happening on the religious front. But the assumption that his position is beyond religion was certainly mistaken. Here is an explanation from Rancière, which one could read also to understand what Tanpinar means when he calls Fuad a “mystic”: “Let us try, then, to define these two ideas of the body of truth of Scripture to see how opposing poetics are deduced from it and how the interpretation of a novel’s reality – and perhaps the reality of literature with it – has to do with the conflict of these two poetic theologies. The field of Christian interpretation of Scripture is defined by four notions, those of the spirit, the letter, the
his suicide may have been, he was simply immature, youthful and extreme. Midhat the liar is a little like İrdal the historian, although the simple man was lying simply to earn a living in his book on Zamani, the Turk who invented time. Fuad, on the other hand, is more of a “hole made in time,” which is what Zamani would have become had he in reality invented time according to The Time Regulation Institute.

İrdal, indeed, is the ultimate “simple” hero in full contrast to Bartleby and Fuad alike with his choice to write and to live despite his understanding of the whole affair as embezzlement. Tanpınar’s writing is in full contrast with the conservative revolutionary Midhat’s, and far more life-like than Melville’s.

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word, and the flesh, which are arranged in a proportion: the letter of Scripture is transformed into spirit in the same measure as the word takes flesh. It is in the interpretation of this proportion that I will isolate two interpretative methods that I can summarize, for convenience, in two sentences, one taken from Saint Augustine, the other from Tertullian. Saint Augustine’s tells us this: ‘I could rightfully call Noah a prophet since the very ark he built and in which he and those belonging to him were saved was a prophecy of our time’ (The City of God, XVIII, 68). Tertullian’s says: ‘If flesh is fiction as well as its sufferings, the Spirit is falsity as well as its miracles’ (The Flesh of Christ, V, 8).” (The Flesh of Words, 79) Fuad’s sacrifice can be considered in the context of the latter: “Tertullian recalls the ‘fictionality’ of meaning that forms the limit of every exegesis of the condition of the truth of the life story: not only the incarnation of the word but its incarnation in a suffering body. This alone attests to the truth of the “shadows” or figures of the Old Testament. But this truth of the suffering body of incarnation is, in its turn, only the announcement of things to come. It needs to be completed to deliver all its truth. But this completion can only be produced by the interpretation that confirms each Testament by the other. There must always be the sacrifice of a new body to make the truth of a body of writing come. That is precisely what Saint Paul says: ‘I complete in my flesh what the sufferings of Christ lack’ (Colossians, I, 24). This is not a ‘figurative’ way of speaking about his illness. It recalls the principle that submits every figure to the condition of a truth that is the truth of suffering flesh. The truth of the suffering body of incarnation requires that there must always be a new body to sacrifice itself in order to attest to it. To give Scripture this new body, its commandment, the ‘Come, follow me’ of the summons must be taken literally. It must be taken in its naked literalness, not guaranteed by any symbolic body, and can be true only through obedience ‘to the letter,’ through the renewed devotion of a body that proves its truth.” (84)
Nor then Tanpınar seems to be invested in the dignity of the activity of writing. He does not take writing so seriously to *literally* commit suicide like Fuad. Perhaps, a little like the anthropologist, Tanpınar considers his hands already dirty.\(^{21}\)

*The life of the humble*

So Tanpınar’s distaste for the humanization of greatness does not resemble Midhat’s, and Tanpınar also knows how Fuad’s “mystic” path ultimately leads to a figural, all in all an overly literary gesture.

However Tanpınar does not search for some greatness beyond humanity either. He too turns to the simplicities of life and to the humble, to the immediacy of the daily life even.

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\(^{21}\) For Chatterjee, at a different register, it is too late too waste time on thinking and promulgating the lofty ideals of citizenship and their accompanying fictions. Chatterjee’s recent work contrasts Foucaultian “governmentality,” i.e. the modern *oikonomia*, the form of management that becomes indistinguishable from politics as such, with the ideals of citizenship and democracy, literary salons and modern nationality. Indeed in this account, all contemporary politics come down to the difference between ways of managing populations and the ways in which “populations” in question respond to management. This is why it is important, for Chatterjee, *not* to try to be “ethically neat,” or to try to describe governmentality as something resembling a problem, to which one could suggest enlightened solutions. Chatterjee’s “political society” is one that lives with the actuality of governmentality outside the walls of the literary scholastic world and in most of the world. This is why he thinks it is best the critic gives up sermons and orations, and face the reality: “[This] means necessarily to dirty one’s hands in the complicated business of the politics of governmentality. The asymmetries produced and legitimized by the universalisms of modern nationalism have not left room for any ethically neat choice here. For the postcolonial theorist, like the postcolonial novelist, is born only when the mythical timespace of epic modernity has been lost forever.” The mystical timespace of tradition has been lost forever too, we would have to add. Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 23.
For him too moreover, as we have seen, there is no literature without faith in the people. But the humble man İrdal simply wants to live. The humble novelist simply writes in the end, and he even cannot stop writing, despite knowing what his activity amounts to, i.e. that ultimately there is only one thing to write, and it is a question: “What the heck was that all about? What was its place in life?” One can compare this way of thinking with rather more serious, social scientific ways of turning to the humble to mark its peculiarity.

Chatterjee’s Nabinchandra Sen, for instance, another literary figure from “most of the world,” and accidentally a contemporary of Ahmet Midhat Efendi, appears equally unwilling to think anything resembling the sanctity of daily life or the humanization of greatness. He seems to be convinced that such humanization and greatness have to do with a particular religious vision of the world, with a Christian worldview to be precise.

Instead of mourning the dead as Christians do or commemorating the dead according to secularized Christian customs, Nabinchandra “would rather have the great deified after their death, their birthplaces turned into places of pilgrimage, their statues ‘worshipped with flowers and sandalpaste.’”22

Tanpınar does not seem as enthusiastic as Nabinchandra about “tradition,” though. He is certainly nationalist in many respects, for instance he is ready to embrace the nationalist narrative of literary linguistic “purification” of Turkish, in his history and elsewhere. But Mübarek’s time is at best something nostalgic and in no way truthful,

decisive or essential for Tanpınar, or at least it is not something that Tanpınar seems
willing to return to, nor does he think it is possible to redeem this traditional temporality.
He is closer to Chatterjee’s Tagore in this respect, Nabinchandra’s nemesis in
Chatterjee’s essay, i.e. somewhat indifferent toward the so-called tradition and with more
of an intellectual investment in the ideals of secularized Christianity.

Yet there is something of a Socratic perplexity in the way in which Tanpınar
observes our secularized Christian way of life in most of the world. There is indeed some
move toward humanization of greatness at stake in Tanpınar’s perspective in *The Time
Regulation Institute*, as I suggested, which necessitates ritualistically adjusting watches,
for instance. But this is more of a symptom concerning how we have become the
ridiculous creatures that we are. It is something realistic, cartographic even, but also
absurd to the utmost. It is as if to say that absurdity has become our world. The world
itself must have become an absurd place to make space for such madness.

In Tanpınar’s novelistic account of things there is no suggestion of a return to our
own and original way of inhabiting temporality, one that would resemble
Nabinchandra’s. This, though, as I explained, does not mean that, like Tagore, Tanpınar
celebrates the humanization of greatness. In fact he despises it and simply mocks it, but
after observing it as the unavoidable reality of our lives.

Now here is the contradiction Chatterjee formulates concerning Nabinchandra and
Tagore, the conservative modernist and the humanist:

In his long and active career, [Tagore] steadfastly held on to his early
commitment to an ethical life of public virtue, guided by reason, rationality,
and a commitment to a modernist spirit of humanism. Since his death in
1941, however, he of all modern literary figures has been the one to be
deified. On the day he died, when his body was taken through the streets of Calcutta, there was a huge stampede when people fought with one another in an attempt to collect relics from the body. Since then, his birthplace has been turned into a place of pilgrimage where annual congregations are held every year—not religious festivals in their specific ceremonial practices, and yet not dissimilar in spirit. We could easily imagine the older poet Nabinchandra Sen chuckling with delight at the predicament of his more illustrious junior. The disagreement over “our” way of mourning for the dead has not, it would appear, been resolved as yet. (47-8, it. added)

Certainly Tanpınar too chuckles, and particularly in The Time Regulation Institute, like Nabinchandra Sen perhaps, but not “with delight.” This is because he knows what Chatterjee and Tagore know, i.e. that Nabinchandra’s, likewise Midhat’s traditionalism is possible only through writing and reading too much into this thing called tradition, only through inventing new traditions. This is more or less what Ahmet Midhat achieves with his national, social, political novels. But this does not mean that, for Tanpınar, embracing the identity of everything religious or traditional, for instance, is the solution, as it seems to be from Tagore’s perspective. That sort of writing too would be doing something in the end, doing something too much, perhaps, and reading too much into other things, into “humanity” or religion for that matter.

Now in fact for Chatterjee both the reactionary and the humanist fail.23 They both seem to have had a function back in the day when there was a visible enemy to fight,

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23 Nabinchandra too fails in his predictions and conservatism: “In order to bring this out, let me first state that the question of condolence meetings is not, as far as I can see, a matter of debate today. Their form is largely the same as in the West, with the laying of wreaths, observing a minute’s silence and memorial speeches. These practices of a secularized Western Christianity are rarely recognized as such in India today: they have been quite thoroughly domesticated in the secular public life of the country’s civil institutions. Of course, it is not unusual to find a few indigenous touches added on, such as the garlanding of portraits or the burning of incense sticks. Music can be part of such a secular function: in West Bengal as well as in Bangladesh, by far the most likely music on such an occasion would be something composed by Rabindranath Tagore himself. However, the atmosphere would not be one of a public entertainment: Nabinchandra’s
namely the colonial power. But nowadays, it is as if to say, the real struggle goes on elsewhere and against a different sort of enemy.

As opposed to those writers who make up traditions only to distance themselves from the reality of loss (the reality of Mūbarek’s irrelevance, as Tanpınar represents it), and those who simply turn against the people in their disappointment at the people’s reluctance and inability to modernize (to begin ritualistically adjusting their watches, for instance), there are the actors of the real world (who laugh at all this in Tanpınar’s account). There are the living as opposed to those who speak. There is another sort of writing in Chatterjee and another sort of politics; there is governmentality, and there is popular politics.

As opposed to the civil society, then, or at least in addition to it, there is the political society. The members of this society have to fill out forms and all sorts of applications quite frequently. They need to be quite creative too to come up with new solutions and new ways of survival every day in this overly governmentalized world, which is full of all sorts of schemes to seduce the humble and the noble alike, and as Tanpınar explains, here in daylight people even find ways of consoling themselves with what they see and what they have in front of them. There are no “lofty” ideals there. Once those ideals were relevant to fight against the Western enemy, now the game has changed:

fears on this count have proved to be unfounded. Rabindranath’s hopes of grooming a public into maturity seem to have been borne out.” (41)
1. The most significant site of transformations in the colonial period is that of civil society; the most significant transformations occurring in the postcolonial period are in political society.

2. The question that frames the debate over social transformation in the colonial period is that of modernity. In political society of the postcolonial period, the framing question is that of democracy.

3. In the context of the latest phase of the globalization of capital, we may well be witnessing an emerging opposition between modernity and democracy, i.e., between civil society and political society. (47)

Writers may find themselves in conflict with life itself if they do not put aside all those lofty political ideals of European enlightenment, or they may simply turn irrelevant insofar as they follow those reactionary thoughts.

A close reading of this literary anthropology is not possible here, but what we have seen so far is enough to compare its popular politics to the politics in which

24 For instance, such perspective has implications for all sorts of writing, and for many different geographies. The Ottomanist Hanioglu is not interested in the regimes of power and does not use the word “governmentality,” and yet, his conclusions are more instructive than most theoretical investigations on the concept. He says that there were three key dynamics at play in the late Ottoman empire, for instance. These are the struggle between center and periphery, challenges of modernity, and the broader context of Ottomans for Europe and vice versa. However his fundamental assumption is that all these dynamics produced practical challenges, which in turn were dealt with practically. This leads him to the conclusion that one must look at the history in question bearing in mind that in practice, for the Ottoman, “Muslim” leadership, it was all a matter of checks and balances. Hanioglu contrasts practice with ideology, but he means many things by ideology. For instance what he terms “extreme fanatics” are conservative Muslims whose “ideological” conflicts with the reformists make the late Ottoman historical process in hindsight appear as if it was a battlefield of old and new ideas where, for instance from the perspective of modern Turkey, Islamism and secularism seem to confront each other the way they did and continue to do in modern Turkey. Nationalisms, Ottomanism, Islam, secularisms etc are significant to a certain extent to understand the struggle for survival and the end of the Ottoman establishment, religions and political idealisms do not really matter too much – what really made history were practical challenges and choices, Hanioglu tells us. Hanioglu’s three categories in effect constitute a single story line, and this story is about the Ottoman resistance/submission to modern governmentality. Yet governmentality from this point of view teaches us something very peculiar about contemporary politics. Governmentality here presents itself as the only way to do politics, the only way to be political. All the rest is illusory. The idea of efficacy, a fixation on practicality and work is the ultimate horizon of this politics whose only purpose is management and constant amelioration of it. The centrality of the concept of “efficacy” to Foucault’s governmentality has been theorized extensively in recent scholarship. As indicated, Chatterjee
Tanpınar’s simple man İrdal is involved. For Tanpınar’s interest in İrdal seems to be guided by similar intentions. Tanpınar too wants to turn to the people, to the politics of the people, to the popular politics and to the simple realities of the life in common. After all, elsewhere Chatterjee will even call this type of collectivity the majority of the living in our world, i.e. the “most of the world.”

Perhaps Tanpınar too is interested in something like popular politics in most of the world and its literature.

İrdal simply writes and simply to earn a living. İrdal knows he is lying in his (fictional) history of Ahmet Zamani, the Turk who supposedly invented time, while Ayarci, the “regulator,” tries to convince İrdal that he is not lying, which is more or less what Auerbach tells Dante when the latter takes Virgil to be as good as Christian. But İrdal does not really believe in the “regulator,” and he never gives up on the ultimate question about literature: “What the heck was this all about? What was its place in life?”

İrdal writes and lies, and he knows that he is lying, he confesses it too; indifferently, as it were. Because, working in the institute, he was also happy simply to earn a living. He enjoys that not-that-lofty ideal of earning a living. İrdal, moreover, is not simply humble, but he is also the “intellectual.” All he knows is that things work. His “nationalist” fiction somehow works, and that is about it.

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also teaches us that nothing, no lofty ideal, no noble political ideal can stand in the way of the dirty governmental work. Hanioglu’s conclusions confirm this observation and expands it historiographically too. See Sükrü Hanioglu, A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Just as Chatterjee distinguishes his writing from the writing of those who write with certain lofty ideals in a world that in fact works without such ideals, Tanpınar turns away from all those ideals of not-writing, be it Valéry’s or Melville’s (or Agamben’s, for instance), or writing in a second and secret language within language, like Kafka’s according to Deleuze (and Rancière, for instance).

If we were to compare İrdal to Bartleby, that other simple man and simple writer who simply prefers not to write, we would have to say that İrdal has no illusions whatsoever about such poetic agency nor has he interest in it. He does write, unlike Bartleby, but he is not invested in writing or literature. Writing is his business, and he understands that there is a bit of dishonesty in this business.

Bartleby pays the price of his choice with his life in the end, and quite meaninglessly, while Melville, and those philosophers writing about him, simply continue to type like Bartleby’s colleagues and earn a living this way too, that is on top of a great deal of symbolic capital.

From the perspective of The Time Regulation Institute Bartleby is an embarrassment for the writer and perhaps even as literature, just as Sen and Tagore turn out to be an embarrassment for politics in Chatterjee’s account. Bartleby is too literary, too purely literary.

İrdal the simple man simply wants to be, he just wants to earn a living, like most of us, even those of us who work as salaried philosophers or literary critics. He just wants to earn a living for which purpose he prefers to write, very much like Melville the great writer and his philosophers. The thing is this is neither a great tragedy in Tanpınar, nor some miraculous act that brings about the truth almost naturally or coincidentally.
It is as if, unlike the anthropologist, Tanpınar resists the urge to analyze some “prosaic realities as phantasmagorias bearing the hidden truth about the society, to tell the truth about the surface by tunneling into the depths and formulating the unconscious social text that is to be deciphered there.” As Rancière points out, moreover, “this model of symptomatic reading is an invention peculiar to literature” to begin with, and as we have seen, Tanpınar was in fact also writing about the futility of this sort of writing, perhaps to test the limits of writing at a different register. Chatterjee’s “political society,” this is to say, would appear a bit too literary, perhaps even too poetic for Tanpınar’s taste. Indeed what would be point of thinking a collectivity of İrdals? Would one really need to postulate a politics or a “society” to understand what İrdal does?

İrdal prefers to write to earn a living, only to end up asking indifferently: “What the heck was this all about? What was its place in life?” This is a perfectly reasonable and comprehensibly clear reaction, articulated in plain tongue, in everyday language. Here then there is no illusion of a “second language,” as I have indicated before, a language within language, like the mysteriously tragic or tragically mysterious language of Gregor Samsa the vermin, which even Gregor’s family cannot understand, while of course Kafka and his readers supposed to have no difficulty speaking it.

Tanpınar speaks the common language, which, moreover, he also presents as the one and only language of the intellectual as well.

Embezzlement

Let us remember Bourdieu before I recuperate what we have seen so far and move on to the crux of the matter, i.e. Tanpinar’s understanding of things, goods, and words as resembling each other at a very interesting register.

At another register, then, perhaps “sociologically speaking,” İrdal’s way of earning a living seems to be quite similar to Bourdieu’s writers’ who are expected to do what they do hypocritically, i.e. to write without believing in writing, which was also supposed to unite them in real activity outside the field of literature in the real world. This was the righteous thing to do for Bourdieu, who therein found a way of rescuing the dignity of the activity of the writer-scholar.

For “how can one fail to see that in its apparent nihilism, this critique does in fact encompass the recognition of universal logical or ethical principles, which it has to invoke, at least tacitly, in order to express or denounce the selfish, interested, partial, or subjective logic of strategies of universalization.”27 Men of letters needed to stick to their “politics of purity,”28 but only after ceremoniously confessing to their impurity in closed quarters, to their involvement in “the every-man-for-himself struggle (or competition) [...]”


But İrdal does not seem to take that route either. His confession is not an act of self-purification. Bourdieu, despite his anti-intellectualism, defines a way of rescuing literature through an international corporation modeled on the social logic of public and regulated communication, the exemplary achievement of which is represented by the generalized exchange of the scientific world: in this case, the every-man-for-himself struggle (or competition) is organized in such a way that no one can win, and thus make the most of himself, except by making the most of arguments, reasons, demonstrations, thus serving to advance truth and reason. (Ibid. 662)

For this is what literary activity amounts to in Bourdieu: a meaningless and somewhat predictable competition among writers, involving a great deal of injustice too, since literary-philosophical talk, this cheap talk, does not know any form of restraint, involves no rhetorical, rational, or verificational requirement, its only requirement being the distance between writers and others. A properly defined field of world literature could change things according to Bourdieu’s thinking, through classrooms or conference halls that would function like confessionals.

The Time Regulation Institute describes a similar organization, and this organization even has certain implications for the unemployed and impoverished, simple folk like İrdal, who makes “the most of himself [...] by making the most of arguments, reasons, demonstrations.” His book was translated into eighteen languages, moreover, and was reviewed in each of these languages too. (SAE, 8-9)

Together with Ayarcı, İrdal engages in all sorts of debates and controversies in the real world afterward, involving even the most concrete, architectural matters. But Tanpınar would end up calling this overall operation simply embezzlement, which is what İrdal’s lamenting over such Bourdieusian scheme, such “mediation” point to:
I had never known anyone by the name Ahmet Zamani Efendi. [...] “Oh dear God, why have you not given me my bread money straight away, but instead made me into a lie told by others!” This is what I was in reality. I had become a lie, serialized like a novel, with which I became acquainted piecemeal everyday and which I could not trace back to its beginning or find its end. (SAE, 263)

A liar and an embezzler İrdal may be, but that is not too much of a crime, at least not his crime altogether. He is more of a lie told by others. Perhaps this lie in question is one that is lived collectively, and this is the problem. No one seems to know why, no seems to understand it, yet everyone lives with it at the very least to earn a living, which is good enough an ideal on all counts.

Let us put everything together. Tanpınar does indeed have a sense of secrecy as it relates to modern art, and he is also aware of his involvement with a regime of writing that is primarily an engagement with a form of secrecy, and one that is not limited to specifically literary writing; a regime whose genesis Frank Kermode describes in perfect clarity, and Adorno celebrated for us with fireworks. And Tanpınar is invested in giving the secret as secret, not as the magic mackintosh of which Kermode speaks but as a hole riddled umbrella. The secret for Tanpınar is not at the zero degree of meaning, but at the zero degree of writing. If Kermode is interested in the genesis of secrecy, for instance, Tanpınar is interested in its historicity, it looks like, in its complete arbitrariness. And yet this arbitrariness, in Tanpınar’s case, is more like the arbitrariness of an insignificant lie one mumbles almost instinctively on the spot. It does not resemble the arbitrariness of the glorious historical reason of which Bourdieu speaks.

It is as if to say that this is the way things work, whether one likes it or not. And one does not have to like it. After all, the embezzler and the office worker come back
home after a painfully long workday to sit down and say: “What the heck was this all about? What was its place in life?”

İrdal has no illusions whatsoever about saving the dignity of his activity of embezzling, nor has he any illusions about the relation of his activity to something like the truth. He cannot and does not try, or perhaps does not find it necessary to affirm or justify this madness he is involved in. He just wants to earn a living, he wants to write stories or histories like a shoemaker makes shoes.

So İrdal does not plead the defense of doli incapax on the basis of some literary scholastic madness, which would then enable him to embezzle without turning into a criminal. He is shameless, that is, he shamelessly requests one thing: to earn a living.

Writing for him is not some sort of weapon, it is simply a way of making things to earn a living. It is as if Tanpınar invites philosophers and literary critics, sociologists and psychoanalysts to ask the same question about their activities (“What the heck was this all about? What was its place in life?”) instead of acting on one ideal or another of truthfulness or self-righteousness.

Jewelry

So Tanpınar wants to write stories or histories like a shoemaker makes shoes. This can explain a few things. If he will be “poisoned by words,” as Ayarçı diagnoses İrdal’s incapacity to make action out of speech, at least Tanpınar wants this poisoning to resemble that of the shoemaker poisoned by polish.
In an exemplary argument in his 1960 essay “The Fundamental Differences between the Orient and the Occident,” Tanpinar explains how the difference in question comes down to different styles of making, which then necessitates further explanation and redefinition of the fundamental concepts of aesthetics:

It is always possible to reduce the most apparent differences between the Occident and the Orient into a few notions, which then would allow critical engagement. As I understand it, first come the behaviors of these two distinct mentalities vis-a-vis the good and the thing. Needless to say here we take words in their most general meanings, i.e. we consider the good and the thing, but also the stuff of thinking and imagining, all the material of mental and social life, which is to say we consider the “object” in the face of the thinking mind and the processing hand. The Orient accepts the thing as is or as it appears in the first differentiation it is assigned at the first encounter. The first traits always suffice. In the first encounter it [the Orient] even arrives at certain perfections, so much so that sometimes after the first encounter, perfection of the same caliber becomes forever unattainable. But in traditions that take root fast this perfection freezes, it gets rigid. The Occident grabs the thing to turn it around, holds it before the mind, looks for additional traits to assign and other possibilities of perfection to pursue, wrestles to know the thing as thoroughly as possible and as a result of all this endeavor makes the thing into almost something other than itself. It could be argued that the Orient appropriates the good only generally. Sometimes it is as if the Orient simply borrows the good from nature. The Occident owns the good completely by understanding its bodily constitution and testing all of its possibilities. (132)

For Tanpinar, diamond cutting is the perfect example. “At least until the conquest of South African mines,” Tanpinar writes, “the Orient was the home of precious metals.” While the most precious and the most beautiful jewels are originally Oriental, processing of precious metals has become an Occidental business. It was originally an Oriental business, writes Tanpinar, but “a special care and a way of knowledge that expands all the way to speculation has transformed” this sort of making:

29 “Şark ile Garp Arasında Görülen Esashi Farklılıklar,” in EÜM, 132-5.
This care is speculative, because it is based on observation and knowledge concerning the capacity of light to be refracted. In the Occident, in poetry, in music and language, in all the fields of fine arts and in all issues concerning thought and society, we always encounter this care and this economy of knowledge. The Oriental imagination resembles those figures of old fables that stumble upon precious stones. It gathers whatever it can gather on the isolated mountain tops where it flies on the back of Zumrud-u Anka [phoenix?].

In a few lines, Tanpinar reduces all literary history, an entire history of art moreover, in the east and in the west alike, into a history of manufacture, into a history of *literally* making, even what is at stake is literary making. Indeed, this is how one should look at this matter to account for our libraries and museums: to answer the question of what art is, one must simply consider “the ‘object’ in the face of the thinking mind and the processing hand” alike.

To understand what this rhetoric does, we should revisit the difference between the figurative and the figural as introduced in modern times by Tanpinar’s neighbor Auerbach. Rancière explains Auerbach’s position with perfect clarity:

For Noah, to be a carpenter and a prophet is thus the same thing, as to be the object and subject of writing is also the same thing. To tell (the story of Noah), to make (the ark of Noah) and to prophesy (the salvation), all that makes only one single operation, precisely the operation of representing. Saint Augustine joins two effects of reality in this notion: the effect of materiality (the work of the ark) and the proof of the figure by its completion. The ark is not an inert construction of a craftsman. As prophecy, it is a word, animated with the life of the spirit. But conversely it is not a word that vanishes in the breath of language. It has the material solidity of things that art has produced. The fabricated object and the recounted narrative are, in their indissociability, prophetic writing, one single promise of meaning. The text is already of the body, the fabricated object is already of a language that bears meaning. The figure is the bearer of a double reality: the figurative reality of its material production and the figural reality of its relationship with the body-to-come of its truth. It is enough, then, to make one function slide under the other to transform the religious text into a poetic text or the coded narrative into the speech of life itself. That is what Auerbach achieves by annulling the distance of writing, by making the Evangelist’s act of writing, and the emotion
experienced by his character, two expressions of the same spiritual movement
penetrating the depths of the people. (*The Flesh of Words*, 81)

But then the figure is *just* the figurative in Tanpinar. For Auerbach, the figurative only
carries the figural, hiding under the chess board the Bible, i.e. the figure is *both* figurative
and figural, otherwise it would be indistinguishable from the dumb flesh. Tanpinar takes
writers to be like carpenters, and that is about it. He himself, in turn, wants to be like a
carpenter or a shoemaker. Auerbach wants writers to be prophets and carpenters at the
same time.

For Tanpinar, the distance between the Occidental and the Oriental ways of
making, moreover, cannot be mended even through some conventionally shared
“imagination” under these circumstances. That would only be an ambiguous abstraction.
It is as if Tanpinar had foreseen such objection, and he has this to say about the issue: “It
would not be an exaggeration to say there is no imagination in the Orient.” Imagination,
for him, is the capacity “to test all the possibilities of a sentiment, idea, or an image
generation after generation without repetition, to wrestle with it in every possible depth
until its essential character transforms, and thereby to deny language any rigidity in order
to enrich speech.”

Such capacity is irrelevant for the Oriental way of making things with words. As
for the Occidental admiration for the colors and lights of Eastern tales, Tanpinar has one
thing to say. It is an illusion that stems from the way the Occidental mind finds in the
Orient something other than what it experiences in its own way of making things with
words.

The Westerner stumbles upon “the good itself or its traits in its natural state” in
the Orient or alternatively upon certain “civilizational peculiarities that are the outcome
of repetition.” The westerner is so alien to this “real” world that he mistakes the thing as is for imaginative produce, and the indifference in the way of engaging it with imagination.

On the one hand everything Oriental is reduced to some sterile rigidity, but one that embraces the good and the thing as is and even arrives at certain perfections in doing this. These are natural perfections, and they are naturally inert in every respect, like precious stones in the rough. Impossible to add up to in their current state, for instance through processing and exchange, these perfections only lead to poverty over time.

On the other hand there is the Occidental imagination and the economy of knowledge. But then it is reduced to a capacity to manufacture, make up or manipulate things, which but only brings enrichment in addition to distance from the good and the thing “in their natural state.” One is naturally poor, but then it gives one life itself as is, which is its paradoxical wealth. The other is artificially rich, but then this is all about making up things, some artificiality, which in turn is its paradoxical poverty.

This is what it comes down to, then. Both the Oriental and the Occidental make things, but while one is paradoxically poor the other is paradoxically rich.

“I am bound to our music,” says Tanpinar, “but I cannot deny its deficiencies.”

(134) Tanpinar is both the sage from the desert, pointing to the futility and artificiality of the neon lights, of that life in the European urban centers where all things are things of exchange and everything appears as if it were other than itself; and he is the fully fledged literary critic and orientalist who knows the essence of his oriental wisdom as that of bare
life, of life as is, a life so bare that it borders bestiality. This, however, makes Tanpinar himself paradoxically poor and paradoxically rich.

After all this, Tanpinar’s conclusion is even more perplexing. He first quotes from Dante without referencing his source: “To depict something one must first become that thing.” And then comes the conclusion: “The difference between the Occident and the Orient, thus, is this mode of work that involves living in person the work one performs and to thoroughly settle in reality through work.” (135)

One could replace “work” in this statement with “fiction,” or even “writing” to make the conclusion a little bit more comprehensible, since Tanpinar’s main concern in the essay is cultures and more specifically literary cultures, and it could be argued that fiction and literature for him are simply a way of making things, simply a mode of work. But that would be too easy a solution. I will analyze this conclusion further in the next chapter, but let us look at some of its implications here.

That Tanpinar is paradoxically poor and just as paradoxically rich may mean that he is the out-of-place novelist, on one hand, and the out-of-place dervish on the other. (Indeed, as we will see in the next chapter, Tanpinar describes himself as a “dervish without the mantle.”) As an out-of-place dervish he would write novels, then, he would write in the most literary of all styles but to mock novelists and writers alike. As an out-of-place novelist he would mock the Oriental wisdom as the noisy chatter of drunkard fools and potheads. Tanpinar the novelist looks down on Tanpinar the Oriental sage, while the wisdom of the desert silently mocks the wisdom of the writer. But both the silence and writing belong to Tanpinar.
We can then use elimination to solve this equation with too many unknowns. Perhaps Tanpınar is simply the self-hating Oriental novelist. Perhaps, after diagnosing in himself something resembling orientalische Selbsthaß Tanpınar sets for a quest to find a cure for this madness, but like Don Quixote ends up fighting against windmills, which also means that he lives through his madness, like Ziya Pasha, “right in front of us like an affliction, willfully embracing all the suffering inflicted on him. Thus he is perhaps the liveliest man of his age,” putting together the liveliest novel that is *The Time Regulation Institute* that hates writers and dervishes alike. *(OAE, 285)*

We have seen how one could look at İrdal as the ultimate figure through whom Tanpınar mocks all writers, all sorts of literary heroisms and even literariness itself as it is found outside the specifically literary field. The character in *The Time Regulation Institute* that Tanpınar tortures as the out-of-place dervish is a certain Lutfullah Efendi, one of İrdal’s father’s friends who believes that one day he will find Caesar Andronicos’s treasure and transform base metals to gold in the secret laboratory behind Aristidi Efendi’s apothecary. İrdal’s father takes this man to be a “pothead of a liar.” Yet Lutfullah Efendi is the one who most inspires this small group of friends: *(SAE, 40)*

In point of fact, all these people, so as to be able to go beyond the wall called reality, had dug themselves holes to live in. [...] I think they were actuated by something more important than belief. This something was equally important for all three of them. To their mind, there was no limit to so-called possibility. They had a universe of their own where everything was within the bounds of possibility. Articles, materials, men, everything at the

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30 which we would have to define in terms quite similar to the ones Theodor Lessing developed in *Der jüdische Selbsthaß* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1930).
threshold of this possibility lay in wait for the magic word, formula, prayer, or process that would transform them at any moment. Their only sin was in failing to believe like everybody else in things they saw and touched, things that responded to their senses. (42)

İrdal describes Sheikh Lutfullah Efendi’s imaginative activity with the same admiration Tanpınar describes Ziya Pasha’s laughter:

Lütfullah himself did not deny the fact that he occasionally used opium. But then, opium was for him not a dangerous means of gratification, it was a way, in his own jargon a “holy order”, into which one had to initiate oneself to attain the supreme, the beautiful. In his half-drowsy state, he used to say that unless one repudiated one’s reason, one could never attain the divine truth. In such states he always spoke about the other side of the fence and how there was no end to the sources of pleasure that awaited human beings beyond the visible. Listening to him, it was hard not to believe that he did actually live in turquoise palaces, in that world beyond our sight among gold and jewelry, silver embroidery, and thousands of other beauties that had remained unsavored till then. He even had, in this hedonistic world of his, a girl he loved by the name of Aselban. We all knew by heart the beauty of his inamorata who either entertained herself at musical gatherings in the company of female slaves as beautiful as she herself was, just like in fairy tales, amid the never failing roses, by the crystal clear pools, among songs of nightingales and odors of roses and jasmine, and in cool babbling waters, or sat all alone embroidering and thinking of our friend Aselban’s hair was darker than the night, her eyes brighter than the stars, her complexion whiter than jasmine and her bearing made pheasants green with envy. (43-44 [58])

The thing is in Lütfullah the pothead’s case, the jewelry, this extremely beautiful and magic path of saying, this dream state, becomes a thing of commercial exchange. These men of God are out of place, not in the tavern but in the market place. Lütfullah is actually trying to make gold out of this poetic wealth. Indeed, İrdal’s father’s friends, including Lütfullah, look to recover their real and worldly wealth.

But that divine ecstasy of poetry was meant to make the owner of those sacred jewels, of those poems, poor-in-the-world to begin with. Lütfullah and his friends look up to wealth, to real wealth, not to the divine wealth of being one in the life in common. Their trajectory is not one that would take them back to the life in common, which is
what the *harabat*, the wine or the pot was supposed to do in distancing them from the righteous path of reason. It is no longer possible for Ziya Pasha and Lutfullah Efendi, but for Tanpınar as well, to make as if the *harabat* is intact.

Perhaps unknowingly, both Ziya Pasha and Lutfullah Efendi had left the *harabat* anyway, and they simply look like drunkard fools whom no sober men can tolerate. Tanpınar cannot walk that path. This is why Ziya Pasha is a drunkard fool just like Sheikh Lütfullah is a pothead, while Tanpınar is a novelist as opposed to a drunkard fool and a poet as opposed to a pothead.

All they have in front of them are those beautiful jewels of words, and yet they find themselves in the market place. But once the madman of God becomes the orator or the salesmen, his ecstatic words do not produce any effect whatsoever. Those words simply and obviously do not sell or they sell for cheap. Because the words of exchange are not things, certainly not beautiful things like jewels but means, and it was because the so-called poets were “poisoned by words” that they were sent to the tavern to begin with, so that they could at least make things with words as madmen of God, just like anyone else making things. To embrace the divine ecstasy was to follow the “custom,” it was only to follow the law of the life in common; it was to follow the people, simply to imitate the simple. Of course these words are not gold. Of course they cannot be sold like gold. Their worth, their value, was somewhere else.
Communal madness

At first sight, it looks like İrdal’s way of saying, his “writing” a story-history, his way of making a living with something like literature is in full contrast with wine poetry. He writes like a novelist or a historian in the end. One should consider the novel, i.e. Tanpinar’s writing, with this in mind as well, since İrdal is the narrator.

It is as if Tanpinar is bestowed with a certain secret and a certain mission, a mission with which he becomes “acquainted piecemeal everyday” and which he “could not trace back to its beginning or find its end,” whose futility and emptiness he knows very well, yet whose expansion toward the past and future he cannot contain. He cannot give up, for instance to go back to the way of saying that the harabati was involved in.

One could say, for instance, that in the case of the harabati, there is “poetry” made in ultimate distance from and indifference to something like reality. This poetry is beautiful and resembles jewelry, and some like Ziya Pasha and Lütfullah Efendi attempt to wear it like real jewelry. In İrdal’s writing there is no jewelry, but only a distance from life, or only some routine, the routine of the office hours or train schedules; only a secret, that is, one that is worthless on top of being incomprehensible.

But perhaps there is another way of looking at this matter. Perhaps Tanpinar genuinely wants to be able to make things, which would mean for the poet to genuinely want to be a dervish. Making those jewels of words in divine ecstasy was in the end a way of being of this world and of the people; it was a way of turning and turning in circles like the whirling dervishes, and turning into poor artisans too, to embrace life as is.
For the poet it was a way of turning into a shoemaker, to make poems like shoemakers make pretty shoes. The trajectory that pointed to the tavern for all those poisoned with words was also meant to embrace those blaspheming madmen of God in the life in common. One made fake jewels in divine ecstasy to become of this world, and return to the life in common where everyone made things.

So perhaps what İrdal does resembles the work of the *harabati* in that he is of the people, of the life in common. He does what he does without knowing what he does or understanding it, nor does he even try to comprehend but only complains a bit. He just types, like Bartleby’s colleagues, and he never misses a day of work, unlike Gregor the vermin.

Perhaps, in all this, he is even closer to the *harabati* than Ziya Pasha and Lütfullah Efendi combined. Perhaps he is more of a Sufi than all these figures. In the end İrdal does not consider his activity of writing of any worth, or his words of fiction as gold. On the contrary, he does not believe in his own words, but he writes simply to earn a living like everybody else.

One should then put together then Tanpinar’s position on the secret and his position on the activist-intellectual to get a better sense of his faith in the people. The quasi-scientific, purely literary investigation, the sociological fable and novelistic theory that is *The Time Regulation Institute* asks a question about its own nature and rationale. But Tanpinar’s is not a performance of a master-writer who shows secrets in hiding them, disclosing some sort of singularity as a side effect, something unique and private, like that impossible thing that is one’s own-most property, which the master-writer would know how to make public or quite paradoxically, how simply to share.
Tanpinar seems to embrace poverty, while at the same time pointing to the sheer impossibility of that mysterious wealth, that treasure which is one’s singularity. That treasure is nowhere to be found in this novel, and the quest to find it, we could say, would appear to be a joke from this perspective.

It is as if to say Tanpinar has nothing, he owns nothing, certainly nothing that appears to him as his own-most property, certainly nothing like singularity of his tongue. It is also as if to say: our thoughts, and even our feelings, our complaints, all the way to one’s own-most solitary sadness, all of these are common, they were always already in common, just like our words. And this is a treasure of a secret and moreover a public secret, a secret that is most often shared.

Hard as he may try, the writer is not an exception. Stylistically speaking, *The Time Regulation Institute* takes the opposite path. It does not strike the reader as “literary,” especially when compared to Tanpinar’s poetry, or when İrdal is compared to Bartleby for instance or to Gregor Samsa for that matter, which is why I believe *The Time Regulation Institute* can be translated to any language without losing anything.

One could ask whether any language, including the original language of *The Time Regulation Institute*, has anything to gain from this novel, which is a topic beyond the scope of this dissertation. Suffice it to say *The Time Regulation Institute* uses the vocabulary of daily life, it speaks in daily, the purely instrumental language, which is in the end language as language; but moreover it speaks in a politically indifferent and neutral, “commonsensical” mood that passes a judgment, quite indifferently too, on literature and literary language.
So Ziya Pasha and Lütfullah Efendi attempted to wear those jewels of words like real jewels, to show everyone their enormous wealth, as a result of which they faced nothing sort of delirium. It is as if to say modern Ottoman literatures were a senseless endeavor on all counts. Yet this type of madness had something about it that made it look like it was ultimately curable. The trouble of these writers was that they were poisoned by words, like Don Quixote whose mind, as Auerbach emphasizes, was deranged simply because he had read too many books of chivalry.

Ziya Pasha had a hangover, intoxicated by the words of the harabati, while Tevfik Fikret had read too many French poems, Ahmet Midhat Efendi too many novels and Beşir Fuad too many books of science. They also had read too many languages. This is why their minds were deranged like Don Quixote’s.

But still this was a madness in word only, at least these people knew where they were coming from, theirs was not real madness. They were acting as if their minds were deranged, like Don Quixote, but in reality they would know who they were and what they were doing. Ziya Pasha was not in the tavern nor was Fikret in Paris.

They were just faking madness, their madness was a fake madness, they were either imitating the old harabati or the French poets or novelists or scientists, very much the same way Don Quixote, as Rancière after Auerbach points out, was simply imitating the knights whose stories he had read in books of chivalry.31 It was a matter of reading

31 Rancière, The Flesh of Words: “Such is the peremptory reason with which Don Quixote retorts to Sancho’s curt logic: isn’t Sancho somewhat naive to think one must be madly in love to imitate the madnesses of love? And does he imagine that poets take the sublime qualities with which they adorn the beloved seriously? In brief, Don Quixote knows as well as Cervantes that Dulcinea is only the peasant Aldonda Redonco. But the problem is precisely that Don Quixote is not the writer but the character, that the solitude of writing that gives every license to the fantasy of the

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and writing, not real madness, or not real drunkenness but something resembling hangover.

Had they stopped speaking too many languages, had they stopped being obsessed with the stories told to them and perhaps with those poems which Ziya Pasha says, in his preface to the anthology, that he had been reading since his childhood; had they just turned to the real world to live and act in it or alternatively submit their souls to the drunkenness of the wine, their troubles would be resolved. An anthology could never contain the ecstatic poetry of the harabati, whose poetry could never function as the literary address Ziya Pasha wanted it to be. No one apart from a small minority read or understood Tevfik Fikret and his journal Servet-i Fünün back in the day, which is the reason why he wanted to move to New Zealand; and Tevfik Fikret himself, like many of his contemporaries, did not take Ziya Pasha’s “anthology” seriously as an anthology, but instead defined it as a problem, as only a problematic attempt to build an anthology.32

Now from this we can extract another position as that of the novelist Tanpinar’s, for whom everything works like clockwork, whose novels are novels of world literary caliber and who has readers as well, and who, moreover, after complaining about how things did not work for these mad Ottoman revolutionaries, also complains, silently

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32 See Tevfik Fikret, “Harabat’tan bir Sahife,” [“A Page from Harabat.”] in Servet-i Fünün 395 (September 24, 1314/October 6, 1898). The criticism of Harabat, beginning already with Namık Kemal, never ends, all the way to Tanpinar’s history. Fikret’s point is that Harabat is insufficient, certainly, as an anthology of Ottoman-Turkish poetry that is, and yet there is nothing else (as for an anthology documenting the “objectified cultural capital”). I have already mentioned Fuad Köprülüz’s 1917 essay. One can also mention Rıza Tevfik’s “Harabat ve Harabati” in Yeni Sabah 29 (1944) as a transition to Tanpinar’s history.
perhaps but openly, about the fact that everything works like clockwork for him and in his world. The new setting also allows me revise a point I have made in the last chapter.

I argued that from Tanpinar’s perspective, his Ottoman revolutionaries looked more real (with their mad laughter etc), that their restlessness was more like Hamlet’s and Tanpinar’s like Hecuba’s. I added that in their day and age literature was the site of restlessness but that now everything works. Now it turns out that the old madness, that other restlessness, the mad laughter had to do, in the final analysis, simply with books. It was a bookish madness. Tanpinar’s madness, however, is more like a social fact. Now at another register then, Tanpinar’s madness, for this reason, is no curable madness but is more like Hamlet’s, while the old madness now appears similar to Hecuba’s.33

That things work seamlessly for the modern man of letters Tanpinar, can only be explained by the shift in the social setting enabling and disabling this or that form of address. For the Ottoman revolutionary’s writing, like Don Quixote’s words, was “poured into a void […] can neither be graciously received nor graciously rejected. There is nothing but amusingly senseless confusion.”34 (Mimesis, 345)

33 “But if we want to understand the difference, we need only compare the bewildered, easily interpreted, and ultimately curable madness of Don Quixote with Hamlet’s fundamental and many-faceted insanity which can never be cured in this world.” Auerbach, Mimesis, 332.

34 The passage continues thus: “To find anything serious, or a concealed deeper meaning in this scene, one must violently overinterpret it.” The “deeper meaning” in question is the one Auerbach refers to in this other passage: “[S]ociological and psychological interpretation has been advocated by various writers on the subject. I myself advanced it in an earlier passage of this book, and I leave it there because in the context of that passage it is justified. But as an interpretation of Cervantes’ artistic purpose it is unsatisfactory, for it is not likely that he intended his brief observations on Don Quixote’s social position and habits of life to imply anything like a psychological motivation of the knight’s idée fixe. He would have had to state it more clearly and elaborate it in greater detail. A modern psychologist might find still other explanations of Don Quixote’s strange madness. But this sort of approach to the problem has no place in
Fikret’s poems sounded to many awkward in the end and Ziya Pasha’s anthology was not properly an anthology for many. Ahmet Midhat Efendi, on the other hand, had to turn literature into propaganda to achieve what he achieved, which from the perspective of Tanpinar, was writing against literature and turning into a salesman. They were writing against the grain in different ways, they were neither madmen of God nor madmen of literature proper.

In Tanpinar’s world, literature works. Unlike Ahmet Midhat Efendi, he does not need to look for the essence of literature outside literature to make sense as a writer. Unlike the Ottoman symbolist poets, Tanpinar is not out of place as a symbolist poet or a modernist novelist. Whatever he does, says, and writes is inescapably serious in this manner, and this seriousness has to do with people who take things seriously, even the most senseless things, for instance novels or the departure of the train. This is why he cannot simply make as if he can speak the words of harabat and assume he is returning to life in mystic ecstasy. People take him seriously whatever he does, even when he does not and cannot take seriously what he does. Hence the seriousness of this madness. An entire people has gone mad and there is no way out.

The entire world, this part of the world like any other, is afflicted by some strange disease. Everybody is mad, madness of a particular sort has become the norm. People

*Cervantes*’ thinking. Confronted with the question of the causes of Don Quixote’s madness, he has only one answer: Don Quixote read too many romances of chivalry and they deranged his mind. That this should happen to a man in his fifties can be explained – from within the work – only in aesthetic terms, that is, through the comic vision which came to Cervantes when he conceived the novel: a tall, elderly man, dressed in old-fashioned and shabby armor, a picture which is beautifully expressive not only of madness but also of asceticism and the fanatic pursuit of an ideal." *Mimesis*, 348-49.
take madmen, those who wear words like jewels (anthologists, encyclopedists, philosophers, sociologists and novelists alike) seriously. So according to the mental theatre of this novel, that everything works can only explain what happened in or to the lifeworld that once did not or could not allow such efficacious madness.

Everything works, unfortunately. No God to save us, no messiah, no hope, hence the melancholy. But then where are exactly in this apocalyptic scene? Engraved on his tombstone are these lines:

    I am neither in time
    Nor outside of it completely

    Which time does Tanpınar speak of? Mübarek’s time? The institute’s time? The time of the clock at the train station?

    On the one hand Tanpınar writes in that most modernist of all styles. But on the other hand he is no way invested in this world of writing, and he simply wants to be able to make things. These lines seem to be his last word, even if he did not mean them to be. Perhaps he did not have a say in that matter either.

    His heart is in the wreckage, perhaps also in those non-descript lives swamping the train stations. He wants to fail in resistance or resist in failure like those whom he accused of some duplicity of consciousness, those Ottoman revolutionaries who still resisted unlike the psychoanalysts and historians, sociologists and economists, novelists, poets, literary critics and bureaucrats and other technocrats of the future wreckage. But Tanpınar knows that, he cannot simply choose to resist like those Ottoman revolutionaries, or call others to choose resistance. Or he could try but then he would
only be “pouring words into a void.” Those revolutionaries had not chosen to resist to begin with. They had no choice in that matter, they had no option.

Because in the final analysis, when it comes to make a rational choice between “‘orders dictated by impersonal social requirements’ and the ‘appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons’ such as saints, geniuses and heroes” to decide what makes history, Tanpinar opts for the former. On one hand it is how things actually work, how they have come to work, the work of the writer scholar that concerns Tanpinar. On the other hand, he must write, he has no other option but to write and even write novels, because this is how things work. On one hand he writes novels, then, but on the other he considers this an act quite similar to that of the whirling dervishes.  

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35 Chapter Five elaborates on this topic further. Tanpinar’s case is not an isolated case, of course. Consider Dani Kouyaté, the griot and director of Keïta! l’Héritage du griot, a film that once more sings the epic of Suniata. Kouyaté comes from an ancient family of Sufi poets, the griots or djélis. When it was his turn to begin singing the epic, he decides, in the Sufi spirit of resignation, that the best option he had was to make a film out of it. Otherwise he would have appeared reactionary; in the modern world this type of activity was only the activity of the conservative folk. They would not have let him be, he could not have simply sung the epic. Singing like a djéli was in full contrast with his French style education and upbringing. In his day and age it was too late to sing the Suniata like the ancient djélis did. It would have been artificial in this modern world. In the film itself this is a theme elaborated through the tension between the French educated mother of the child to be initiated into the culture, and the djéli, the Sufi teacher. This is what Kouyaté says about agency in our context: “Sometimes when you don’t know where you’re heading, you have to return to where you came from in order to think things over before continuing your journey. Today, with all the things happening to her, Africa has trouble finding which direction to take – modernity, tradition, or some other road. We are not really capable of digesting all these things. We don’t know who we are, and we don’t know where we are going. We are between two things. Between our traditions and our modernity.” Maria Eriksson Baaz and Mai Palmberg, Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity in Cultural Production (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2001), 99.
Chapter Five: Waste Product

To identify the stakes of the activity of writing that İrdal and Tanpınar are involved in more clearly requires thinking a particular tension between at least two different ways of saying and being, between two different economies of the letter. The difficulty, though, and the particularity in question results from the fact that this tension is not the outcome of some clash, of some confrontation between two “mentalities” (as Tanpınar puts it) that contradict each other. To account for this difficulty I would like to focus on Tanpınar mysterious statement: “The difference between the Occident and the Orient, thus, is this mode of work that involves living in person the work one performs and to thoroughly settle in reality through work.”

There is no contradiction and no conflict. For Tanpınar there is no contradiction, what is at stake is different ways of making in the end, effortlessly melding into each other in his work. There are two different ways of making that stem from two different mentalities, but there is no contradiction between the two, since all art comes down to making. Tanpınar is the dervish and the novelist, he is the whirling novelist, and there is no contradiction in that. Yet there is the tension, some silence, an invisible and inaudible
restlessness that is on all counts present, perhaps in the form of some strange affliction, some mad smirk or something uncanny in the Freudian key.

To explain this one must take a detour. We saw how the Ottoman revolutionaries relentlessly worked to prove that Islam was never in conflict with scientific progress, modern governmental organization, parliamentary procedures such as elections, and not even with modern democratic institutions. Nor had the prayer-like poetry of the harabati ever been in conflict with the “new literature,” literature in the modern, Western sense.

In fact, as some Ottoman revolutionaries argued, one could show that the exact opposite is true, that Islam was always already scientific and democratic etc. One could even argue that the poetry of the Muslim mystic was at times “romantic” and at one point even “symbolist,” just as İrdal proved in writing that the Turk had invented time.

A figure such as the late eighteenth century Ottoman mystic Sheikh Galib and the historical reception of his poetry, and particularly of his Hüsün-ü Aşk or Beauty and Love, gives a perfect example of this situation on the artistic front. ¹ The history of Galib’s reception that Holbrook narrates in detail reflects the tensions of literary historiography and canonization Tanpınar mocks in The Time Regulation Institute. For some Sheikh Galib lagged behind in his writing, Namık Kemal is quite clear about his matter; Beauty

and Love is not literature, nor a “roman” or a “romantic mesnevi,” it’s “another Sufi treatise.” (1985: 169) But for Ziya Pasha, whom Kemal considered a reactionary, Beauty and Love is ingenious, Galib was ahead of his time. Then come the authors who went on to build, after Ziya Pasha’s Harabat, the Ottoman canon in their biographical and anthological works, among them Recaizade Ekrem, the author of the literary textbook Talim-i Edebiyat, comparing Galib to Hugo in his biographical Kudema’dan Birkac Şair. Muallim Naci alternatively compares Galib to Musset. (281-2) Later, for the members of Servet-i Funun, its members well-versed in Parnassianism and Symbolism, Galib turns into a symbolist. (288)

This whole scene is very much like the one in which İrdal made up a story about a seventeenth century Ottoman inventor of time. But one can make up such stories, Ayarçlı would explain, one can even make up a story about a man who invented the Turkish novel in late eighteenth century, having written a “romantic mesnevi.” He could have invented literature as such even, or modern poetry, so long as this is what the current age needs of course, in retrospect that is and insofar as it works.

Holbrook shows how the modern literary commentary on Beauty and Love as derivative, as “backward” is total fiction. But she joins the procession, for her too Beauty and Love is some literary summit, which was the judgment passed on the text already by some nineteenth century men of letters. She only shows, additionally, how to argue that it is ahead of its time comes down to the same thing as arguing that it lags behind. She suggests that by assuming it was either backward or ahead of its time Ottoman revolutionaries were making a mistake. This is because, according to her, Galib was really original, but this was a different kind of originality, an originality based on a
different measure of temporality and invention and literariness, not the kind of originality available from the perspective of modern literary activity.

Holbrook assigns herself the most difficult task, that of reading Galib’s poetry in its own terms. Her discussion of *Beauty and Love* revolves around the question of what it means to read Galib “in his own terms,” although she does not phrase her question this way. She considers these terms as offering, at least potentially, an alternative literary theory of style. Where others see derivativeness in Galib, namely from Arabic and Persian traditions, Holbrook sees a different kind of originality. Where they see a waste of literary potential, Holbrook identifies a different kind of literature. She wants to show us Galib in his own time, right where he was, neither ahead nor behind, yet having done things literary that are original, i.e. she wants to adjust our sense of temporality and originality in another way. The problem of course is the meaning of this urgency to define Sheikh Galib’s work as literature (or “poetry,” “lyric,” “romantic” or alternatively modern or literary) and as original, for which purpose it seems to be fair game even to invent a different notion of literature and a different notion of originality. Indeed, why not forget about literature and originality altogether, and just read? What is this ambition if not an ambition to redeem Galib’s work in the Auerbachian key?

The thing is there is a difference between showing how there is no contradiction between Islam and democracy, for instance, and the urge to prove that Islam has always already been democratic. There is a difference even between arguing that Islam and democracy do not contradict each other and arguing that Islam has always already enabled the space for modern democratic institutions or for instance for modern literary activity. Just as
there is a difference between arguing that there existed in the Muslim lifeworld some empty place and arguing that the place in question was like an empty page that could or could not be filled, like Midhat’s or Fuad’s pages.

Tanpinar, the whirling novelist, knows that there is a difference and distance between his artistic activity and the ecstatic dance of the whirling dervishes. But he also knows that there exists no contradiction between the two, which does not mean that one could take the former as naturally following the latter, or the latter as having always already enabled the former in some teleological procession or according to some logic of figurality. What he does (in writing poems and novels) adds up to the activity of the whirling dervishes in his mind.

Yet, in the end, it does add up and it is not an ecstatic dance at all, nor is his poetry “traditional.” Tanpinar wants to be like the whirling dervishes, and this is all he can achieve. Because he also knows that one cannot simply opt to become a dervish anywhere in the world and anytime. It is a communal matter in the end. The path of the dervish and the harabati, just like the path of the writer-scholar, is a social trajectory.

What then is this supplement?

Let us take the headscarf as an example. The texture of a flag may be the same as the texture of a headscarf. One can indeed sew a scarf as one sews a flag. And when one compares the construction of an Ottoman government building in a distant land under
alleged Ottoman control\textsuperscript{2} to the construction of a humble house in the suburbs of Istanbul, the making in question may be reduced to the one and the same activity of constructing, to the same activity of “building” as in building brick by brick.

And yet the former suggests, additionally, the extension of the visibility of the “empire,” its “specter” or “spectacle,” as it were, from Istanbul to a distant land, while the latter does not have to participate in such “representational regime,” or take part in the iconography of the empire.

In fact it was not until around the mid-nineteenth century that the Porte, the Ottoman government, began to invest in the construction of government buildings, gathering places such as public squares, roads etc in places far from Istanbul, in Africa for instance. It was not until then that the sultan’s image was hung on the walls of the governmental and military offices.\textsuperscript{3} Railroads and identity cards, and even the postal

\textsuperscript{2} Hanioglu, \textit{A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire}, 6-7: “The most salient characteristic of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth century was its decentralization. In fact, the Ottoman state can only be considered an empire in the loose sense in which the term is used to refer to such medieval states as the Chinese under the late T’ang dynasty. Its administrative establishment, economic system, and social organization all call to mind the structure of a premodern state. On paper, Ottoman territory at the turn of the nineteenth century stretched from Algeria to Yemen, Bosnia to the Caucasus, and Eritrea to Basra, encompassing a vast area inhabited by some 30 million people. In practice, the reach of the Ottoman government in Istanbul rarely extended beyond the central provinces of Anatolia and Rumelia, and then only weakly.” It is difficult to understand what Hanioglu means by “decentralization” here, since such a thing would require an a-priori “centrality” – “on paper” perhaps?

\textsuperscript{3} See Selim Deringil, \textit{The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909} (I.B Tauris: London, 1998) for the development of late Ottoman, imperial iconography. Deringil also writes about Ottoman imperialism, or whether or not one can postulate a “Muslim” colonialism, for instance in the context of Ottoman involvement in the “scramble for Africa,” in “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery:’ the Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” in \textit{Comparative Studies in Society and History}, Vol. 2 (2003), 311-342. The essay presents a poor understanding and superficial use of the term “subaltern,” with a simplistic suggestion that the Ottomans were “subaltern” to European power, whatever that may mean, ending up coining, as for a conclusion, the term “borrowed colonialism”
system, for instance, but also what Tanpınar himself deems “the purification” of Turkish language, i.e. the infrastructure that enables a particular representational regime, and hence the particular representational absence/presence (the Ottoman “empire” or “nation” and perhaps even the Ottoman “people”), all date back to the Tanzimat declaration and the history of reforms that lead to it.

It is in this context that we should try to see what Tanpınar points to with this most powerful conclusion to his essay on the difference between the “West” and the Orient: “The difference between the Occident and the Orient, thus, is this mode of work that involves living in person the work one performs and to thoroughly settle in reality through work.” (135)

On the one hand, it is as if Tanpınar, with some ecstatic, perhaps even mystical materialism, asks us: But what is a state, after all, if not the government buildings and the flag, the passport, the national anthem and the railroad? What is a novel if not letters to describe the Ottoman, allegedly “Muslim” colonialism. It is difficult, after all the evidence Deringil provides, to understand what is so “Muslim” about the Ottoman ambition to imitate its European rivals in Africa. Yet both the book and the essay are the outcome of an extraordinary research raising numerous thought provoking questions.

The “purification” in question is all in all the gradual standardization of language for and through an efficient media technology. That Turkish language developed over time into a purer, more immediate sort of medium is a teleological fiction dear to many Turkish scholars of the last century. Hakan Karatake has an excellent review essay on this topic that also discusses the arguments of some those scholars, titled “Osmanlı Nesrinin Cumhuriyet Devrinde Algılanışı” (“The Reception of Ottoman Prose during the Republican Era”) in Nesrin İnşası: Düzyazida Dil, Üslup ve Türler, ed. H. Aynur, M. Çakır, H. Koncu, S. S. Kuru, A. E. Özyıldırım (İstanbul: Turkuvaz Yayınları, 2010). He explains, in that essay, how to isolate a phrase from the seventeenth century Ottoman document and to argue that the phrase in question and it alone (as opposed to other phrases in the same document) stands for “pure” Turkish, that it alone is purely or simply Turkish, and this simply because the phrase (unlike others in the same document) is still comprehensible in the nineteenth or early twentieth century Istanbul, is not commonsensical at all, but requires a huge leap of faith.
printed on paper? In that respect, it is as if Tanpinar argues that we have always already been builders and manufacturers, and thus building things (government buildings in distant lands, or historical or novelistic narratives and even poems) never contradicted our way of being and saying, making and sharing. Building and making things are not alien to us. But how about this supplementary “dwelling”? How about dwelling in reality? In the reality of the government buildings and flags, in public squares? And how about the highly textured contemporary reality of the headscarf, for instance?

The supplementary dwelling is not something that Tanpinar can simply choose to escape. It would be too naive a suggestion for Tanpinar to argue that he just makes things when he writes novels, essays like this one or poems. The trouble is that, in “the society of the spectacle,” one cannot simply put stone on stone in the square, or add sentences to sentences to write a newspaper article, or put together imaginative scenes to

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5 See Agamben, *Kingdom and Glory*, for a recent take on the history and the implications of Guy Debord’s *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994). Here is what Agamben has to say about Debord, which is quite an important moment in his argumentation in the book: “In 1967, Guy Debord – in what appears to us a truism today – diagnosed the planetary transformation of capitalist politics and economy as an ‘immense accumulation of spectacles’ in which the commodity and capital itself assume the mediatic form of the image. If we link Debord’s analysis with Schmitt’s thesis according to which public opinion is the modern form of acclamation, the entire problem of the contemporary spectacle of media domination over all areas of social life assumes a new guise. “What is in question is nothing less than a new and unheard of concentration, multiplication, and dissemination of the function of glory as the center of the political system. What was confined to the spheres of liturgy and ceremonials has become concentrated in the media and, at the same time, through them it spreads and penetrates at each moment into every area of society, both public and private. Contemporary democracy is a democracy that is entirely founded upon glory, that is, on the efficacy of acclamation, multiplied and disseminated by the media beyond all imagination. (That the Greek term for glory – *doxa* – is the same term that today designates public opinion is, from this standpoint, something more than a coincidence.) As had always been the case in profane and ecclesiastical liturgies, this supposedly ‘originary democratic phenomenon’ is once again caught, orientated, and manipulated in the forms and according to the strategies of spectacular power,” 255-6.
build a novelistic narrative for the pleasure of readers, and argue that one is just making things, or that things one makes in this setting are just things. There will always be something hiding behind the flag, under the table, in the government building; and regardless of the genre of writing, there will always be something to read between the lines. Moreover there will always be a very particular economy, a representational economy enabling this game of hide and seek.

Even wearing the headscarf has become fraught with a great deal of meaning and there is no escaping this. It is as if to say: it is not possible to simply wear a headscarf anymore. It is as if to say: it is not possible to simply be Muslim anymore. (But then İrdal wants everyone to let him be!) Unfortunately there is no difference between arguing that the headscarf is reactionary and suggesting that it can be revolutionary or that it has always already been (or that it has always carried the potential to turn) revolutionary or reactionary. These are attempts to condemn or redeem the headscarf in the final analysis, which boil down to the same thing.

No simple objection is possible to this framing, to this way of “partitioning the sensible,” as Rancière puts it, hence İrdal’s (and perhaps Tanpınar’s) affliction and paradoxical submission and silent resistance. Caught in the apocalyptic world of condemnation and redemption, İrdal has one thing to ask from everyone around him: to let him be. He does not want to be even reacting to anything but to simply be. He does not want to turn revolutionary or reactionary. He just wants to turn and turn in circles like the whirling dervishes. So does Tanpınar, as we will see shortly. Such are the troubles of Tanpınar the Muslim novelist.
The short stories I read in this chapter address these issues, one of them titled “Submission,” as I have indicated. “Submission” gives us an opportunity to set the stage for a closer look at Tanpinar’s tomb poem, too, to close another circle in this dissertation. I addressed the first and last stanzas of the tomb poem in the first chapter, arguing how they pointed to two different, perhaps even opposite, directions. Looking at the stanzas in between will give a more complete picture. As I indicated, it is in this poem that Tanpinar describes himself as “a dervish without the mantle,” whirling and whirling in an infinite circle “to grind the silence,” as he puts it.

After this chapter I conclude with drawing a few cartographic images along these lines of thought, which are pictorial descriptions in the Bergsonian mood.

But before this I would like to dwell a little longer on the “infrastructure,” the chess table that enables the particular representational regime or the iconographic state of affairs that I alluded to.

_The streetcar_

Thanks to a 1918 essay by Ömer Seyfeddin, an immensely significant literary figure who is taken to be among the first writers of the Turkish “national” literature, we have some

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6 Ömer Seyfeddin, “Sanatı İdrak,” in *Vakit Gazetesi* 45, 5 Kanun-ı evvel 1334/1918, 2. For Seyfeddin’s significance for the making of a Turkish literary sphere, see Murat Belge, “Genç Kalemler and Turkish Nationalism,” in *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem and Philip Robins (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), p. 27-37. Unfortunately Belge ends up simply arguing in this historically rich essay that Seyfeddin and his comrades fabricated or manipulated identity and history. Yet the essay is historically rich insofar as it shows how one of the first Turkish nationalist outbursts were a response to the invasion of Libya by Italy, for instance.
detailed information about the reception of Ahmet Midhat Efendi’s novels in Istanbul. The essay is titled “Understanding Art,” and tells us about a particular transformation from an era that was completely alien to novelistic fiction to another one in which people came to understand the novel’s particular reality better.

Once upon a time, Seyfeddin explains, Midhat’s readers used to travel all the way to the printing facilities where Midhat had his works published to explain to him how this or that fictional character in this or that novel of Midhat’s was in fact their neighbor, or to ask him whether or not this or that fictional youth was their neighbor’s son or daughter.

Things had changed by 1918. “Since [once] people did not know anything about this genre of writing that is the novel, they took fictional persons to be real persons! And yet, 
elhamdi"llah, we do not live in that age that takes the novel to be the real event.”

But then comes an even more interesting comment about the inevitability of this transformation, which has to do with daily life. This is how Seyfeddin formulates the remaining issues:

But there are still many who cannot understand the genres of modern [عصر: contemporary] literature. Just as on the streets we come across villagers who cannot understand modern life, we can always bump into narrow-minded friends in the intellectual realm. No doubt, villagers who bargain for the ticket price before getting on the streetcar or the boat, the old lady who tries to make the streetcar take a turn to drop her off in front of her friend’s house, just don’t understand the facts [بدبيبات: the givens] of modern life. (ibid)

Taking a fictional character to be a real person is like asking the conductor of the streetcar to make a right turn in the middle of the trip. This is not how the streetcar or the novel works. On the one hand the issue is strictly technical and in the case of the streetcar even material. The issue is that one needs to give in to the way life flows, simply not to turn into an obstacle along the path or into a laughing stock. One needs to
give in, just as once the mystic gave in to the flow of life in whichever direction. This is not too much to ask even from the pious folk. Otherwise one stops turning and turning in circles and turns reactionary. The issue is strictly technical and has to do with reality, with the material reality of the track of steel. It is as simple as that.

But on the other hand life in this strictly and concretely real world requires a shift concerning “morality,” concerning the perception of the invisible in addition to the visible, the “meaning” in addition to the “thing.” In Turkish the distinction would be between maddi (material) and manevi (immaterial, spiritual, moral or relating to mana or meaning). Teaching literature of all things in schools is one way of addressing the troubles of the villagers and the narrow-minded folk. Seyfeddin must go so far as to speak of metempsychosis in explaining this:

One should not anymore deny the decisive victory of the revolution, whose spirit has transmigrated\(^7\) from the Occident to the Orient, which is why moral \([\text{معنی}} \) issues should enter our schools along with the scientific issues […] “Ottoman rhetoric” has nothing to teach our youth. It is necessary to know the past, but without ignoring the present and the future.\(^8\)

At first we had tracks of steel, now we have spirits transmigrating. At any rate, teaching literature is the way to resolve these troubles on the part of the reading and commuting public. People who commute, read, buy and sell, pass by government

\(^7\) The word used is “tenasüh,” from “nesh,” which means to cancel out, as in a verse in the Quran canceling out a judgement passed in another verse. Late Ottomans used the word to translate the French métémpsy cose but also reincarnation in general. Legally speaking, it is used to describe an heir’s heir’s inheriting of the original heir’s inheritance in case of the former’s early death. From the context one can tell that Seyfeddin’s original use of the expression is closer to métémpsy cose.

\(^8\) “Mekteplerde Edebiyat,” [“Literature in Schools”] İnci Mecmuasi 6, Temmuz 1335/1919, 14.
buildings to be greeted by flags etc. must be present in these urban places not only physically but also in spirit:

While the youth is busy with studying scholastic literature or “scholastic” simply transliterated; Seyfeddin means the literature of the harabati] they should in fact learn modern [عصرى: contemporary] literature. If we are entering into the democratic western civilization out of necessity [as if in a streetcar, one could add], we cannot avoid this. Thus we should no more ignore the styles, norms, and techniques of western literature, and include them in our curricula. Western literature in the end is an addendum to classics [this extraordinary statement uses the word استطالة, which also means extension or expansion]. We must teach Greek and Latin classics and contemporary works of western literature in our high schools. The youth cannot wait for this until college, because it is necessary for life, for what we have in front of us. In fact it is our scholastic literature, which does not have any practical value [عنى, or literally, value relating to work] that has to be taught in institutions of higher education. [...] He who sees life cannot deny this necessity. (ibid.)

But this is not all. “We can always bump into narrow minded friends in the intellectual realm.” One must address that front as well. If intellectuals would like to go about their own business, if they want to work and make money like everybody else, to produce the supply to meet the demand that is, there are certain additional things they too have to do. One of the issues that troubles Seyfeddin is the widespread belief among the Ottoman intellectuals that one cannot earn a living by writing in the Ottoman Empire. It is true that this is the case for many, he argues in an essay titled “Supply and Demand in Literature.”10 But for him this is a simple failure that can be avoided through simple

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9 Compare this simple statement with this explanation from Rancière, The Flesh of Words: “[...] the world is not just made of perceptible, experienced equalities; it is also made of books, not of a conventionally shared ‘imagination,’ but of a continuum of books and attestations to the existence of what they discuss. How can one slice into this continuum without drawing out the entire chain that also includes the chansons de geste, the ancient epic, and [...] the holy books themselves [...]” (89)

10 “Edebiyatta Arz ve Talep,” Ifham Gazetesi Haftalık Edebi İläve 1, August 18, 1919, 1-3.
measures. Turkish literature failed, because Turkish literati does not write in the simple language of the people, they are stuck to dead letters, ignoring the live speech of the live and simple people. It is out there in the open, this live speech, in the people’s mouth.\textsuperscript{11} It is out there like the streetcar track and it works, it enables the making and exchanging of great many things. It has been working for millennia. But the Turkish literati does not know it. This is why their literature does not work and they cannot make a living by writing. The track is out there in the open, it is just that the Ottoman writer insists on making the streetcar take the next right to drop him off in front of his house, thus turning reactionary or into a laughing stock.

Here too, on the one hand it is all about learning the “styles, norms, and techniques of western literature,” and using the already existing raw material and infrastructure to produce supply in order to take part in the greater exchange. But on the other hand all this has to do with “the sense of life.” If writers want to work, if the Turkish literature will work, the changing sense of life must be understood first:

If we examine the reasons of our failure, we will see the truth. Over the ages the sense of life changes. With this changing sense, the fundamental premises and techniques of literature, and the relationship between the artist and the people change. Woe to those who fail to sense the truth of this change! Those who say one cannot make a living out of writing are of this crowd [of this, of this crowd of “Seven Sleepers”]. They do not know their people, nor do they know the aesthetic demands of any people. As a result they cannot produce artistic supply. (2)

\textsuperscript{11} This is how Seyfeddin engineers “The New Tongue,” a medium that is both new and millennia old, youthful and ancient at the same time. For more on Seyfeddin and his essay series “The New Tongue,” see Murat Belge, “Genç Kalemler and Turkish Nationalism” [“Young Pens and Turkish Nationalism”].
This is the line of thought that leads nationalist Seyfeddin to go so far as to begging the question of collectivity after describing a collective potential, which is the infrastructure for a literary market as the live speech of a people. After identifying the infrastructure for an efficacious literary market he makes words fleshy by postulating a Turkish literature of lively words and a demanding people. Literature in this imagination is the culmination of the ways of doing things with writing and speech that, as for a side produce, would ultimately lead to the incarnation of one meaningful word, which would be the word “Turk” for Seyfeddin:

Yes, it is mistaken to think that one cannot earn a living by writing in Turkey. We are either lazy, or we do not want to work. Or we lack the vigor [اشتقر], simply capacity, but also virility; but from the context Seyfeddin suggests that “we” may be sterile. Now, especially after this World War, we will become a nation. Like Greeks, like Armenians, like Jews, like all the peoples of the world we too will become a nation. Our language will be the one we learn from our mothers and the one we speak, not the one we learn at school or in the madrasa. The artist [...] will see that his addressee is not a group of gentlemen but the people. He will carefully examine the aesthetic demands of the people [...] If this artist produces the literary supply that meets the aesthetic demands of the people [...] he would live comfortably. What’s more is the fame he would earn. (3)

What is at stake here is not only “work,” then, but a particular way of working. Seyfeddin speaks only of the market and of work, but there is something additional here. What is at stake is, additionally, to work and to “settle in reality through work,” as Tanpinar puts it, to work with “vigor” and achieve the conception. One needs to work, to write in one’s “natural” tongue to naturalize one’s tongue in reality, to recognize it as one’s pure and simple mother tongue. It is only then that we will become what we have always already been. We will be born (again). Namık Kemal, who was the first to
introduce the word nation into the Ottoman speaking world about half a century before Seyfeddin wrote these essays, is far clearer when he writes in 1867: “Let the Europeans believe that the Sublime State is on the way to its grave. We know that it is not in the midst of a cemetery but in its mother’s womb.” It is settling in reality through work that would animate the empire. Sewing flags, printing identity cards, building government buildings, hanging the sultan’s image on the wall and writing of a particular sort, i.e. literature in the modern sense, would animate the empire, make it lively and real.

This of course is not to say that the “natural tongue” Seyfeddin speaks of is complete fiction, or that the postulate of a national life is simply fraudulent. It all comes down to making and dwelling in the end. The problem, the “failure,” occurs, according to Seyfeddin, when there is only reality and no dwelling, or alternatively, as we see in Kemal’s way of thinking, when there is the urge for dwelling, and even vigorous work but only limited reality to dwell in.

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12 See Mardin, Genesis, 283-336.

13 Namık Kemal, “Mülähaza,” Tasvir-i Efkâr, 18 Şevval 1283/February 23, 1867. Quoted in English translation by Mardin in The Genesis, 38. I adjusted the translation a little again; to be precise I translated Devlet-i Ali as “Sublime State.” Namık Kemal hardly uses the expression “Ottoman Empire” [in Turkish it is “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu”]. When he uses the word empire, it is usually to refer to European empires. Tanpinar too was a great fan of Namık Kemal, whose essays he put together in an anthology. See Namık Kemal Antolojisi, ed. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar (İstanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitap Evi, 1942). It is interesting to see how Tanpinar himself, in his introduction to the anthology, carelessly uses the expression “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu,” while the essays he compiled and transcribed uses only Devlet-i Ali.
For Kemal, at the beginning, newspapers and novels, theatre and modern poetry were “the primary means of progress.” But he would soon understand that they were not enough, they were even superficial in the broader scheme of things:

What we have done does not amount to more than a few superficial changes [...] in our literature. We do not have a single factory. How are arts to prosper in our country? We have not been able to establish a single joint-stock company. Is this the way to advance trade? Is there a single Ottoman Bank in existence? How do we propose to go about creating wealth?

A closer engagement with Kemal’s extraordinary work is beyond the scope of this chapter, yet I cannot but quickly summarize one last essay by him titled “Population” to explain this final point, which also clarifies the link between political economy and literary imagination that I addressed through Seyfeddin.

Kemal takes issue with Malthus’ thinking on the question of population, declaring that such thinking is not compatible with the facts on the ground in the sublime


16 Kemal, “Nufus” İbret, June 25, 1872. Kemal does not refer to Malthus directly, but it is easy to identify the work he criticizes in thinking about the Ottoman condition. See also the next footnote.

17 Thomas Robert Malthus, Essay on the Principle of Population, As It Affects the Future Improvement of Society, with Remarks on the Speculation of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers (London: J. Johnson, 1798). I have already mentioned how Ziya Pasha, comrade and close friend of Kemal’s, published his famous essay “Poetry and Prose” in London. The couple, along with some other revolutionaries, had to live first in Paris and then in London, among other places. We know that London contributed significantly to their intellectual formation; they also contributed London’s intellectual life, through their friend Gibb, for instance, who would publish the first anthology of Ottoman literature in English translation under their influence. See Mardin, Genesis for biographical details. But we also know intellectual circles in Istanbul were already well-versed in political economy even earlier in the century. Henry Layard, secretary of the British embassy in Istanbul around 1830s, describes his interaction with his
state. It was not a matter of making ends meet in the sublime state. The issue of population was a different matter here.

For instance, Ottoman reformists had come up with a legal decree to create an educational network across the Ottoman lands, to open schools everywhere. But there were not enough people to teach. Ottomans had more land than most other peoples, yet the land was desert-like. This is why the first thing to do was to populate the Ottoman lands and build cities, then would come the educational reform Ottoman reformers had hastily put in place.

That is to say, Kemal did not only come up with the Ottoman equivalent of the word nation, he wanted to *make* it person by person if need be, like building a house brick by brick. Much later, for the tenth anniversary of the Turkish republic (1933) a march was written, still popular in Turkey, whose first two lines are as follows: “We have emerged victorious in every battle in the last ten years / In ten years we have created fifteen million youths of all ages.” This is where we meet Tanpinar and İrdal thinking about writing and making, literature and manufacture, the word and the thing, the work, the voice and silence, meaning in history and reality.

Moreover, Tanpinar is concerned precisely with “orders dictated by impersonal social requirements” that resemble Seyfeddin’s streetcar tracks. He is also interested in

Ottoman friends in Istanbul in this way: “We read together the best English classics – amongst them the works of Gibbon, Robertson and Hume – and studied political economy in those of Adam Smith and Ricardo. My friend Longworth had strong Protectionist views. I was an ardent free-trader. We spent many an hour in fierce argument in which the effendi joined in great vigour and spirit.” Henry Layard, *Autobiography and Letters* (John Muray: London, 1913), II, 48. Many Ottoman intellectuals, including Ahmet Midhat Efendi the novelist, wrote on political economy rigorously.
the question of agency, the agency of writers, the agency of “individuals” vis-a-vis that of the people, of the life in common, i.e. the meaning of the “appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons’ such as saints, geniuses and heroes.”

Can writers indeed make the streetcar take the next turn? Alternatively, is writing a matter of giving in to the flow? Can one resist in writing? Moreover, what kind of making is writing? Do writers make things like everyone else? Let us turn to “Submission” to understand better Tanpinar’s way of framing these questions.

Submission

“Submission” (BO, 204-17) is the sort of narrative that first requires submission on the part of the reader, as if testing the reader’s patience. Until the end of the story, we do not understand what is happening, who the main character is, for instance, what he does or even where he is.

His name, Emin (meaning, in an ironic contrast with the title of the story, “certain,” “adamant” or “determined” in Turkish) is given to us pretty late in the story line. In fact, even at the end of the story, we do not know what exactly he does and why exactly he has come to visit the piece of land he is about to leave (with the train, of course).

He is an intellectual of sorts, this we know for sure by the end of the story; yet we do not know whether he is a teacher or a government official, a journalist, doctor or a lawyer. We know from the start that he has a particular sensitivity about language and speech, one that sets him apart from everybody else in some solitude: “In the midst of
these people who did not listen to any of his ideas, he had come to think of himself as
unnecessary and perhaps even alien.” (204)

The story opens with a bunch of travelers waiting for the train at a deserted station
and conversing in whispers, likely in some rural part of the country:

Apart from this confabulation in whispers, there was another talk; in the casual
facial gestures, in the looks that reminded, insisted, pondered or promised,
there was a second speech, rather more distant than the first one, and perhaps a
bit more scattered, yet just as significant as the first one. And on top of that,
loud jokes cracked every now and then and some insignificant statements
preserved the public order of the company. (204)

There are all sorts of languages spoken already among the travelers that Emin bey
just cannot understand very well yet can identify as language. There is also a turkey in
this company being transported that sticks its head out of its basket to make strange
gestures, “as if practicing artificial respiration,” we are told.

Emin bey feels like he resembles this turkey in this God forsaken place. He
decides to take a little walk, spends some time looking at some stream and its frogs over a
bridge, thinking more about languages of a variety of life forms, and the secrets of this
not that secretive, but quite mysteriously and even indifferently silent, yet full of action
and emotion, perfectly functional order of life:

[Under the simplest gestures hid] crucial decisions, extraordinary, perhaps
destructive secrets. These resembled ciphers that only those in the know could
read. If you did not know how to decipher them you would simply miss
everything happening in the world of these people who, living like nicely
camouflaged soldiers, were in fact constantly waging a war behind those
friendly smiles, generous treats and jokes. (206-7)

But what would be the point of “reading,” “deciphering” this final form of speech,
the language of life and the people, anyway? Because “even if you deciphered [this
speech] you wouldn’t have learnt or gained much. Because the machine underneath this swarm, the passions and causes fueling it would still remain alien to you.” (207)

It is as if this sort of speech were not meant to be deciphered anyway, and even if one did access it with or without deciphering it, there is nothing it could teach or say, there is nothing to “know” about this order of life.

But what are these passions and causes? And how are they different from Emin bey’s passions and causes, if he has some?

This was a life lived awake, like playing chess. He was terrified every time he calculated the difference between this life and his own life and thinking, the latter only following some half learnt wisdom, trying to force life itself, which is never containable in any of its moments, into the melting pot of a laboratory. “If you become like me and think like me then you can listen to me!” Dear God, what a farce was this, what sort of determination was required to win this game, how much had to change to succeed in this business. (208)

So Emin bey wants to understand and even address some collectivity. He is also distant from this collectivity, like a teacher in a classroom, yet his mission is not simply pedagogical or at least not exclusively so.

There seems to be a research element to his occupation, at the very least the narrator’s Socratic perplexity is undeniable. There is certainly something academic about his attitude, some scholarly curiosity with a focus on discourse. So what is his occupation, his business? Insofar as it has to do with addressing a public, it is also something like politics, or at least it has a powerful political dimension to it, this we know for sure. But he is realizing, in the middle of this trip, that he does not have the necessary means to do his work whatever it may be; that he has only half learnt a certain wisdom that on all counts appears irrelevant here.
It is as if Emin bey were sleeping until now, and his thoughts, thoughts about the people, about understanding and about politics, and more significantly about “language” were but dreams. Indeed the story of this trip is a story of awakening and enlightenment, and it is also a story of politics.

The machinery in question “underneath this swarm” has to do with a form of life in common. It even involves a certain grammar enabling communication, moreover the exclusivity of certain means for communicative action for the community in question, all of which relate to a common experience of the world that in turn enables or disables possibilities of living, but living “at the foot of the hill,” as it were, possibilities of bare survival without the urban neons.

All this is to say the machinery and work, language and exclusivity here all describe a certain, “real” form of politics, which Emin bey discovers only to understand how “politics” as he knew and practiced it was nothing more than a silly illusion:

Until then he had considered politics to be an exclusively a thing of great centers, and above all a matter of ideas, taking place around big issues. But this short trip had taught him that politics was something that concentrated around these small cities, in the power of money, in the faces, deep voices and the heavy nodding of employers; it was a thing of storehouses, shops, magazines, of the scattered houses of notables that from the outside looked like the waste of a great catastrophe. Politics was the earth, politics was the market. (206)

So his own business has to do with politics and address, with some political address, but one that concerns, not the sort of relationship between one will and another and not even the market, but rather understanding, deciphering, and changing.

This political address is indifferent; it can only be heard if the addressee becomes and thinks like the addresser. Here there seems to be a conflict, since the narrator’s
political address in the political universe of this small town appears somewhat irrelevant, somewhat insignificant.

It looks like Tanpinar speaks about the politics of writing, moreover of something like literary writing, which is his business on all counts, a business that he himself is occupied with in writing this story.\(^{18}\) He is in this small city on a mission, and we will see what sort of a mission this is shortly.

Once he had faith in the significance of this mission and the meaning of its politics. He knew how it had to do with knowing things but also doing things, with indifferently doing like playing a game, with interpreting the world and thereby indifferently changing it too, by discovering new niches and enlightening previously dark corners etc.\(^{19}\) All these now appear under a different light thanks to this visit.

\(^{18}\) Yet the topic here is not literary specificity, but something about writing and literature that stands for a particular mood, a particular way of positioning oneself vis-a-vis the “addressee.” We do not have a sociological account of literature here, or a political account of writing; but a literary account of something that literature shares with the humanities and the social sciences.

\(^{19}\) Auerbach and Rancière have similar thoughts, as we have seen. According to Auerbach, Cervantes’ way of looking at things is not a scholarly matter, it is a war in real. But it is a silly war, like Don Quixote’s war. Disciplinary eclecticisms of contemporary criticism take hold of literature in the exact same way literature lays a somewhat naive, silly siege on reality. And this is what Rancière scrutinizes further: “But the explanatory models they use […] are the models forged by literature itself.” (The Politics of Literature, 22) So on the one hand Rancière will mock the Bachelardian formula about how “there is one science, and it is that of the hidden,” which he will recognize as the Althusserian but also Bourdieusian slogan, and on the other hand he will recognize its “attitude” – as Auerbach has it – toward life in this world as a political attitude, as the core of the politics of literature, of literature qua literature, of the “naïve” literature or literature in its ultimate naïveté. As political naïveté, this attitude is other than what it becomes in the sciences of the social. Not that it achieves anything, but as literary-political naïveté it has at least something of a promise, which it cannot claim as for instance Bourdieusian scrutiny. For Auerbach, in taking this game of hide and seek too seriously the scientist takes part in the game, but the game here, having lost its playfulness, ceases to lead where it is supposed to lead and remains a game forever, an overly serious game, as it were. The game itself, on the other hand, as game, has the promise of finding, accidentally and playfully, naïvely, as it were, new niches, of making visible previously dark corners etc. Now for Auerbach, the topography to be discovered –
There is another game here, one that is played “awake,” another indifference and another flow, all of which appear far more powerful and certainly deeper than the one he is involved in.

The flow is far beyond his powers, also far beyond the center he belongs to and he is about to return. His was a game within a game, like a play within a play. He was a Hecuba and not even a Hamlet.

Once he was Emin, he was certain, and then he found himself suspecting his own position, now finally he has apocalyptic doubts. Once he knew what he was doing, he even thought he was doing it himself, that it was his own activity or indecision, that

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accidentally, almost miraculously – in the naïve game also turns out to be reality. This is why he offers literature as an alternative and serious way of knowing things, on top of being a not-that-serious way of doing things. The game leads to reality, while social scientific scrutiny gets caught in the game and also petrifies it. For Rancière, however, one needs to take the naïve game rather more seriously, and stick to the rules of the game; here writing is a serious way of doing things, on top of being a not-that-serious way of knowing things. There is no reason why to take the game to be leading anywhere like reality, one can instead take the topography of the game as infinitely expanding and this latter as the true meaning of both politics and literature. One can take life itself to be a game that is and play it too. One needs to take literature seriously as a way of doing things, but knowing what one does. The literary attitude had to come before the institutional interpretive practices built on it: “To analyze prosaic realities as phantasmagorias bearing the hidden truth about the society, to tell the truth about the surface by tunneling into the depths and formulating the unconscious social text that is to be deciphered there – this model of symptomatic reading is an invention peculiar to literature. It is the very mode of intelligibility in which literature asserted its novelty and which it then passed on to those sciences of interpretation which believed that, by applying them to it in turn, they were forcing literature to cough up its hidden truth.” (22-3) The “model” in question is already caught in a paradoxical situation. It leads to different kinds of politics. It can expand in multiple directions, some conflicting each other. Its ambiguity, its pure expandability, therefore, is only the source of a promise, not an achievement of sorts. By looking at what Rancière takes himself to be doing, how he endeavors to fulfill the promise in question, we can find more on the exact content of this promise: “I by no means think … that there is no science but of the hidden. I always try to think in terms of horizontal distributions, combinations between systems of possibilities, not in terms of surface and substratum. Where one searches for the hidden beneath the apparent, a position of mastery is established. I have tried to conceive of a topography that does not presuppose this position of mastery.” The Politics of Aesthetics, 49. See also Étienne Balibar, “From Philosophical Anthropology to Social Ontology and Back: What to Do with Marx’s Sixth Thesis on Feuerbach?” Postmodern Culture 22:3 (2012) for a recent discussion of this formula.
everything he wrote or typed had to do with his agency, with his singular personality.

Soon he will discover that things are a bit more complicated:

Seeing the secret life of the city, Emin bey felt as if he came close to understanding what the word “root” meant, which some ideologues used frequently. Because in the lives of these men everything was about the roots, everything was in the deep. They had quite an idiosyncratic life of their own that was quite far away from the leaves and branches seen under sunlight, deep in the darkness of the earth, deep and thick, full of apocalyptic struggles and movements. There they clenched up, squeezing each other, diminishing or multiplying their possibilities of living. Sometimes one of them sensed the impossibility of living in this apocalyptic space, and took off like a log driven down the stream, moving to Istanbul or Ankara or elsewhere to try to live under different conditions. But the root continued to live its own life in the earth. (207)

Then Emin bey comes across a friend. While taking this little walk in the country he runs into one of his classmates from college, namely Suleyman from Manastır, who in his college days had spent all his time looking for his father, publishing announcements in newspapers.

It turns out that the friend had found his father in this place, and now he lives here in this small city “in his pajamas” with his father and his new found siblings, taking care of them. Emin bey pities this friend of his at first, he even despises him. But then, slowly, after briefly visiting his house, Emin bey makes up his mind, he comes to embrace a different sort of certainty.

Suleyman’s father’s whereabouts were always known, but no one told him. No one wanted him to in this city “at the foot of the hill.” Emin bey does not know what to think, but he knows what to do and what he wants to do. Suleyman had returned.

Emin bey goes back to the train station, and to one of the notables of the city he says out of the blue:
– I’ll see your son. I’ll tell him that you’re right. I’ll try to influence him! I’ll prevent him from marrying that woman. He’ll return to the earth. You know your son loves me, he listens to me. He’ll forget everything he’s read. He’ll resemble you! [...] I have changed, I have now changed. I submit. You’re always right. Not only in this matter, in all matters, in all of them... I submit. (216)

Now this statement at the end of the story, together with another statement at the beginning of it (“In the midst of these people who did not listen to any of his ideas, he had come to think of himself as unnecessary and perhaps even alien”), we get a sense of what Emin bey’s mission is, regardless of his particular profession.

His mission is similar to that of a guide. It looks like the notable in question has a son living in the center; the son was sent there, driven like a log down the stream, as it were, for a purpose. It also looks like the way this son wants to conduct his life, as a result of the books he has read, is now in conflict with the way this notable takes to be the right conduct. This man of the center, Emin bey, was supposed to guide the notable through this conflict, tell him what the right books say about right conduct.

But now he gives up. He decides instead to guide the son back to this life “at the foot of the hill.” This guide, Emin bey, does not know the territory to begin with, and putting aside his half learnt wisdom of books, he gives in.

On the one hand he wants to drive the son against the stream and back to the earth, to the root, on the other hand he himself gives up on his mission, and he himself wants to return to the roots, to the people, to the life in common, conflicting it no more, submitting to it, embracing it. He wants to give in for instance like the mystic once did; he wants the wine and its happy ecstasy in the face of the troubles of this world. He wants the life at the foot of the hill. He will no more act like Hecuba, but will become a Hamlet, he will drink “the true wine,” as Tanpinar would have it.
He thinks he can now finally submit, he thinks he had been resisting until now. But then
the notable from this small city gives him a most unexpected response: “But that is too
much.” (216) Surprised, Emin bey, once again uncertain, asks: “You’re not happy? […] Isn’t this what you wanted? What’s too much?” And here is the ultimate answer, which
Emin bey has no option but to accept with a silent smile: “I mean [...] How are we
supposed to find the right path? Until now, for the better or worse, we found our path
following you. What are we to do if there is no difference between you and I?” (217)

This final submission, the one with the silent smile, involves a submission to the
life in common too, this is certain. One could argue that the writer here appears like a
reluctant mahdi of sorts, some humble saint who finally understands that in fact the
people had chosen him to do what he does.20 But this is too easy an interpretation.

20 We find such thinking about the role of the intellectual in the Muslim world in Seyfeddin for
instance. Seyfeddin’s “Mehdi,” a short story in the collection Bomba (Istanbul: Bilgi, 1970
[1910]) can be read side by side “Submission” to mark the difference between the attitudes of
these two authors: “Will there ever be such a Messiah to save all Muslims from servitude and
oppression and persecution? In all Muslim lands, in Asia, India, Africa; all Muslims are awaiting
this Messiah. […] But no such Messiah will emerge to deliver the Muslims, overthrowing the
occupiers, taking their revenge. Will this bondage and anguish last until the day of judgement? Of
course not. […] The Qur’an answers this: ‘The Messiah of every tribe shall come.’ Yes, every
nation shall have its own Guide, leading them to redemption. The Caliph cannot go and rescue the
Muslims. […] They themselves must struggle. From amongst them, one or more selfless martyrs
will emerge. They will take up arms. They will emulate other nations, the Christian nations, who
have thrown off the yoke. The same is true for the Algerians, Moroccans, Tunisians, Sudanese
and even Egyptians. This is also valid for living elsewhere. Liberators from within their tribes
will emerge. These liberators will lead their nations. Then, after this deliverance, the people who
begin to understand knowledge and wisdom will form an international entity, much like their
Christian counterparts. This is the true ideal of the Union of Islam. When this ideal is realized,
Christian Internationalism will not be able to exert pressure on the Muslims whom they find weak
and unprepared. Only then balance, law and order will be established in the world. A nation’s
Guides are those who can awaken their people from their witless slumber of ignorance. We Turks
will march towards a national ideal that is illuminated by the sacred torches of our Guides and
will break the chains of slavery under which we have been wailing. Not only that, but we will
The intellectual finally understands that the path of the writer-scholar, just like the path of dervish is a social trajectory. He understands that, after all, we are all “clenched up, squeezing each other, diminishing or multiplying possibilities of living,” even if we are intellectuals, driven like logs down the stream.

What then is the silence? The sadness? What then is this submission that requires turning and turning, never allowing a single fixed point for the writer?

Once turning and turning in circles like the dervishes, to live in common at all cost meant returning to the life at the foot of the hill. This is what Tanpinar thought he could go back to doing. But he discovers that nowadays things work in a different way.

To understand this we can now put together the “‘orders dictated by impersonal social requirements’ and the ‘appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons’ such as saints, geniuses and heroes.”

Tanpinar seems to point to the fact that the “orders dictated by impersonal social requirements” nowadays require “appeals made to the conscience of each of us by persons’ such as saints, geniuses and heroes” in this society. Hecuba has become real.

There is no play within the play here. In fact there is only the play, this game of hide and seek, which in turn is a serious matter since we have all become “actors.”

The solitary intellectual can be happy or sad about this matter, but this is irrelevant. Something happened to the life in common, a conversion of sorts that the

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even be able to go to the aid of our non-Turk Muslim brethren. Like ourselves, every Muslim nation may rightfully expect their own Guide. The exultant tiding is given in the Qur’an. […] The Messiah shall never come. However, there will be many Guides. While the common man is awaiting that lone imaginary Savior, we Turk, Arab, Persian and other Muslim thinkers must be vigilant for our own Guides, real savors. We must never doubt that they will appear.” (205-7)
intellectual Tanpinar has no option but to submit to if he is to remain what he wants to be, i.e. some sort of a dervish who gives in to the flow of life. But he cannot be a dervish anymore; he cannot simply decide to go back to the “roots” in this fashion. If he does not want to convert, in this penultimate paradox, he must convert, or “take off the mantle,” as he will phrase for us shortly. Here then we have something like a conversion embraced in resistance to conversion.21

21 One of the most powerful political movements in contemporary Turkey is the conservative Muslim movement known as the Fethullah movement, at times associated with the current conservative government in Turkey as well. The movement is in control of numerous educational institutions across the Muslim world. Fethullah Gülen, the leader, currently lives in self-exile in the US. He explains his self-exile by referencing the tensions his activities cause in Turkey. He lives in the US, because the secular political authority in Turkey takes his activities to constitute a political challenge, while challenging authority is against his own conservative but “tolerant,” Anatolian-Muslim, so-called Sufi world-view. Although he was invited back to Turkey many times by the representatives of the current Turkish government, including prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, through public statements, he refused to return on the basis of the same argument. A recent incident and Gülen’s reaction to it explains the point I have just made. When IDF attacked the Turkish flotilla carrying aid to Gaza on May 31, 2010, Turkey and its allies across the world protested the incident. Fethullah Gülen was among the few in the Muslim world who instead protested and even condemned the flotilla activists for challenging the authority of the Israeli government. For the historical significance and political reception of the incident, see Moustafa Bayoumi, Midnight on the Mavi Marmara: The Attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and How It Changed the Course of the Israel/Palestine Conflict (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010). See Mardin’s Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) for an introduction to the Nurcu movement, of which Fethullah Güven is taken to be the modernizer. It is not easy to interpret this reaction by Fethullah Gülen. His evaluation of the rise of “Islamism” is one that he shares with political actors from a variety of orientations; so-called secularists, nationalists, some Islamists etc. Islamism, he suggests, insofar as it develops as a response to other political positions, for instance to the staunch secularism of the Turkish state or Israeli state aggression, is simply reactionary. Mahmud Erol Kilic, an Ibn-Arabi scholar who is also an expert on vernacular Islam, has a similar but rather more scholarly take on these matters, which is to be found in Tasavvufa Giriş [Introduction to Sufism] (Istanbul: Sufi Yayinlari, 2012). Also see the interview “Mevlân’ya küfreden toplum önünde Mevlânâcilik oynuyor,” Zaman Online, web, 03.25.2012.
In another short story that he wrote, Tanpınar gives an additional explanation for this. The story is called “Tahsin of Erzurum.” (BO, 89-102) The name already suggests that the main character of this story is an archaic, “historic” figure. Indeed, such a name, such denomination suggests that there is something mystic and mediaeval about the person carrying this tag. There is no surname to begin with. He is just Tahsin, and he is of Erzurum. The proper name sounds like the proper name “Francis of Assisi,” for instance.

So who is this person? He is a madman of God, a Sufi who had given up on the world and all sorts of worldly concerns, including his family and his inheritance. Although he comes from a well-to-do family, after fighting in the Balkan wars, he travels around the Muslim world penniless, and becomes an urban legend before he finally comes back to Turkey, only to appear here and there to shock everyone with his words of wisdom, of sacred wisdom that mesmerizes people.

Now the last time our narrator sees this great mystic is in Erzurum, and right after an earthquake. We know now how for Tanpınar the country, the land, the security of the ultimately real and naked earth was important, important at least as an allegory of something ultimately fictional, as the ultimate dream of security, as something impossible. In “The Path” this is where he pointed at, to the country, to the earth and to the life on the naked earth, to the nondescript Anatolian village and its meaningless, anonymous life. In “Submission” he explains the dynamics behind this impossibility.

Now we have an earthquake that chokes out a mystic, a Sufi, a madman of God with whom the madman of literature, i.e. Tanpınar, must settle accounts. Once again our
narrator has left the security of his apartment, of his urban center after the earthquake, having sensed the sheer power of the earth perhaps, and he is wandering on the streets of Erzurum to watch the men, the Turkish men who too have thrown themselves to the streets like our narrator in their pajamas and underwear. Simple men, simple folk in their simplicity and with their long white underwear, and hardly any women.

Accidentally, our narrator meets the mystic near a coffee house. In the most eloquent of all styles, the mystic tells the narrator: “The silence of the earth [...] is not something so horrific that we take it to be. But we just cannot get accustomed to it.”

(BO, 99)

Then the narrator orders him a hookah, and the mystic offers to share it with him. The narrator rejects, giving an excuse about how hookah makes him sick. “So what if you get sick,” asks the mystic, “Maybe you’d die? [...] Oh, what would become of this world if you died! How would this poor world fair without you, just think about that.”

After making fun of the narrator’s fear of illness and death, he delivers a sermon:

Life is nothing other than an ode [qasidah] for death. The sun is a grave and the earth... and us... [...] Everything, all of this is death. Everything comes from it and returns to it. We and everything that you see – his hand surveying the world around, his feet pounding the grass – everything, all of us are worms wandering on this huge and grand carcass... Do you understand? Carcass worms.”22 (101)

22 “The world is a carcass” is in fact a hadith. There are many sources to discuss this issue, but likely, closest to Tanpınar was Mawlana’s Masnavi. See Jalal Al-Din Rumi, The Masnavi, Book One, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004). Here is a Mawlama’s description: “In explanation of how the Prophet’s efforts to conquer Mecca and other towns was not out of love for power, for he has said: ‘The world is a carcass.’ Rather it was by God’s command: ‘We’re not distracted and we’re not like carrion,’ / He said, ‘We’re drunk with God and not His garden.’ / The treasures of the heavens though he saw / The Prophet judged it worthless just like straw / What then are Mecca, Syria, and Iraq / For him to covet and wish to attack! / If you think this you must be sick indeed, / Comparing him with your own stupid greed! / Put yellow glass up right in front of you / And everything will then look yellow too / To smash such coloured lenses is a must
The narrator tells our mystic about the things he has seen on the streets of Erzurum, people having become naked nomads, himself included, because of the earthquake. “Which is to say the entire city is like me as we speak,” says the mystic, “Then I must go.” (102)

Without looking back and without hurry he left, and soon after he disappeared right where the stubby trees of the garden were indistinguishable from the dark shadows of the night. I never saw him in Erzurum again, no one knew where he went. What goes without saying is that this madman taught me a great lesson. I rushed back to my apartment and went straight to bed. It was not worth wandering sleepless in this mortal world.

The narrator does not follow Tahsin anymore, nor is he curious about him or his whereabouts. Here then we have our complete trajectory: first, in “The Path” we look from a passing train to the world, dreaming of an ideal life in a non-descript Anatolian village; now, terrified, we rush back to where we belong, to our apartments and our clean sheets peacefully waiting for us. But more importantly, with “Tahsin of Erzurum” we have two ways submitting. Two different kinds of resignation and indifference.

One of them is the Sufi’s that is out of time, and it amounts to getting lost on the carcass that is the world, to turn into a carcass worm in a world that is itself nothing more than a rotten carcass. Tahsin’s appears to be a strong reaction, though, too much of a reaction, more like the reaction of the reactionary. Tahsin is too much of a legend, a

/ In order to distinguish Man from dust. / Dust rose behind his horse as that knight sped, / You thought the dust a man of God instead! / Satan saw dust and said, ‘Things made of clay / Cannot be better than my fire, can they?’ / If God’s dear friends as evil you should see, / That thought of yours is Satan’s legacy; / If you are not a child of Satan too, / How did the dog’s inheritance reach you?” (240-1)
lonely soldier. He has hardly anything to do with the people and the life on the streets of Erzurum. But he is of Erzurum. His is too much of a statement.

Perhaps the world does not stink as he assumes, perhaps what he feels is more like an intolerably heavy fragrance. Moreover perhaps this heavy fragrance is his own. Because his life is too loud a statement. There is huge difference between the humble artisanship of the Sufi and Tahsin’s business of Sufism and religion. It has nothing to do with going about one’s own business, which is why he does not live among the people, his appearance is more of a miracle.

We do not know where he goes after this meeting, but there are two possibilities. When everyone finally resembles him after the earthquake, he runs to merge with them, perhaps, this may be because he cannot resemble them himself. Alternatively, since distance, singularity and solitude is his whole existence, everyone becoming a nomad like him bothers him, which may be why he just leaves the city.

The other resignation, the narrator’s resignation, amounts to going back to the comfort of one’s home and bed, to the clamor of the coffee house to dissolve in life and its crowds after a good night’s sleep, unpleasant and noisy as this life may be. It is giving up on great statements, on reactionary politics as well, but only to turn sad in this mortal world, to be and to write silently and sadly in this world. There is no other option. Because poor Tahsin has become more of an orator, while he meant to be silent.

This latter would be what Tanpinar does when he devotes his whole life to writing, to the comfort of speaking up for himself, knowing that he would forever remain silent on all counts, his voice resembling the voice of the suffering animal, however elaborate his syntax.
One man gives up on speech to remain silent, to dissolve into the silence of the world leaving behind the meaningless clamor, to turn indifferent to the riches of the world, very much like a wondrous animal that is poor-in-the-world. But this dream like animation turns out to be an impossible fiction, one that has no place in this world and its great drama. Here it looks like an ugly, reactionary humanity, a very heavy fragrance.

It would not be too far off to think of Francis of Assisi here, another madman of God of interest for Auerbach and to some of the philosophers I have referred to so far. Trying to turn poor-in-the-world, like the glorious animal whom the almighty feeds, Francis ends up preaching to animals.23 This is what Tahsin seems to be reduced to, although what he

23 See Auerbach, “St. Francis of Assisi in Dante’s ‘Commedia’” in Scenes from the drama of European Literature, 79-100. Auerbach, as always, is interested in the “real and human content” that the very particular life experience of Francis enables and the way this content figures through Dante’s words, as some sort of an impossibly realist history, i.e. a literary account more real than any historical account. Agamben’s The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form of Life, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013) has a different account of things that brings together some of the themes I have addressed so far, namely humanity and bestiality, poverty real and figurative etc.: “[W]hat is in question, for the [Franciscan] order as for its founder, is the abdicamento omnis iuris (“abdication of every right”), that is, the possibility of a human existence beyond the law. What the Franciscans never tire of confirming [...] is the lawfulness for the brothers of making use of goods without having any right to them (neither of property nor of use). In the words of Bonagratia, sicut equus habet usus facti, ‘as the horse has de facto use but not property rights over the oats that it eats, so the religious who has abdicated all property has the simple de facto use [usum simplicem facti] of bread, wine, and clothes.’ From the perspective that is of interest to us here, Franciscanism can be defined—and in this consists its novelty, even today unthought, and in the present conditions of society, totally unthinkable—as the attempt to realize a human life and practice absolutely outside the determinations of the law. If we call this life that is unattainable by law ‘form of life,’ then we can say that the syntagma forma vitae expresses the most proper intention of Franciscanism. / The assimilation of the Franciscan form of life to an animal life in Bonagratia and Richard of Conington corresponds faithfully to the special importance that animals had in the biography of Francis (preaching to animals, the liberation of the sheep and the two lambs, his love for worms: circa vermiculos nimio flagrabit amore, ‘Even toward little worms he glowed with exceeding love’). If on the one hand animals are humanized and become ‘brothers’ (‘he called all creatures by the name of brother’), conversely, the brothers are equated with animals from the point of view of the law.”
in fact was supposed to do (as the harabati wanted to do) was to turn himself poor-in-the-world, and demonstrate the possibility of becoming a glorious animal in poetry of all things, in that most human of all endeavors, and precisely by giving in to the law of the form and thereby reducing oneself to the numbing ecstasy of sacred drunkenness. But Francis and Agamben’s Franciscans propose a reversed version of this attitude; Francis instead preaches to animals. There is a scene in “Submission” that is reminiscent of such a sermon. One of Suleyman’s siblings bother the donkey tied to the fence, which Emin bey describes in the following way:

> A few steps away a thirteen-year-old boy, with a wooden stick in his hand, was teasing the donkey tied to the fence. The donkey had begun to turn its ears back, expressing how it was about to draw its thoughts about the idiocy of human beings to its rational conclusion. (210)

So an animal parable may be relevant at this point. In one of Tanpınar’s posthumously published stories, which is more properly a parable, titled “The Last Council” (meclis, which could also be the council of poets, or, colloquially as well, a gathering at the tavern, or in the “salon”), an old emperor’s court receives animal visitors who claim to know the emperor from long ago.

(110-1) The argument here supplements Agamben’s thinking on the zoe and bios. Insofar as Francis ends up preaching to animals while extending his infinite love to the animal realm, one could easily make the case that even for Francis’ time such thinking was impossible and unthinkable. Let us call this unthinkable the desert, the Deleuzean term. One could alternatively make the case that Francis’ was a move toward the desert, toward an impossible “conversion,” as Rancière describes the Deleuzean move. Why can one not be able to relegate the impossibility and the unthinkable in question to a particular lifeworld and its law? To a particular blindness and vision, to a particular world-view, as it were, to a particular “religion,” a religion as world-view that only expands itself in an impossible move toward the beyond, toward the desert? The cartographic images I present in the “Conclusion” rely on such thinking.
The emperor does not recognize the animals, but the elephant explains politely that it is in fact an acquaintance. In fact the elephant is none other than the emperor’s very own appetite. The lion moreover is his power and glory, the tiger his anger and wrath, the bear his compassion, the wolf his hunger and the monkey his imagination, the snake his remorse, the donkey his sobriety. Now the animals want to leave this empire, and ask the emperor to let them go, hence the last council. Because, they say, they are not fed properly anymore, that in fact they are starving to death.

The emperor had forgotten his passions, it looks like, he had turned away from everything that made him alive, everything that made him of his empire, perhaps even of this world and of this life. He spends too much in the palace, perhaps, he was blinded by all sorts of luxuries. Indeed before the animals come, he only has his chamberlain, his magician, his heir and guards near him, and he is surrounded by precious metals and all sorts of luxury items, his throne itself a work of art. (311)

Perhaps he has become too civilized, too urban, too polite, too lawful, perhaps he is too far away from the earth. He is on the path to become all too human, this we know for sure, and he is only a few steps away from the ultimate ideal of humanity. This is why the animals starve and want to leave for good and let him be. The emperor asks about the meaning of all this, and upon hearing the response, at first loses his temper, but he quickly calms down.

As a result, in the middle of suffering animal sounds coming from the world outside and inside the palace, the emperor gives up on them:

Why not? If death is to open the door of the stable, to kick out a bunch of stinking animals! Why not? Chamberlain... Leave me alone... You stay, away with these animals though, let them take their leave at once, with all the rest, those waiting in front of the door. I shall empty the stable. (322)
He does empty the stable but the price to pay is death, of course. He even appears prettier as an all too human figure, like a statue in his deathbed, with a mysterious glow on his face.

The birth of the mysterious human figure amounts to death. The figure is death, while the stable is closer to life, which in the end is something stinky and bestial. The starving animal only announces the coming of the human figure, which in turn announces

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24 One of the most tragic events of the early twentieth century Istanbul was the mass murder of the stray dogs of Istanbul in the year 1910. According to one report, 30,000 dogs were massacred due to the hygienic concerns of the Young Turk administration. Young Turks had been in power since their revolution of 1908 against Abdulhamid II (the “dictator” as he was called back in the day) and they had reopened the Ottoman parliament. The revolutionary spirit penetrated all facets of life in the empire, including daily life on the streets of Istanbul. Although the official policy concerning the annihilation of the canine population states hygienic concerns, we also know that dogs of Istanbul had long been the symbol of the empire’s backwardness, particularly in the eyes of the European travelers and revolutionary Turks. Indeed, many European travelers expressed shock at the canine population in Istanbul and at how dogs were a part of the daily life of the city (many expressed shock at the Turks’ indifference to the Jews living in their midst, too, but this is beyond the scope of this note). Here is an example: “Rien de si affreux que ces chiens: ils sont tous de la même race et hargneux. Concevez-vous rien de plus absurde que cette protection qu’on leur accorde? On en voit quelquefois une centaine sur un fumier se battre et se diputer les ordures qu’on vient d’y jeter.” Lady Craven, *Voyage de Milady Craven à Constantinople par la Crimée en 1786* (Durant fils: Paris, 1789), 214-215. Lamartine has similar comments, and here is what Nerval, for whom dogs had a function, a mission in Istanbul, has to say: “La faveur dont les chiens jouissent à Constantinople tient surtout à ce qu’ils débarrassent la voie publique des débris de substances animales qu’on y jette généralement. Les fondations pieuses qui les concernent, les bassins remplis d’eau qu’ils trouvent à l’entrée des mosquées et près des fontaines, n’ont pas d’autre but.” Gérard de Nerval, *Voyage en Orient II* (Garnier-Flammarion: Paris, 1980) 171-2. In Istanbul in 1910, dogs were gathered from the streets, mainly by the Roma people employed by the administration for this purpose. Despite the protests of the locals (and also of some Europeans, including Pierre Loti, for instance) they were exiled to an island in the middle of the Marmara Sea, namely Sivriada, where they starved to death. The protests against the policy, as we know from a great number of publications from the era, was powerful, just not powerful enough. Indeed the conflict, retrospectively, appears to be between the revolutionary spirit and the “Islamists,” most of the opponents of the policy being Muslim conservatives. For an extraordinary account of these tragic events, see Catherine Pinguet, *Les chiens d’Istanbul* (Saint-Pourçain-sur-Sioule: Bleu Autour, 2008). An essay that summarizes some of the points of the book is to be found in Pinguet, “Le chien éboueur: Mythe ou réalité?” in *Cogito* 43, Summer 2005, 222-242.
only death. Alternatively, starving the animal for the sake of that mysterious glow is a crime against bestiality and humanity alike, and its punishment is death.

Or perhaps the point is that there is no more feeling but constraint, only law, no passion but only work in this civilized world. Nor is it possible to simply turn poor-in-the-world or be silent anymore.

Even silence would turn into something else in this frame, into some sort of speech, some gesture meaning this or that thing anyway. But the point is not to look for some true meaning in silence either. This is what Tahsin of Erzurum seems to be doing on all counts. He was supposed to be one with the world, he ends up appearing the most awkward thing in this world. This is like trying to be silent when the silence itself becomes an oration.

Right before the narrator of “Tahsin of Erzurum” meets the Sufi near the coffee house, he sees shadows of two oxen near the swamp. (BO, 98) They have become something of an obsession for him, he says, he had been following these two for some time, since he comes across them everywhere in the city, which must be quite an unusual sight, a bizarre contrast.

This is what inspires him to philosophize, he says. These animals, with all kinds of filth on their backs and dried up mud and shit all the way up to their necks, walk all

25 In that barbaric, incomprehensibly real indecision of Hamlet, for instance, which is what Schmitt does in Hamlet or Hecuba.
around with flies and flees flying on top of them. They pay the price of being grand, the narrator says, they were sentenced to suffer from their greatness in this way all their lives.

But philosophy has its limits, obviously. He would in reality never really get close to those animals. When the narrator and Tahsin meet not that far from the oxen in the dark, which makes them indistinguishable for us, the readers at a distance, from the other shadow couple and the “stubby trees” as well, the life of the great Sufi does not suit our narrator at all. He runs home to his clean sheets. It is not worth it, why would he turn into an ox in the middle of the city?

Well if this is not the thing to do, there is hardly anything else other than to go about one’s own business. But if, absent wine, it is difficult to buy into the glory of daily life despite the urban neons, if it does not make sense for the train to leave on time even although one always knows the cause and one is made to think that there is nothing more sensible in this world, well then one feels sad in this world.

Tanpinar goes about his business, the business of writing. But his distancing himself from Tahsin the reactionary has to do with his decision to go about his business in the spirit of the harabati. This is to say his involvement in this most modern of all activities, i.e. novel writing, is supposed to make him truly Sufi in his mind.

So in his mind, the humble novelist is very much a dervish. Novel writing is his business here, simply his occupation, which involves speaking silence, or better still “grinding” silence and making some noise in the process too, but that is about it:

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I am neither in time
Nor outside of it completely
In the indivisible flow
Of a vast moment of unity
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Every shape is mesmerized
By the color of an odd reverie
No feather in the breeze
Has been as light as me

My head is a boundless mill
To grind the silence
And inside I am a dervish
Accomplished, without the mantle

The world has become ivy
I feel, its roots are inside me,
A blue, utterly blue light
I am swimming in it

_Waste_

Tanpinar, sadly, does not think he achieved anything in his life. Financial troubles are among the major themes in his diaries, in which he prays for money and mourns for not having loved and married. But the overarching topic is his failure and his sad leisure, the scholarly, writerly leisure:

What am I? Who am I? What have I achieved? Oh, if only I could step out of myself and see myself for once. […] To be able to decide, and to be adamant… Could I not have finished one single work? I’m lazy. I’m broke. I don’t exist. My only hope is that, since I have rid myself of this European complex, I may start a journal […] (GI, 70)

This attitude is the same in his old age: “I’m sixty years old, I don’t have one single work [of art?]” (208) And this is his fear of death: “For the first time I start thinking that I may not see the next year. Seriously. I don’t want to die before I finish something.” (287)
He does not like the left wing, because he thinks communists only back communists, which is why for instance instead of his novels, communist Turks’ novels were translated into world languages. (167) Nor does he like right wing. “I’m not with the right wing. Because the right wing is the orient, and the orient is always ready to devour us, devour us from within.” This is what Tahsin the Sufi would have done, devour Tanpinar from within.

As for his “occidentalism,” this is what he writes during his first European trip that, according to him, came only too late: “I’m visiting these places that I should have visited twenty years ago. Today’s Europe is a sad cemetery of my thoughts, mental habits and ideals. In fact if I’m not wandering around Europe like a ghost then I’m nothing more than its waste product.” (GI, 84)

He has no investment in the splendor of the simple life as something of a path leading to the depths of the life in common. There is no path, the path is only an illusion, sometimes pleasant sometimes not that much. And there is nothing in depths to understand or decipher. Nor would he, like a social scientist, go around and interview individuals in search for the same route at the surface. There is the squeeze and the clench, at the surface and the depths alike, and the possibilities of living multiplied or diminished. But that is about it, the clench and the squeeze.

He believes in the people more than he believes in himself. But this only means for instance that he cannot take himself to be a saint, genius or a hero. He cannot even go around to confess the nothingness of his thoughts in service of some alternative enlightenment either. He does not take himself seriously as an individual. That is why his tongue is tied, and he is silent.
But then “I don’t like the people,” he says, only to add: “or rather the individuals as the people. How can I possibly like these morons, the door keeper, the driver, or my neighbors?” (322) So he would not have been interested in “writing the history of the excluded and defeated, which would be completely homogeneous with the history of the victors, as the common and tedious paradigm of the history of the subaltern classes would have it.”

Nor does he like those other, elevated souls as individuals then. Tanpinar wants all those communists, Islamists, and nationalists to let him be. He also wants those humanists and scientists, teachers and writers to let him be. He moreover diagnoses in all of them some sickness, not because he is a doctor or interested in healing anyone but because he shares the symptoms. He wants the faithful of literature to let him be too, literature is not a cause for him, he does not believe in literature, nor in psychoanalysis or sociology or philosophy.

At least, he says, “Ottomans knew their condition, and accepted it too.” But this is not to idealize the Ottoman world-view. Perhaps the Ottoman, his nineteenth century Ottoman revolutionaries, for instance, came very close to what he wants to be. Yet “who are the Ottomans in the end? A bunch of ignorant people.” (274) But at least they knew their condition and they accepted it. Tanpinar knows his condition as our condition and he accepts it to. He is the ghost and the waste product, and that is about it, and so are his “people.” Hence the sadness.

26 Agamben, Signature of all things, 98.

27 He constantly mocks his teacher and friend Yahya Kemal in his diaries. As for their political differences, “anti-militarist Yahya Kemal,” he writes about Kemal’s nationalism, “is sad today because he could not serve in the military.” (205)
Conclusion: The Desert

What best describes Tanpınar’s position in life, as a man of letters and politics, as an individual and a citizen, as a Muslim and as a writer seems to be his belief that “one has to put on the society like a piece of cloth. The society has to be like one’s external garment.” (GI, 288) But before this he says something else: “This world can hardly find its equilibrium at this point. This father... I have always hated the man of faith.”

So he wants to meld in with his world and its people, he wants to simply live as one among many, this is how he wants to write as well. He just wants to go about his business. This was precisely what the harabati wanted to do, he taught us, and this is why he himself was a dervish of sorts too. Those madmen of God, risking blasphemy, could not even think of anything other than the drunkenness of the wine to account for their ultimate state of faithfulness. Tanpınar says that the shocking thing about “our old poetry” is that it “praises real love in an abstract [that is, “duplicitous”] language but realistically, ending up giving us a realistic way of loving too.” (OAE, 22) Such was the realism and worldliness also of the old “religion.” It is as if to say there was nothing in their way thinking, saying and being destined beyond or beneath this world.
Writing and literature, Tanpinar seems to explain accordingly, must be worldly matters like (our old) faith, just like everything else related to living, being, and saying in common. One should be able to put them on like a piece of cloth, the sensory cloth of the living people. They should be going about one’s own business wearing what is customary to wear for no particular reason other than to be and be in common. But then who is this “man of faith” whom Tanpinar always hated? It looks like there is no conflict in his mind between the thinking of the madman of God, of the Muslim mystic, or Islam at large and his humanism and literature?

Tanpinar of course is not the first to think of Muslim realism and worldliness in this fashion. It is in fact thanks to his dedication to the sociological tradition that he comes up with such argumentation (and we will see how he also diverges from this tradition). Already August Comte, the first sociologist ever, with similar thoughts, sent a letter to Reşid Pasha, the architect of the 1839, to invite the Ottoman people to the “positivist worship” and the “religion of humanity.”

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1 See Auguste Comte, *Système de politique positive, ou traité de sociologie, instituant la religion de l’humanité* 3 (Paris, 1853), 562, and 4 (Paris, 1854), 505-11; also his letter dated February 4, 1853 in *Auguste Comte: Correspondance generale et confessions* (Paris, 1987), 38-41. The former was published in English translation as *System of Positive Polity*, trans. J.H. Bridges et al., 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1875-77), originally published in 1851-54. The letter was published in the third volume, xli-xliv in English translation. Here are a few more important passages from the letter of this missionary of “positivist worship”: “Although by reason of the whole preparation required for the Positive Religion, its birthplace was necessarily in the West, Islamism must be held to have rendered the East more favourable to its final admission. For, on the one hand, that religion has protected the populations against the revolutionary poison, since its doctrine was not susceptible of the Protestant or Deistic degenerations, while its regime was far from admitting the hereditary principle in its strictest form. And on the other hand it has maintained the normal supremacy of governments, because it has made Mussulman rulers always more disposed than Christian sovereigns to look at the social problem as a whole, in consequence of the less imperfect harmony subsisting between their theoretic conceptions and their practical notions. Hence the final regeneration may triumph in the East without arousing the anarchical agitation to which the West was condemned by its initiative the philosophers being obliged there
For many centuries East and West have been seeking with equal ardour for the Universal Religion, but till now have never been able to attain it. [...] The two great attempts of the white race to establish a monotheistic universality have mutually neutralised one another, the Roman world being irremediably divided between Catholicism and Islamism. [...] The genius of Islam must even be less opposed than that of Catholicism to the final advent of the Positive Religion, inasmuch as it has always tended more towards reality, in virtue of its simpler creed and its more practical direction. [...] The East had therefore to leave it to the West and to the true Catholic regime to initiate the glorious social revolution consisting in the two gradual emancipations of women and labourers. But the Orientals became better fitted than ourselves to reap the definitive fruits of the great movement which followed this decisive prelude. For they were thus preserved from the principal intellectual and social difficulties entailed on the modern inhabitants of the West by the too mystical character of their beliefs, and, above all, they have been saved from the metaphysical disorder involved in the spontaneous decomposition of their artificial regime. (xlii-iii)

Comte thought, since the Muslim religion, unlike Christianity, was what religion proper was ought to be, i.e. a worldly matter or simply a matter of politics, it should not be difficult for Muslims to embrace the religion of humanity, the ultimate political ideal and the ultimate religion. His fellow Christians, on the other hand, were caught in anarchy and dogmatism and superstition, stuck to theologisms of all sorts, and this is why they did not understand his religious take on sociological matters. There was no conflict between “humanism” and Islam. On the contrary, insofar as there was “unity” in Islam, insofar as “the rulers of the East have really remained at the head of their respective nations, and always strive to fulfill worthily the twofold function of every government—

to address themselves to the lower classes, because they cannot get the upper classes to understand them. / Reasoning from this historical estimate of the genius of Mahometanism, I do not doubt that its present representatives, when their first astonishment has passed away, will welcome the Positive Religion as offering them spontaneously the unexpected satisfaction of their chiefest aspirations. Passing straight from Islamism to Positivism, without any metaphysical transition, they will feel that they are worthily continuing the admirable designs of their great Prophet, the ‘universal glorification of whom is systematised for ever by the Positivist worship.’" (xliii)
to promote what is good and resist what is evil,” (xlii) insofar as the East was not touched by the “revolutionary poison,” and insofar as Muslim people were “one” in following their ruler, they could set the example for the West as well.

Now there is a difference between the sociological wisdom and Tanpinar’s. One must play a little bit with Tanpinar’s thought of “duplicity” to explain this. Because where Comte sees unity, Tanpinar defines duplicity. Comte was misled, the destination he had in mind for his letter (and for his fellow positivists and reluctant Christians), the “orient of unity” never existed. Yet Comte did set out for a “journey to the orient,” as it were, together with his letter.

The letter and its journey

Obviously Comte or his letter did not end up in that “orient” of an undifferentiated unity, that desert-like place that is both primitive but for this reason also full of promise for equality, development and progress. But along the way they met people in this impossible journey, people like Tanpinar and his ancestors. And it was Comte’s mission to convert all to the true religion, and guide them (back, in his mind) toward the desert.

The following passage by Rancière, quoted in the Prelude as well, explains the birth of sociology and literature in a way that is helpful to make sense of the Comtean moment and relate it to the history of literature in the modern sense:

The nineteenth century was haunted – negatively – by the Platonic paradigm of the democratic dissolution of the social body, by the fanciful correlation between democracy/individualism/Protestantism/revolution/the disintegration of the social bond. This can be expressed in more or less poetic or scientific terms (sociology as a science was born from this obsession with the lost social bond), more or less reactionary or progressive terms, but the entire century was
haunted by the imminent danger that an indifferent equality would come to reign and by the idea that it was necessary to oppose it with a new meaning of the communal body. Literature was a privileged site where this became visible. It was at one and the same time a way of exhibiting the reign of indifferent language and, conversely, a way of remaking bodies with words and even a way of leading words toward their cancellation in material states. 

Elsewhere Rancière described this impossible journey, this movement toward an “indifferent equality” as a movement toward a “conversion.” But complete conversion, arriving at the ultimate destination that is the desert was impossible because the desert did not exist as desert. This is the mistake Auerbach had made, according to Rancière, since he could not think outside that logic of “representation of reality.” Comte is a little like Auerbach in that he really thinks that his writing, for instance in this letter and about the orient, literally describes the orient, represents something real. But it was in fact a political gesture for Rancière, and it required a great deal of imagination. It obviously had nothing to do with “the real orient.” But it made something.

Auerbach’s representation of reality in the west was the history of the political and discursive shift toward an indifferent equality, and had nothing to do with the “reality” as reality. It was a history of making, in reality. The orientalist works of imagination that Said studies in Orientalism, in their urge to move beyond “Europe” and toward the “desert,” as it were, can be taken to be political in the same way. Comte’s


3 “The theater of the work of art is consequently one of a movement restrained in its place, of a tension and a station in the sense as well in which one speaks of the Stations of the Cross. The work of art is the Way of the Cross of figuration that manifests the lashed figure as a dishonored Christ. Yet, the work precisely retains in place the lashed figure that wants to slip away. The work of art is a station on the way to a conversion.” Rancière, “Is there a Deleuzean aesthetics?” trans. Radmila Djordjevic, Qui Parle 14:2 (Spring/Summer 2004): 7.
work for “humanity” is accordingly a moment in this history. This is a history of an impossible conversion in that first of all it requires writing and enacting the truth of books in general, as opposed to the truth of the Book. It requires leaving those European centers and moving, on an impossible journey, toward that imaginary, undifferentiated desert, and sometimes explicitly toward that non-Christian desert of an orient real yet at the same time imagined. Because sometimes the desert is simply the desert. This was also the direction, according to Rancière, that Deleuze had directed us with his desert.⁴

All these books and letters, novels and poems, modern writing in general, constitute an “aesthetic regime,” in Rancière’s terminology, a regime of writing and books in general and as opposed to the rigidity of the “representational regime,” the regime of the Book.

Those devoted to enacting the truth of the Book had embarked on crusades, for instance, but those enacting the truth of books in general had windmills to fight against. This is why Rancière objects to Auerbach when the latter traces the genesis of the “Christian/novelistic” realism to the gospels. For Rancière, “Christian/novelistic” realism starts with Don Quixote, who enacted the truth of books in general, deranged as his mind was because he had read too many books of chivalry.⁵ If the Book meant the

⁴ See “Deleuze accomplit le destin de l’esthétique.” See also Chapter Three, note 1; and Chapter Five, note 23.

⁵ For Rancière’s account of this alternative genesis, see The Flesh of Words. But then we also know that Cervantes was a crusader. We also know, moreover, that the popularity of the quixotic fable back in Cervantes’ day was in part due to its “historical account” of the defeat and the utter destruction of the Ottoman fleet in the battle of Lepanto. In order to fight in this war Cervantes took the pains to write home from Rome, where he was serving as chamberlain to Cardinal Acquaviva, to ask for a certificate of legitimate birth to prove that he was a cristiano viejo, that he was of the “Old Christian” blood, that he was no morisco or marrano, that he did not have Jewish or Muslim blood. Otherwise he would not have been able to fight. This is one of the few documents available to the biographers of Cervantes, an attestation of his true blood, of his
crusade, “books in general” (“literature”) meant a different sort of journey, a journey embarked on indifferently toward the “reality” of places.

But what exactly are these books in general “in reality”? Something resembling a great library? What do they do, these books, and what do those writers who enact their truth achieve? What did the “aesthetic regime” achieve? If the conversion is an impossible destination, where do we find these writers?

We find the answer in a Paris lecture by Ahmet Rıza, among the founders of the last ruling Ottoman political organization “Union and Progress.” Rıza was an Ottoman intellectual who responded positively to the call of the positivist religion of Comte as well, and was moreover among the founders of the “Positivist International”.

It is in one of his lectures on positivism and Islam that we find a response to these questions. These are Ahmed Rıza’s opening words in the lecture:

perfect Christianity. Cervantes fought in this war, and this despite the fact that he had got seriously sick right before the combat and was practically incapacitated. Yet he offered his sick body against all odds and most willingly to attest to the glory of god. He lost one hand in that battle, and wrote the first novel ever, this source of modern literature, with the other, which is to say absent one hand, which had disabled his capacity to war in real. All in vain of course, since Ottomans built an even bigger fleet during Cervantes’ lifetime. Moreover they imitated the Christians in building the new fleet, they took over Christian maritime technology. They also reclaimed the land in North Africa, which during Cervantes’ lifetime was conquered by Christian warriors. Christian victory in the battle of Lepanto was not a decisive victory for Christians, and the sick man of Europe was not yet Ottoman, when this novel was written. Lepanto is traditionally regarded as a turning point, when the myth of the invincible Turk was attested to be a fiction alongside the glory of god. The sick man at the time was not the Ottoman establishment but the Christian warrior turned writer to invent the novel to fight madly against windmills. Thus literature was born handicapped, with a genetic disease of sorts, as Cervantes’ certificate attests. Indeed who are those enemies worth fighting against in the name of the truth of the Book and all books? Who is the enemy in the quixotic fable? Putnam’s introduction to his translation has a biography and rich bibliography too.


The desert of that undifferentiated unity did not exist as desert, but it did as “literature.” Moreover, perhaps coincidentally (but we will soon see that there is no coincidence in that matter), as an orientalist fiction or as fiction \textit{qua} orientalism, and already in the form of the great “Bibliothèque nationale de Paris.” A politics based on these “books in general,” the politics of literature in the Rancièrean key, this move toward the beyond, could only be politics \textit{qua} orientalism in the “concrete reality” of the real and tangible world. Those attesting to the truth of books in general could only be “fanatics” of a particular sort who would declare, “comme l’abbé Vertot: tant pis, mon siège est fait.”

There was no “unity” in the Muslim orient, indifferent, differentiated or undifferentiated. But then this is also the reason why when the Young Turks borrowed the Comtean slogan to name their political party, they had to translate “\textit{order and progress}” into “\textit{Union and Progress}.” This is not radically different from the way Ottomans, during Cervantes’ time, had built a new fleet modeling the crusaders’ fleet after the defeat in Lepanto. The desert was a fiction, but there is obviously a truth to

fiction. The reality and fiction of the “Turkish” collectivity, of the “Turkish” body can already be read in the name of the last ruling Young Turkish political organization.

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8 Don Quixote had already explained this for us: “For to endeavor to persuade anyone that Amadis never lived, nor any of the other knightly adventurers that fill the history books, is the same as trying to make him believe that the sun does not shine, that ice is not cold, or that the earth does not bear fruit.” Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans Putnam (New York: the Viking Press, 1965), 515. Here’s Rancière’s extraordinary reading of this passage, which is important to understand the stakes of this novelistic argumentation: “In its seeming absurdity, the sentence tells us this: the world is not just made of perceptible, experienced equalities; it is also made of books, not of a conventionally shared ‘imagination,’ but of a continuum of books and attestations to the existence of what they discuss.” *The Flesh of Words*, 89. Don Quixote is a real actor in Turkey, and one that marked a great deal in the Ottoman revolutionary mindset. For in almost every Ottoman reformer, including Midhat, as we have seen, there is a madman similar to Don Quixote. He is right there sitting next to them at the writing desk. The typical Ottoman reformer is a man of letters, a madman of letters, a friend of Don Quixote’s. But of course once invited, Don Quixote does not come alone, he is only a part of a continuum, a family as it were. For instance, Omer Seyfeddin sums up the Ottoman modernist position, explicitly and without reservation, as an anti-Hamlet and anti-Cervantes dedication to Don Quixote in his “Don Kişot,” *Yeni Mecmuâ*, 2:37 (March 28 1918), 202-204. Hamlet was caught, in this logic, in the purgatory, which was the reality of life, “a most violent purgatory in between bestiality and humanity” as Seyfeddin formulates. One needs “faith,” like Don Quixote, who is above all a man of faith after all, to step out into humanity. But one who cannot take this step cannot reclaim bestiality either, remaining there in suspense forever in the purgatory. Cervantes, by torturing that most faithful and most human knight Don Quixote as he does throughout the two volumes of his novel, remains in such purgatory. Don Quixote, accordingly, is more real in his humanity than Cervantes, which is the reason why Seyfeddin just cannot forgive the latter. Cervantes is a little like Hamlet, frozen, as it were, in that in-between realm forever, incapable of acting like a human would and should, as Seyfeddin explains in another essay titled “Hamlet,” in *Yeni Mecmuâ*, 2:33 (February 21-28, 1918), 124-126. Another figure, Namık Kemal, for instance, the man who thought literature would give birth to the Ottoman empire, considered himself closer to Faust, whose creator had valued sentiment above all in allowing his hero to reclaim his youth. If Don Quixote the man of faith and the man of action was Seyfeddin’s hero, Faust in his ambition to reclaim his youth and was ready to sell his soul for this purpose (accidentally like the sublime state that was only being born through literature, in his deathbed that is, as the Europeans thought) could be Kemal’s hero. Let us isolate a logic of fiction, formulate a truth of fiction from this history, a real history, after all, as a history of fiction, of thinking and writing literarily, of faith and of action. We have it, this history, to the letter right in front of us in the grand archive of Ottoman literature, just as real as the letters on the paper. The three mythic characters of the myth-sheding, Christian Europe, the three cornerstones of this continuum, namely Don Quixote, Faust, and Hamlet (the Catholic, the Protestant, and Hamlet in between the two or “the chasm that defined Europe’s destiny,” according to Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 45) are major historical characters in the history of the Ottoman reform. That “chasm” may have determined more than Europe’s or Christianity’s destiny. It may sound mad to put it in this way, and yet these three characters are just as real actors in this mental theatre as Kemal and Midhat. It is mad, and the madness belongs to Ottoman reformers. Seyfeddin’s compassion for Don Quixote and anger for Cervantes is proof of this. Such is the place of literature qua literature in the history of the late Ottoman era. The Ottoman age of reform, in this sense, is the age of literature.
To read Tanpinar, then, is to read the story of an equally impossible response to the letter, and the story of those coming from the other end of this road paved for a European pilgrimage. The road was built for the journey of orientalists, missionaries, sociologists and philosophers, of the Saint-Simonian engineers, of writers of all sorts but also that of literary figures real and imagined. All sorts of beings, real and imagined, religious and secular, sacred and profane, traverse this path but their gait and their intentions for travels differ. The path itself is that of fiction. It is after all a way of being, saying, making and sharing. Fiction and action amount to the same thing in this journey.

But then if the desert was an impossible destination for the “aesthetic” journey, Tanpinar will explain to us shortly that it was an impossible origin of departure too, a very duplicitous one. It is as if to say, yet here we are, and Tanpinar is a novelist in the same boat with those traveling to the desert, a “dervish without the mantle.” But how could one be a dervish without the mantle? It was all about the mantle?

Moreover, if Comte’s thought is a matter of an impossible conversion, Tanpinar’s writing bears witness to an impossible identity. If Comte and his company, real and imagined, were on a journey to a non-existent promised land, Tanpinar and his company meet them on the same road, coming from the opposite direction.

Doubling

Tanpinar says he is an accomplished “dervish,” but “without the mantle.” There is an inside where he turns and turns like the whirling dervishes, but as for an external garment, he has to point out that he cannot put on the mantle. This is to say he is a
dervish, and really a dervish but in spirit. Nowadays one needs to take off the mantle to put on this society like a piece of cloth. One needs to take off the mantle (or the headscarf, for instance) to be Muslim in spirit.

But then for Tanpınar being Muslim had to do precisely with putting on the mantle, as it were, and even ecstatically and for no reason other than to be what one is and be in common.9 It was a worldly matter to begin with, it was a matter concerning the “outside.” Muslim way of saying and being, thinking and acting was about emptying the inside to move toward the outside. The Muslim way of life was precisely to go about one’s own business and even ecstatically, which is also the reason why the harabati, the Sufi, the Muslim mystic or the Oriental “intellectual,” took it to be primarily his task to embrace the wine. The idea was to meld into the undifferentiated reality of the world.

For instance, for the madman of letters, the issue was to meld into the undifferentiated reality of the world in mere word, by giving in to pure linguistic form in poetry, by treating words as mere things. Tanpınar reads couplets (“beyit”) to prove this point. The essence of oriental Muslim art is the couplet, he shows, the poetic couplet as opposed to 1) the “stanza” of European poetry, 2) the “thematics” that binds couplets or

9 “Until the turn of the century, across the Muslim world but particularly in the Ottoman geography, Islam as such was the ‘mystical Islam’ [‘tasavvuf,’ or ‘sufism’] without ever needing to be categorized as mystical or otherwise,” says Mahmud Erol Kilic (“Mevlânâ’ya küfredenler toplum önünde Mevlânâçılık oynuyor”). This is not to say that all Muslims throughout the history of Islam were poets. But it is to say that the way the harabati lived Islam, blasphemous as some of their words may appear retrospectively, can be taken as a model for understanding the vernacular experience of Islam across the world until about the beginning of the twentieth century. Given that until the development of the specifically caliphic iconography by the late Ottomans, it is difficult to observe a difference between “vernacular” Islam and anything else that could be contrasted with it (for instance “institutional” Islam), Kilic suggests that Islam as such was “sufism,” making sufism into what the sociologist called an “undifferentiated state,” or a state of simply being Muslim, if we were to follow my reading of Tanpınar.
stanzas in European poetry, 3) the “narrative” that binds statements into stories or novels, 4) the “frame,” visible or invisible, in Western plastic arts that enables vision and representation. He accepts that usually the second line of most couplets in oriental poetry appears either redundant or superficial, although the two lines together, the couplet as couplet, resembles a jewel. (*OAE*, 28-34) The first line says something, the second nothing, expressing only a submission to form in following the former but simply formulaically, thereby making the overall form appear contentless. One could conclude that this makes *art as such* into *form without content*.

Moreover, the unity of couplets here into one single meaningful work was never possible, however long or short the poem. Individual couplets, in their essential duplicity, were the jewels, but only insofar as one half of the couplet made the other redundant, or annulled the other’s content by rendering it *nothing but form*. Tanpinar will translate this into the language of society. Quoting Massignon without proper reference, he will argue that “there is no time in the Muslim orient, but only moments.” (32) Moments are to couplets as narrative (or “history,” for instance) is to time. This is where the “time regulating institute” stands vis-a-vis Tanpinar’s oriental world.

Pre-modern (pre-Tanzimat) Turks were a duplicitous matter for him, because those Turks spoke too many languages, wrote in too many languages too, produced their masterpieces in Arabic and Farsi, for instance, and even made Turkish servile to these languages, writing in Turkish but only by Arabizing or Persifying Turkish, *not making a distinction between Arabic, Farsi and Turkish* (as in Ziya Pasha’s “anthology” of Ottoman literature). (19) Another facet of this ancient duplicity, according to Tanpinar, defines the major difference between the occidental middle ages and the oriental Muslim
middle ages: there existed a people in the Muslim orient speaking a simple language, while the Muslim writer was shut off from any influence from this language. (42) It is the people who could not be realized, in other words, a collective body that one could call the “Muslim” or “Turkish” people. This is where Tanpinar refers to Kafka, explaining how according to him, German language could never accommodate the warmth of the mother tongue for the Jew. The classical Muslim-Turkish world was thus divided; there was no such thing as Turkishness on paper, in “reality,” or as “objectified culture,” as it were. There was no Turkishness “made.” Yet people spoke, indifferently, as it were. This is the pre-Tanzimat “duplicity.”

Modern Ottomans and modern Turks, on the other hand, denied this past so vehemently in their work of forging a new meaning for Turkishness (and a “pure” Turkish language) in journals and literary gatherings, in salons, societies and universities that they ended up making Turkishness into a complete fiction, something that had nothing to do with the concrete history of the “external garment,” that of the “mantle” in question. (132-4; 158-60) Another facet of this latter duplicity was that it was ambivalent. What was objectified “on paper” did not correspond to life. The “external garment,” as it were, did not fit. One took off the mantle to turn into a dervish inside. But then the new cloth, hiding the Muslim, obviously could not “really” contain anything, but only the secret as secret. Like Kafka’s young Jewish writers writing in
German,\textsuperscript{10} one was suspended in between. This is the post-Tanzimat, “modern” Turkish duplicity.

There are then two different “duplicities” at stake here, one of them ancient but real, concrete and historical, the other nothing more than a modern fiction, but equally real and influential. There is a duplicity that results from the failure to differ, and then there is a duplicity that results from difference. There is a duplicity even to duplicity. But then there is also the difference, the difference between the one and the other. The former duplicity has to do with undifferentiatedness, for instance the prayer-like poetry of the old; the latter with differentiatedness, for instance the specifically literary discourse of Tanpınar. There is then a fundamental duplicity, between the differentiated state and the undifferentiated state. What is this about?

\textit{Toward the desert}

Bourdieu the sociologist found the undifferentiated society in the deserts of Muslim Africa, among the Kabyle for instance.\textsuperscript{11} Moreover, the march to differentiated modernity

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{10} who “wanted to leave their Jewishness behind them, and their fathers approved of this, but vaguely (this vagueness was what was outrageous to them). But with their posterior legs they were glued to their father’s Jewishness and with their waving anterior legs they found no new ground. The ensuing despair became their inspiration.” Kafka, \textit{Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors}, 289.

\textsuperscript{11} Bourdieu’s “originary undifferentiatedness” (\textit{l'indifférentiation originelle}, SP 200) is a Hegelian inspiration (\textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 146-50) and describes the living conditions of primitive, uncivilized peoples, usually with a certain degree of ethnocentrism in Bourdieu’s anthropological work. There is no place for literature, and according to Bourdieu no place for capital proper, economic or cultural, in societies of this kind. \textit{(The Logic of Practice, 117-18)} Absent objectified symbolic capital, not even religion proper can be thought of under these
\end{quotation}
under French control had brought here “disorganization of conduct,” “resigned passivity,” “self-alienation,” and “traditionalism of despair.”

Bourdieu did not find symbolic capital, arts or literature, and not even religion in the undifferentiated societal organization. All these latter were the fruit of the march to differentiation. Not only religion as such had a place in the undifferentiated society, but also for him, the sociology of the modern, “western,” “differentiated” society was the modern sociology of religion. This may explain what Tanpınar means when he says “This world can hardly find its equilibrium at this point. This father... I have always hated the man of faith.”

originary, undifferentiated societal formations, let alone literature. This is why Bourdieu’s anthropological work on North African Kabyle peoples most notably downplays the significance of Islam, since there, a religious field of sorts cannot be thought of in the absence of professional clerics. Conversely, undifferentiatedness of all sorts in advanced societies, for instance governmental control over the cultural field in the contemporary world, means tyranny. If undifferentiated societies do not enjoy some sort of Eden without economic or symbolic capital and religion proper, as in North Africa, they are condemned to economic and symbolic tyranny – in the form of Caesaro-Papism, for instance. (Pascalian Meditations, 103)


13 See Erwan Dianteill, “Pierre Bourdieu and the Sociology of Religion: A Central and Peripheral Concern,” in David L. Swartz and Vera L. Zolberg (eds.), *After Bourdieu: Influence, Critique, Elaboration* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Press, 2004), 65–85 for an excellent discussion of Bourdieu’s religion. Bourdieu discovered the so-called undifferentiated or little differentiated state among Muslims but in their difference from the French and their distance from France. That Bourdieu, following Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, considers the sociology of culture the sociology of religion of our time is no newsflash. But, again, Bourdieu did not find this religion among Muslims. Actually he found in North Africa the exact opposite of what he considered religion. Nor did he find there literature. Religion, like literature, was a phenomenon of the differentiated world. Moreover Bourdieu did not devote much energy to the study of the sociology of religion as such, which for him was clearly the sociology of the religious field, and that suggested a monopoly of religious practice, whose paradigm was the Catholic Church. This despite the fact that all of his conceptual apparatus was from the sociology of religion (field, doxa, habitus, belief etc). His position as a sociologist perhaps enabled him to distance himself (relatively) from the position of the artist or the philosopher, which then would have granted him the necessary distance and intimacy, or what has also been dubbed “critical intimacy,” to
Rancière and his philosophers, Deleuze among them, find the differentiated society in European urban centers, in Kafka’s Vienna for instance, and for them literary-aesthetic path has as for a horizon the undifferentiatedness of the *imaginary* desert, where Bourdieu found, “in reality,” the real and undifferentiated Muslims. This path, the literary-aesthetic path, was a path toward an impossible conversion for Rancière. Kafka was opening the path to undifferentiatedness through his minor language and literature within the differentiated dominance of German.

So Bourdieusian Muslims are moving from the undifferentiated world to differentiatedness, only to fail, to end up with “disorganization of conduct,” “resigned passivity,” “self-alienation,” and “traditionalism of despair”; while Rancière’s Europeans write novels to move from the differentiated world to the undifferentiatedness of the desert. But the latter destination is impossible on all counts, so they too are doomed to fail. The former fail to simply be, or to “taste the happiness of life in the exact same

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14 I read Rancière’s argument in “Is there a Deleuzean aesthetics?” here, although his take on the “aesthetic regime” of art can be read elsewhere as well.

15 Kafka, Rancière explains, is not really involved in literally making up a new language, a “second language” within the German language when he writes in this foreign language in such a way that, as for an accomplishment, he makes the language itself into an alien thing, the site of the *unheimlich*. In fact he writes in the common language using the common words of language. He does not use hieroglyphs, for instance, nor an insectile language, in which case we could not have understood him. This is very similar to the way Bergson, in his suspicion of words and language, tries to explain that non-linguistic hence non-symbolic, utterly mobile and uncontainable flow, the duration that is the essence of his qualitative multiplicities, by leaving us
way the great nature appears to be happy simply to be,” as Tanpinar would have it, while the latter fail to convert out of (differentiated) Christianity.

Now, Tanpinar’s company, including his Ottoman revolutionaries, would be moving, according to this scenario, from the undifferentiated way of being, saying, and living to the differentiated one. Kafka and his company move in the exact opposite direction, from the differentiated world to the undifferentiated desert. The two parties meet right in the middle.

One party has left the European urban centers, dating back to those independent mediaeval city states, and they are on a pilgrimage. It is as if the desert is in sight while there is only a horizon ahead and perhaps a few shadows. The other party is on its way to the urban centre. Balzac and Flaubert, Melville and Kafka, Bergson and Deleuze move forward to the desert with Deleuze, as Rancière cheers them on. Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha, Beşir Fuad and Seyfeddin with the rest of the Ottoman crowd, guided by those

in the final analysis with verbal descriptions of certain insufficient images. Rancière’s point is that to argue, for instance as Deleuze does, that Kafka’s language is another language within language is only to allegorize language, while the point was to literalize the reality of language. Because that second language is nowhere to be found. The business of resistance has nothing to do with language as such or grammar. In fact Deleuze will have to point to idiosyncrasies of fictional characters and unusual events in Kafka’s narratives as the trait of that nowhere-to-be-found language, very much like Bergson literally describing images to point to a non-linguistic grammar. This is why Rancière thinks one should be rather precise about the confrontation here. What for instance, in his language, is literary “petrification” in Flaubert’s novelistic language, has to do with an aesthetic regime in opposition to an ancient representational regime, both claiming the very same language as language. So for him Bergson as much Deleuze, Balzac and Flaubert as much as Kafka and Melville, are members of a modern aesthetic movement in writing which, still using the common words of conventional language, struggle to turn it upside down, to make the representational movement in language inoperative, as it were. Now the contradiction Rancière points to, which for him is also a productive tension, is that literature or art of this sort only leads to its own end, or as for its rational conclusion it has nothing other than its own destruction. It can only lead to not writing.
approaching them, move \textit{backward} to the desert, as Tanpınar mourns for them. In both cases the desert is an impossible destination.

Well this imaginary space, this imaginary crossroads can as well be the space of literature as a global phenomenon. The image gives us an opportunity to describe the dynamics of the world literary movement from the perspective of the like of Tanpınar.

It explains, to a certain extent, why Tanpınar thinks he is silent despite the thousands of pages he wrote. It is as if he had no other option to swallow his words, to breathe in to talk. Indeed Tanpınar explains the basic characteristics of the pre-modern, undifferentiated poetry of the desert-like Muslim world through the exact opposite term that he uses to describe his literature: voice and sound, carefree, rational only formally like music. \textit{(OAE, 28-9)} So, looking ahead while moving backward, and guided what is in the horizon, moving (“retreating”) in the wrong direction, swallowing one’s words or to speak to remain silent.

Tanpınar of course never formulates such visions, but then he also says he is silent. What I did is to simply put together the silences, as it were. Tanpınar was not really a systematic thinker, which would have enabled his critic to turn to his Bergsonian inspirations and say, for instance, that what we have here is only the development of a fundamental intuition. What we have in Tanpınar is more of a fundamental intuition alone, without development, philosophy or a system. I tried to develop it to its rational conclusion.
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