Gunvald Axner Ims

Conflicted Selves

Ironic Representations of Westernization in Three Twentieth-century Turkish Novels
Dissertation presented at Uppsala University to be publicly examined in Humanistiska teatern, hus 22, Engelska Parken, Uppsala, Saturday, 8 February 2020 at 10:15 for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The examination will be conducted in English. Faculty examiner: Laurent Mignon (Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford, England).

Abstract


For over a century, a dichotomous East–West debate has influenced conceptions of Turkish literature, threatening to reduce single works to products of westernization. This study critically reviews this discourse by investigating how it is addressed through irony in three novels from a period of forty years of the late 20th century: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü (The Time Regulation Institute, 1961), Adalet Ağaoğlu’s Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down To Die, 1973), and Orhan Pamuk’s Yeni Hayat (The New Life, 1994).

This investigation examines how these novels participate in the discourse of westernization and the role of irony in them. The term “discourse” is used in its Foucauldian sense of “a limited number of statements that belong to a single system of formation,” while irony is understood according to Linda Hutcheon, as a discursive practice that signals “difference at the heart of similarity.”

This study combines contextualization and close reading. The analysis of each novel is preceded by the presentation of, firstly, a theoretical framework concerning irony, discourse, and westernization and, secondly, background for interpreting irony, westernization, and literary periods in a Turkish context as well as overviews of the three authorships and prior reception.

Guided by Hutcheon’s description of “the cutting edge of irony” and Wayne Booth’s caution about knowing “where to stop” the investigation illustrates how westernization is represented through irony in these novels. It shows how first-person narration plays a crucial role in subverting the discourse of westernization through the narratives of self-reflective individuals. The study concludes that these novels disrupt the discourse of westernization by undermining its dichotomous tenets; in doing so, they also reveal how the Turkish discourse of westernization, while undergoing significant transformations, is sustained at the cost of suppressing individual voices.

Keywords: Turkish literature, novel, irony, discourse of westernization, postmodernism, first-person narration, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, The Time Regulation Institute, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Lying Down To Die, Orhan Pamuk, The New Life

Anahtar kelimeler: Türk edebiyatı, roman, ironi, Batılılaşma söylemi, postmodernizm, birinci şahıs anlatımı, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Ölmeye Yatmak, Orhan Pamuk, Yeni Hayat

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In memory of my grandmothers
Ingeborg Indrebø (1918–2009)
and Margit Bertine Ims (1914–2010)
Doğu da Batı da Allah 'ındır.
—Qur’an 2:115 in Orhan Pamuk, *Benim Adım Kırmızı*

*To God belongs the East and the West.*
—Qur’an 2:115 in Erdağ Göknar, *My Name is Red*
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Abbreviations and Notations

The reference style used in this dissertation is based on the eighth edition of the *MLA Handbook*, published by the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) in 2016. This implies that whenever an author of more than one work is cited, the author *and* title (or an abbreviated version of the title) are mentioned in the citations. However, for the following often-cited works, I mention only the title, not author, in the citations:

- Ölmeye for Ağaoğlu, *Ölmeye Yatmak*
- Saatleri for Tanpınar, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*
- Yeni for Pamuk, *Yeni Hayat*
I want to thank my supervisors who encouraged me to start and pursue this research: Bernt Brendemoen, who was my supervisor when I wrote my MA dissertation at the University of Oslo and has been my mentor ever since, and Erol Köroğlu, whom I first met in Berlin in 2007 to discuss my initial ideas for a thesis proposal. Furthermore, I want to thank my main supervisor until recently, Éva Ágnes Csató, and my supervisors for the last few years: Anette Månsson, who has been my co-supervisor in this period, and László Károly, who became my main supervisor when Csató retired in 2016.

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Since I began this project, I have presented my research at several seminars. In 2009, I presented my project to young scholars from across Europe engaged in the topic of East meeting West at the International Summer School in Kazan, organized by the Department of History and East-European Studies, and at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture at Justus Liebig University Giessen, in cooperation with the Federal University in Kazan. At our department in Uppsala, my work has been presented and
discussed at the regular Turcological seminar at several stages, including in a seminar in early 2012, which Bernt Brendemoen, Erol Köröğlu, and Heinz Werner Wessler attended as invited guests. A work-in-progress seminar at the English Department at Uppsala University in 2012 also gave me valuable feedback. In 2013, the Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Boğaziçi University held another seminar in which my thesis was discussed, and I am grateful for the interest and well-informed comments I received from that panel of experts. In 2016, a symposium for doctoral students was arranged by LiLae, the Research Network in Literary Studies at the Faculty of Languages. In addition to these seminars, I would like to mention the regular and interfaculty queer seminar in Uppsala, which, although it has not been directly involved in the development of my thesis, has provided me with an environment for broader discussions of gender, sexuality, and literature. Special thanks go to the organizers and attendees of my final seminar in February 2016, and especially to Engin Kılıç, who in the role of opponent during this “mock defense” gave good shares of encouragement, critical remarks, and constructive suggestions for the final version of my dissertation.

Lastly, I’d like to thank my closest family, who have backed me all the way and showed great interest in my work. To my dearest, Marta, I want to say thank you for all the support and patience you have shown through the demanding final years of this project, and for all good cheer and flowers along the way.

Oslo, September 2019
Introduction

—Orhan Pamuk, Yeni Hayat

“They accuse us of underestimating Western civilization, he said. Actually, it’s the opposite ...”
—my translation

Motivation

After I started my studies in Turkish literature in 2002, it did not take long before I was introduced to a way of thinking about Turkey and its relations to East and West that was at odds with the established version of history that Turkey had become a Western country through reforms launched by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the first president of the Turkish Republic, 1923–38 (e.g. Ahmad 31–71; Lewis 239–93; Zürcher 173–214). On one hand, studies in Turkish literature provided me with overwhelming details of a longer history of westernization, with the 1839–76 reform period often referred to as Tanzimat (e.g. Finkel 447) standing out as a tipping point when Turkey turned to the West in a transformative way. On the other hand, I noticed that the idea of westernization as a transformation process of the past had started to weaken, while an image of westernization as a way of talking about Turkey as constantly sliding between East and West became more manifest.

For instance, in the introduction to his series Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış (A Critical Look at the Turkish Novel),1 first published in 1983–94, Berna Moran, former professor of English literature at Istanbul University, identifies “problematics of East and West” as a prevalent theme treated by most Turkish novelists after Tanzimat, from Ahmet Mithat in the late 19th century to Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar in the mid 20th (“Bati-Doğu sorunsalı,” my trans.; Moran, Ahmet Mithat’tan 7, 24).2 In the same introduction, Moran explains that even though westernization may not be the dominant theme in all novels in this period, it might be the second most dominant theme; for instance, the novels of Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil all display features having to do

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1 Turkish titles are provided with a translation in parentheses when first mentioned.
2 “My trans.” is used throughout this dissertation as an abbreviation for “my translation of the previous quotation.” Although quotations from original sources mostly precede my translations, there are occasions, such as this one, when I have needed to integrate short phrases by in-text translation first, and quote my original sources in the citation.
with westernization (24). Jale Parla, professor of Turkish literature at Istanbul Bilgi University, has agreed with Moran that westernization prevailed as a theme in Turkish literature in the 20th century after the foundation of the Republic, but she has another view as to when the dominance of this dichotomous epistemology began. In her 1990 study Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri (Fathers and Sons: Epistemological Foundations for Tanzimat Novels), Parla points out that talking about Tanzimat as creating a dichotomy between Eastern and Western values in Ottoman society has become a cliché, leading to a blunt understanding of Tanzimat culture as dichotomous per se (11). According to Parla, interpretations of Tanzimat literature have occurred as projections from later ideology in the time of the Turkish Republic, while she emphasizes that the epistemological foundation of Turkish literature up to the late 19th century was profoundly Islamic (Babalı 31).

While I share Moran’s view that westernization, or the problematics of East and West, is a common theme in Turkish literature from Tanzimat onwards, I have felt ill at ease at making it the key to interpreting most Turkish novels for at least two reasons. Firstly, I continued to visit Turkey for studies and research trips of various lengths, and what surrounded me during the early 2000s was a country that had become increasingly well integrated in the global system, certainly westernized or modernized if it comes to that, yet with particularities. Secondly, as my literary explorations expanded, I found that the discourse of westernization did not situate Turkish literature where it ought to be. Rather, I thought that the discourse itself reduced the literature by presenting it as a tool for identity debates that did not highlight what I saw as more relevant, namely how literary works are in themselves engaged in forming language, literature, and culture. Thus, as a researcher, I sought strategies for involving myself in discussions of Turkish literature in order to highlight some of the universal qualities I had also seen in books that deal with the East–West debate in innovative ways, such as the works of Orhan Pamuk and his precursors.

My research can be seen as addressing a growing need in English, articulated by several voices, to understand Turkish works from within the Turkish context (Holbrook, Unreadable Shores; Atış; Seyhan). Expanding the frameworks for discussing Turkish literature seems increasingly relevant, since several Turkish authors, following Pamuk, have reached non-Turkish readers through translation. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Adalet Ağaoğlu, whose works are considered here, are among the few authors of Turkish modern classics who have recently started to be translated into a wider range of languages, including English.

Living in an era when similar dichotomy-based discourses have gained new actuality through politics both in Turkey and elsewhere, I have thought it valuable to scrutinize the alternative perspective of approaching the discourse of westernization in terms of irony, as is done in Turkish novels of a
postmodernist bent. I am convinced that by combining the concepts of irony and westernization in studying works of literature by Tanpinar, Ağaoğlú, and Pamuk, I will reveal something new in the fields of westernization research and Turkish literature in the 20th century.

**Aim**

The aim of this dissertation is to discuss ironic presentations of westernization in Turkish novels of the late 20th century. My research question is: How is the discourse of westernization presented through irony in Turkish novels in this period? The books chosen for closer study are Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar’s 1961 novel *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (*The Time Regulation Institute*), Adalet Ağaoğlú’s 1973 novel *Ölmeye Yatmak* (*Lying Down To Die*), and Orhan Pamuk’s 1994 novel *Yeni Hayat* (*The New Life*).³

It is my hypothesis that these novels represent literature that, while engaging in the discourse of westernization and thus repeating certain ideologically determined understandings of it in relation to East and West, does not imply that westernization is a valid episteme as such. The westernization critique that they express has prompted me to analyze them through readings that apply the critical concept of *irony*. Irony has been seen as a fundamental element of the novel as a genre (e.g. De Man, “Rhetoric of Temporality” 210), so by focusing on irony in Turkish 20th-century fiction, I explore a core element of what constitutes these works as novels. When irony is seen as fundamental to the novel as a genre, this is not only because of irony’s ability to deconstruct established concepts and undermine certain ways of using language, but also because it conveys a strong message in itself.

In her 2011 treatise *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey*, Nergis Ertürk scrutinizes Tanpinar’s *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* among other works of the 20th century, and emphasizes how these works are “produced in a linguistic field profoundly overdetermined by the national grammatology” of that century⁴ and “self-conscious regarding both local and global forces aiming to bind language” (emphasis in orig.), offering “their own accounts of the violent control of writing” (16). I seek to highlight these novels as creative and dynamic fields of language. This is a different approach from the often-politicized use of literary works as artifacts treated as ideological.

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³ *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* was first published as a serial novel in 1954, but substantially revised before its second edition published as a book in 1961, which is the version I have analyzed (Alptekin 70–71). *The Time Regulation Institute* and *The New Life* are titles used in English translations (Freely and Dawe; Gürol, *Time*; Gün). *Lying Down to Die*, on the other hand, is my translation, since no English translation of *Ölmeye Yatmak* exists. Other possible interpretations of the Turkish titles will be discussed in later chapters on each book.

⁴ “Grammatology” is here used according to Jacques Derrida’s definition of it as “a general science of writing” (N. Ertürk 6).
products. In my view, there has been a tendency to value the discourse of westernization as an external force that forces Turkish literature into predetermined patterns.

Selection of Novels

The three novels chosen for close study are well-received, widely read, and much-discussed works of the second half of the 20th century. At the same time, they stand out not only within Turkish literature but also within the oeuvre of each author as profoundly ironic texts, simultaneously amusing and deadly serious in their thematics.

One shared feature of Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, Ölmeye Yatmak, and Yeni Hayat is their extensive use of first-person narration. Since first-person narration facilitates self-reflection, it seems well-suited for enabling irony as defined by Paul, i.e. “a dialectic of the self” that sets up “reflexive structures” (“Rhetoric of Temporality” 169–170). The application of first-person narration in these novels is part of a general trend of experimenting with form that is often associated with the period of modernism as opposed to realism, in which third-person narrative was the preferred form.

Ironic representations of westernization in first-person narratives differ from such representations in late 19th-century novels such as Ahmet Mithat’s Felâtun Bey ile Rakım Efendi (Felâtun Bey and Rakım Efendi), first published in 1875 (Akyüz 71; Evin 81; Özön 198), and Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem’s Araba Sevdası (A Carriage Affair), first published in 1896 (Moran, Ahmet Mithat’ın 73). These books are predominantly third-person narratives and known, in different ways, for their ironic presentations of westernization. According to Moran, Felâtun Bey ile Rakım Efendi is the first of many Turkish novels that discusses the problematics of westernization by displaying a kind of character that he designates an “alafranga züppe,” i.e. a ‘westernized dandy’ (Ahmet Mithat’ın 43). Parla is one who has discussed examples of irony in the novel Araba Sevdası (Babalar 30), in which she sees a fundamental “parody of the act of writing and reading” (“yazma ve okuma eylemi parodisi,” my trans.; Babalar 105).

The three novels chosen for close study are, in other words, far from the only works in Turkish literature that contain ironic representations of westernization. An early example of the ironic representation of westernization in a first-person-narrated novel is Sabahattin Ali’s Kürk Mantolu Madona (Madonna in a Fur Coat), first published in 1943 (Kudret, Cumhuriyet 60). This novel displays clear parallels to Tanpınar’s novel Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü in that the frame stories in both novels have an urban setting among modern-day bureaucrats, and both novels have narrators looking back at previous decades.
However, the first novel that comes to most Turkish readers’ minds when thinking of irony in relation to East and West is Öğuz Atay’s voluminous novel Tutunamayanlar (Misfits), first published in 1972. Tutunamayanlar is often considered the first example of Turkish postmodernism (e.g. Moran, Sabahattin Ali’den 270), and it shares the feature of first-person narration with the novels chosen here. Tutunamayanlar is an already much-studied work in Turkish literature, and Jale Parla’s discussion of it in her extensive study Don Kişot’tan Bugüne Roman (The Novel from Don Quixote Until Today; 202–230) deserves to be mentioned. It is a meticulous analysis of irony in Tutunamayanlar with numerous references to previous articles on the subject. In addition to this, Osman Oruç and Hüseyin Türkan have studied irony in this novel in their MA dissertations.

Although I initially thought of including Tutunamayanlar in my research, I decided not to as it was hard to present an analysis of it balanced with those of the other three works, which happen to be more similar to one another than to Tutunamayanlar when it comes to the size and organization of their narratives. In choosing the three novels that I did, I saw the possibility of a more efficient presentation, at the same time as my analysis of these three novels would widen the scope for scrutinizing ironic approaches to westernization in Turkish postmodernism both before and after Tutunamayanlar.

My concern for efficiency is also what led me to choose three novels, and not to include other genres. As far as ironic representations of westernization go, the authors Aziz Nesin and Sait Faik Abasıyanık would be obvious candidates if autobiography and short stories were to be included. Plays by Ağaoğlu and Atay as well as Bilge Karasu could also be interrogated in a similar fashion, but such cross-genres inquiries would have complicated the presentation of my topic.

Irony in First-person Narratives

The stories of these novels will be presented in more detail later, as will the three authors and the contexts of their novels. Suffice it here to mention that one source of irony in these three novels is the dual agency of the first-person

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5 The title Tutunamayanlar is a participle plural consisting of the verb stem tut-, meaning “hold,” “grab,” and “restrain,” plus five suffixes, -un-a-ma-yan-lar, the first of which is derivational, while the next four are inflectional. Intrinsically difficult to translate into English, it is open to innumerable possible literal translations. Notably, there is an intentional double meaning in the interpretation of the Turkish word along the lines of either “Those who cannot abide” or “Those who cannot restrain themselves.” My notion of “Misfits” is from Göknar (Orhan Pamuk 45). Other efficient translations suggested for this title are “The Maladjusted” (Halman, Millennium 122) and “Losers” (McGaha 110).

6 For an analysis of Aziz Nesin’s irony, see the 2007 MA dissertation of Cem Taş.
singular, often referred to by the personal pronoun “ben” in Turkish (“I” in English) and by corresponding personal endings of verbs and nouns.

All three novels show an awareness that the written self differs from the writing self. They display, as I see them, a degree of self-reflection characteristic of postmodernism. As Linda Hutcheon has emphasized, the metafictional self-reflection in postmodernist works does not prevent them from speaking powerfully about real political and historical realities” (Poetics of Postmodernism 5). While expressing individual agencies, the protagonists in the three novels by Tanpinar, Ağaoğlu, and Pamuk obtain dual identities as narrators and characters, making them both subjects and objects of narration. The double protagonist/narrator is an ironist in relation to the discourse of westernization—as much a part of as resistant to this dominant discourse that permeates these novels. This illustrates how the authors use first-person narration to create self-reflective modes of writing, which become ways to comment on the topic of westernization, and even to deconstruct the discourse of westernization as a grand narrative.

Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, Ölmeye Yatmak, and Yeni Hayat all tell individual stories continuing up to or close to the time of their narration, i.e. the mid 1950s in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, around 1970 in Ölmeye Yatmak, and the early 1990s in Yeni Hayat. From their very first sentences, they emphasize the individual by creating tight bonds between narrators and protagonists and in different ways letting them speak in first person, personally, as it were, to their readers.

In Tanpinar’s Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, the narrator seems to reveal something to readers that only friends of the protagonist know:

Beni tanıyanlar öyle okuma yazma işleriyle büyük bir ilgim olmadığını bilirler. (Saatleri 7)

Those who know me would be aware that I have no great interest in such things as reading and writing. (my trans.)7

In other words, this sentence establishes an image of a protagonist referred to as if existing outside of the text, among friends, where he is known for not having a big interest in reading and writing. At the same time, this protagonist is identified with the narrator, soon to be described as writing his memoirs, which are associated with the text we read (Saatleri 10). Narrator and protagonist, which in theory are two different textual phenomena, are thus

7 Translations are always interpretations, and sometimes, as here, I have felt the need to present my own translations instead of citing already published English translations. Whenever one or several English translations of the cited work have been available, they have been consulted, and are referred to when quoted. Whenever my translation is based partly on another source, I use the combination of “my trans.” and a citation of the consulted source after the abbreviation “cf.”
paradoxically brought together and identified as one by means of the first-
person-singular pronoun. Although this is not an uncommon feature of
narratives, it does highlight a paradoxical duality that exists in the
protagonist/narrator individual constructed in first-person narratives.
Ağaoğlu’s Ölmeye Yatmak establishes a similar duality when bringing its
readers, in medias res, into a situation referred to as if existing at an Ankara
hotel and a scene in which only two persons interact, a young man who works
there and the protagonist:

Asansörle tam on altı kat çıktık. On altıncı katta indik. Bana odayı gösterecek
oğlanın peşinden yürüyorum. (Ölmeye 1)

We have taken the elevator altogether sixteen floors up and stepped out at the
sixteenth floor. I am walking behind the young man who will show me the
room. (my trans.)

Again, we see that the first-person-singular pronoun has the function of
identifying the narrator with the protagonist in quite a paradoxical way. Since
the situation described is an intimate one, in which two people interact in an
otherwise empty elevator and corridor in a hotel, there is no latitude for the
protagonist to simultaneously report to a crowd, and yet the narrator who does
report the situation to the crowd of readers is identified with the protagonist
by means of the first-person-singular pronoun.

When Pamuk’s Yeni Hayat was released, its first sentence was widely used
to promote the book in commercials, helping it to achieve legendary status:

Bir gün bir kitap okudum ve bütün hayatım değişti. (Yeni 7)

I read a book one day and my whole life was changed. (Gün 3)

So far, there is no reference to a particular time or place in Pamuk’s novel,
which starts by referring to a reading individual whose life was once changed.
A feature here is the way in which the narrator identifies with the reader by
letting the text refer to an act of reading, making the text an intimate mirror of
its own readers. As the narrative continues, there are elements that contribute
to singling out one individual Istanbulite eventually identified as Osman, who
read one book at a specific, though unspecified, time. However, it has also
been noted that the referent to the personal pronoun I is constantly being
erased and reinvented in this novel (Yazıcıoğlu 159–60).

The protagonists in the three novels are constituted as individuals, while
being referred to in the first sentences by the pronoun I and later in the
narratives by the names Hayri İrdal, Aysel, and Osman, respectively. The
emphasis of these novels on individuals is notable, since they are selected here
for ironically representing westernization, an issue one would expect to be
societal rather than individual. However, it is through their individual voices that these novels thematize different political periods, with stories of individuals in Turkish society from the period of Tanzimat (1839–76), through the authoritarian period of sultan Abdülhamid II (1878–1908), the period of the Young Turks (1908–22), the Atatürk period (1922–38), the 1950s, the 1960s and 1970s, and the post-coup d’état era after 1980, up to the early 1990s.

In the three novels analyzed here, the ambiguity regarding the agency of narrators and protagonists who are both subjects and objects is not the only source of irony, just as these stories are not solely about Hayri, Aysel, and Osman. For instance, reading their first pages, we soon understand that these novels are also concerned with, respectively, a time regulation institute, the action of lying down to die, and the transformative act of reading.

Readers may choose, and have indeed chosen, to emphasize the particular or general aspects of these stories in different ways. Firstly, it has been argued that *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* is about Hayri’s experiences with the time regulation institute and how his childhood relates to these, and that it is about the development of bureaucracy during a period of intense westernization in the early Turkish Republic. Secondly, *Ölmeye Yatmak* has been said to be about Aysel becoming pregnant and her subsequent uncertainty, and to be about the education of the first-generation schoolchildren of the Turkish Republic and its consequences for gender relations and class affiliations. Thirdly, it has been argued that *Yeni Hayat* is about the escapades of a young, confused Osman, and that it is about the culture of silence and repression in a late 20th-century Turkish society that kept defining itself in terms of East and West.

In other words, these novels present perspectives of both the individual and his/her society, not by merging the two perspectives, but rather by letting them interact within overlapping textual fields. My focus on Hayri İrdal, Aysel, and Osman does not imply that I am more concerned with the individual side of the stories than with the side that takes up societal issues. Rather, I see the dual identity of these protagonists as constitutive for the novels, impacting how we read stories as both personal accounts and accounts of something more general.

The dual textual identities of Hayri, Aysel, and Osman are symptomatic of how these novels perpetually exhibit an ambiguity between protagonist and narrator. This could be seen in relation to what De Man writes in “The Rhetoric of Temporality”:

> The ironic language splits the subject into an empirical self that exists in a state of inauthenticity and a self that exists only in the form of a language that asserts the knowledge of this inauthenticity. This does not, however, make it into an authentic language, for to know inauthenticity is not the same as to be authentic. (214)
In an attempt to paraphrase, I could say that irony is to use a language that is being marked as “inauthentic.” Applied to the novels scrutinized here, one notes that each subject referred to with a first-person pronoun can be split into overlapping constituents.

An example of how an ironic language splits the subject is seen in Aysel’s first-person narrative in Ölmeye Yatmak. The narrative uses internal focalization, meaning that readers are being involved in what Aysel knows and remembers, thinks and feels. So, from one point of view, this part of the novel seems to be authentically Aysel’s. However, even though the narrative is told using the first-person pronoun, as if Aysel is talking about herself, there is already a split between Aysel here and now at the Ankara hotel, and Aysel of the past. Moreover, there are no references to Aysel writing the story, as opposed to Hayri İrdal writing his. On the contrary, the narrator makes it clear that Aysel at the hotel is unaware of the narrated time that is revealed to readers. So, from this point of view, the story is inauthentic since the narrator reveals that Aysel only exists within this fiction.

Discussing a similarly split subject, De Man chooses to describe the result of this split as a “duplication” of selves, which is “essential for an understanding of irony”; this duplication, he says “is a consciousness, between two selves, yet it is not an intersubjective relationship” (“Rhetoric of Temporality” 212). To continue with the example of Aysel and her narrator, their relationship is not intersubjective for two reasons: firstly, because Aysel is unaware of the existence of her narrator, and secondly, because the narrator exists at another textual level, which transcends Aysel’s physical surroundings within a fictive universe.

While Aysel in narrated time is depicted in a hotel room in Ankara, on an April morning around 1970, the narrator seems to exist somewhere between this context and Ankara in the early 1970s, i.e. closer to the time and place in which Ağaoğlu wrote the novel. In comparison, Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü depicts Hayri İrdal in a narrated time of the early 1950s, sitting by his desk writing his memoirs in a villa in Büyükdere, Istanbul, an image that fits well with the general image that readers might create of the narrator as being situated somewhere in Istanbul in the early 1950s. In Yeni Hayat, on the other hand, the actual times and places in which one perceives both narrator and protagonist are fluid, notwithstanding abundant references to real places and historical events, and this in itself reflects the story of the novel, in which the protagonist at times engages himself in searching for the writer behind the book he has been reading, eventually referred to as Yeni Hayat (Yeni 265), as if to enhance the mirroring effect between text and reading.
Reflections of a Society

As a sign of their relevance, novels by Ağaoğlu, Pamuk, and Tanpınar have often, both at the time of their publication and later, been read in a contemporary frame. Critics have used and use these novels to make comments on current Turkish politics. That is true for the three novels chosen for closer study here as well. Furthermore, this habit is currently being globally reinforced as translations of Pamuk and earlier Turkish novelists are being read as prescient or prophetic regarding an ongoing conflict between Islamism and the West. For instance, when *Silent House*, Robert Finn’s English translation of Pamuk’s *Sessiz Ev*, came out in the UK in 2012, Mark Lawson wrote in *The Guardian* that the novel, thirty years after it was first published, feels doubly prescient since it shows the beginnings of a great writer, while letting one of his characters, Hasan, predict that Islamist young men such as he will one day be involved in a terrible event that will lead to people being “shocked and amazed” and put him in newspapers and on TV. In other words, when Pamuk’s works today reach readers in Western Europe and North America in translation, the contexts in which they are interpreted are not the same as when the originals came out in Turkey. Nevertheless, they are being read within contemporary contexts. As will become clearer below, *Yeni Hayat* is also suitable for being interpreted as commenting on a global conflict between Islam and the West, an idea that has been reinforced in recent years.

As mentioned above, one feature that the three novels share is that each centers on the personal development and struggles of one protagonist. Thus, some of the irony in these novels derives from their style of narration as they establish an instant changing of positions drawn from repeated discourses into which persons are inscribed and at the same time erased as individuals. These individual stories reflect realities that readers may recognize from their own lives. They are full of allusions and references to Turkish politics. Characteristically, these novels display a kind of multiplication of voices and perspectives that implies self-reflection and self-referentiality, a kind of “self-consciousness” that Barzun sees as a “striking trait of the modern ego,” a trait he relates to the modern ego being more concerned (than was the Romantic ego) with how it appears in others’ eyes (117).

Put together, the three novels, written by three authors, two male and one female, belonging to three subsequent generations, give profound glimpses into individual lives in Turkey over a time ranging from the mid 19th to late 20th centuries. While the novels of Ağaoğlu and Pamuk mostly consider the transformation of Turkish society in the Republican era, Tanpınar offers a story that reaches back into the 19th and 18th centuries. Thus, he comes closer to presenting what Nergis Ertürk has called the “long view of the transformation of Turkish society,” where the tremendous westernization
efforts starting in the mid-19th century is taken as the starting point for Turkish westernization (21).

However, the focal point in Tanpınar’s novel is processes of transformation after the First World War. Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü covers, with flashbacks, the peculiar life of its protagonist Hayri İrdal from the early 1900s through subsequent years of war and reform, told from the perspective of the early 1950s. Ağaoğlu’s Ölmeye Yatmak is the account of Aysel, whose story we follow from early schooldays in the late 1930s up to around 1970, and which is told from the perspective of the early 1970s. Lastly, Pamuk’s Yeni Hayat is the intricate account of a person eventually identified as Osman and his experiences of dramatic events around 1980, told from the perspective of the early 1990s.

Outline

For clarity, I have decided to split the introductory part of my dissertation into two sections, calling the first one Introduction and the second Contextualizations. While all major theoretical concepts and methodological considerations are introduced in the first section, the second presents historical backgrounds for the concepts of irony and westernization in Turkish, relates the selected novels to literary periods, and presents the three authors, their novels, and previous research in more detail. This is in order to create a frame for my interpretations of the novels, which follow under three headings before the final remarks, in which I sum up my findings.

In other words, I develop my argumentation in three stages. Firstly, in the Introduction, I define my theoretical standpoints and my methodological approach. Secondly, in Contextualizations, I further explain some historical and cultural contexts of the concepts of irony and westernization in Turkish, as well as of the authors and their novels. Thirdly, I present my interpretations of these three novels in three sections through illustrative close readings of the texts, discussed in relation to the theories presented in the two introductory sections as well as to previous research on these novels. At all three stages, I aim to show how these novels are concerned with westernization, and how irony comes into play with the discourse of westernization.

The remainder of this introduction will present the theoretical considerations and methodological approaches that I have applied. In the chapter Theoretical Considerations, I define the key terms irony, discourse, and westernization. This chapter was written partly to prepare my readers for my analyses of the novels, in which these concepts are central. At the same time, the initial discussions of irony, discourse, and westernization are in themselves central to my investigation, and in the process of my research, my readings of the novels have guided my understandings of westernization and discourse presented here, and vice versa.
In the chapter Methodological Approaches, I first define what is new in my analysis, which combines different theoretical approaches in studies of irony and westernization, before explaining how I strove to detect irony in the texts and delineated my research in the following analyses. This chapter will also present key narratological terms that I apply in the text.

Under the heading Contextualizations, I present an overview of some ways in which westernization has been understood in Turkish literary theory as both a discourse and a process. After that I present the context of the word *ironi* (“irony”) in Turkish and discuss where to situate the novels in relation to literary periods. The second half of Contextualizations presents the three novels, their authors and their works, and prior research relevant to my investigation.

In the next stage, I present my analyses of the three books, chronologically one by one, first *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, then *Ölmeye Yatmak*, and finally *Yeni Hayat*. I arranged my analyses in this way because I think it makes them easier to follow. Some topics, motifs, and other features appear in all three novels, and I have tried to keep to a somewhat parallel structure in my presentations of the three books, though I have not used a strictly common structure as that would not do justice to the individual analyses. Occasionally, I have added digressions where I felt it natural to discuss parallels and differences between the books. The end of each section presents concluding remarks in which I sum up my findings from the analysis of each book and discuss what these findings bring to the field of Turkish westernization represented through irony.

**Theoretical Considerations**

As a Turcologist presenting my research in English, I believe in the combination of interpreting Turkish literature in its context and applying universal terms in my explanations as far as they go. That is why I stick to the term “westernization,” which is firmly grounded in research into Turkish literature, while I interrogate it using the universal concepts “discourse” and “irony.” I also relate my research to theories of postmodernism as a literary period. My research aims to advance the discussion of what literature can achieve in a heavily politicized field such as the discourse of westernization. In the following, I will elaborate on my definitions of these central terms: irony, discourse, westernization, and postmodernism.

**Irony**

My research is notable by positioning irony, rather than satire and parody, at its center. Irony is often mentioned in Turkish research on Ağaoğlu, Pamuk, and Tanpınar, but has only in the last two decades started to be applied as the
key concept in research, as seen in several MA dissertations (e.g. Aslan; Bayram; Karadikme; Karçığa; Zeyrek). In the following, I will explain how the definition I use for irony is to be understood in the larger context of the theory of irony, and in the chapter on method below, I will present how I practically look for irony in the texts.

I apply Hutcheon’s definition of irony as a discursive practice that signals “difference at the heart of similarity,” a phrasing that Hutcheon uses in both *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (x) and *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (8). By being text centered, this definition is technically better suited for my purpose of analyzing written texts than are traditional definitions of irony that center on a speaker. Apart from “discursive practice,” Hutcheon designates irony as a “mode of expression” (*Irony’s Edge* 1), and a “strategy” (3).

The meaning of irony as this concept is applied in my research has been formed by its history. In her introduction to *Irony: The New Critical Idiom*, Claire Colebrook explains that in late antiquity irony was defined as a trope or a rhetorical figure (2), while romanticism made irony a paradox-driven approach to life (7). In the 20th century, irony developed into a key term in literary theory. This development reflects a profound and complex relation between irony and the development of the novel (De Man, “Rhetoric of Temporality” 186). Thus, having for centuries been discussed under the headings of tropes and figures of speech, in literary research today irony is defined by terms such as “mode of expression,” “discursive practice,” and “strategy,” all of which are used by Hutcheon.

This classification of irony evidences an understanding of it as a phenomenon different from satire and parody, terms that instead refer to texts that, respectively, criticize by mockery and make fun of by imitation. Even though irony is sometimes described as “hitting at something,” even “criticizing” and “mocking” something specific, these features are more exactly described with the terms “satire” and “mockery,” which are not my focus in this treatise.

According to a rhetorical tradition reaching back to Aristotle, irony is “saying one thing and meaning the opposite,” and in a more restrictive sense, that I will not limit myself to, “blame-by-praise and praise-by-blame” (De Man, “Rhetoric of Temporality” 209). As for the scope or range of irony, Quintilian describes it as early as 95 CE, referring to Socrates to claim that it may encompass whole narratives and pervade an entire life (De Man, “Rhetoric of Temporality” 210). Irony in this sense does not necessarily imply more than an attitude of disbelief towards the content of an utterance (Durant et al. 131).

However, the history of irony studies is marked by a long period of confusion concerning where to situate the definition of irony between “meaning the opposite” and “meaning something else.” While “meaning the opposite” seems too narrow to cover common usage, “meaning something
else,” as noted by medieval literature researcher Dennis Howard Green, does not differentiate irony from other tropes such as metaphor or allegory, in which the real and apparent meanings of the words used are also divergent (6). In other words, using a metaphor such as “you are my sunshine” is also “saying one thing and meaning something else.”

Green has pointed out a blurred line that sometimes exists between irony and metaphor, and offered a well-formulated definition of irony while indicating that the apparent meaning of an ironic statement is not merely divergent, but also “incongruous with the conventional meaning” (6). What makes irony different from metaphor and allegory, then, is “the unsuspected dissimilarity or contrast between one dimension and another” (Green 6). Green’s definition comes close to Hutcheon’s above-mentioned definition of irony as “difference at the heart of similarity.” Implied in this way of defining irony is to look at how irony comes about by highlighting a somewhat surprising difference while creating a similitude.

Apart from Hutcheon, my approach is mostly inspired by the theorists Wayne Booth and D. C. Muecke. All these scholars integrate the concept of irony in interpretations aimed at better understanding literature. In different ways, they also highlight how literature occurs within given social contexts. In that way, their theories are well suited for my analysis of three novels that connect to a world outside of themselves through numerous allusions and references. Colebrook has picked up on this emphasis on social context in recent theories of irony. She sums up that we “know a word is being used ironically when it seems out of place or unconventional,” and adds: “Recognising irony, therefore, foregrounds the social, conventional and political aspects of language” (16). This statement echoes Hutcheon’s view that irony is defined by its social context, or by culture. However, this is only half the truth, stresses Colebrook. Referring to Booth, she underscores that irony “does not just rely on shared social values; it also relies on literary value” (17). This is why I strive for a balance between examining textual features leading to irony and explaining cultural context.

It has been claimed that a reason why irony is needed is the limiting power of language. Irony has been viewed as the last resort for criticism when a certain discourse is too strong to get around and criticize from the outside. Søren Kierkegaard has described this function of irony as “a negatively liberating activity” (123). According to him, an endless negation and ultimate nothingness comes about because of an upheaval of conventional restrictions guiding the use of language (123). “Black hole” and “nothingness” are words Kierkegaard used for irony in his 1841 dissertation, where irony is defined as “a position that continually cancels itself.” He writes that irony “is a nothing that devours everything, and a something one can never grab hold of, something that is and is not at the same time” (Kierkegaard 131). De Man builds on Kierkegaard when he underlines that irony can make words mean something totally different from their conventional meanings, and can allow
language to be liberated from a fixed and stable context (“Concept of Irony” 20). If this statement holds true, the Turkish discourse of westernization is a suitable exemplar, since it is, in my understanding, part of a highly politically charged national discourse aimed at language itself. As Ertürk argues, literature is “more than a mere second-order ideological representation”; it is “also a linguistic act that distinguishes itself from other linguistic acts in its ‘free’ mediation of writing independent of a fixed referent” (N. Ertürk 16–17). In other words, we can expect Turkish novels known for their application of irony to engage in a kind of “liberation” of a language marked by westernization.

While applying the theories of Booth, Hutcheon, and Muecke, at the same time I lean towards the tradition of Paul De Man and Jacques Derrida. Often jointly called “deconstructionists,” they have dissected the understanding of irony as a trope as well as the role dichotomies play in the construction of discourses. De Man in particular has been used in ways recalling ideas from 19th-century Romanticism to show how texts perpetually negate themselves and end up in “a black hole” or “nothingness.” My aim, however, is not deconstruction of a discourse as such.

Like De Man and Derrida, Booth also recognizes Kierkegaard’s understanding of irony as ultimately “absolute infinite negativity,” saying:

Irony in itself opens up doubts as soon as its possibility enters our heads, and there is no inherent reason for discontinuing the process of doubt at any point short of infinity. (*Rhetoric of Irony* 59)

Here, Booth comes close to De Man’s description of the ability of irony to dissolve meaning in a text:

It dissolves in the narrowing spiral of a linguistic sign that becomes more and more remote from its meaning, and it can find no escape from this spiral. (“Rhetoric of Temporality” 222)

Since irony has become a hallmark of the novel as a genre, these comments must be seen in relation to the 20th-century debates on the novel and its relation to the world. In Derrida’s universe, irony seems to be a key to thinking about textuality as such. He explains this in terms of how irony is based on a playing out of differences:

Textuality being constituted by differences and by differences from differences, it is by nature absolutely heterogeneous and is constantly composing with the forces that tend to annihilate it. (Derrida 98)
Similarly, De Man speaks of the “irony of irony” in fiction:

Far from being a return to the world, the irony to the second power or ‘irony of irony’ that all true irony at once has to engender asserts and maintains its fictional character by stating the continued impossibility of reconciling the world of fiction with the actual world. (“Rhetoric of Temporality” 208)

Booth concluded that “pursued to the end, an ironic temper can dissolve everything, in an infinite chain of solvents.” He recognizes that texts usually carry multiple intentions and stresses that it “is not irony but the desire to understand irony that brings such a chain to a stop.” That is why he sets out to describe “a rhetoric of irony,” which according to him is required if we are not to be caught in an “infinite regress of negations” (Rhetoric of Irony 59).

In search of a more restrictive interpretation of irony, Booth ends up by placing great responsibility on readers, who can learn “where to stop” in their search for irony. In other words, Booth’s rejection of deconstructive readings is not based on another definition of irony than that of Derrida, Kierkegaard, and De Man; rather, it is based on another theoretical approach towards the study of literature.

Needless to say, looking for irony in an essentially ironic genre such as the novel does not imply searching for hidden messages in otherwise straightforward texts. Rather, it entails looking for dual and multiple, sometimes contradictory, messages that are built up through the text by means of repetitions and alterations while looking for signals so as to know, in Booth’s terminology, “where to stop.” Often, that is realized through a surprising turn in the text, or in Hutcheon’s terminology, a “cutting edge” (Irony’s Edge 4). In other words, looking for irony involves both looking for double and multiple meanings, and looking for evaluations of messages that direct our understanding of the relationship between the different meanings that are yielded. Hutcheon is concerned with defining how to recognize the function of irony, or rather how to describe textual features that make readers recognize it. But while Booth emphasizes the reader’s responsibility to look for “other riches” in the text (Rhetoric of Irony 190), Hutcheon sees irony as incorporating the above-mentioned function of a “cutting edge” that guides readers’ interpretations (Irony’s Edge 37–46).

Irony’s cutting edge is, according to Hutcheon, defined by an “affective dimension” to which she attributes its “evaluative edge,” cutting through a multitude of meanings (Irony’s Edge 2). Ironic cuts can be seen as signals either to start reading ironically or to confirm an invitation to such reading, rather than to delineate the extent of irony. Seeing the cutting edge as a central feature of irony answers some of her guiding questions. Her question regarding “how and why irony comes about” in relation to other tropes (2) is answered as follows:
Unlike metaphor or allegory, which demand similar supplementing of meaning, irony has an evaluative edge and manages to provoke emotional responses in those who ‘get’ it and those who don’t, as well as in its targets and in what some people call its ‘victims.’ This is where the politics of irony get heated. (*Irony’s Edge* 2)

In other words, it seems that the cutting edge or evaluative edge that Hutcheon sees in irony belongs to its core function, to its marking of difference at the heart of similarity (8), since she sees it as ‘what seemed to distinguish irony most from other discursive practices’ (*Irony’s Edge* 4).

In her introduction to *Irony’s Edge*, Hutcheon explains that her interest in irony “was triggered by the fact that irony appears to have become a problematic mode of expression at the end of the 20th century” (1), and adds that she had

even more personal reasons for choosing to tackle this topic that so many others have already addressed. There is a long history of argument that the key to the Canadian identity is irony, that a people used to dealing with national, regional, ethnic and linguistic multiplicities, tensions, and divisions have no alternatives. (7)

While Booth emphasized text and interpretation as combined fundamentals of irony, Hutcheon stands for a renewed emphasis on social context in the interpretation of irony (e.g. *Irony’s Edge* 3). As a result, she includes many cultural enterprises in her study. Still, she ends up saying about irony:

> Why should anyone want to use this strange mode of discourse where you say something you don’t actually mean and expect people to understand not only what you actually do mean but also your attitude toward it? (*Irony’s Edge* 2)

For Hutcheon, irony is not only a “mode of expression,” but an *exceptional* mode of expression. Somewhat surprisingly, she seems to hold on to an idea of irony as something exceptional, something that belongs to a certain place and time (*Irony’s Edge* 176–204). I am more inclined to underline that irony is a universal aspect of language, applied in multiple ways in different cultures, and in this dissertation I intend to present examples of how it is applied within Turkish culture.

Having discussed ways to define irony, I would like to add a few words on a much-mentioned characteristic of irony, namely its capacity to make people laugh. Irony is often recognized as witty rather than straight-out comical (e.g. Wood 3). What I have seen in the novels studied here is that humorous aspects of the narrative are often, but far from always, emphasized with references to laughter, in themselves useful signals of irony.

In his 2005 book *The Irresponsible Self: On Laughter and the Novel*, James Wood says that witty novels have a way of laughing with, not at, their subjects (3–4). He calls this “a kind of tragi-comic stoicism,” but also suggests the term
“comedy of forgiveness,” and explains this by contrasting it to another kind of comedy, namely “comedy of correction,” which makes readers laugh at something (Wood 3–4). Wood sees tragi-comedy as an extreme version of this “comedy of forgiveness,” and associates it with what he calls “the irresponsible self” that he recognizes in works by well-known postmodernists such as Thomas Pynchon, and Salman Rushdie, promoters of what Wood calls “hysterical realism” (Wood 3), a term that can nicely describe Pamuk’s *Yeni Hayat*.

**Lines of Thought**

Overall, my research is grounded within a Turkish research tradition in which the irony in these novels has been read critically at the same time as they have been viewed as taking part in a discourse of westernization that prevailed and developed during the 20th century. The Turkish critical tradition has been concerned with questions of identity, attempting to determine what it means to be Turkish as well as to define the relation between Western influence and Eastern tradition.

My starting point in critically investigating the topic of westernization has been the previous efforts by Tanpınar and Moran, who can be seen as central figures behind an increasingly critical approach to the discourse of westernization during the 20th century. My approach is not to treat these scholars as sources merely to confirm when and how westernization was established. I treat westernization as a culturally determined discourse that shapes the understanding of distinguishable processes. In *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış*, Moran defined the problematics of East and West as the main topic of Turkish literature since the late 19th century.

My research situates itself at the intersection of studies of irony, westernization, and Turkish literature. It is my ambition to bring these critical traditions together in analyzing the three novels. My secondary sources have for the most part been in English and Turkish, and my theoretical approach is formed by the discussions of irony as they have developed in the Anglophone world over the last fifty years. Regarding the discourse of westernization, I bring studies of Turkish representations of East and West into dialogue with global discussions of westernization and related concepts such as orientalism, postcolonialism, and imperialism. My discussion also touches on debates on the extent of modernism and postmodernism in Turkish literature.

This is not the first study to discuss westernization or irony either in the selected novels or in the broader context of modern Turkish literature. Rather, this is the first time these three novels have been made the focal point of comparison in a project of this extent, and my contribution to these debates derives from the joint focus of looking at how irony is at work in these novels and how this affects the representation of westernization. There are, in other words, two fundamental limitations to my study of these novels: one is my
focus on the discourse of westernization, another is my focus on irony. Both elements are well-known features of these novels. Articles discussing the discourse of westernization in relation to these novels are part of a larger cluster of texts considering representations of East and West in Turkish literature. These representations are often read in light of irony, but usually implicitly through the explicit use of the terms “satire” and “parody.” As a result, critics have often touched on issues related to the concept of irony in these works without making irony the main subject of research.

Today, two quite different approaches can be distinguished within Turkish literary criticism when it comes to relating these novels to the discourse of westernization. On one hand, there is the approach of using literature to position oneself in the current political debate on westernization, which is still a prevalent discourse in Turkish political culture. This approach can be distinguished by the lack of critique of the defining tenets of the discourse of westernization. On the other hand, a certain lack of enthusiasm has long been sensed among Turkish scholars regarding the discussion of westernization or the problematics of East and West.

For the last forty years, the well-established tradition of researching Turkish literature in relation to the discourse of westernization (with different degrees of critically analyzing the tenets of this discourse itself) has been challenged by radically new approaches that question the legacy of this discourse. Jale Parla’s above-mentioned 1990 study Babalar ve Oğullar is one early example of such a radical approach, as it critically examines whether the discourse of westernization is a useful key for interpreting Turkish literature before the Republic.

As Turkish modern classics increasingly started to be translated after 2000, voices were also raised asking for new readings outside the national frame. Research on Turkish literature from the late 19th century to the present is now being undertaken by scholars who question the legacy of the discourse of westernization in general and to a degree avoid using westernization as their key concept in interpreting the processes of change described in the literature they study. Alternative concepts such as “modernization,” “Occidentalism” (e.g. Ahıska “Occidentalism”), and “phonocentrism,” launched by Ertürk (N. Ertürk 3),8 are being used to produce new insights into the period often associated with westernization.

Discourse

My approach to westernization in this study is based on my definition of it as essentially a discourse rather than a process. In The Archeology of Knowledge,

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8 Ertürk defines phonocentrism as an ideology traceable to Turkish society in the second half of the 19th century (N. Ertürk 14), the same period that Moran regards as dominated by westernization.
Michel Foucault defines discourse as a limited number of statements that belong to a single system of formation, for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined (121, 131). Hence, perceiving westernization as a discourse in the Foucauldian sense implies emphasizing not the processes of transformation in themselves, but rather the forces that cluster together and make it possible for a system that forms ideas about such processes to arise as the cultural entity that westernization has become. The following discussion of the historical preconditions for the formation of the discourse of westernization is to be understood within this theoretical framework.

This does not mean that discourse is something stable and definite. In a much-cited speech from 1970, Foucault instead calls discourse a “complex grid which changes constantly” (“Order of Discourse” 52). Furthermore, discourse exists in continuously changing relations to history, making it impossible to constrain it to one “ideal, timeless form that also possesses a history” (Foucault, *Archeology* 131). According to Foucault, discourse is instead

a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality. (*Archeology* 131)

Foucault distinguishes between discourses that occur only to fade away and discourses that give rise to new speech acts, which take them up, transform them, or speak of them, “discourses, which over and above their formulation, are said indefinitely, remain said, and are to be said again” (“Order of Discourse” 57). When he explains how discourse is formed in society, he proposes that

in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality. (“Order of Discourse” 8)

When talking about the rules of discursive formation, Foucault emphasizes that discourse answers to procedures of exclusion and prohibition that are observed in society (“Order of Discourse” 41–42). The way in which I understand this is that discourse is always guided by procedures that exist to control and organize speech.

Alternating the term “discourse” with “major narrative,” Foucault gives a description of it that says something about what we should expect from the Turkish discourse of westernization:

[T]here is scarcely a society without its major narratives, which are recounted, repeated, and varied; formulae, texts, and ritualized sets of discourses which are recited in well-defined circumstances; things said once and preserved
because it is suspected that behind them there is a secret or a treasure. ("Order of Discourse" 56)

To elaborate on this somewhat, the grand narrative of westernization is entangled with Turkish language and literature through westernizing reforms that target language and literature. On the other hand, any utterance entails a comment on the discourse in which it is situated because it always utilizes selection. Though we are always bound to certain structures and discourses when we speak and write, we are also free to say what we want in different ways—or even to keep silent. Taking part in discourse is, according to Foucault, desirable because it lets the speaker communicate in an organized manner and thus avoid exclusion and prohibition ("Order of Discourse" 52).

Within any given discourse, Foucault says there are regions that are more tightly controlled, and sexuality and politics are two such regions. This does not mean that discourse in these areas is expected to be less transformative. On the contrary, he says that discourse, far from being that transparent or neutral element in which sexuality is disarmed and politics pacified, is in fact one of the places where sexuality and politics exercise in a privileged way some of their most formidable powers. ("Order of Discourse" 52)

This is relevant to my dissertation, because sexuality and politics are thematic fields that all three novels treat. It is of interest to scrutinize these fields and compare their presentations in the novels. That is also because engagement in sexuality and politics is driven by desire, a cause that also drives engagement in discourse. “As psychoanalysis has shown,” Foucault says,

discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized. ("Order of Discourse" 52–53)

In other words, discourse is not only a channel or medium for the communication of desire, it is also the object of desire ("Order of Discourse" 8–9). To dominate discourse is an expression of power and therefore “the very object of man’s conflicts” ("Order of Discourse" 9). If we are to consider how desire is turned in the direction of the discourse of westernization, we can say that westernization is not only a way to talk about things, places, and processes, it is also in itself something that people want to inhabit and control since it represents power.

One particularly powerful such attempt in this regard is the writings of Ziya Gökalp, pseudonym for Mehmet Ziya (Mani 156). He was a sociologist and poet and is often considered the main architect of the kind of Turkish nationalism that was to be implemented by Atatürk in the 1920s and 1930s (e.g. Lewis 231). In Türkçülüğün Esasları (The Principles of Turkism), first
published in Istanbul in 1920, Gökalp takes command of the already flourishing debate on East and West, yet without using the word westernization, and forces it into a program, making it into a tool to serve Turkish nationalism, an ideology that sustained the establishment of a Turkish nation-state in 1923. A prominent feature of Türkçülüğün Esasları is the way in which its author situates Turkish society in transition between two civilizations (32–72).

An example of how the three novels scrutinized here take part in the discourse of westernization in organized ways is how they all emphasize contrasts between regions within Turkey and different parts of Istanbul by letting them represent the dichotomy of East and West. To start with, juxtaposing posh neighborhoods north of the Golden Horn, which are considered Western, to the Istanbul peninsula, considered Eastern since many neighborhoods here have a more traditional outlook, is a well-established metaphor in Turkish literature.

It is used by Tanpınar in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, where Hayri İrdal’s childhood in the peninsula represents his traditional background in contrast to the modern, westernized lifestyle in which he later engages north of the Golden Horn.

Likewise, in his 2003 memoirs İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir (Istanbul: Memoirs and City), Pamuk, who grew up in Nişantaşı, north of the Golden Horn, writes that when he in his teens would stroll through neighborhoods on the peninsula with his girlfriend, people would think they were foreigners and speak to them in bad English (311).

In Ölmeye Yatmak, Ağaoğlu creates a similar dichotomy between the Anatolian village, which partly represents the traditional mindset of Aysel’s family, and the capital Ankara, which with its modern buildings represents the westernized lifestyle of the protagonist as an adult.

In Yeni Hayat, Pamuk similarly juxtaposes the old-fashioned Anatolian villages that the protagonist visits to the westernized city of Istanbul, where he lives.

This metaphor can be traced further back. For instance, in Peyami Safa’s 1931 novel Fatih–Harbiye, the title refers to a tramway line that used to run from Fatih on the peninsula to Harbiye, north of the Golden Horn. When the protagonist Neriman makes this journey, said to take less than an hour, she feels it is a cultural journey as long as the Afghan railroad, because the two parts of the city, the narrator explains, display as many differences as would Kabul and New York (Safa 29).

One thing that my study reveals is how the Turkish discourse of westernization is transformed when taken up and treated with irony in the novels. Pamuk’s achievements in bending the discourse on westernization have been recognized by, for example, the Swedish Academy. When awarding him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2006, the Academy’s motivation was that he “has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures”
(Nobel Prize). Whereas Ziya Gökalp imagined a synthesis of Eastern culture and Western civilization (*Turkish Nationalism*), the result of Turkish westernization efforts over the last two hundred years could perhaps better be described in terms of a Janus face, as does Erdağ Göknar in his article “Yeni Hayat ve Türk Milliyetçiliğin Eleştirisi” (“Yeni Hayat and Its Critique of Turkish Nationalism”; 326–327). The Eastern side of this face is, according to Göknar, directed backwards towards traditions representing the Turkish original self, while the Western side is directed forward, towards a future yet to come, and reminiscent of contemporary life in “the West.”

### Methodological Approaches

I have read the three selected novels closely and in dialogue with previous research. Additionally, I have examined theories of both irony and westernization to bring them into the field where these two phenomena overlap. Because my research is based on several fields of study, my work proceeded with separate foci at a time. My work has clustered around close reading and taking notes about each novel, searching for secondary literature, and noticing everything of relevance to my approach, reading extensively on westernization and on irony in general to gain an overview of the historical lines and of the trends most relevant to literary studies. Surprisingly, studies of irony and of westernization are quite separate fields, and speaking from my own experience, a reasonable explanation for this is that they both represent massive clusters of research, making it a major task to gain an overview of both. Hopefully, this dissertation will pave the way for more studies to come in this unexploited field of research.

Analyzing a discourse through written texts enables readers to see both how a single text aligns with the totality of a discourse, and how it diverges from it in a process that involves irony. When Foucault explains how “the analysis of discourse operates between the twin poles of totality and plethora,” he underlines a duality in the role an individual statement plays in relation to a given discourse (*Archaeology* 133). In Foucault’s words, each discourse “contains the power to say something other than what it actually says, and thus embrace a plurality of meanings” (*Archaeology* 134).

My analysis of the three novels is guided by questions taking this duality into account: How do these novels engage in the discourse of westernization? What else are they saying when speaking about westernization? The analyses of the books will include presentations of what Ertürk has called the “historical imagination they themselves invoke” (N. Ertürk 21). Thus, my analysis will demonstrate how each novel exhibits westernization in its own way while reshaping and subverting it through irony.

Singling out rules and formulae for recognizing irony has been a task for literary theory in the 20th century. Kierkegaard in the 19th century had already
stated that personality is a necessary feature of the ironic position (131), and according to Green, irony presupposes conscious intention (of someone, often the author or a character in the work) and cannot arise fortuitously (5). However, New Criticism’s attack on the concept of intention meant that literary theory needed to sharpen its text-focused descriptions of irony. In *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Booth approaches the task of defining irony by noting that irony is difficult to place—in the author, the text, or the reader (2). His suggestion is that we avoid focusing on the intention of the sender, and instead look for clues of irony in the text. As mentioned above, Booth places much responsibility on the reader when it comes to recognizing signals in the text as to “where to stop” the interpretative chain leading towards indefinite negativity. He asks, “Where then do we stop in our search for ironic pleasures?” and answers pragmatically: “Where the work ‘tells’ us to, wherever it offers us other riches that might be destroyed by irony” (*Rhetoric of Irony* 190).

In my research, this means that I will not follow the “infinite chain of solvents” to the “black hole” of “absolute infinite negativity.” It is not my intention to prove that irony in the texts I am analyzing ultimately leads to the total dissolution of meaning. Rather, I think signals of “difference at the heart of similarity” are often used to highlight, comment on, and maybe even adjust aspects of common discourse.

When looking for places to start searching for irony, the approach of D. C. Muecke was to define certain basic situations. Without listing westernization as one of them, Muecke mentions several dichotomous situations that he describes as “ready-made containers for irony” (220). By citing examples—some of which obviously reflect conceptions and vocabulary now regarded as old-fashioned—he explains the concept as follows:

> There are certain ‘basic situations’ which, from their nature as dualities of a *de haut en bas* kind (for the most part), tend to function as ready-made containers, so to speak, for irony. These are the dualities of God and man (or heaven and earth), audience and play, puppet-master and puppet, artist and work of art, man and animal (or machine), giant and pigmy, aristocrat and bourgeois, rich and poor, traveller and native, present and past, walking and dreaming. (Muecke 220; emphasis in orig.)

The Turkish discourse of westernization fits well into the description of a basic situation of irony, grounded as it is in the duality of East and West. Even though most of the dichotomies that Muecke lists may be seen as different positions in hierarchies rather than as polarities, he says that such dualities produce “similar sets of polarities,” and cites the examples of “disengaged/involved; free/enslaved; dispassionate/emotional; serene/wretched; real/illusory; critical/credulous; meaningful/absurd” (221). Dichotomies like these are one form of signals of irony that I have been looking for in the texts.
Parallel to Muecke’s “basic situations of irony,” Hutcheon speaks of “scenes of irony” defined by the interpreter who sees them. She explains:

The ‘scene’ of irony involves relations of power based in relations of communication. It unavoidably involves touchy issues such as exclusion and inclusion, intervention and evasion. (Irony’s Edge 2)

In my thesis, westernization answers to this definition of “scene of irony.”

Another term from Muecke used in my research is that of “the ironist,” which somewhat resembles the old Greek eiron, i.e. “the ironic man” or “the smart guy” who appears in Greek comedy paired with the alazon, i.e. “the dumb guy,” as presented by De Man in “The Concept of Irony” (165). Muecke positions the ironist above the object or victim of irony as he involves the reader or observer in their relation (218). A special case of the relationship between ironist and victim is found in first-person narratives in which the ironist is a narrator mocking him- or herself.

I have written this text with the aim of creating a whole that reads well and improves our understandings both of the three novels and of the intriguing relations between irony and westernization in literature. The well-proven method of the hermeneutic circle has guided me to read details in light of the whole, and the whole in light of the details. Close reading, launched by New Criticism as a safeguard against emotional misreadings, has also guided me to take extra care in basing my arguments on the material texts. Narratology has given me both concepts and terminology to accurately describe and explain what I read.

Key Narratological Concepts

I have already used concepts such as narrator, protagonist, perspective, focalization, narrated time, and time of narration. In the following chapters, my interpretation will continue making use of such concepts, which have been developed in narratology. In this chapter I will explain my key narratological terms mainly with reference to Gérard Genette’s Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method and Booth’s The Rhetoric of Fiction, with illustrative examples drawn from the novels.

A fundamental idea in Genette’s narratology is that time in fiction is perceived in relation to time as we experience it outside of fiction (Genette 29). For Genette, who wrote his Narrative Discourse taking most of his examples from Marcel Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu (in later English translations called In Search of Lost Time), fictive times such as the past, present, and future are understood by analogy to the time we experience in the real world. The natural connection between experienced time and fictive time is the observed time passing when reading and writing (Genette 86). The organizing principle of Genette’s narratology is that the flow of time within
the fictive world of narration corresponds to the flow of time in the external world.

Consequently, we feel that a story is slow or fast, eternal, contemporary, futuristic, etc. If many events are presented as happening within a short time, the narrative is perceived as slow (Genette 87). A longer sequence of slow narrative creates a scene in which the events are presented at about the same pace as they would happen in the external world. On the other hand, if very few events are presented as happening over a longer period, the narrative appears to be fast, and could be called “summary” narrative (Genette 94).

Story is the word used for the text’s narrated events, “the signified or narrated content.” Narrative is the word used for the sum of events as they are presented in the text, “for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself” (Genette 27). Narrated time, from the German *erzählte Zeit*, is the phrase I prefer for the time when events are presented as taking place, while time of narration, from the German *Erzählzeit*, is the phrase I use for the time when the story is supposed to have been rendered by its narrator. This is the imagined “now” of the narration, the time from which the narrator selects and organizes the events, as well as evaluates and comments on them (Genette 33).

The narrator is the one telling the story. The narrators are often on another level of consciousness than the characters, because they are often positioned so that they supposedly have practical knowledge of their characters being part of a narrative.

For instance, when we read *Yeni Hayat*, we imagine a parallel world where the protagonist lives unaware of being fictional. At the same time, we imagine a narrator who does know that the protagonist is part of a story because the narrator, by definition, is the one telling the story. For instance, we learn quite late in *Yeni Hayat* that the narrator is a later Osman, i.e. an Osman of the early 1990s, who renders the stories about his younger self, i.e. an Osman of the 1970s and later (252).

In *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, the narrator is also depicted as a later version of the protagonist Hayri İrdal, writing about his younger self from the perspective of the early 1950s. This is different from *Ölmeye Yatmak*, in which the narrator is not given a name or fixed accurately in time.

The telling, or narration, of characters and events is never neutral, but builds on a selection of characters and events reflecting the views of a narrator. Both narrators and characters display different moods, voices, and aspects in relation to events in the story, and the narrator is most visible through the selection of events and vocabulary.

Although the word narrative covers most of what constitutes the text in a novel, there are always details that might not be associated with the narrative even though they are constituents of the text, for example, page numbers, the organization of the text in paragraphs and chapters, and epigraphs. Since these elements are not part of what is usually considered the narrative, they are not associated with the narrator either. The term “implied author,” introduced by
Booth, is sometimes used to attach readers’ reactions to the whole work, including such elements, to one figure or agent who is thought of as having organized the text (Rhetoric of Fiction 215; Chatman 127).

If not indicated otherwise, two events rendered after each other give the impression that the event first mentioned happens before the one mentioned afterwards. For instance, in the quotation from Ölmeye Yatmak (see p. 21), taking the elevator to the sixteenth floor is perceived as happening before stepping out on the sixteenth floor, even if that is not explicitly said with words such as “after” or “before.” Perception of a causal relationship between events is also often involved. For instance, it is implied in the same passage that the characters stepped out on the sixteenth floor partly because they had taken the elevator to that floor, and that they took the elevator to the sixteenth floor in order to step off there.

However, sequences of events may very well break the pattern of “after A happens B then C,” and these breaks can be carried out by simple references to time, for instance, through a shift in verbal forms and/or by adverbials denoting time. A sequence of events indicated as having taken place earlier is called “analepsis” (Genette 48–67), and a sequence of events indicated as happening later is called “prolepsis” (Genette 67–79).

An example of analepsis in Ölmeye Yatmak is “Sabaha doğru Küçükesat’taydım” ‘In the early morning, I was at Küçükesat’ (Ölmeye 21; my trans.). This sentence is an analepsis because it refers to an earlier event than the events before and after it in the narrative, and that break is indicated here by the combination of the past tense copula suffix –ydı ‘was,’ with the personal marker –m ‘I,’ and the adverbial phrase “sabaha doğru” ‘in the early morning.’

An example of prolepsis in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü is the beginning of this sentence:

Hattâ sonraları Muvakkit Nuri Efendiden öğrendiğime göre Avrupa saatçiliğinin en büyük müşteri daima Müslümanlar ve onlar içinde en dindarı olan memleketimiz halkı imiş. (24)

Indeed, according to what I later learned from time-setter Nuri Efendi, the best customers of European watch-making were always Muslims, and among them the most religious people of our homeland. (my trans.; cf. Gürol, Time 41; Freely and Dawe 21)

The initial clause here is a prolepsis because it refers to a later event than the events before and after this sentence. While the verbal phrase “öğrendiğime göre” ‘according to what I learn/learned’ is tense-neutral, the adverbial “sonraları” ‘later’ marks this clause as a prolepsis. In other words, the time shift here is not communicated through the verbal form, but through adverbials, and in Turkish this is often the case.
Narrated time may, of course, be distant from or close to the time of narration and, as Pamuk’s *Yeni Hayat* exemplifies, the relation between these two temporal points is not always as coherent as Genette’s theory suggests. An example of narrated time being close is in *Ölmeye Yatmak* when the narrator says: “Burada yatıyorum işte. Ölümün tamamlanmasını bekliyorum” ‘So I am lying here, then, waiting for death to be completed’ (21; my trans.). Here, the narrative is focalized through Aysel who portrays the conditions around her at a time that seems as close as it can be to the time of narration, and yet narrated time is not, and can never be, the same as time of narration. In this case, the readers are left unaware of the exact time of narration, because as mentioned above, Aysel who is lying in bed here, is not actually the narrator, but rather the focalizer of the narrative. However, there are signals in this novel that suggest that both the time of narration and narrated time is around 1970, a matter to which I will return later.

At times, the narrative may move away from rendering events into pure comment (Genette 164–69). An example of comment is the first sentence in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (see p. 20). It presents a statement concerning “those who know” the protagonist Hayri İrdal, and not an event that belongs to the story. Another example from the same book is chapter 8 in part I, which instead of presenting new events begins with two questions (the first of which could very well have served as a title for the whole chapter), and then answers these questions:

But why have I burdened my chronicle of the Time Regulation Institute with these distant reveries? And why have I allowed myself to be seized by these shadows of the past? People today fail to grasp the importance of such questions. They overlook the truths and absurdities that lie beneath. I myself am now far too old to take pleasure in visits to the past or even, for that matter, from simple reminiscing. But even so, there is no disputing the fact that from the moment Halit Ayarci came into my life I became a new man. I became more at ease with reality, more accustomed to confronting it. Indeed the man created a whole new life for me. I now feel distant from all these characters and long-ago events; a part of me has turned away from the past, though I still claim it as my own. (Freely and Dawe 50–51)

The whole chapter continues like this as a metanarrative comment. Although the purpose is to comment on the narrative, we see how the metanarrative also
connects to events in the story, such as meeting Halit Ayarcı and becoming a new man. In Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, paragraphs like this take over a large part of the narrative in the introductory chapters. Similarly, they present events from the story embedded in comment.

The extent and place of comments varies between the novels. In Yeni Hayat, for example, there are only sparse comments in the first few chapters, but the comments that are there are significant even though they may be very short. In the following sentence, the narrator leaves the story with a short comment:

Çünkü kitap, bana öyle geliyordu ki, benim bu dünyada ne için varolduğunu anlatıyordu. (Yeni 16; my emphasis)

After all the book revealed, *so it seemed to me*, the meaning of my existence. (Gün 12; my emphasis)

With a few words the narrator inserts an afterthought, which becomes a comment on the narrated event. This short comment emphasizes the distance that exists between the character as he reads the book and the narrator who describes this experience somewhat later. It even creates the potential for doubt concerning the truth of the story.

The narrator’s telling and comments are, in theory, always separated from the thoughts and reflections of the characters in narrated time. Yet, in actual texts, the two are not always distinguishable from each other. Speech and thoughts rendered without quotation marks, italics, or discursive lines are called free indirect speech and free indirect thought, and the distinction between free indirect speech or thought and comments is often blurred, as it is difficult to determine where the narrator’s story ends and the protagonist’s thoughts begin. An example of free indirect thought is Aysel’s log from the hotel room in Ölmeye Yatmak, which will be presented in detail below.
Contextualizations

What should be done? Should I carry on like today, adopting behaviors and attitudes of people around, unconsciously indifferent and content with this colorless, odorless presence; or …
—Oğuz Atay, Tutunamayanlar

The Word İroni

As an example of the complications that language reforms have wrought upon the Turkish language, I would like to present the Turkish context of the word ironi ‘irony.’ This chapter is not intended to add anything to the definition of irony presented in my analyses, but rather to give a glimpse into how new terms, such as ironi, enter the Turkish language in relation to other terms of different origins.

To start with, the English word irony and the Turkish word ironi can both be traced back to an ancient Greek word derived from a verb meaning “to lie” in the sense of “saying something not true” (Colebrook 1). In Turkish, the word has come through French, and it has settled comparatively recently, i.e. within the last 200 years, and parallel to a growing knowledge of French and other Western languages among Turkish readers. Today, the word is widely used, and not only in academic circles.

I first offer some comments on the semantic contexts of the words irony in English and ironi in Turkish. In English there are several terms that signify usages of language that might overlap the signification of the term irony. Examples of such terms are ridicule, satire, and mockery. These words do not mean the same as irony, but in different ways their meanings partly overlap what is meant by irony.

Similarly, Turkish has several terms to designate usages of language that overlap ironi. Examples are alay ‘ridicule,’ eleştiri ‘criticism,’ and hiciv ‘satire.’ As a result of the complex transformations of the Turkish language over the last 150 years, there are sometimes pairs of such words that mean approximately the same thing, in which one word is an Arabism from
traditional rhetoric and the other a neologism based on a Turkish dialect or derived from a Turkish root and given a specific meaning applicable to literary studies. One example of such pairs is mizah and gülmece, both meaning comics, the first word being an Arabism and the second a neologism. As is often the case with such pairs, the two words do not have the exact same coverage in today’s Turkish. The traditional word mizah is used more often than the neologism for the concrete meanings cartoons and comic strips. Another such pair is istihza and alay, the first word being an Arabism and the second a neologism, both meaning ridicule and mockery.

“Satire” has even more synonyms, as it may be translated in at least four different ways in Turkish, with the Arabism hiciv, with either of the neologisms taşlama and yergi, and with the Westernism satir, which according to the online dictionaries of Türk Dil Kurumu (TDK) ‘Turkish Language Council’ has been borrowed for different usages from English, French, and German. These words exist side by side, having slightly different meanings or being associated with different contexts, and it is not my aim here to investigate all these nuances. Suffice it to say that the gradual transition from rhetorical terms from Arabic, via neologisms based on Turkic roots, to rhetorical terms borrowed from Western languages can be taken as exemplifying the complex situation that has arisen as a result of Turkish language reforms, which in themselves are processes associated with westernization.

To clarify, there is no synonym for ironi as such in Turkish, meaning that there is no other word that fully corresponds to the meanings that ironi has acquired. The neologism alaysılama, derived from the Turkish word alay ‘mockery,’ was launched by TDK in 1975 as a term for Socratic irony in philosophical writing in the dictionary Felsefe Terimler Sözlüğü (Dictionary of Philosophical Terms). Based on the word alay ‘mockery’ and incorporating the suffix structure alay-sı-la-ma, the word is easily grasped by Turkish speakers as meaning something along the lines of “lightly mocking,” but outside of dictionaries it has not caught on as a substitute for ironi. Two other neologisms for irony are tersinme and tersinleme, both based on the word ıvers ‘opposite’ (Türkan 22). However, neither of these words has caught on and replaced ironi.

Perhaps due to the late arrival of irony as a critical term in Turkish scholarship, there has been a strong tendency to emphasize mizah and hiciv over ironi in works by Tanpınar, Ağaoğlu, Pamuk, and others. This has resulted in a different theoretical approach from one based on ironi, which as a term has attracted its meanings through global discussions in philosophy and literary theory. For instance, in Moran’s chapter on Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, he touches on irony through a discussion that mostly concerns hiciv, ‘satire.’ However, at one point he identifies some kind of hiciv in Tanpınar’s text that is actually something else, something he spells “ironie” (Moran, Ahmet Mithat’tan 308). The French spelling might indicate that irony was still
an unfamiliar term among Moran’s readers when he made this analysis. It is noteworthy that Moran categorizes irony as a kind of satire, or rather explains the term “ironie” as a kind of híciv instead of the other way around. This is an example of how intricate the introduction of Western terms in Turkish can be.

Several more words can be added illustrating how this situation in Turkish, in which Arabisms from traditional rhetoric exist alongside neologisms and Westernisms referring to aspects of literature, affects the reception of the word ironi. The Arabisms mizah ‘comics’ and tariz ‘hidden or indirect mockery’ have been used to explain ironi in dictionaries. Or rather, mizah is often used to explain ironi alongside explanations of which meanings are covered by the traditional term tariz, which is no longer used directly in dictionary explanations of ironi.

Both mizah and tariz are words with meanings partly overlapping that of ironi, but they are not synonymous with ironi in the way that híciv is synonymous with satir; rather, they are words that denote different aspects of what irony can be. In relation to each other, these two words are instead similar to satire and mockery as discussed above. Interestingly, their origin lies in an Arabic rhetorical tradition that was partly developed through translations from Greek to Arabic during the first Islamic centuries. In other words, they were originally developed in relation to the Greek term that underlies irony. In translations from Greek to Arabic, several words have obviously been used for irony, and the meaning of Arabisms denoting aspects of irony in Turkish today might or might not correspond to the meaning of similar words in Arabic. It is not my task here to examine the history of these Arabisms and their relations to terms for irony in the Arabic and Greek traditions. What has been essential in my readings has rather been to notice the meanings of such terms as mizah ‘comics’ and híciv ‘satire,’ which Turkish scholars use alongside ironi, often at the cost of neglecting irony in the more restrictive sense of saying something other than the conventional meaning of the words used.

Westernization

Before looking further into a specific discourse of westernization, I want to show how it can be understood as one of several ways to talk about East and West in Turkey. Then, I will identify some topics within discussions of the Turkish discourse of westernization. After that I will discuss how Turkish understandings of westernization compare both to understandings of westernization elsewhere, and to related discourses such as that of modernization. At the end of this chapter, I will elaborate more on the Turkish concept of westernization by presenting some common metaphors that are used for it. Altogether, this chapter is meant to provide background for
discussing specific examples of how the discourse of westernization is rendered with irony in the novels.

Ways to Talk About East and West

There are at least three ways of using “East” and “West” that are significantly different from one another. The first is to use the terms as references to direction. For instance, situated in Ankara, Istanbul is to the west and Erzurum to the east. Yet Erzurum is to the west from the perspective of Van. That is to say, the meaning of “East” and “West,” as much as that of “North” and “South,” as directional markers is relative to position.

The second way of using these terms is to use them to refer to geographical areas. Areas referred to as “East” and “West” are often loosely defined as far as boundaries are concerned. However, there are defined regions in Turkey known to be East, such as Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, and there are regions known to be West, such as the Marmara and the Aegean regions. There is also a common definition of Turkey as consisting of a European side, also called Thrace (in Turkish Trakya), and an Asian side, also called Anatolia (in Turkish Anadolu), and the perceptions of these regions being part of Europe and Asia play into conceptions of East and West, since Europe is considered West and Asia East. These concepts of East and West in Turkey are technically similar to concepts of an Eastern and Western Europe and an American West and an American East, even though the connotations of East and West within these three political entities are different and always contextually defined.

The East–West Dichotomy in Turkish Discourse

A third way of using the terms “East” and “West” is in connection with the discourse of westernization. As much as Turkey is not alone in being affected by a discourse of westernization, it is a country where it holds a particularly strong position in the dominant culture, and this has been noted by several scholars in recent years (e.g. Ahıska “Occidentalism”; N. Ertürk; Seyhan). To clarify, westernization is here primarily understood as a translation of the Turkish term Batılılaşma (e.g. Bayramoğlu 157; Kavcar; Moran, Ahmet Mithat’tan 21), in a slightly older phrasing, Garphlaşma (e.g. Tanpınar, XIX. Asır 5, 61). Westernization is also often referred to as Doğu ve Batı meselesi (e.g. Enginün) or Bati-Doğu sorunsalı (e.g. Moran, Ahmet Mithat’tan 7), both

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9 These forms are derived from the Arabism garp, used for “west” in Ottoman Turkish, and the neologism batı, derived from the Turkish verb stem bat- “(for the sun to) set.” Thus, both the Arabism and the neologism are based on words for “west” that are based on words for “sunset.”
meaning “East–West problematics.”¹⁰ Throughout the 20th century, these terms were used to identify a Turkish discourse that framed perceptions of different processes of change widely considered both to have been sparked by Tanzimat and to perpetually affect several fields of Turkish society, including language and literature.

Let me emphasize that what I am discussing here is not the political program of westernism, or “Batıcılık,” which can be studied more closely in other works (notably Karpat; Mardin, Genesis; Ülken), but rather a discourse that is based on a combination of an East–West dichotomy and a before–now dichotomy, which preconditions both Westernism and other political programs such as Ottomanism and Islamism, to which the East–West dichotomy is integral. Fundamentally, the discourse of westernization establishes and sustains the belief in East and West as dichotomous entities that relate both to time and space.

That combination opens up a multitude of ways to understand how East and West relate to us now. Westernization has been understood as both an ontological and an epistemological entity. In other words, westernization has been seen partly as comprising actual or historical processes, and partly as a way of organizing entities and changes into a certain understanding of social, cultural, material, and political processes. Even though the terms “West” and “western,” which are fundamental to the discourse of westernization, are inexact as geographical terms, they emphasize in a flexible way that there is some geographical aspect to the processes it applies to. That is why westernization cannot be understood as synonymous with modernization. The concept of westernization sustains the understanding that change is directional in space as well as in time: Change comes from somewhere just as it appears at certain times.

The discourse of westernization is integrated into discussions of modernity in Turkey, an example of which can be seen in Meltem Ahıskal’s analysis of “occidentalism” in Turkish discussions of EU membership (“Occidentalism” 362–363). The following line of thought can be extracted from Ahıskal’s article: Here and now, we are all (still) a bit Eastern and (already) a bit Western. At the same time, we are neither Eastern in the ideal sense that our forefathers were, or that village-dwellers are, nor Western in the ideal sense of what we might become, but only others in relation to Westerners. The two poles of the dichotomous westernization metaphor relate differently to time in that the East is seen as a source of what has passed, while the West is seen as a source of what is to come.

One aspect of Ahıskal’s analysis of the political impact of the concept of westernization today is that the East–West dichotomy is partly treated as a part

¹⁰ The first of these phrases contains the Arabism mesele, which can also be translated as “problem” and “topic.” The second contains the neologism sorunsal; a direct translation of problématique, it is based on the Turkish verb stem sor- “ask.”
of Turkish nationalism. Within that frame of understanding, the concept of westernization seems to strengthen a belief that Turkey is exceptional, because it marks Turkey’s experiences in the modern era as unique, different from those of the West and the East.

Westernization between Imperialism and Modernization

As already mentioned, it is not only in Turkey that the East–West dichotomy has been discussed. Among others, Derrida has scrutinized it, most notably in “Plato’s pharmacy,” where he writes:

The hierarchical opposition between son and father, subject and king, death and life, writing and speech, etc., naturally completes its system with that between night and day, West and East, moon, and sun. (92)

In other words, Derrida sees hierarchical differences as part of the East–West dichotomy as much as spatial and temporal ones.

A power hierarchy can also be distinguished in the Turkish dichotomy, and one way to grasp the power aspect relating to it is to look at how the dichotomy is situated within imaginations of Turkish history. Moran points at a “kültür ikileşmesi,” i.e. ‘cultural dualism,’ which he says occurred because of westernization in the late 19th century (Moran, Sabahattin Ali’den 21).

When talking about ikileşme—“dualism”—Moran builds on Tanpınar, who used the word ikilik—“duality”—to designate a state brought about by westernization in the same period (XIX. Asır 213). Tanpınar’s massive treatise XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatının Tarihi (History of Turkish Literature in the 19th Century),11 was based on his lectures at Istanbul University and first published in 1949. It contains profound analyses and evaluations of works by 19th-century authors. Tanpınar’s main concern is to explain and comment on a transition he observes in Turkish literature of this period, from classical genres such as the lyrical poem gazel and the narrative poem mesnevi to novels, theatre plays, and modern poetry. Tanpınar understands this transition as a process of Garplilaşma—“westernization” (e.g. XIX. Asır 5, 61, 138).

In English, the concept of westernization is now more likely associated with debates concerning postcolonialism than with a central theme in the development of European modernity. Postcolonialism sees westernization as an ideology imposed by a dominant “West” on the rest, with the “West” referring roughly to the cradles and centers of capitalism and industrialization, current global phenomena that started to spread, at different paces in different places, from northwestern Europe in the 17th century. For instance, when K. M. Panikkar, a few years after India’s independence from Britain, wrote his

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11 This treatise has been translated into French and was published under the title Histoire de la littérature turque du XIXe siècle in 2012.
treatise *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco da Gama Epoch of Asian History 1498–1945*, he explained westernization as a process of social and political changes of fundamental importance imposed on Asia by Europe starting in the 19th century (18).

Despite many differences between India and Turkey, there are some striking parallels between them when it comes to which experiences of change are actualized through discourses of westernization. In both places westernization encompasses similar processes of change, and these are envisioned to have happened at approximately the same time. However, in the Indian discourse of westernization there is a tradition of emphasizing that processes of change have been forced on locals by a colonial power in a way that has never been possible in Turkey, since the country as such has never been colonized.

Panikkar explains westernization as a process that results from a kind of reorganization of the social, economic, and political structure that had already taken place in Europe in the 18th century (18), and as examples of the transformations in Asia he discusses the development of nationalism (490), democracy, urbanization, and capitalism (500), and a fundamental change in language, which “represents a new semantics, a new world of ideas and thought which is reaching a larger and larger circle every day” (506).

Partha Chatterjee builds on Panikkar’s understanding of westernization as a process forced on India, understood as Eastern, by European actors representing the West, when she underlines a psychological reaction of resistance that was also part of the dynamic (120). Similarly, the Turkish discourse of westernization has implied ideas about “a naïve original and Eastern self” perceived to exist both before westernization took place and within the Turkish self when everything Western is peeled off the surface. These are ideas that Ağaoğlu, Pamuk, and Tanpinar have utilized when scrutinizing them through irony.

It is pertinent here to mention Edward Said’s *Orientalism: Western Concepts about the Orient*, first published in 1978, because of its impact, and because of one theoretical aspect that it shares with this dissertation, namely the identification of a literary discourse based on the East–West dichotomy. Said’s book came out at a time when a theoretical wave within the field of comparative literature studies had just started to give way to a cultural wave and did much in spreading a critical approach towards ideologically determined categories based on an East–West dichotomy.

Said singles out a certain discourse, called orientalism, that by different ways of reproduction establishes itself to make a conceptual gap between West and East, between us and them, and even between now and then, since development in what is conceived as the West is used to enforce the understanding that the West is ahead of the East temporally as well (49–72). Just as the source of the Turkish novel is thought to be the French novel (e.g. Akyüz 28), it is not far-fetched to imagine that the Turkish discourse of
westernization developed through copying French conceptualizations of Turkey and the Orient that Turkish writers and readers came to know through French literature. According to Edward Said, European literature had long been engaged in a discourse based on an East–West dichotomy when Tanzimat occurred. However, whatever role European literature played in instigating a discourse of westernization in Turkey, it can hardly explain the success and sustainability of such a discourse in Turkish literature.

While discourses of imperialism and colonialism emphasize the existence of power hierarchies between actors and those acted upon, the discourse of westernization blurs these hierarchies in a way that can be convenient in cases of conflict. The concept of westernization seems to require some resistance to the processes it refers to, because it seems to be a tool for abstracting conflict: Pointing to the West can be an easy excuse for local and regional politicians if a process goes wrong, and pointing to the traditions of the East is a mild way of showing resistance. Part of the magic of the word “westernization” is that it erases both the immediate actors behind processes of change, i.e. those carrying them out, and those resisting them. In addition to erasing whatever local forces might be said to be enacting certain processes, westernization implies that the “real actors” are somewhere else, namely in “the West.”

Modernity and modernization, on the other hand, seem intended to eliminate geographical aspects altogether with their emphasis on time. Based as they are on a dichotomy between modern, i.e. “what is now,” and premodern, i.e. “what was before now,” these terms imply concepts of progress and nostalgia, i.e. both the idea that the present state is better than previous states of this world, and the longing for what is becoming lost. This is often expressed through the spatial metaphor of the world “moving forward,” but this is a metaphor used to conceptualize time as such and does not attach geographical references to the changes it applies to.

Thus, modernization partly contradicts the tenets of imperialism and colonialism, which through their focus on present structures of exploitation consistently disrupt narratives of progress. Hence, the concept of westernization can be understood as situated somewhere between modernization and imperialism/colonialization; this is because, as distinct from modernization, westernization emphasizes that processes of change are spatial and, as distinct from imperialism and colonialization, westernization does not lock the direction of change to any strict power hierarchy.

Turkey as a Bridge, and Other Spatial Metaphors

Istanbul and Turkey are places that, not only in the novels examined here, but over hundreds of years, have been considered meeting points. There are many competing explanations for this; here I will mention some of the most common ones. Inasmuch as the perception of Turkey as a meeting point goes further back than the thousand-year history of Turks in Anatolia, it is older than
Turkey itself. It has been adopted by and projected on Turks since they first entered the former Byzantine lands during the aftermath of the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 (Cahen 3–14), and it is possible to trace the perception back to ancient understandings of the Greeks’ position in the Eastern Mediterranean, and later to Constantinople’s relation to Rome, as discussed by Ziya Gökalp (Türkçülüğüün Esasları 61). According to this explanation, Turkish states from the Seljuk Empire of Rum, through the Ottoman Empire, and down to the Republic of Turkey have inherited some of the previously established associations of the land’s position between East and West.

At the same time, it is possible to trace the understanding of a Turkish nation between East and West back to the area known as the cradle of the Turks, i.e. back to the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of Central Asia and their self-conception of being people along the silk road, taking up influences from China in the east and the Mediterranean world in the west, an understanding that predates the advent of Islam. For instance, the Orkhon inscriptions, which are Turkic texts written in stone in the 8th century in what is today Mongolia, bear witness to such a “meeting-point awareness,” written as they are in a Turkic phonemic script that seems to be at least partly inspired by alphabets developed farther west (Clauson 44), and relating to, among other things, various experiences with China (e.g. Golden 42). It should be added that the monoliths known for these texts in Turkic script also include Chinese texts written in Chinese script—another sign of the cultural meeting occurring in the Turkic-speaking world of that time (e.g. Yalımkılıç).

After the Turks’ adoption of Islam, which in Anatolia happened largely parallel to flows of Turkish immigration after 1071, representations of Turks and Turkey also exhibit an understanding of Turks’ being positioned between East and West that concerns how they brought Islam into former Christian lands. Turks can thus be seen as representing the “eastern religion of Islam” in a “Roman” or “Christian” west, or as “Muslims dwelling in the westernmost part of the Islamic world.” As discussed by Cemal Kafadar and Victoria Holbrook, this geographical understanding formed Turkish identity until the late 18th century, when Anadolu (i.e. “Anatolia,” from the Greek Anatoli, a word meaning “East”) started to replace Rum as a geographical designation (Kafadar 18; Holbrook, Unreadable Shores 34). In other words, any association of Turkey and Turks with Islam does not in itself make them more or less associated with East and West. The Islamic dimension of these representations may lead in both directions since Islam represents a culture incorporating influences from East and West. As it is a religion with universal claims, Islam resists being associated exclusively with a geographical east or west.

Even though Turkey has regions associated more or less with either East or West, the most significant aspect of the case of Turkey is how the country as a whole, like many of its constituent local areas, is considered a meeting point, a bridge, or a transit point between East and West—the metaphors used may
vary. Istanbul—both the strait of Bosporus, which runs through it, and other parts of the city—may represent crossings, overlappings, and a mixture of East and West in different ways. At the same time, various areas, neighborhoods, and streets are associated with either East or West to varying, and continuously shifting, degrees.

Ahıska is one who has used the bridge metaphor critically, applying a metadiscourse to the application of this metaphor in observing:

> Turkey has been trying to cross the bridge between the East and the West for more than a hundred years now, with a self-conscious anxiety that it is arrested in time and space by the bridge itself. (“Occidentalism” 353)

Another concept related to the discourse of westernization is the belatedness or time lag that Ahıska and Nurdan Gürbilek discuss with reference to Nilüfer Göle and Gregory Jusdanis (Ahıska, “Occidentalism” 354; Gürbilek 599–600), and the metaphor of “catching the train,” which Ahıska discusses with reference to Halil Naçaoğlu (“Occidentalism” 354). In Venkat Mani’s analysis of Yeni Hayat in translation, a similar concept is central to his conclusion that in “New Life, the nation emerges as a belated ‘contemporaneity’” (182).

**By Analogy to Islamization**

In *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatının Tarihi*, Ahmet Hamid Tanpınar uses a surprising parallel to describe the process of westernization, likening it to Islamization, i.e. the historical process of Turks’ conversion to Islam (19). According to this analogy, Turks of today are adopting the civilization of the West, just as Turks in history adopted the new civilization of Islam. Undoubtedly, the reference to Islam as a historic matter says something about Tanpınar’s understanding of religion, or rather lack of interest in discussing religion in relation to the ongoing process of westernization. At the same time, his analogy says much about the enormous implications of westernization that he saw.

The parallel Tanpınar draws between westernization and Islamization illustrates what we might call a postmodernist awareness of the changes that his society underwent at the time, an awareness of the vulnerable status of “grand narratives” such as the narratives of the expansion of Islam and of modernization. His understanding of changes was not that they happened only because “time required it.” Rather, Tanpınar discusses how ongoing changes are also about a geographical reconstruction of people and minds. This is parallel to Panikkar’s concern about changes that he noted as arising from the Western colonization of India. Tanpınar’s focal point is to notice how the process of westernization shapes Turkish literature as Turks take part in this process. He also notes that Islamization was not forced on Turks after a war.
By analogy, this might also be seen as a comment on westernization, noteworthy since the reform process of Turkey at that time was also seen as a process arising after a decade of devastating wars in the early 20th century.

Tanpınar’s interest lies in discussing the cultural forces that form literature. There is a clear direction in Tanpınar’s treatise. He does not carry out a historical investigation of the real Islamization process whose results he uses to explain westernization, but explains Islamization retrospectively from the perspective of modernism, making it parallel to westernization.

Crucial to the success of the discourse of Turkish westernization is how the concept of westernization is connected to people, customs, and belief systems within Turkey. Moran makes Hanioğlu’s words his own by saying:

Türkügi gibi yüzüller boyu İslam ideolojisinin egemen olduğu bir ülkede bu ideolojiden uzaklaşmak, toplumun hayatında yerleşmiş değerlerden, geleneklerden, yaşayış biçimlerinden uzaklaşmak demektir. (Moran, Ahmet Mithat ‘tan 22–23)

Moving away from the ideology of Islam in a country where that religion had been dominant for centuries meant moving away from the values, traditions, and lifestyles that had taken root in this society’s life. (my trans.)

While Moran does not discuss Islam as a tradition to the same degree as does Tanpınar, he does position it in relation to westernization, not as an analogy but rather as a historical obstacle to westernization understood as modernization. Moran is able to isolate Islam to such a degree as a historical entity and a matter of something as abstract as “religion” because he writes from within the heyday of Turkish secularism. Neither Tanpınar’s analogies nor Moran’s historicizing and generalization make valid claims about the role of Islam in Turkish history, but they say much about the authors’ different positionings of religion within their imaginations of westernization.

Perceived Beginnings of Westernization in Literature

As presented above in the chapter Motivation, the Turkish language and Turkish literature are perceived as products of a tremendous process evolving from two impulses of westernization. The first one is the introduction in the late 19th century of Western genres such as the novel, drama, and French-inspired poetry, and the second is the language reform that surrounded the introduction of a Turkish alphabet based on the Latin script in 1928.

While the much-used introductions to modern Turkish history by Ahmad, Lewis, and Zürcher emphasize the Atatürk period as the main time of transformation, they track Western influences further back, all underlining the foundation laid by Tanzimat (Ahmad 26–27; Lewis 106–108; Zürcher 52–74). The word tanzimat comes from Arabic and means “reforms” (Zürcher 52), “regulations” (Mardin, Genesis 3), “re-ordering” (Finkel 423),
“reorganization” (Evin 9), or “restoration” (Ülken 29). When used to refer to the reform programs in the late Ottoman Empire, the term seems to be a shortening of the more elaborated phrase Tanzimat-ı Hayriye ‘Beneficial Reorganization,’ which is mentioned by the historian Joseph Matuz (225). The period under Atatürk’s leadership, 1923–38, is another focal point in the history of Turkey’s relation with the West, but it is a popular misunderstanding that westernization began with the revolutionary cultural reforms introduced in this period. Atatürk himself played an active role in forming the image of the Turkish Republic as something totally new that broke with Eastern ways of the past while embracing Western ways of the modern world. Thus, he presented himself as the center and starting point of westernization in Turkey (Zürcher 182–83).

Westernization by Rupture

The breakthrough of new prose literature in the late 19th century has been described as the first of two steps of a “literary revolution” in which signs, ranging from vocabulary and syntax to letters and rules of word formation, became tools in a process of redefining the relationship between the Turkish language and the world. This reorientation created a radical shift, at times presented as a total rupture between two literary cultures (Holbrook, Unreadable Shores 20). While traditional Ottoman literature had been heavily influenced by Arabic and Persian literature, modern Turkish literature instead saw its sources of inspiration in the literature of the West, first French literature and subsequently also literature in other European languages such as English and German (Tanpinar, XIX. Asır 19). In Turkey, these two traditions are often referred to as old literature and new literature, as the study of Turkish literature is institutionally divided into two branches, namely eski (or klasik) edebiyat ‘old (or classical) literature,’ covering literature from the earliest examples of Anatolian Turkish literature in the 13th century to mid-19th-century Ottoman Turkish literature, and yeni (or modern) edebiyat ‘new (or modern) literature,’ covering literature from the mid 19th century onwards (e.g. Akyüz 5; Kavcar 63). It could be added that even though this two-fold division of Turkish literature is operational within the field of Turkish studies in Turkey, this is also the field where it meets the strongest criticism. While average Turkish schoolchildren might feel strongly that Ottoman poetry is foreign to them, incomprehensible as it is without transliterations and vocabulary lists, university students of Turkish language and literature, most of whom learn Arabic and Persian in addition to Ottoman Turkish, have a much more complex view of the development of Turkish language and literature through different periods and of the variations in style in different genres.

When genres such as the novel, the news article, and modern poetry eventually gained hegemony over traditional genres such as the mesnevi and the gazel in a Turkish-speaking urban elite in the 1870s, it happened in a
segment of the population already schooled in French due to the westernizing reforms of Tanzimat, introduced through two decrees by sultan Abdülmecid in 1839 and 1856. Tanzimat involved the establishment of European-style schools and institutions of training, such as translation offices, army schools, medical schools, and newspapers, within a Turkish literary culture that had mainly evolved from Persian and Arabic traditions for about 600 years. In Istanbul and other major cities in the Ottoman Empire, Tanzimat contributed to the formation of an intellectual elite that could read French and, through the latter half of the 19th century, adopted European standards in writing, just as in other areas of life (Akyüz 5–22; Caner 56–60; Dino 12–22; Moran, Ahmet Mithat’tan 9; Evin 9–21; Finn 1; Karpat 16, 43–50; Seyhan 23; Tanpınar XIX. Asır 128–32; Ülken 27–40).

The introduction of Western genres in the 19th century is commonly explained as having occurred in two stages, firstly through translations of Western novels, the first of which was François Fénelon’s *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, first published in French in 1699, translated by Yusuf Kâmil Pasha and published in Ottoman Turkish in 1862, and secondly through copying and adapting the genre to create local products, a process that gained pace in the early 1870s (Kudret, *Tanzimat’tan* 11, 13). This narrative of the evolution of the Turkish novel is applied by Akyüz, Evin, and Kudret, who take the copying of a new genre from French in the context of Tanzimat as a starting point (Akyüz 5, 7; Evin 9–10; Kudret, *Tanzimat’tan* 11).

In the same period, i.e. the 19th century, Western European countries enhanced their influence in the region through commerce, schools, and publications (Caner 68–70; Zürcher 59). For instance, one of the first periodicals in Turkish was the *Cerîde-i Havâdis* (*Journal of News*) weekly, which the British interpreter and diplomat William Churchill initiated in 1840 (*XIX. Asır* 141; Lewis 146); it was second in importance only to the official *Takvim-i Vekayî* (*Calendar of Events*), which started publication in 1831 (Ülken 36).

Many historians emphasize that the main two Tanzimat edicts occurred when the Ottoman Empire found itself in immediate urgent situations in international politics. The prerequisite for Tanzimat was the altered power balance achieved under the preceding sultan, Mahmut II, who managed to get the şeyhülislam, i.e. the leading official of religious affairs, on his side against the military corps of the Janissaries, who, along with members of the Islamic Bektashi sect to which they adhered, were crushed in an immense manhunt starting in 1826 in order to build a new army after Western European principles. The reason for such westernizing reforms of the army is usually said to be the military defeats of the late 18th century, leading to Russian advances towards the Black Sea and to the French occupation of Egypt (1798–1801). Moran has expressed the view that Tanzimat was based on the principle of implementing Western institutions in Turkey by imitation in order to prevent the Empire’s collapse (14).
According to Robert Finn, the new prose literature in late Ottoman Turkish saw its beginning with the publication of Şemsettin Sami’s *Taasuk-i Talât ve Fitnat* (*The Romance of Talât and Fitnat*) in 1872 (1). This work has also been called the first Turkish novel,12 but Ahmet Evin has stressed that it is too simple to sustain that claim (55). He instead sees it as one of several transitional works published in the early 1870s, i.e. simple adaptations of the novelistic form that integrated elements of popular storytelling (Evin 50). These works emerged after a decade of translations of fiction from French, and, in Evin’s view, paved the way for more genuinely Ottoman Turkish novels (Evin 42–49). The next step in this development is the short novel *İntibah: Sergüzeş-t-i Ali Bey* (*The Awakening: The Adventure of Ali Bey*). Written by the exiled “New Ottoman” writer Namık Kemal and first published in 1876, it is seen as a landmark in the development of modern Turkish fiction because of its attention to reality in its depictions of landscape and to the psychological experiences of its characters (Evin 64–65, 79).

A sense of literary liberation has often been noted in discussions of how new genres were introduced in the 19th century. On one hand, there is the political aspect of the first Turkish novelists adhering to the New Ottoman movement, which comprised young bureaucrats who, through their reading of French literature, had been inspired by ideas of liberation, which they wanted to apply in their own society. Moran argues that the novel developed as an elite tool to promote the political program of westernization. Concerning the political purpose of New Ottoman literature, Moran writes that New Ottoman writers had two obvious ways of making themselves heard by the people, through newspapers and through literature (Moran, *Ahmet Mithat’tan* 17).

On the other hand, there is the more technical aspect of the first Turkish novelists’ need to liberate language from fixed metaphors. They had to develop a genre in which, for instance, depictions of nature were allowed to express the feelings of a character rather than merely repeating fixed metaphors aligned with the lover–beloved dichotomy, which dominated traditional Ottoman Turkish poetry. Ertürk emphasizes how the new genres were set to open up a new world:

‘Liberation,’ here, might best be understood not in terms of the historical dissemination of French Enlightenment political concepts of freedom and equality, but rather as an uprooting of the linguistic sign into omni-directional exchangeability. Language makes accessible distant speech (the speech of non-Muslim populations, as well as of the outside world more generally), bringing in the unseen and unheard world of the foreign and awakening a new kind of

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12 *Akabi Hikâyesi* ‘The Tale of Akabi’ by Vartan Paşa, first published in 1851 (of which a transcription in Latin script by Turcologist Andreas Tietze was first published in 1979), is obviously older, but has not traditionally been considered Turkish literature even though it was written in Ottoman Turkish. By being printed in Armenian script, it was intended to reach Armenian readers, not a general Turkish-reading public. Today it circulates in both Armenian translations and abridged versions of Tietze’s transcription in Turkish.
desire. My contention here is that the emergence of the novel in the Ottoman literary context cannot be understood apart from an early enchantment with (as well as fear of) this ‘freed’ power of language. (N. Ertürk 47)

The issue of liberating language from stale metaphors reoccurs in later 19th-century debates on romanticism versus naturalism.

As several scholars have noted, the introduction of new genres in new printed media in the 19th century entailed reform of the written language, which became a tool for presenting news in an effective way and for creating authentic dialogues and depictions of nature. Newspapers became influential in bringing new ideas to Turkish readers in a simplified language (XIX. Asır 74; Lewis 147; Ülken 59). According to Ertürk, this reshaping of the written language implied a new commitment to what she calls “phonocentrism,” i.e. the idea that the written language should imitate and subjugate itself to the spoken language (N. Ertürk 12). In the larger process of westernization, the principle of phonocentrism was thoroughly enacted in the language reform of the early 20th century, when the morphosyntactics of the written language were first brought closer to the spoken language. A Latin-based Turkish alphabet was then implemented through the alphabet law of 1928, which also prohibited the use of the centuries-old Arabic-based script. Finally, this was followed by a massive language reform that minimized the influence of Arabic and Persian through a momentous alteration of vocabulary, and through the definition of new standards for the production of new words. Notably, the use of suffixes was revived, making it easy to form new words based on existing ones, a very productive way of making new words that is still very much applied. The language reform effectively not only cut the bonds to classical Turkish literature written in an Arabic-based alphabet that had been used for Turkish in Anatolia for about 700 years, but also terminated direct access to novels, plays, and newspapers published during the preceding fifty years for subsequent generations.

Even though this tremendous process of westernization, as it is often called, has had ubiquitous and longstanding effects on the outlook of Turkish language and literature, the transformation process is still often conceived as unfulfilled. When discussing the alphabet law of 1928, Victoria Holbrook refers to it as “a remarkably successful alphabet revolution,” and underlines how it was followed by “comprehensive revision of syntax and vocabulary” (Introduction 20). Holbrook places this literary revolution in a wider context of “semiotic revolution” influencing signs such as calendar systems, clothing, names, and titles. While emphasizing the enormous cultural shift that Turkish society has undergone, she also underlines the continuation of the process when asserting that the semiotic orientation of Turkey is still under revision, as Ottoman culture is being reevaluated according to nationalizing goals set by the Turkish Republic.
The discourse of westernization has affected Turkish identity when it comes to its relations to East and West. Even though the Ottoman state from the beginning was regarded as situated in the West and received impulses from the West as well as from the East (Lewis 41), Tanzimat meant a massive reorientation, since the West now became a model, the ultimate source of innovation, and even more radically, it meant that people within the Ottoman Empire, who had regarded themselves as situated in the West, started to regard themselves as situated in the East (Mardin, Türk Modernleşmesi 9)—according to Holbrook, “East” and “West” had been “relocated” (Unreadable Shores 34). In other words, Turkish westernization implied a departure from seeing Constantinople as the center of the world and representative of the West. At the same time, Turkey, including its former capital Constantinople, was redefined as a westernizing East, while the perception of a universal center moved to somewhere else in a loosely defined West outside of Turkey.

Regardless of what is taken to be the starting point of westernization, the understandings of westernization as a historical process share the idea that there has been an unadulterated Eastern past, whether before Atatürk, before Tanzimat, or before 1700. This view has been challenged, for example, by Zeynep Uysal, who sees Pamuk’s 1998 novel Benim Adım Kırmızı (My Name is Crimson) as a playful critique of this concept, since contrary positions at first associated with a dichotomous gap between Eastern and Western traditions in modern painting turn out to have been present in the Eastern tradition of miniature painting from the beginning (378–80).

Westernization by Gradual Transition

Even though the understanding of westernization in Turkish literature is dominated by descriptions of rupture through belated copying of Western genres and through revolutionary reforms over the last 200 years, there are alternative explanations of the massive processes of change that Turkey has undergone. Speaking of Turkish society at large, historian Kemal Karpat emphasizes that there has been a continuation of the old society through the reforms (12). According to him, massive European influence in the 19th century accelerated the transformation patterns of societies that had already been in motion through the impact of internal forces in the Ottoman Empire for the previous 200 years (Karpat 27).

Two periods in the 18th century are often presented as harbingers of the reorientation towards the West that occurred in the 19th century. The first of these two periods was the so-called Lâle devri ‘Tulip Period’ during the 1703–30 reign of Ahmet III, when the first official cultural convoy was sent to Europe and the first printing press for Turkish texts was set up by İbrahim Muteferrika, later to be destroyed (Finkel 342; Matuz 197; Tanpınar, XIX. Asır 56). The second period was the 1789–1807 reign of Selim III, when permanent embassies were established in Europe and a new military corps was
temporarily established according to European principles (Zürcher 23–26; Tanpınar, *XX. Asır* 62; Matuz 210).

Culturally, the Tulip period of Ahmet III is known for strong impulses from India as well as from France, not least through the “Indian style” in poetry. The later sultan, Selim III, was himself a competent poet (Andrews 259) and a supporter of Şeyh Galip (Holbrook, Introduction xviii; *Unreadable Shores* 109), who in 1783 wrote the romance *Hüsn ü Aşk* (Beauty and Love) in the traditional *mesnevi* genre (Introduction ix).

Politically, historian Caroline Finkel stresses that the Karlowitz Treaty of 1699 had already heralded a new era in the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the powers of Europe, because in that treaty, which followed the Ottomans’ second failed siege of Vienna, “all parties declared their respect for the concept of territorial integrity” (Finkel 321). Thus, Turkey was brought into the framework of European diplomacy as it had developed since the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia by recognizing the sovereignty and independence of individual states (Finkel 395). These principles of a “balance of powers” would later, she argues, guide the Ottoman rulers to respond to threats from Russia with mutual commitments between the Ottoman Empire and Western European powers. In other words, the reorientation of Ottoman Turks towards a political center in the West, which Holbook described as seeping into language in the 19th century, resulted from political realities that started to become evident in the very late 17th century.

It could be added that the 18th-century interest of the West in the Ottoman Empire saw its parallel in European culture, where *turquerie* became a popular category in painting, music *alla turca* was a recognized diversion, and even Turkish costumes and Turkish-style buildings became fashionable, as art historian Michael Levey notes (112). Perhaps is it in the field of art that it was the most obvious that the Ottoman reforms of the 18th century, unlike those in subsequent centuries, did not yet imply a conceptual “relocation of East and West.” As a matter of fact, Ahmet III and Selim III, who are referred to as reformist sultans of the 18th century, are also remembered as great patrons of traditional arts (Levey 112; Signell 5).

In the field of Turkish literature, the approaches of Mustafa Nihat Özön and Güzin Dino as well as that of Tanpınar stand in contrast to those of Akyüz, Evin, and Kudret, referred to above. Özön and Dino represent views parallel to that of Karpat, emphasizing internal factors promoting change. In his 1936 treatise *Türkçede Roman* (*The Turkish Novel*), Özön gives a thorough presentation of traditional narratives in Turkish, both written and oral, defining them as a solid foundation of the Turkish novel (45–139), which also according to him emerged first under the influence of translations of French novels in the 1860s (147–82), and then through the experimental novels by Ahmet Mithat in the 1870s (185–309). In his 1969 study *Türk Romanının Doğuşu* (*The Birth of the Turkish Novel*), Dino refers to Özön, and follows up with substantial chapters both on the importance of economic developments
in the 19th century, which led to the emergence of a new class of intellectuals, and on the role played by the newly established press (14–22). Together, Özön and Dino explain the transition from traditional storytelling, such as romances in verse and oral narratives, to printed novels as depending on economic and technical developments that see their parallels in other countries in the same period.

Tanpınar is another scholar who represents a view of transition rather than rupture between old and new literature. In *XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi* (*The History of Turkish Literature in the 19th century*), he argues that even before Tanzimat there was already a materialist bent in literature that paved the way for the introduction of new genres from the West (see especially the chapter on early 19th-century poet İzzet Molla, 91–95).

**Literary Periods**

The Turkish landscape of literary periods is complicated since different trends appear in parallel for several decades and many authors follow multiple trends in their novels. For instance, Tanpınar’s *Huzur* is often viewed as a modernist masterpiece (e.g. Kantarcıoğlu 103–126), while *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* represents a very different style, which we might today associate with postmodernism.

**The First Period**

Moran has in his series *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* arranged Turkish literature in periods according to when westernization was a dominant theme. In the first period, Turkish literature was mostly concerned with westernization (*Sabahattin Ali’den 7*). Some of the very first Turkish novels, such as Ahmet Mithat’s 1875 novel *Felâtun Bey ile Rakım Efendi*, utilize the dichotomy between Eastern and Western styles and habits to ridicule the “wrong sort of westernization.” Moran says that *Felâtun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* is the first novel to treat the topic of westernization by presenting the character of an *alla franga*, or Western, dandy. Felâtun Bey loves to imitate Western fashions and habits, but he has a very shallow understanding of Western culture. The double signification of his exaggerated Western outlook as something funny is highlighted by juxtaposition to Felâtun Bey’s antithesis, Rakım Efendi, who is more or less an ideal Ottoman *effendi*, or “gentleman,” one who knows how to benefit from the best of Western culture while retaining his original self, as Moran puts it (*Ahmet Mithat’tan 48–49*).

The motif of “the dandy” as an extravagant westernized character reoccurs in many novels of the 19th and 20th centuries, for example, in Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar’s 1888 novel *Şık* (*Chic*) (*Moran, Ahmet Mithat’tan 54*) and Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem’s above-mentioned 1896 novel *Araba Sevdaşı*.
As for reoccurrences of the Western dandy in the 20th century, Moran notes several novels, and pays special attention to the numerous works by Peyami Safa and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu published in the 1920s and 1930s (Ahmet Mithat’tan 48).

Realism

In Moran’s view, the 1950s are characterized as the peak of the second period in Turkish literature, also called Anatolianism (e.g. Guth). This is a realist trend in which the focus shifted to problems of the unjust system based on the structure of society, problems that had to do with class (Sabahattin Ali’den 7–8). Moran claims that this trend started in the 1930s with the publication of Sabahattin Ali’s “village novel” Küyucaklı Yusuf (Yusuf of Küyucak) in 1937 (Sabahattin Ali’den 21). It has become commonplace to describe Mahmut Makal’s novel Bizim Köy (Our Village), first published in 1950, as the first Turkish village novel written by a villager.

If we look more closely at the second period, the village novel followed an urban trend of realist literature concerned with social problems. One of the first representatives of this trend was Suat Derviş. She has been left out of many mid 20th-century anthologies and encyclopedias, but is, together with Ali, attracting growing interest today. Due to her affiliation with communism, Derviş’ books, like those of Nazım Hikmet, were banned for a long period through the late 1940s and the 1950s, only beginning to reappear in the more liberal climate emerging after 1960 (Dorsay; Berktay).

Furthermore, the 1960s and 1970s are known for a revival of the political novel, i.e. novels depicting class differences, and the period has been considered the peak of the classic “prison” novel. Sevgi Soysal was a novelist in this period who pursued the realist trend by applying it to urban settings, mostly in short stories; her first, “Tutkulu Perçem” (“Passionate Lock of Hair”), was published in an anthology in 1962. Her only novel, Yenişehir’de Bir Öğle Vakti (Once Upon Noon in Newtown), first published in 1973, received the Orhan Kemal Novel Award in 1974.

Born in 1936, Soysal, who died in 1976, belongs to the same generation as Ağaoğlu. Together with Füruzan (pseudonym of Feruze Çerçi), who wrote mostly short stories that were published in the 1970s and 1980s, Sevgi Soysal shares another feature with Ağaoğlu in that, though concerned with urban matters, she is not Istanbul-centric like Tanpınar, Derviş, and Erbil. Like Ağaoğlu’s and that of the much-acclaimed postmodernist Atay, Soysal’s urban scene is Ankara.

Closer to Ağaoğlu in applying new narrative techniques associated with modernism and postmodernism is Leyla Erbil, born in 1931, who had her first short stories published in the 1960s. Her first novel, Tuhaf bir kadın (A Strange Woman), was published in 1971.
The Turn Towards the Individual in the 1950s

The second half of the 20th century in Turkey is a period that historian Erik Zürcher has called “a troubled democracy” (vi). During this period, Turkey moved away from the one-party system established under Atatürk, developing a two-party system in the 1950s before a multi-party system was implemented after 1960 (Zürcher 173–342). Some signs of the troubles in this period are two coups d’état (1960 and 1980), two other military interventions (1973 and 1997), and growing conflict with the Kurds.

While the village novel peaked in the 1950s, this decade is also seen as the beginning of a new trend of literature not belonging to the realist trend that had been prevalent in a few decades (Moran, Sabahattin Ali’den 7–8; Seyhan 80–81). This trend is represented by Sait Faik Abasıyanık, Yusuf Atılgan, and the Garip ‘Strange’ poetry movement and characterized by a turn towards the individual. Moran sees in their works resistance at the cultural rather than social level (Sabahattin Ali’den 323).

Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü shows clear parallels to this cluster of literature when the protagonist Hayri İrdal is described as being viewed by his doctor Ramiz as “biçare bir meczup” (33), literally ‘a helpless insane,’ humorously translated as “a reprobate” by Freely and Dawe (31). Doktor Ramiz also calls Hayri İrdal “kabiliyetsiz bir adam,” literally ‘a man without capabilities,’ translated by Freely and Dawe as “a half-deranged eccentric” (31), and finally “hayat dışı” ‘outside of life.’

There have been discussions as to what to call the new trend emerging after 1950. Many would agree that Tanpınar and Ağaoğlu, as well as Atılgan, are modernists. However, since they often comment on earlier modernism in Turkish and Western literature, they could, in view of some of their works, be considered early postmodernists as well.

It seems that Turkish scholars have shown some hesitancy in adopting the terms “modernism” and “postmodernism” because they have been developed elsewhere and in other national literatures. For instance, in his 1995 article on Tanpınar and Turkish modernism, Pamuk rejects the idea of projecting the more recently imported concept of modernism on a Turkish novel written in the 1940s. The novel he dissects is Tanpınar’s Huzur (Peace), which I believe has only strengthened its status as a profoundly modernist work since Pamuk wrote his article “Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar ve Türk Modernizmizi” (“Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and Turkish Modernism”).

On the other hand, modernism in Turkish literature has, based on a German tradition of research, been traced back to the late 19th century. Sevim Kantarçoğlu presents Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil’s Mai ve Siyah (The Blue and the Black) as the first modernist Turkish novel, a novel first serialized in the later very famous periodical Servet-i Fünun (Treasury of Sciences) in 1897 (34, 115). To sustain her categorization, Kantarçoğlu cites Kenan Akyüz (34–35), who in Modern Türk Edebiyatının Ana Çizgileri (Outlines of Modern Turkish
Literature) writes that, as far as technique is concerned, the novelists in the circle of Servet-i Fünun were the first ones to escape the errors of the Tanzimat novel and to take command of a modern technique (100). However, a closer look at Akyüz shows that he discusses “modern” rather than “modernist” techniques, a distinction not clarified by Kantarcıoğlu.

Postmodernism

In Turkish literary history, Yıldız Ecevit has emphasized that a big shift in literary trends is the break between realism and modernism/postmodernism (Orhan 20–21). She argues that modernism never became a dominant trend before postmodernism did around 1990, but developed alongside most realist literature, which continued to be the dominant trend up to the 1980s. She speaks of antecedents to the new modernism/postmodernism trend from the early 1970s, in which she sees Atay’s Tutunamayanlar, first published in 1972, as a watershed (Ecevit, Türk 85–86, 94). In Moran’s view Atay’s Tutunamayanlar, and Atılgan’s Anayurt Oteli (The Motherland Hotel), first published in 1973, represent the opposite of Anatolianism (Sabahattin Ali’den 7–8).

I see Tanpınar as a forerunner of this new trend, which continues in the 1970s with Ağaoğlu alongside Atılgan and Atay and gains dominance around 1990, when Pamuk made his breakthrough with Kara Kitap (The Black Book), soon followed by Yeni Hayat (The New Life). While Pamuk has frequently been labeled a postmodernist writer since the first publication of Beyaz Kale (The White Castle) in 1985 (e.g. Ecevit Türk, and Demir), my categorization of all three studied novels as part of a postmodernist trend challenges earlier definitions of works by Ağaoğlu and Tanpınar as modernist.

My assertion should not be taken as attacking such views, but rather as modifying them. Whatever periods individual novels are said to belong to, they can have more or fewer of the qualities associated with them. When I identify qualities such as self-reflection and self-referentiality in the novels I analyze, these are qualities often associated with modernism. When I add that they employ a high degree of intertextuality and metanarration, these are features often associated with postmodernism. These features are central to Elmas Sahin’s analysis of Ölmeye Yatmak as a postmodernist work.

My understanding of Tanpınar’s Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü as postmodernist, extends Turkish postmodernism back to the 1950s, a claim that might seem radical within the frame of Turkish literature, but is more in line with perceptions of when postmodernism appeared elsewhere and, not least, how it developed out of modernism. McHale, for instance, sees the transition from modernism to postmodernism in several literatures starting in the 1950s (12–19). According to him, crossover authors from that decade are Samuel Beckett, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Carlos Fuentes, and Vladimir Nabokov, who paved the way for Thomas Pynchon, whose novel V., first published in 1963,
represents the breakthrough of postmodernism in American fiction (McHale 21–25).

François Lyotard explained how the postmodern is a part of the modern, boldly asserting that a “work can become modern only if it is first postmodern” (79). Likewise, my understanding of postmodernism as a literary trend has been formed by Yıldız Ecevit, Brian McHale, Hutcheon, and others who see postmodernism as a continuation of modernism rather than an abrupt departure from it. When it comes to the mere interpretation of the word “postmodernism,” McHale has emphasized that it should be understood as following from, not after, modernism (5). Hutcheon, emphasizing “the ironic dialogue” in which postmodernism engages with history, says: “Because it is contradictory and works within the very systems it attempts to subvert, postmodernism can probably not be considered a new paradigm” (Poetics of Postmodernism 4). She adds: “It may mark, however, the site of the struggle of the emergence of something new” (Poetics of Postmodernism 4).

Westernization is arguably the most powerful discourse not only in Turkish literature but also in Turkish culture and politics at large, so when Ağaoğlu, Pamuk, and Tanpinar in their innovative ways confront the politicized concept of westernization through irony, they display mistrust in westernization as a “metadiscourse” or “grand narrative,” terms used by Lyotard for philosophical constructions applied to legitimate knowledge (xxiii). This kind of mistrust or “incredulity towards metanarratives” is for him the hallmark of the postmodern condition (Lyotard xxiv).

Because of its dominance in Turkish literary studies, westernization has not been discussed sufficiently as an integral part of discussions of modernism and postmodernism, but rather as a peculiar aspect fundamental to Turkish literature alone. My observation of how Ağaoğlu, Pamuk, and Tanpinar use irony as a tool to disrupt westernization as a grand narrative is one of several characteristics of the three novels that leads me to categorize them as postmodernist.

Westernization in Relation to Turkish Postmodernism
A certain return to the problematics of East and West has been observed in Turkish literature after 1950, but it has been noted that the topic is treated differently in this period versus during the first period of the Turkish novel. Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü can be viewed as an early example of how authors would reinvent the “problematics of East and West” as a main topic of their novels. Although the way in which new literature of the late 20th century turned away from realism through deploying new narrative techniques has been much discussed, there has not been a thorough examination of how this new literature turns the debate on westernization into an ironic mode affecting the whole discourse. There is a need to explain late 20th-century
representations of the East–West debate, which differ significantly from the representations in late 19th-century novels discussed by Moran.

After 1980, Pamuk is one of a series of authors who revived the discourse of westernization in their novels. His innovative applications of the East–West discourse have been part of a bigger trend in Turkish literature since at least the 1950s. In Pamuk’s 1985 novel *Beyaz Kale*, the narrator launches the East–West debate as a discussion of the interrelations between Islamic culture and the West for young students in a time when the problematics of East and West were instead defined in terms of the Cold War (Pamuk, *Beyaz* 10).

In later novels, such as *Kara Kitap*, *Benim Adım Kırmızı*, and *Kırmızı Saçlı Kadın* (*The Redhaired Woman*), Pamuk uses references and allusions to classical literary works of the Islamic tradition written both in Ottoman Turkish and in Persian, such as Ferdowsi’s late 10th-century *Shahnameh*, Jalal al-Din Rumi’s 13th-century *Masnavi-ye Ma’navi* (*The Spiritual Masnavi*),13 and Şeyh Galip’s late 18th-century romance *Hüsn ü Aşk* (*Beauty and Love*),14 as well as to miniature paintings in handwritten and illustrated versions of the latter. These works become central elements of Pamuk’s novels, intertextual fabrics that took the first readers by surprise.15

One way to get a better grasp of what Pamuk and earlier postmodernists have done with the discourse of westernization is to consider what Hutcheon sees as a hallmark of postmodernism. Inspired by Charles Jencks and Paolo Portoghesi, who discuss postmodernism in architecture, she emphasizes the concept of “the presence of the past” as a way of “rethinking modernism’s purist break with the past” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 4). I would argue that “the purist break with the past” that Hutcheon associates with modernism has its parallel in the idea of Turkish westernization by rupture. Ahıska is one who has shown this. Focusing on the peculiar “loss of archives” in modern Turkish institutions, she has examined the devastating effects that westernization might have on Turkish collective memory (*Occidentalism* 31–34). According to Hutcheon, postmodernism is not marked by a nostalgic return to history but rather by a critical revisiting, “an ironic dialogue with the past of both art and society” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 4).

Reflecting on the results of postmodernism, Hutcheon writes:

> Whatever narratives or systems that once allowed us to think we could unproblematically and universally define public agreement have now been questioned by the acknowledgement of differences—in theory and in artistic practices. (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 7)

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13 I have chosen to use these common spellings in English for these Persian authors and their works.
14 First written in 1783, Victoria Holbrook’s English translation, *Beauty and Love*, was published by MLA in 2005.
15 The publications of *Kara Kitap* and *Benim Adım Kırmızı* led to vibrant debates in Turkish, reflected in two anthologies edited by Nüket Esen and Engin Kılıç.
Whereas postmodernism in English is marked by the revision of modernism, I would argue that Turkish postmodernism is marked by the revision of westernization. One thing that the postmodernisms in both languages share is what Hutcheon calls “the interrogating of the notion of consensus” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 7). Compared with the third-person narratives of the realist period, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, *Ölmeye Yatmak*, and *Yeni Hayat* do not represent a turning away from social issues to private issues; rather, I see their first-person narration as another way to discuss social identities in combination with the lives of individuals. When these works identify the individual as the center of literature, it is also an expression of taking command over westernization—or at least it is a statement of a desire to do so.

In an interview with Zeki Coşkun, published in the daily *Radikal* on December 16, 1998, right after the publication of *Benim Adım Kırmızı*, Pamuk explained that all his books emerged from a mixture of Eastern and Western methods, styles, habits, and histories (*Öteki* 155, 425). He adds:

Kendi rahatlığım, çift mutluluğum da buradan gelir, iki dünya arasında suçluluk duygusu duymadan, kendi evimde gezinir gibi gezinirim. (Pamuk, *Öteki* 155)

My comfort, my double happiness, comes from the same source: I can, without any guilt, wander between the two worlds, and in both I am at home. (Freely, *Other* 264)16

One thing that Pamuk has demonstrated to the world is that westernization is a central theme in Turkish literature, as noted by several scholars (e.g. Akyüz 5; Moran 24; *XIX. Asır* 49). In the above quotation, Pamuk also shows that westernization does not have to mean a clash of East and West, even though his works, including *Yeni Hayat*, are often more conflictual than the author himself admits. As emphasized by Bernt Brendemoen and Uysal, Pamuk creates metaphors that break with essentialist views that see East and West as incompatible identities (Brendemoen, “Orhan Pamuk’un Hümanizmī” 77–85; Uysal 380). Yet, there is something highly paradoxical in the metaphor of a home containing, instead of adjacent rooms, separate worlds between which one can wander freely. This paradoxical phrasing, which is somewhat altered in the translation by Freely and Dawe, highlights both Pamuk’s dichotomous understanding of East and West as two worlds, and his familiarity with these dichotomous entities.

Pamuk’s metaphor of the familiar dichotomy of East and West can be seen as a symptom of how postmodernism, in McHale’s definition, departs from modernism (9–10). McHale emphasizes that between modernism and

16 Regarding the last sentence here, a translation closer to the original is: “I can, without any feeling of guilt, wander between two worlds as if I am wandering in my own home” (my trans.).
postmodernism there is a shift in dominant approach to the world. He asserts that while the dominance of modernist fiction was epistemological, the dominance of postmodernism was ontological (McHale 9–10). Citing Dick Higgins, he explains that while modernists pose questions such as “How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?” (Higgins 101 in McHale 9), postmodernists would pose questions such as “Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?” (McHale 10). Postmodernism, says McHale,

foregrounds such epistemological themes as the accessibility and circulation of knowledge, the different structuring imposed on the ‘same’ knowledge by different minds, and the problem of ‘unknowability’ or the limits of knowledge. (9)

Thus put, one might wonder whether Turkish literature, in which the East–West debate permeates novels from the 1870s onwards, might have been postmodernist from the beginning. Turkish literature presents a series of protagonists who experience the quest to choose between new ways of the West and traditions of the East, raising questions about established ways of disseminating and structuring knowledge. However, novels of the first period are dominated partly by the quest to find a true self and a true way of living in this world between East and West and partly by portraying Eastern and Western figures as archetypes. The shift towards a more epistemological approach, which we recognize in Pamuk’s works, can, as the novels selected for this study will show, be traced at least back via the 1970s to the 1950s.

The Three Authors and Their Works
Tanpınar, Ağaoğlu, and Pamuk are canonized Turkish novelists and among the most famous Turkish authors. Being canonized means that their works are recognized as good literature by a broad readership, including by critics and scholars. Canonization can be seen in many ways: in the number of publications and republications, the amount and quality of secondary literature about them, their being taught in schools, discussed on television, translated into other languages, and so on.

Tanpınar, Ağaoğlu, and Pamuk are all well educated, liberal urban dwellers belonging to three successive generations of the 20th century. Through their backgrounds, education, occupations, and publications, they have, in different ways, all been associated with the Turkish elite, a position they are all aware of and discuss in their literature in self-conscious ways, critical as they are of the hegemonic discourses in which they are taking part.

Resemblances to real life are crucial parts of the fiction encountered in the studied novels and in other novels by the same authors. In all three novels, the
authors have exhibited parallels between their literature and their lives by creating fictional characters who are similar to themselves in many, though not all, ways. Though these novels make it clear that they are not meant to be read autobiographically, they are indeed accounts of their time and place. One strong parallel between the protagonists and authors is that the times of narration in these novels overlap the times when the books were actually written. Another strong parallel is that in all three novels, the main narrators share the gender of the author. Added to this, the protagonists are individuals who both write and are being written about. Similarly, Tanpınar, Ağaoğlu, and Pamuk are all authors who have published articles, essays, and diary entries in which they make themselves subjects and objects of their writing. In these ways, the protagonists in these novels recall the positions of the authors, even if they do not attempt to account for the lives of Tanpınar, Ağaoğlu, and Pamuk. Such parallels between protagonists and authors add to other references to a shared world that are accessible to both authors and readers, creating a sense of realism.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–62)

Tanpınar is, as Hasan Bülent Kahraman has noted, a man formed by a period of transition (602). Tanpınar himself experienced the massive cultural shift that the protagonist Hayri İrdal in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü is concerned with. During Tanpınar’s lifetime (1901–62), Turkey underwent several political upheavals. Perhaps of greatest significance were the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and the cultural revolution of the 1920s and 1930s that transformed Turkey into a nation-state along a pattern already followed by countries in Western Europe, such as Germany and Italy in the 19th century. In Turkey, this transformation was promoted through the above-mentioned political program drawn up by Ziya Gökalp and carried out under the leadership of Atatürk.

The biographical information presented in the next two paragraphs is from a short biography by Handan İnci (“Hayatı”). Son of a judge, the young Ahmet Hamdi can be said to have grown up with one foot in the new and the other in the old. He was schooled in both French literature and Ottoman Turkish literature, classical and modern. In other words, he was schooled as an ideal late Ottoman intellectual, who knew the Eastern culture of his roots as well as the Western culture that the Ottoman elite was striving to keep up with. Tanpınar belongs to the last generation of authors who would possess this dual cultural proficiency, which arose after Tanzimat and died out after the alphabet reform.

Tanpınar graduated from Istanbul University (in Turkish, Darülfünun-ı Şahane) in 1923, and after the retirement of his teacher, the famous poet Yahya Kemal, he held the position of professor of modern literature in the Turcology Department at the same university starting in 1939. In the early 1940s he lived
for a period in Ankara, where he was a member of parliament and developed a national program for education. It is easy to imagine that his positions as professor and member of parliament made Tanpınar acquainted with the creation of new state institutions and bureaucracy from within, which must have been useful when depicting Hayri İrdal’s experiences with the Time Regulation Institute of the novel.

Much of Tanpınar’s literature seems to emerge from concern for the past and how people can live in peace with their past in a rapidly changing world. Research on Tanpınar’s works has emphasized that he discusses understandings of time and their implications for human life. Since professor of modern Turkish literature Mehmet Kaplan first discussed the French philosopher Henri Bergson’s influence on Tanpınar (“Saatleri”), it has become commonplace to note Tanpınar’s interest in Bergson, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1927, and is also known for having influenced authors as different from each other as T. S. Eliot and Marcel Proust. As far as Tanpınar is concerned, Bergson’s idea of durée ‘duration’ is the one that has attracted the most attention, in articles both by Tanpınar himself and by scholars who have studied Tanpınar’s writing.

As emphasized by Kaplan, Tanpınar followed Western writers and other artists and scholars closely. Tanpınar’s novels bear many traces of Western literature, and Kaplan emphasizes that he has read all the works of Paul Valéry and Marcel Proust, and followed Freud, Jung, Sartre, and Bachelard closely (“Tanpınar’ın Mirası” 343). This is clearly reflected in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, and allusions to some of these and other authors will be discussed in more detail in my analysis.

Tanpınar’s list of published works does not end at the time of his death, but continues into our time:

1) Tevfik Fikret: Hayatı, Şahsiyeti, Şiirleri ve Eserlerinden Seçmeler (Tevfik Fikret: His Life and Personality, and Selections from his Poems and Works, biography, 1937)
2) Abdullah Efendi’nin Rüyaları (The Dreams of Abdullah Efendi, short stories, 1943)
3) Mahûr Beste (The Song in Mahûr, serial novel, 1944)
4) Beş Şehir (Five Cities, essays, 1946)
5) XIX. Asır Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi (The History of Turkish Literature in the 19th century, academic treatise, 1949)
7) Sahnenin Dişindakiler (Those Outside the Scene, serial novel, 1950)
by Ender Gürol (2001), and by Maureen Freely and Alexander Dawe (2013)

9) *Yaz Yağmuru* (Summer Rain, short stories, 1955)
10) * Şiirler* (Poems, poetry, 1961)
11) *Yahya Kemal* (biography, 1962)
12) *Edebiyat Üzerine Makaleler* (Articles On Literature, essays, 1969)
14) *Tanpinar’ın Mektupları* (Tanpinar’s Letters, edited by Zeynep Kerman, 1974)
15) *Bütün Şiirleri* (All His Poems, collected and edited by Mehmet Kaplan, 1976)
16) *Hikâyeler* (Short Stories, 1983)
17) *Aydaki Kadın* (The Woman in the Moon, novel, 1987)
18) *İki Ateş Arasında* (Between Two Fires, play, 1998)
20) *Günlüklerin Işığında Tanpinar’la Başbaşa* (Tête-à-tête with Tanpinar in Light of His Diaries, diaries, edited by İnci Enginün and Zeynep Kerman, 2008)
23) *Hüsrev ü Şirin* (Hüsrev and Şirin, 1925 dissertation, 2017)
24) *Suat’ın Mektubu* (Suat’s Letter, fiction, 2018)

In addition to these works by Tanpinar, notes taken by students during Tanpinar’s lectures have been edited and published in three books (Uçman; Miskioglu; Güven). Two collections of Tanpinar’s translations in various genres have also been published, including three plays by Euripides. Additionally, Tanpinar’s 1942 anthology of works by Yahya Kemal is also often listed in his bibliography.

Kahraman has commented on Tanpinar’s different identities as poet, novelist, and literature professor, emphasizing that it is mostly his novels and essays that, by the early 1950s, had earned him the title of author (600). Kaplan has stressed that even though Tanpinar did not write many novels, the two that were published in his lifetime, *Huzur* and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, are doubtlessly among the masterpieces of Turkish literature (“Tanpinar’ın Mirası” 343).

*Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* was first published as a serial novel in the newspaper *Yeni İstanbul* (New Istanbul) in 1954 (e.g. Kaplan, “Saatleri” 109; Bayramoğlu 119), and then as a book in 1961. Turan Alptekin writes that Tanpinar wrote his manuscript in “the old script” (“eski harflerle”; my trans.;
He adds that the newspaper responsible for its transcription published it with an overwhelming amount of spelling errors. Tanpinar worked on the book edition, which is substantially longer than the serial novel, mainly towards the end of 1960, and the new edition contains additions as well as omissions and other kinds of alteration, in Alptekin’s view often serving the purpose of enhancing the satirical effect of the text (71).

It should be noted that the book was published for a second time only in 1987 (Saatleri 2), which is striking in light of the massive attention paid to Tanpinar for the last thirty years. This was his second novel, and 1961 saw both its republication as a book and the first publication of Tanpinar’s modest anthology of thirty-seven poems.

After Tanpinar’s death in 1962, Kaplan’s treatise Tanpinar’ın Şiir Dünyası (Tanpinar’s Poetic World), first published in 1963, helped secure the status of Tanpinar as an influential modernist poet at the same time as even more of Tanpinar’s prose continued to be published posthumously: Tanpinar’s biography on the early 20th-century poet Yahya Kemal, entitled Yahya Kemal, came out in 1962. In 1973 the novel Sahnenin Dışındakiler (Those Outside the Scene) was first published as a book. In 1975 the novel Mahür Beste (The Song in Mahür) was also first published as a book. Kaplan continued to promote Tanpinar’s writing, both poetry and prose. He collected and edited Tanpinar’s poems, first published in their totality in 1976.

With the renewed interest in Tanpinar starting in the 1980s, unfinished works also began to be published. The unfinished novel Aydın Kadin (The Woman in the Moon) was first published in 1987, and in the last two decades there have been several philological editions in which formerly unpublished material has been published. In 2008 Tanpinar’s diaries were published under the title Günlüklerin Işığında Tanpinar’la Başbaşa (Tête-à-tête with Tanpinar in Light of His Diaries), edited with commentary by Enginün and Kerman. Previously unpublished stories by Tanpinar keep emerging. Some of the last ones to be published are found in Handan İnci’s 2012 edition Tanpinar Zamani (Time for Tanpinar). Enginün and İnci have launched an archive of Tanpinar’s works, and this has been the source of critical editions with commentaries published in the last few years.

While Tanpinar’s interest in the past caused him to be easily rejected as a conservative in the radical 1960s and 1970s, later critics instead tend to see him as an early modernist, a term Pamuk has unconvincingly rejected as anachronistic and misplaced (“Ahmet Hamdi”). Tanpinar’s turning away from the realist tradition of third-person narratives seems radical when compared with the realist novels of his time. Kahraman sees throughout Tanpinar’s works an urge, as he puts it, to break the knowledge regime (601).

During the 1990s and early 2000s, there has been increasing interest in Tanpinar’s prose. Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü has been reprinted more than ten times over the last twenty years, meaning that the book has always been on the market. In the same period, in Turkey there has been a growing number
of dissertations, articles, and books written about Tanpınar. Tanpınar is often mentioned, not least by Pamuk himself, as an author who dealt with the same issues as Pamuk, and as an author who inspired the latter.

In the 2000s Tanpınar’s books also started to be available in other languages in translation. In English, a translation of a small part of Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü first appeared in an anthology by Kemal Silay in 1996 (Feldman, “The Clock-Setting Institute”). The whole novel was first translated into English by Ender Gürol and published in 2001 as The Time Regulation Institute. This title was also used in a second translation, by Freely and Dawe, first published in 2014. Erdağ Göknar, who received the IMPAC award for his translation of Pamuk’s My Name is Red in 2003, made an English translation of Huzur, which was published under the title A Mind at Peace in 2008.

Adalet Ağaoğlu (born 1929)

Ağaoğlu belongs to the first generation of the Turkish Republic. She was born in Nallıhan, the westernmost part of Ankara Province, and moved with her family to the capital city of Ankara in 1938. This is one of the parallels to the protagonist Aysel in Ölmeye Yatmak, who also moves to Ankara, but Aysel leaves her parents and moves in with her aunt and uncle.

Ağaoğlu is one of several female Turkish novelists of her time. As far as their educational background is concerned, this new generation of writers traces its literacy back to the system of mass education introduced under president Atatürk in the early years of the Republic, rather than to traditions reaching back to Ottoman times. However, it is worth mentioning that women took part in the rise of the Turkish novel from the very beginning. This is true not only because many readers of novels in the 19th century were women and because novels portrayed women, but also because there were also female prose writers: Zafer Hanım, whose Aşk-ı Vatan (Love of the Fatherland) was published in 1877; Fatma Aliye, who had four of her novels published in the 1890s by the influential editor, author, and critic Ahmet Mithat; and Halide Edip Adıvar, who stands as one of Turkey’s greatest intellectuals and one of the most influential authors of the first half of the 20th century. These female forerunners in late Ottoman Turkish literature paved the way for female Turkish authors in the 20th century.

At Ankara University, Ağaoğlu studied French language and literature. Starting around 1950, she worked as a playwright for twenty years, including taking on projects for the national broadcaster TRT (Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu ‘Turkish Radio and Television Corporation’), before turning to novels in 1970. She has written in various genres apart from novels, continuing to do so even after 1970. Her work includes short stories, essays, memoirs, letters, diaries, and plays for radio and theater. Ağaoğlu was in a car accident in 1996, after which she had to spend two years in hospital.
Ağaoğlu is known as a great innovator in Turkish literature (Erol 5). According to Sibel Erol, a typical feature of her work is the combination of realism with poetic language treating the inner worlds of her characters’ feelings, ideals, and dreams (6). When Moran writes about Bir Düğün Gecesi (A Wedding Night), the second volume of the trilogy of which Ölmeye Yatmak is the first, he comments on a certain exaggeration typical of Ağaoğlu’s writing (Moran, Sevgi Soysal’dan 35). He notes that Ağaoğlu repeats and exaggerates features from the political novels of the 1960s and 1970s by presenting characters who act as types, representing different socio–economic groups of the time: the military forces, the manufacturers, the revolutionaries, the police, and women who are ignorant of politics (Sevgi Soysal’dan 35).

Ölmeye Yatmak was Ağaoğlu’s debut novel. First published in the spring of 1973, it became a breakthrough for her as an author. Ağaoğlu was already a public figure due to her achievements as a playwright, and she gave interviews before and after the publication of the book. The novel soon entered the bestseller list, where in 1973 it was surpassed only by Sevgi Soysal’s Yenişehir’de Bir Öğle Vakti. A significant controversy followed a negative review written by the renowned critic Fethi Naci, published in the August issue of Yeni Dergi (New Journal).

The total list of Ağaoğlu’s published works so far is as follows:

1) Bir Piyes Yazalı (Let’s Write a Play, play, 1953)
2) Yaşamak (To Live, radio play, 1955–56)
3) Evcilik Oyunu (Domestic Life Play, play, 1964)
4) Tombala (Tombola, play, 1967)
5) Çatıdaki Çatlak (Cracks in the Roof, play, 1969)
6) Sıncırlarda (At the Borders, play, 1969)
7) Bir Kahramanın Ölümü (Death of a Hero, play, 1973)
8) Çıkış (Exit, play, 1973)
9) Kozalar (Cocoons, play, 1973)
10) Ölmeye Yatmak (Lying Down to Die, novel, 1973)
11) Yüksek Gerilim (High Tension, short stories, 1974)
12) Kendini Yazan Şarkı (The Song that Wrote Itself, play, 1976)
13) Fikrimin İncе Gülü (Delicate Rose of My Intellect, novel, 1976)
14) Sessizliğin İlk Sesi (First Sound of Silence, short stories, 1978)
15) Bir Düğün Gecesi (A Wedding Night, novel, 1979)
17) Hadi Gidelim (Come, Let’s Go, short stories, 1982)
19) Göç Temizliği (Cleaning of Migration, memoir, 1985)
20) Geçerken (In Passing, essays, 1986)
21) Hayır... (No ..., novel, 1987)
22) Çok Uzak—Fazla Yakın (Far away—too close, play, 1991)
23) Gece Hayatım (My Night Life, memoir, 1991)
24) Ruh Üşümesi (Frozen Soul, novel, 1991)
25) Duvar Öyküsü (Telling of the Wall, musical, 1992)
26) Romantik Bir Viyana Yazısı (A Romantic Summer in Vienna, novel, 1993)
27) Karşılaşmalar (Encounters, essays, 1993)
28) Seçmeler (Selections, various genres, 1993)
29) Başıka Karşılaşmalar (Other Encounters, various genres, 1996)
30) Fikrimin İnce Gülü (Delicate Rose of My Intellect, play, 1996)
31) Hayati Savunma Biçimleri (Ways to Defend Life, short stories, 1997)
32) Öyle Kargaşada Böyle Karşılaşmalar (Such Encounters in Such Turmoil, essays, 2002)
33) Damla Damla Günler (Days Drop by Drop, diary, 2004)
34) Mektuplaşmalar (Correspondence, letters, 2005)
36) Yeni Karşılaşmalar (New Encounters, various genres, 2011)
37) Çağımızın Tellali (Broker of Our Time, play, 2011)
39) Dert Dinleme Uzmanı (Professional Listener, novel, 2014)
40) Düşme Korkusu (The Fear of Falling, short stories, 2018)
41) Okurun Yazarı (Reader’s Writer, selected writings, 2018)
42) Yeni Karşılaşmalar (New Encounters, essays, 2019)

Through later publications, Ölmeye Yatmak has been promoted as the first book in a trilogy entitled Dar Zamanlar (Hard Times). The second novel in this trilogy is Bir Düğün Gecesi. The third novel is Hayır.... Since the incorporation of Ölmeye Yatmak into a trilogy is a later development, I have not thought it necessary to include the other novels in my analysis. Apart from them, Ağaoğlu has had six novels published, as the above list shows.

Two of Ağaoğlu’s novels have been translated into English. Curfew is the title of John Goulden’s translation of Üç Beş Kişisi, published in 1997 and discussed by Azade Seyhan in her 2008 study Tales of Crossed Destinies. Summer’s End is Figen Bingül’s translation of Yazsonu, published in 2008. Ölmeye Yatmak has not yet been translated into English. Parts of the novel were translated by Ellen Ervin and included in her 1988 PhD dissertation (22–74), a thorough examination of the narrative complexity and feminist consciousness in Ölmeye Yatmak and later works by Ağaoğlu. Complete translations exist in other languages, including German, and Ingrid Iren’s translation Sich hinlegen und sterben was first published in 2008.
Orhan Pamuk (born 1952)

Outside Turkey, Pamuk is the most famous Turkish author today, and only the poet Nazım Hikmet and the novelist Yaşar Kemal have comparable reputations. Since the early 1990s, Pamuk’s books have been translated into many languages, paving the way for the translation industry of contemporary Turkish literature that has become established over the last two decades with significant support from the Turkish Ministry of Culture. According to Pamuk’s publishing house, his books have been translated into sixty languages (Orhan Pamuk Site). One who has investigated translations of Pamuk’s works into English is Melike Y. Baştuğ, who in her 2004 MA dissertation also explores why Pamuk’s books were selected for translation before many other celebrated works of Turkish literature.

As shown in my 2006 MA dissertation and by Michael McGaha in his 2008 treatise Autobiographies of Orhan Pamuk: The Writer in His Novels, Pamuk is an author who integrates elements of autobiography in his novels and other books and projects. Ferit Orhan Pamuk was born in 1952 and during his first years he grew up in the family-owned Pamuk apartment building in the upper-middle-class district of Nişantaşı, Istanbul. An aspect of this district that is both reflected and scrutinized in Pamuk’s literature is the established view that this part of the city is the Western pole along an East–West axis running through Istanbul, where, as mentioned, the Eastern pole is the peninsula situated south of the Golden Horn, not the Asian side of Bosphorus. Further research on the imagery of Istanbul’s topography in Pamuk’s work has been carried out by Nergis Pamukoğlu-Daş, Şule Demirkol Ertürk, Beyhan Bolak Hisarlıgil, Maya Ombasic, and Catharina Dufft.

In Öteki Renkler, Pamuk describes spending six months writing poems at the age of eighteen (151). Some of his poems appeared in the 1970s in literary magazines that are not easily obtained today. In his mid twenties, he decided to work full time on his writing. Pamuk’s first novel was written in 1974–78, and for this novel, then entitled Karanlık ve Işık (Darkness and Light), he won his first literary award in 1979, in a competition arranged by the publisher Milliyet. When this novel was first published in 1982, the title had changed to Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları (Mr. Cevdet and His Sons).

In 1985–88 Pamuk lived with his wife in New York City, where she worked on her PhD research (Arasan). Since 2007, Pamuk has retained an apartment in New York City, and has stayed there during periods when teaching literature at Columbia University. In 2009 he gave a series of lectures at Harvard University, which are translated by Nazım Dikbaş and collected in the 2010 publication The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist.

Pamuk’s third novel, Beyaz Kale (The White Castle), has since its second edition in 1986 been provided with Pamuk’s metanarrative afterword (Beyaz 181–193), which has reached English only through the 2007 anthology Other Colours: Essays and a Story (367–75). The inclusion of this chapter in this
anthology is one of several differences from the 1999 Turkish version, Öteki Renkler: Seçme Yazılar ve Bir Hikâye. In her 2014 PhD dissertation Das Ich—ein zweites Selbst (The Ego—A Second Self), Katrin Gebhardt-Fuchs has investigated the self-descriptions related to the first-person accounts in Beyaz Kale. In her 2018 article “The Subversion of East and West in Orhan Pamuk’s Novel, The White Castle,” Adile Aslan Almond concludes that Beyaz Kale is a “narrative of cultural pluralism,” which through parody “functions as a fictional form that deconstructs the fixed historical oppositions of East and West” (11). Citing Olcay Akyıldız, she underlines that what is crucial in Beyaz Kale is “the possibility of this transition/crossing, exchange of roles” (Almond 11; Akyıldız 236).

Pamuk’s great breakthrough in Turkey came with the publication of Kara Kitap (The Black Book) in 1990. Immense debate arose around this novel, addressing issues such as syntax and narrative techniques. Nüket Esen collected articles from this early debate in her 1992 anthology Kara Kitap Üzerine Yazılar (Articles About Kara Kitap), and Engin Kılıç collected other academic articles on Pamuk’s literature in his 1999 anthology Orhan Pamuk'u Anlamak (Understanding Orhan Pamuk). The two of them also edited the 2008 proceedings Orhan Pamuk'un Edebi Dünüyası (The Literary World of Orhan Pamuk).

When Yeni Hayat came out in 1994, it soon became the bestselling book ever in Turkey after groundbreaking commercial advertisements on buses and billboards in the big cities and through a TV campaign. Sentiments from the discussion that arose concerning the commercial promotion of this novel later reoccurred as mocking remarks in discussions concerning Pamuk’s political statements in interviews. In addition to articles and books on Yeni Hayat in Turkish, B. Venkat Mani and Erdağ Göknar have made major contributions to the reception of this novel in English, to which I will return in the chapter on Yeni Hayat.

During an ultranationalist campaign in 2005, several Turkish writers were labeled traitors in the Turkish media. For Pamuk, this led to his being charged twice according to article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code for having violated Turkishness, a crime for which the punishment ranges from three months to three years in jail, which could be multiplied by three if the violation was committed abroad (TBMM). The charges were dismissed with reference to a Turkey–EU agreement on human rights. However, the Turkish Minister of Justice, Cemil Çiçek, commented on this decision saying that he thought Pamuk should have apologized anyhow, because that is what he would have done (“‘Pamuk’”). These charges are the subject of Pamuk’s 2005 article “On Trial,” and a 2006 report by lawyer Stuart Kerr presents this and other similar prosecutions of authors in Turkey. Political campaigns against Pamuk have also been discussed in relation to his fiction (e.g. Mani 146–47; Göknar Orhan Pamuk 19–24; Fisk 113–64).
When the Swedish Academy awarded the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature to Orhan Pamuk, reactions in Turkey were divided. Half of the commentators were proud to see that Turkish literature had received its first Nobel Prize, while the other half thought that the Swedish committee had rewarded a traitor. One example of the political critique is the anthology Beşinci Sanattan Beşinci Kola: Orhan Pamuk (From Literature to Terrorism: Orhan Pamuk), edited by Kaan Arslanoğlu et al. Another book generally critical of Orhan Pamuk’s oeuvre is Adnan Acar’s 2013 book Nobel, Orhan Pamuk ve Yazarlığı (Nobel, Orhan Pamuk and His Authorship).

During the last two decades, Pamuk has been busy with new art projects: firstly, the Museum of Innocence project, which has given rise to an artistic museum for memorabilia in central Istanbul, museum catalogs, an associated novel, and several documentary films; and secondly, the compilation of an archive of interviews with people in Istanbul’s poorer districts, laying the foundation for the 2014 novel Kafamda bir Tuhaflık (A Strangeness in My Mind) and the 2016 novel Kırızı Saçlı Kadın (The Red-Haired Woman).

Thirdly, Pamuk has had more pictures published in recent years, both his own photographs and drawings of various kinds, and pictures by others, for example, Ara Güler’s photographs in İstanbul and Resimli İstanbul. In the two editions of İstanbul and the anniversary editions of Kara Kitap, pictures are integrated into books mainly comprising literary texts. The museum catalog, The Art of Fiction, referring to his 2008 novel Masumiyet Müzesi (The Museum of Innocence), on the other hand, can be read in different ways, for instance, as representing the artifacts on display in the Museum of Innocence and as appendices to the novel. Hatırlarım Masumiyeti (The Innocence of Memories) contains Pamuk’s contribution to the script of the 2015 film The Innocence of Memories, directed by Grant Gee, and reflections from the period he worked with this film. In Balkon and Orange, Pamuk has instead created literary texts that comment on his photographs, making them the central focus. The last three books in the list below illustrate how Pamuk has become an international author, as all three have been published abroad, in Norway and Germany.

The full list of books published so far by Pamuk is as follows (year of publication shown in parentheses; details of English translations follow when applicable):

1) Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları (Cevdet Bey and His Sons, novel, 1982)
Among these twenty-two books are ten novels. *Gizli Yüz* is a film scenario, and *Hattıraların Masumiyeti* is a collection of script material and reflections of Pamuk’s work with the 2015 film *The Innocence of Memories*, directed by Grant Gee. *Öteki Renkler, Babamin Bavulu, Manzaradan Parçalar, and Saf ve Düşünceli Romançı* are collections of essays, and *Ben Bir Ağacım* is an essay.
anthology of pieces selected from previous books and a chapter from the then still unpublished novel *Kafamda Bir Tuhaflık*. These and many more essays have also been printed in various publications around the world, bearing witness to Pamuk’s continuous engagement as a public figure since the mid 1990s.

*Istanbul: Hımatlar ve Şehir* is a combination of memoirs, autobiography, and a presentation of Istanbul in modern art history and literature. In addition to these works, I should also mention *Kara Kitap’ın Sırları (Secrets of the Black Book)*, first published in 2013 and edited by Darmin Hadzibegovic, which contains assorted curiosities based on interviews with the author as well as sketches and drawings by Pamuk.

Over the years, various conference proceedings, anthologies, and monographs dedicated to Pamuk’s work have been published, with an increase in such publications since the 2006 Nobel Prize. These books have been published in English (e.g. Afridi and Buyze; Anadolu-Okur; Can; Damrosch and Türkkan; Fisk; Göknar, *Orhan Pamuk*; Hisarlıgil; Ilea; McGaha; Murthy; Yaşkıoğlu), Turkish (e.g. Akbayır; Akçay; Aral; Doğan; İrmak; İşık; Özekin; Solmaz *Anlam*; Solmaz *Cevdet*; Toker; Yücel), French and German (e.g. Bourbeau; Duclos; Gebhardt-Fuchs; Ombasic *Espace*; Ombasic *Paysages*; Pamukoğlu-Daş; Parlak; Rhein), and other languages.

As mentioned above, Pamuk’s revisiting of the East–West debate comes at a time when Turkish scholars seem somewhat unenthusiastic about discussing issues of Turkish modernization in terms of this dichotomy. Onur Duman, who sees Pamuk’s evoking of the East–West divide as an element of his becoming an international author in a time of globalization, writes that “Pamuk’s works essentially thematize the struggle of the modern secular Turkish individual who sadly reflects on its cultural history and tries to find an existential meaning in a country Pamuk would call in-between Europe and the East” (408).

Uysal and Akyıldız have analyzed the discourse of westernization in Pamuk’s oeuvre from the starting point that he, as a postmodern writer, applies the East–West dichotomy to undermine it. Writing about *Benim Adım Kırmızı*, Uysal says that it is a novel in which eastern and Western forms of perception are set against each other, and in which the East, while still differing from the West, loses its positive and negative characteristics, as the East understood as an isolated container for a pure culture untarnished by the West is broken (379). She concludes that whether due to Western influence or conflicts within Eastern culture, this breakage is inevitable and makes it impossible to continue Eastern tradition (380).

Building on Uysal, Akyıldız broadens the perspective to describe Pamuk’s writing and its approach to the East–West debate as a whole. She does not see his oeuvre as articulating a method for choosing between East and West as two separate worlds or for reaching a synthesis, but rather sees it as a call to accept current affairs as they are, with all the associated “in-betweenness” and
confusion (228). Akyıldız maintains that the concepts of East and West are the right keys for interpreting Pamuk’s literature, but that they give no single direction for interpretation (230). She claims that Pamuk, while taking clichés as his point of departure and giving the impression that he is writing novels that articulate the grand narrative of a clash between East and West, reads and makes us read these clashes in reverse. Thus, Akyıldız states, he eliminates the East–West distinction completely at a textual level by questioning the basis of the grand narrative that he seemed to be articulating (Akyıldız 234). On the other hand, Akyıldız expresses some hesitation when it comes to the question of whether Pamuk, by questioning the grounds for a discourse of westernization, undermines or subverts this discourse. She notices significant differences between Tanpınar and Pamuk in their application of the East–West dichotomy, writing that Tanpınar suffers from a feeling of guilt while striving to be both Eastern and Western, while Pamuk’s approach comes together in an expression of craftsmanship and play. While refusing to be bound to those who treat East and West as salient entities, Akyıldız maintains, Orhan Pamuk is still an author from a culture where the pain of trying to turn from East to West has settled in the subconscious of the society. By emphasizing doppelgangers and the like, he certainly does not leave dichotomies behind, but blunts their definitions (Akyıldız 236).

The Three Novels and Their Receptions

*Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*

Turkish critics have read *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* both within the frame of Tanpınar’s works and within the broad Turkish cultural debate on westernization.

*Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* stands out among Tanpınar’s novels because it cannot be easily connected to the others in the way that *Huzur* connects to the other novels that Tanpınar finished, namely *Sahnenin Dışındaki* and *Mahûr Beste*, both of which were only posthumously published. The plots of these three novels overlap through shared references to times, places, and names of characters. Even though first-person narration, prevalent in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, is also used in *Sahnenin Dışındaki*, the satirical style of *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* has been viewed as very different from that of most other writing by Tanpınar. There is certainly an overwhelming stylistic difference between *Huzur* and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*. While *Huzur* is serious, slow, and contemplative, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* is light, fast, and humorous.

Despite these stylistic differences, some of the same sentiments can be said to underlie the presentation of westernization in *Huzur* and *Saatleri Ayarlama*...
Enstitüsü. When Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü has been read as tekinsiz ‘uncanny’ (Bayramoğlu), this could be seen in relation to how Huzur has been read as huzursuz ‘troubled’ (Moran, Ahmet Mithat ‘Tan 269–96). Although the two novels are very different in style, there is a line extending from troubled to uncanny in their parallel critiques of Turkish westernization.

In 2014 when Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü appeared in English translation for the second time, the New York Times aligned the novel with other works in the tradition of Menippean satire:

The Time Regulation Institute is before all else a first-rate comic novel, one with a fairly large foot in the Western literary tradition called Menippean satire. Works within the orbit of this genre stretch across the centuries, including Aristophanes’ “The Clouds,” Erasmus’s “In Praise of Folly,” Huxley’s “Point Counter Point” and those “Fortuna’s wheel” sections of Toole’s “A Confederacy of Dunces. (Riker)

Martin Riker explains that Tanpınar “creates an allegorical premise at once specific and broad enough to effectively satirize the entire 20th century, a century of systems if ever there was,” and says that the novel “ends up being the most comprehensive satire of what we would call NGOs and nonprofit organizations I’ve ever read.” There is a tendency in Riker’s article to emphasize a reading of The Time Regulation Institute as being about modernization rather than westernization. In Turkish scholarship, however, there have been many examples of Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü being read more narrowly within the culture-specific discourse of westernization.

Tanpınar is among the most studied authors in Turkish literature and examining even half of the books about him would be too big a task for this dissertation. In the following, I will present some key studies close to my focus on irony in representations of westernization in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü.

When it comes to the portrayal of westernization in the novel, Kaplan has presented a reading in line with the common understanding of westernization as a process whereby a separate East comes under the influence of and strives towards unification with a West. To the Bergsonian image of a flow of time, Kaplan adds the image of an island frozen within time, and he explains that this frozen island is Turkish society. He writes that Tanpınar, who in accordance with Bergson’s philosophy perceived time as a flow, as duration, aims at vitalizing the people and their environments that are either frozen within this duration as an island, or madly “fluttering” in order to escape from it (Kaplan, “Saatleri” 109). Kaplan’s view is that the author’s aim is to tell in a comical way how, over the last fifty years, Turkish society has sought to escape a frozen lifestyle; Kaplan emphasizes the absurdity of the story, saying that the novel from beginning to end tells of the absurd lives of people in the East, who live outside reality (“Saatleri” 110). In the same article, Kaplan emphasizes that the author’s approach to time in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü
differs from his approach in other works, and adds that this novel depicts time as a caricature of itself (“Saatleri” 109).

In other words, Kaplan supports the common belief drawn from the Turkish concept of westernization, namely that Turkey is a separate, isolated place, rather than integrating Turkey in the concept of time as duration. He gives the impression that the problem is that Turkish society is very conservative, not that there have been (ridiculous) attempts to escape from the old order. According to Kaplan, what the novel mocks is how people struggling to embark on the new, to take part in the real world, remain stuck in the unreal old. In Kaplan’s view, their mad fluttering is funny at the same time as it illustrates the errors of a conservative society. I oppose this reading because I do not see Turkish society depicted as stable and isolated in the novel. However, since Kaplan, most critics and scholars have adhered to his understanding of Bergson’s philosophy as an ideal that stands in contrast to the novel’s description of time. One reason for this could be that the understanding of a contrast between Bergson’s ideal time and Tanpinar’s depiction of time in Turkey confirms the basic tenet of the discourse of westernization that the novel writes itself into, namely that East and West stand in contrast to each other.

Many critics have noted that Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü is a mocking, satirical, and even absurd story. Kaplan emphasized that the novel displays features of “alay” ‘ridicule’ (“Saatleri” 111) and “abes” ‘absurdity’ (“Saatleri” 110). Moran has also emphasized the novel’s critique of westernization. In his chapter on Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, he states that it is a novel criticizing the mistaken notions, attitudes, behavior, and idiocies of a society caught between two civilizations (Ahmet Mithat’tan 297). Like most Turkish critics, Moran reads the novel as an allegory on Turkish society (Ahmet Mithat’tan 303). Hayri İrdal’s childhood, which in the novel is clearly set in the Abdülhamid era of the late 19th century, represents in Moran’s interpretation the society before Tanzimat, set in contrast to the Republican period, which in the novel sees the creation of the Time Regulation Institute (Ahmet Mithat’tan 302, 311n10).

Kaplan has noted that even though Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü at first glance is seen as “fantezi” ‘fantasy’ and “alay” ‘ridicule,’ it is a work that needs to be read with great seriousness and be thought about deeply (“Saatleri” 111). He develops this thought in a later article where he says that this novel is a unique work, an “ironik” ‘ironic’ work, in which Tanpinar deals with all the problems of Turkish society. Using a well-established metaphor known through Stendhal, Kaplan says that Tanpinar holds up a huge distorting mirror to Turkish society and its people (“Tanpinar’ın Mirası” 343). In other words, Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü is, with all its fantasy, ridicule, and irony, a story that reflects a specific society.

Due to the novel’s fantastic features and irony, Parla has seen similarities between Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Tanpinar’s short story
“Acıbadem’deki Köşk” (“The mansion in Acıbadem”), first published in the anthology *Yaz Yağmuru* (*Summer Rain*) in 1972 ("Car Narratives" 540). However, the uncanny features of *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* have more direct parallels in Tanpınar’s short story “Mahkeme” (“Trial”), first published in 2012. Standing out as one of Tanpınar’s most uncanny achievements, it is also an absurd, nightmarish story, resembling perhaps more strongly Kafka’s “Trial” than the trial scene in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, which will be discussed further in my analysis.

For Moran, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* is first of all “alay” ‘ridicule,’ “eleştirel” ‘critical,’ and “hiciv” ‘satire,’ but he also touches on the novel’s “ironie” ‘irony’ (*Ahmet Mithat’tan* 320), and compares Tanpınar’s method to that of Montesquieu, who looked at society with the eyes of a foreigner (298). Tanpınar also criticizes society through an observer, says Moran, who sees Hayri İrdal as a person of the past, inserted into the society of which he has become a member (298–99). Moran thus emphasizes that Hayri İrdal is different from other outsiders in satirical literature since he is positioned within society and changes as part of society according to shifting times (300).

When it comes to mockery, Moran sees it as pointing in different directions. When commenting on Hayri İrdal’s psychoanalyst, Doktor Ramiz, Moran notes that the shuffling between what could be considered Eastern and what could be considered Western is a sign of not having been able to jump over the threshold (*Ahmet Mithat’tan* 304). In other words, Moran can be said to read the novel as mocking how society is stuck in the past, in a similar fashion to Kaplan. On the other hand, for Moran, the Institute is itself a parody of the new (305).

Compared with Kaplan, Moran can be regarded as more conservative, and following his article there have been countless articles written by conservative critics eager to elaborate on what Tanpınar ridicules in the new society. I believe that these readings rest on an error. It is correct that Tanpınar struggled with thoughts concerning “the meeting of East and West,” but this does not mean that he operated with East and West as two separate categories in his novels. I believe it is a weakness of interpretations that focus narrowly on the satire in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* that some critics end up reading it as a conservative message attacking the new that enters society as a result of westernization, because the novel does not ridicule the old order as much as it ridicules how it is used within the new.

Süha Oğuzertem has criticized the facile readings of *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* as “social criticism,” “historical interpretation,” “satire,” “protest,” and so on for neglecting the fact that Hayri İrdal, who is the object of analysis, is both the protagonist and narrator of the text. According to him, Hayri İrdal is, through a feeling of obligation that is difficult to comprehend, wrapped up in a far from credible naïveté (460).

Sigmund Freud is a figure often referred to in literature on *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*. This comes as no surprise, since the novel itself makes
several references to Freud, Jung, and psychoanalysis, which will be further discussed in my analysis below. Furthermore, Tanpinar has himself conducted a scholarly Freudian analysis of Turkish society. In the 1951 essay “Medeniyet Değiştirmesi ve İç İnsan” (“Change of Civilization and Inner Man”), Tanpinar argues that Turkish literature after Tanzimat has rejected the old tradition reaching back to the 13th–14th-century authors Yunus Emre and Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (35–6), and discusses what psychological effect this rejection might have on the Turkish self, still connected to the old tradition:

Meselâ kendimizi hâlis bulmuyoruz, kendi hayatımıza yaşamıyoruz, kendi ağzımızla konuşuyoruz vehmine kapılıyoruz.

[...]

Cesaret edebilseydim, Tanzimat’tan beri bir nevi Oedipus kompleksi, yani bilmeyerek babasını öldürmüş adamın kompleksi içinde yaşyoruz, derdim. (Tanpinar, Yaşadığım 38)

For instance, we carry a groundless fear that we are no longer unadulterated, that we do not live our own lives or talk in our own tongue.

[...]

If I may dare to say so, I would state that ever since Tanzimat we have experienced a kind of Oedipus complex, i.e. the complex of having unknowingly killed one’s father. (my trans.)

It is noteworthy that Tanpinar does not define a naïvely perceived “loss of one’s self” to be the kernel of the identity crisis of his culture, but rather the groundless fear of there being such a loss. The definition of the Oedipus complex as that of a man being unaware of having killed his father is also worth noting, since it compares to how the protagonist Hayri İrdal is diagnosed with a father complex in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü (107–8). In comparison, Zeynep Bayramoğlu argues that the father complex, from which the protagonist Hayri İrdal is said to suffer, is a metaphor for the father complex of Turkish society (137), a society that wants to free itself from the past (139).

Bayramoğlu has followed up on Kaplan’s notions of the absurd by launching a discussion of tekinsizlik, which means “uncanniness.” Bayramoğlu points out that there is something unheimlich, or uncanny, that clings to representations of the old days in the novel. With reference to Schelling, Freud described the uncanny as “something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light” (217), and Bayramoğlu sees the resurrection scene, where Hayri İrdal’s presumably dead aunt arises from the grave while being buried, as an allegory of the old society threatening to arise like a phantom in modern society (168). For Bayramoğlu, the Institute, having the “uncanny purpose of setting all the clocks in the country at the same time,” is in itself a manifestation of the absurd construction of the novel (“ülkenin bütün saatlerini aynı zamana ayarlamak gibi abes bir amacı”; my trans.; 175).
In their Note on the Translation, translators Freely and Dawe comment on how Tanpınar’s style in this novel leans on an oral tradition:

For those of us familiar with Turkey’s traditions of oral storytelling, there is also the pleasure of watching Hayri walk way out on a limb, and then the limb of the limb, as we begin to ask ourselves if he and his author have perhaps lost the thread, the plot, the point, or even their minds. And then, just as our own minds begin to wander, there’s a slap on the table, bringing the story, the chapter, the novel to a sudden and startling end, and all those random details fall neatly, and perfectly, into place. (xxii)

This description of how Tanpınar structures his narrative is recognizable to those who have read him in Turkish. What they label “a slap on the table” is described as a moment when the details at the end of a long sentence fall into place. When details fall into place, it does not mean that readers are left with only one option for interpretation. This moment can also be characterized, in Hutcheon’s words, as a cutting edge, where irony cuts in to signal the various possible interpretations of the text.

Not only is the novel mocking a new order as such, it is mocking a certain kind of new order made possible through a certain westernization process. Today, Tanpınar represents in a profound way the transition that the language underwent during the language reform. Looking back at Tanpınar’s linguistic legacy, it can be observed that he has become a significantly influential writer when it comes to creating a new literary Turkish, since his influence on writers of Turkish is ongoing.

Nergis Ertürk has developed a profound analysis of Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü in her Grammatology and Literary Modernity, in which the homelessness of the individual, as observed through the protagonist Hayri İrdal, is seen in relation to a repressing logocentrism, which, according to Ertürk, has been the core principle of the Turkish literary revolutions of the 19th and 20th centuries (44). The way I see it, a trademark of Tanpınar’s prose is instead the space he creates for dialogue. Even though he adjusts his language according to the reforms, he also resists purism, and is able to use words from both French and Ottoman literature without alienating his texts from new readers. As Ertürk puts it, Tanpınar has emphasized the development of reform projects focused on the Ottoman Turkish language as “a fundamental register of the ambiguities and tensions of the transformation of the Ottoman cultural and political spheres at large” (6). About Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, she writes:

The significance of this novel, I suggest, lies in the way it both examines and resists the cultural effects of the reforms, without simultaneously generating a new logocentrism domesticating the uncanniness it comes to understand as immanent in language. (N. Ertürk 17)
To sum up, previous commentaries have often focused on the divergence between Turkey in the novel and Turkey in the official discourse, interpreting the novel as satire of certain political aspects of Turkey in its time. In this study, the focus is instead on the irony seen in the discrepancy between what the narrator tells us that he is doing and what he actually does through his narrative. The focus here is not on the novel’s depiction of “inappropriate westernization,” but on its display of an inherent irony of the westernization concept, which asserts as strongly that we are westernized as that we are not westernized.

Ölmeye Yatmak

As mentioned above, Ağaoğlu has been viewed as an author who repeats issues from realist literature but with a twist (Moran, Sevgi Soysal’dan 35). This feature is also present in Ölmeye Yatmak, where she depicts the life of common folks in the village and the big city and refers to popular culture such as films. At the same time, her literature is linked to the national discourse associated with idealist authors such as Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu and Halide Edip Adıvar. This linking is done through references to Atatürk, and even through quotations from his speeches, references to discussions in the Turkish parliament, conversations among characters about Turkey’s geopolitics, and so on.

The twist Ağaoğlu brings to literature is her high degree of creativity, metafictionality, and intertextuality, all signs of the influences she has absorbed from Western literature on a broad scale. More narrowly, Ağaoğlu seems to be inspired by the modernist works that she knew through her extensive reading of French literature. Ağaoğlu’s innovations in literature in the early 1970s have their parallels in Atay’s 1972 novel Tutunamayanlar and 1975 novel Tehlikeli Oyunlar (Risky Games), and in Atılğan’s 1973 novel Anayurt Otelı.

To read Ölmeye Yatmak as intertextual is, in Julia Kristeva’s words, to read it as a mosaic, or a “hybrid field of words” (“croisement de mots”; my trans.; 85). In Ölmeye Yatmak, it is especially striking how Ağaoğlu applies the technique of intertextuality as she integrates letters, diary entries, and newspaper articles—as well as a third-person narrative recalling the realism of earlier Turkish social idealism—in a novel in which a personal log constitutes the frame narrative. The hybrid field of words is also seen in Ölmeye Yatmak through references to other texts such as Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina and Gustave Flaubert’s Madame Bovary.

Ağaoğlu has commented on how the name of the protagonist Aysel is used and perceived in Turkish literature, mostly as a name for poor or urban and “accessible” women, sometimes prostitutes (Geçerken 38–43). The first example she gives of a protagonist named Aysel is in the 1934 village movie Bataklı Damın Kızı Aysel (Aysel, Daughter from the House in the
This film, subtitled Bir Köy Hikayesi (A Village Tale), is based on a script by Hasan Cemil and directed by Ertuğrul Muhsin. Curiously, the Internet Movie Database [IMDB] gives credit to Nazım Hikmet and Selma Lagerlöf for having inspired the story: Lagerlöf through her short story, “Tösen från stormyrtorpet” (“The Girl from the Home in the Marshlands”), published in 1908 and made into a film in 1917 known as The Lass from the Stormy Croft, and Nazım Hikmet through the movies he directed under the pseudonym Mümctaz Osman in the 1930s.

As mentioned above, Naci’s critique of Ölmeye Yatmak initiated a huge debate in the Turkish press lasting through 1973, mostly concentrated in the newspaper Cumhuriyet (Republic) and the monthly Yeni Dergi (New Journal). Naci’s argument can be summed up in three points. Firstly, he criticizes the placing of an author’s preface at the beginning of the novel. It was quite common for Turkish novels of that time to be introduced by prefaces, but these were usually written by other writers, not by the authors of the novels themselves. Naci explicitly criticizes Ağaoğlu’s preface for creating false expectations when promising that the novel is a novel of the period, not of one person (Naci 34). In response to this criticism, later versions of Ölmeye Yatmak have been published without the author’s preface. Secondly, Naci criticizes the narrative structure of the novel. He says the novel is structured along two lines, one that explains the history of the Republic from Atatürk’s death in 1938 to 1968, and another that tells the personal story of Aysel lying down to die, taking up, as he sees it, only one fourth of the novel (28). He would have preferred it if Ağaoğlu had stuck to Aysel’s story and elaborated on that. Thirdly, Naci cites selections from the novel to explain the development of Aysel’s personal drama (30–32). In conclusion, Naci argues that Aysel’s story is about the problems of being both a woman and a human, but accuses the novel of giving a typical bourgeois depiction of gender, closing its eyes to social and economic realities (33).

Regarding Naci’s critique of the novel’s structure, his approach reveals first of all that metafictional strategies were unusual in Turkish literature in 1973, and his suggestions regarding what would make the novel better imply that his criticism was based on the ideals of realism.

Poet and critic Aydın Hatipoğlu soon wrote in response to Naci, and asserted that Ölmeye Yatmak is “a comic novel” (“bir mizah romanı”; my trans.; 181). He explained:

Ama alıştırıldığımız manada kahkaha attıran sonra da hiçbir şey bırakmadan geçip giden mizah türü değil yapılan. İroni. İnce mizah. Humor dedikleri. (Hatipoğlu 181)

But what’s achieved here is not comical in the usual sense. It is not the kind of humor that makes you laugh and there is nothing more to it. It is irony. Refined mockery. It is what they call humor. (my trans.)
This quotation shows that Hatipoğlu sees Ağaoğlu’s humorous irony as a new feature that needs to be explained to readers.

The main response to Fethi Naci’s critique of the novel was expressed in the article “Adalet Ağaoğlu’nun romani” (“Adalet Ağaoğlu’s Novel”) by the young critic Selim İleri. İleri’s reading is one that integrates both Aysel’s story and other segments of the text into one novel, which he reads as feminist literature, comparing it both to previous plays by Ağaoğlu, such as Evcilik Oyunu (Marriage Play), and to Sevgi Soysal’s novel Yenişehir’de Bir Öğle Vakti. İleri claims that these works stand in stylistic contrast to Ölmeye Yatmak, as that novel departs from the realist trend (38).

 Ağaoğlu’s shift away from the realist trend can be viewed in its political context. When Aysel “lies down to die,” this can be read as challenging a shift in the political climate that took place in the early 1970s. Ölmeye Yatmak first came out at the peak of “the politicized literature” of the 1960s and 1970s. The 1960–80 period is often viewed as a separate period within the longer era of “troubled democracy” because of the constitution of 1960, which was put into force after the officers’ coup d’état in 1960, amended throughout the 1970s, and repealed after the coup d’état in 1980. The Constitution of 1960 is often viewed as the most liberal constitution that Turkey has ever had. The period saw an increase in the publication of books and magazines, a thriving Turkish film industry (despite increased censorship in the 1970s), and the creation of several new parties and organizations. Around 1970 there was widespread concern about the increased radicalization of the Turkish left and right. Examples of this radicalization include the 1969 creation of the nationalist right-wing party Milli Hareket Partisi ‘National Movement Party,’ and the 1971 actions of the Marxist–Leninist revolutionary Deniz Gezmiş and his group, especially the kidnapping of four American soldiers, for which Gezmiş was sentenced to death in an exceptional vote by the Turkish parliament. In 1971, the military intervened in the political leadership, emphasizing stability over liberty and thus putting an end to the more liberal climate of the 1960s, when the aspirations of the constitution still seemed stronger than concerns about the collapse of the political system.

Yeni Hayat
First published in 1994, Yeni Hayat is according to Pamuk his most spontaneously created book, and the novel he spent the least time writing. The inspiration for the book came while Pamuk was at a conference in Australia, where he wrote the first chapter after he had already started writing Benim Adım Kırmızı (Óteki 144).

The English translation, The New Life, by Güneli Gün was first published in 1997 and, although criticized for its marked American colloquial style, it received good reviews (Brendemoen “Å oversette” 42–44; McGaha 135–44). Over the years it has attracted less attention than the translations The Black
Book, first published in 1994, and My Name Is Red, first published in 2001. This is somewhat different from the situation in Turkey, where Yeni Hayat, as mentioned above, became an immediate bestseller and sparked great interest among scholars. This is reflected in the above-mentioned anthologies Orhan Pamuk’u Anlamak and Orhan Pamuk’un Dünyası, which contain eleven articles mainly about Yeni Hayat (Esen and Kılıç 199–208; Kılıç 225–344). Still, the novel has also been criticized in Turkey for being a hard read. As Bakioğlu states, “Ironically, both Umberto Eco and Orhan Pamuk retain the status of being best-seller authors despite the inherent difficulty of reading their works” (2).

An extensive analysis of Yeni Hayat is found in Orhan Pamuk’u Okumak (Reading Orhan Pamuk) by Yıldız Ecevit, first published in 1996. Her book takes the form of a sample reader in which she presents readings from four main theoretical perspectives: the formalist, structuralist, Sufi, and social perspectives. When it comes to interpretations of Pamuk’s works based on Sufism, such studies had already appeared in relation to Kara Kitap. Ecevit writes that Kara Kitap, through conceptual constructions and analogies in the text, alluded to mystical associations, prompting critics to draw parallels to Islamic mysticism (Orhan 135). Ecevit’s analysis is a typical example of the Sufi perspective, in which the definition of Sufism applied is the broad one, meaning Islamic mysticism in general. This definition is rooted in Oriental studies rather than Islamic thought, and applying this perspective certainly does not imply that Pamuk is a member of a Sufi order and, as he has emphasized himself, not even that he believes in or follows the tenets of such an order, rather that he uses the Islamic literary tradition in a creative way (Öteki 152).

The Sufi perspective was later applied to other books by Pamuk, mainly Beyaz Kale, Gizli Yüz, and Yeni Hayat. Elif Sezgin Kömürcü applies it in one chapter in her 2009 PhD dissertation on identity in Yeni Hayat (6–33). She emphasizes the Sufi element of journey when writing that “Galip in The Black Book and Osman in The New Life go on journeys in which they put the trivialities and desires of the world aside and annihilate their former identity in order to reach the meaning of a new life and to get a new identity in this new realm” (64–5). Göknar sums up this kind of reading well when he says that Yeni Hayat “assumes the quality of a Sufi quest or mystic romance in which the hero must overcome obstacles to unite with his beloved, who is also a representative of Allah” (Orhan Pamuk 169).

Venkat Mani conducts the most extensive analysis of how Pamuk creates a Turkish–German dialogue within Yeni Hayat (171–80). Most profoundly, Mani gives a clear picture of how Sufi and romanticist elements play a similar role in creating expectations concerning how the text works in the world: “Through the glorification of a text and the act of reading,” he says, “Pamuk forms and informs the narrator’s relationship to the author, the co-readers, and the nonreading enemies of the book,” and “he uses this very tactic to parody
his own readers’ relationship to the text before he can create a geographical and cultural divide between the East and the West, only to disintegrate it slowly by the end of the novel” (Mani 153). Thus, Mani presents a reading of *Yeni Hayat* as a book that first establishes a mystic–romantic view of the text, only to parody it later. My reading of irony in the novel is largely in line with Mani’s reading when it comes to the understanding of how Sufi and romanticist elements function in the text. However, as will become clear in my analysis below, I see the transitions in the text between sincere expectations of change and mockery of romanticist ideas as more of an ongoing play with dichotomies throughout the novel.

*Yeni Hayat* is often brought into discussions of Pamuk’s literature in a broader sense. It is often discussed in relation to his 1990 novel *Kara Kitap* and 2002 novel *Kar*. One common feature of *Yeni Hayat* and *Kar* is the remembrance of travels on trains and buses around Anatolia in different periods of recent Turkish history. The accounts of these travels are, according to Pamuk, based on his own experiences of travelling around Turkey as a young man (Çakır). Another common feature is how key events in Turkey’s recent history are discussed from a contemporary viewpoint. This could be said to be the case with all of Pamuk’s novels, and especially *Sessiz Ev*, as shown by Yasemin Karakaşoğlu in her 1993 study *Fünf Stimmen Im Lautlosen Haus* (*Five Voices in Silent House*). A third common feature of these novels is their “İstanbul-centrism” and the author’s use of allusions to his own life, analyzed by Turcologist Catharina Dufft in *Orhan Pamuks Istanbul*.

It is worth mentioning that “*Yeni Hayat*” also reappears in *Kar* as the name of the pastry shop where the protagonist Ka has his first date with İpek. This is where they witness a young Islamist from Tokat shooting and killing the principal of a local college who has recently expelled female students for wearing headscarves. It is hardly a coincidence that this incident is situated in the pastry shop *Yeni Hayat*, as it is only one of several allusions to *Yeni Hayat* in *Kar*. The protagonist of *Yeni Hayat* often has experiences of being close to people who are killed, as has the protagonist Ka in *Kar* and, at least one point, the protagonist Galip in *Kara Kitap* as well.

When it comes to the uncanny atmosphere that takes hold of the bus journeys in *Yeni Hayat* and the ensuing sense that a disaster might happen any time, Kılıç has interpreted this as an allusion to the political climate in Turkey in the early 1990s, the time of the narration. In *Orhan Pamuk’u Anlamak*, Kılıç describes people’s experiences when the Islamist Refah Partisi ‘Welfare Party’ was about to win a Turkish election for the first time: representatives of both traditional Islamic culture and westernization found themselves in a paranoid state of worry. Islamists threatened the established order and appeared to be ready to turn everything upside down, Kılıç writes (225–26).

Similarly, Mani has read *Yeni Hayat* as containing traces of the cultural climate after the 1989 fatwa issued against Salman Rushdie’s 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*. In Turkey, Mani reminds his readers, Uğur Mumcu, a young
A journalist who had written against the fatwa, was murdered in the wake of this controversy in 1993, the same year as thirty-five people died in a fire resulting from a mob attack targeting Rushdie’s Turkish translator Aziz Nesin (170).

Here, I would add that where *Yeni Hayat* jumps in narrated time to the early 1990s, there are also descriptions of “spooky Kurdish villages emptied because of a war not declared” (“İlan edilmemiş savaş yüzünden boşaltılmış hayaletimsi Kürt köyleri”; my trans.; *Yeni* 256). There are explicit references to the ongoing conflict with the Kurdish military and political organization Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK) ‘The Kurdish Workers’ Party’ (*Yeni* 258). This conflict is visualized along an East–West axis within the topography of Turkey as the buses (from western Turkey) are described as modern, comfortable, and screening commercials, in contrast not only to the shabby buses fourteen years earlier but also to the poverty surrounding Osman when entering the eastern provinces of conflict (*Yeni* 251–57).

Pamuk’s novels from *Benim Adım Kırmızı* to *Masumiyet Müzesi* all have a narrator/character named Orhan. As I have explained previously, there is also an Orhan character in *Kara Kitap*, named as such not in *Kara Kitap*, but through a reference to this novel in his later novel *Kar* (İms 190–93). In *Yeni Hayat* there are strong allusions to Orhan’s name as well. The first one appears when the protagonist is said to have a name that rhymes with Canan (43), though the name is not said to be Orhan, and later in the novel the protagonist, after several identity shifts, is named Osman (195). In other words, the protagonist of *Yeni Hayat* is not Orhan, but the choice of Osman as the protagonist’s name is close enough to sustain an allusion to the author. Those acquainted with Ottoman history know that Osman and Orhan, father and son, are the founding fathers of the Ottoman Empire, buried side by side in separate mausoleums at the site of a previous Byzantine monastery on a hill in Bursa, which Orhan seized in the early 14th century. Their shrines are much visited even today. In *Öteki Renkler*, Pamuk has further explained some parallels between Osman in the novel and himself: Osman is about the same age as Pamuk when he, aged twenty-two, decided to become an author; he studies at Istanbul Technical University, where Pamuk used to study, so details from the corridors there reflect Pamuk’s own experiences; and he lives with his mother, just as Pamuk did (147).

A possible explanation as to why the interest in *Yeni Hayat* abroad at first did not match the interest in Turkey is that with its many references to Turkey and recent Turkish history, as well as its somewhat more accessible references to Western and Islamic literature, it is a less accessible novel in translation than in the original, and is also less accessible than Pamuk’s other novels. For instance, Talât S. Halman describes *The New Life* as “incomprehensible,” “a mystery wrapped in a conundrum engulfed in enigma” (*Turkish Muse* 229). McGaha, who sets aside twenty pages to discuss this novel in his *Autobiographies*, is generally positive about Gün’s “more colorful and vivid”
translation, and yet he concludes that it is a work that “really does defy interpretation” (135).

Two scholarly works have compensated for the purported lack of intelligibility of Yeni Hayat in English by putting this novel and its political context at the center of their discussions. In his 2007 study *Cosmopolitical Claims: Turkish-German Literatures from Nadolny to Pamuk*, Mani presents a nearly 40-page reading of *The New Life* as a cosmopolitically inclined parody of a narrow, nationally defined mindset, and in his 2013 study *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy: The Politics of the Turkish Novel*, Erdağ M. Göknar puts *Yeni Hayat* at the center of discussion in the chapter called “Political Parody from Coups to Conspiracies” (165–209). These books came out when the news of the political turmoil that engulfed Pamuk after receiving the Nobel Prize had attracted international attention and at a time when the War on Terror had enhanced readers’ interest in the East–West dichotomy. Both books helped Pamuk readers without proficiency in Turkish to understand more of the historical backgrounds and cultural contexts of *Yeni Hayat*.

Similarly, Ahmet Alver’s 2016 article “New Life, Old Conspiracies: Pamuk’s Parodic Representations of Turkish Conspiratorial Logic in *The New Life*” uses *Yeni Hayat* as a lens for understanding recent accusations against Pamuk, saying it is a “startling foreshadowing of the conspiratorial accusations that would come to be leveled at Pamuk and other authors seen to be part of an intellectual Western elite that despises an autonomous Turkish state” (107).
The Ironic Discourse of Westernization in 
*Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*

... hiç kimseyi görmüyordum. Fakat yüzlerce, yüzbinlerce olduğunu hissediyordum.  
—Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, “Mahkeme”

... I didn’t see anyone. But I felt that there were hundreds and hundreds of thousands of us.  
—my translation

Apparently, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* centers on the rise and fall of a certain Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, ‘Time Regulation Institute,’ created to implement a single standard time measure, to see to it that all clocks are set exactly on time and to promote a better understanding in society of how hours and times work and affect people’s lives. The Institute is not a university institute, but rather an official institution somehow recalling the history council and language council, both founded in Ankara in 1931 and 1932, respectively (Zürcher 199). Ertop mentions several different slogans used by the Institute that bear some resemblance to Atatürk’s sayings, which, especially after his death in 1938, were repeated and preserved in a fashion similar to proverbs (320).

In the following I will scrutinize how the discourse of westernization is presented through irony in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*. I will start by analyzing the role of the East–West dichotomy in the novel and proceed by discussing how irony is created in the narrative. This discussion will be illustrated by citing selected quotations, before presenting the conclusion of this section of my dissertation.

The narrator, Hayri İrdal, states early on that he writes to preserve the memory of the Institute, the greatest and most beneficial establishment of the century (*Saatleri* 11), and its founder, Halit Ayarç (Saatleri 10). Taken literally, we would expect the novel to mostly resemble a memoir or biography, or a combination of both. Alper Çeker, for instance, writes that *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* is told in a memoir-like fashion (48).

Given Hayri İrdal’s praise of Halit Ayarç and his statements about his story being about one of the greatest institutions that ever existed, it comes as a

17 I use the translation “Time Regulation Institute” for the rather uncommon Turkish phrase “Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü.” This translation has become well established through two published translations of the novel (Freely and Dawe; Gürol, *Time*). Other possible interpretations are discussed in a separate chapter below.
surprise that the main narrative, which starts with chapter 4 after a three-
chapter digression, takes the readers back to Hayrî İrdal’s birth, after which it
only slowly brings its readers to the establishment of the Institute in part III,
which is the first of two final parts of the novel. As the narrator points out
early on, there are close ties between the Institute and his own person and past
(Saatleri 20), and this could explain why two thirds of the novel recount events
from Hayrî İrdal’s life before the Institute, reaching back to his childhood and
before. While Feldman and others have discussed how part I is mostly about
Hayrî İrdal’s childhood, my analysis will focus on part II, which presents an
intricate story of Hayrî İrdal’s efforts to establish himself as a young adult.

When Hayrî İrdal meets Halit Ayarcı and the Institute is finally established
in part III of the novel (Saatleri 184; 219; 222), these events are not presented
as life-changing in the way that the introduction has prepared us for; instead,
they occur as echoes of similar events in part II, i.e. events that happened over
the years since Hayrî İrdal returned to Istanbul after World War I and after the
death of his father (Saatleri 77). Shortly after this, Hayrî İrdal is introduced to
the psychoanalyst Doktor Ramiz (Saatleri 97), who in part III will be the one
to introduce Hayrî İrdal to Halit Ayarcı, an old classmate of Doktor Ramiz
from the elite high school Galatasaray (Saatleri 197). Paradoxical as it might
seem considering the praises of Halit Ayarcı in chapter 1, the unspectacular
nature of his entrance into narrated time only in part III hardly surprises the
readers. This is because both the style of the language and the structure of the
narrative have helped create an ironic discourse on its subject, the Turkish
process of westernization and the place of the individual within it.

When mentioning how Hayrî İrdal in these intermediate years of the 1920s
follows Doktor Ramiz’ initiative to become the director of a certain Psikanaliz
Cemiyeti ‘Society for Psychoanalysis’ and the accountant of the
İspiritizmacılar Kulübü ‘Spiritalist Club,’ the narrator alters the impression
he has given of his life having radically changed only after his later meeting
with Halit Ayarcı. The relation between these two experiences is something
he comments on:

Evet, şimdi itiraf edeyim ki, Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü’ne müdür muavini
olduğum zaman, hiç de bu cins işlerde tecrübesiz değildim. Daha evvel
Psikanaliz Cemiyeti’nin müdürü ve hemen hemen ona benzeyen
İspiritizmacılar Kulübü’nün de muhasibi idim. (Saatleri 143)

So yes, I must concede that when I was made deputy director of the Time
Regulation Institute, I was not completely without experience (Freely and
Dawe 152). I had previously been the director of the Society for
Psychoanalysis and accountant of the Spiritualist Club, which was a somewhat
similar organization (my trans.; cf. Gürol, Time 142; Freely and Dawe 152).
Hayri İrdal’s previous experience with the psychoanalytic and spiritualist organizations, which parallels his later experience at the Time Regulation Institute, modulates the impression of how radical his later experience was.

The Establishment of Dichotomies

One way to start answering the question of how westernization is presented in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü is to examine how the East–West dichotomy is established in combination with the before–now dichotomy in the novel. The above-mentioned turning point is central to this examination. The death of Hayri İrdal’s father on a personal level and the same character’s return to Istanbul after World War I on a societal level merge into one distinct turning point in the story, as both events happen at approximately the same time (Saatleri 74, 77). Hayri İrdal’s father is said to die “during the war” and Hayri İrdal to return “after four years” (“harp içinde”; “dört seneden”; my trans.; Saatleri 77).

World War I is often viewed as ending the Ottoman Empire, as it initiated a process that led to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 after the Turkish War of Independence, 1919–22 (Finkel 541–45; Zürcher 139–41, 174). Thus, the main turning point between childhood and adulthood in Hayri İrdal’s life corresponds to a historical transition from Ottoman times to the Turkish Republican era. Both events are briefly referred to at the end of part I and the very beginning of part II, marking a temporal shift from Hayri İrdal’s childhood, presented mainly in part I, to adulthood, presented mainly in the subsequent parts II–IV.

As far as the pre-World War I period is concerned, Hayri İrdal grows up with a dual relationship to westernization: he lives in the capital, the center of westernizing reforms, but still at the periphery, since his father feels himself bound to the legacy of his forefathers who have been striving for generations to build a mosque. As far as the post-World War I period is concerned, Hayri İrdal reflects on his role as one of the central minds behind the Time Regulation Institute, an Istanbul-based bureaucratic institution established in the 1930s and developed until its decline in the 1950s.

Before World War I, Hayri İrdal’s life is filled with expectations and yearnings expressed through old legends, legendary events in the family, and symbols such as watches, which Hayri İrdal relates to both at home and in the workshop of the muvakkit ‘watchmaker’ Nuri Efendi, where he becomes an apprentice. Altogether, this is a rather stable, traditional life in the neighborhoods of the Istanbul peninsula, where many aspects of life are as they have been for centuries. After the war, Hayri İrdal’s life is marked by several transformations: first, because of a trial; second, because of his acquaintance with the educated Doktor Ramiz and Halit Ayarcı; and third,
through other kinds of socializing in the more westernized neighborhoods from Galata to Şişli and eventually Büyükdere, north of the Golden Horn.

Overall, the novel presents Hayri İrdal’s reflections on his life before and after World War I. There is a clear distinction between the imperial city of Ottoman and Byzantine heritage before the war, and the unstable situation that follows until the Time Regulation Institute is firmly established. In this situation, traditional pre-Republican life gains a utopian status, perhaps associated with nostalgia for an earlier, looser system and power structure that, according to the historian Şerif Mardin, has been associated with the Ottoman political tradition (Religion xiv).

Circling around World War I as a turning point, the story reveals several of the dichotomous pairs associated with westernization that were discussed in the Introduction: Before the war, Hayri İrdal was a sane and innocent child who grew up on the Istanbul peninsula. His family values were colored by Islam; they were poor and lived in surroundings where urban legends abounded. After the war, Hayri İrdal became an adult who soon figured in court, where he came close to being found guilty, spared by a judicial medical doctor who ruled him insane. Subsequently, Hayri İrdal was introduced to science, moved to Şişli (Saatleri 223), wrote scientific articles, and became comparatively rich. In other words, the turning point in the story becomes a tool for organizing ambiguities in the narrative in sharp dichotomous polarities from the beginning.

On the surface, a summary like this gives the impression that the novel features a transition from the old, Eastern, poor, and innocent, etc., to the new, Western, rich, and educated. The child–adult, poor–rich, religion–science, and oral tradition–literate culture dichotomies add to the image of a traditional understanding of westernization as a process whereby society “moves forward” from something bad to something good. Yet, this is only one of several lines to follow through this narrative. Indeed, the two turning-point events are at the center of ever-shifting sets of polarities of the kind that Muecke saw as constitutive of basic situations of irony. Even though the events that constitute the turning point are mentioned in narrated time only at the beginning of part II, they exemplify a turning point that figures throughout the narrative as a principle for organizing the story in a sharp before–after dichotomy.

In part I there are also minor parallel events built around a before–after dichotomy, events that in different ways mirror the war event while pointing towards the establishment of the Time Regulation Institute: before and after Hayri İrdal got his first watch, an event likened to a new birth (Saatleri 23); before and after becoming the apprentice of “Muvakkit Nuri Efendi” ‘the watchmaker Nuri effendi,’ whom he for several years visits instead of going to school (Saatleri 29–30); and before and after the death and resurrection of his aunt (Saatleri 59–69).
The various ways of applying the before–after dichotomy can be understood as resulting from the narrative situation, which yields memories of childhood and early adulthood alike. As Hayri İrdal is sitting in his “Villâ Saat” (Saatleri 10), which means “Villa Clock” (Gürol, Time 29) or “Clock Villa” (Freely and Dawe 6), by the Bosporus to write down his memories, he presents old and new events using the tools of a partly diachronic, forward-moving narrative, and of commentary. In other words, the narrative does not present the story in a strictly diachronic way, and events are told and commented on in retrospect. This implies that knowledge of later events colors the presentation of earlier events and vice versa. Even though the before–after dichotomy is associated with the Institute and its newly deceased founder in chapter 1, it is soon associated as strongly with parallel events such as those just mentioned. In the end, the establishment of the Time Regulation Institute figures as only one of many life-changing events for Hayri İrdal from early childhood to the time of narration.

The explicit references to Hayri İrdal’s act of writing down his story invite readers to apply a metaperspective on the text, in which this last event of narration gains the most prominent position of them all. Without the text about Hayri İrdal being written, there would not be any Hayri İrdal. This leads to an awareness of the fundamental irony of fiction discussed above with reference to Booth, De Man, and Kierkegaard, namely that the story of the novel simultaneously is and is not. It is there and it is not there based on the imagination of its readers. At this level of analysis, irony constantly threatens to make the whole narrative disappear into a black hole of nothingness. At another level, the same irony creates a critical distance from the narrative. It invites readers to test various interpretations within the vast distance between the letters and words observed on the surface and the “nothingness” at the end of what Booth called the infinite loop of irony in the text. This testing may be, but is not bound to be, conveyed in a search for signals about, in Booth’s phrasing, “learning where to stop.” It may also follow the example of Hutcheon, the range of interpretations being limited through the predefinition of one context, such as Turkish westernization, not to exclude, but to take command over other contexts.

In sum, the number of parallel or competing turning points might leave readers exhausted when attempting to identify the main turning point between before and now, and yet the idea of there being such a radical turning point is an influential element throughout the narrative. The multiple turning points create many contexts in which irony happens. Irony cuts through various layers throughout the narrative, inviting readers to scrutinize dichotomies associated with westernization.
Westernization Metaphors

Since Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü displays a recognizable combination of temporal and spatial dichotomies associated with the discourse of westernization, Hayri İrdal’s life becomes a typical example of a Turkish citizen caught between East and West, and his narrative situates itself within a wider discourse of westernization.

An Istanbul peninsula–Şişli dichotomy is recognizable as a local example of the East–West dichotomy, similar to the Fatih–Harbiye dichotomy in Peyami Safa’s novel mentioned in Introduction. Through the narrative, these spatial dichotomies are combined with a temporal dichotomy, as Hayri İrdal’s moving from the Istanbul peninsula to Şişli and beyond also represents a shift between before and after (Saatleri 223).

Talking about the need for the Time Regulation Institute to set clocks accurately, Hayri İrdal refers to people replacing old clothes, hats, and shoes with new ones (Saatleri 15). These examples connote Atatürk’s reforms, such as the hat reform, and Sultan Mahmut II’s fez reform a hundred years before. In fact, a new suit is something that Halit Ayarcı buys for Hayri İrdal on one of his first days at the Institute, leading to a total transformation, which the narrator presents in clear East–West terms:

Değişme, koordinasyon, çalışmanın tanzimi, zihniyet değişikliği, üst düşünce, ilmi zihniyet gibi tabirlerle konuşmaga, kendi istekszizliğime ‘zaruret’, ‘imkânsızlık’ gibi adlar koymaga, şarkla garp arasinda ölçüsüz mukayeseler yapmaga, ciddiliğinden kendim de ürktüğüm hükümler vermeğe başladım. (Saatleri 17, my emphasis)

I began to use terms like ‘modification,’ ‘coordination,’ ‘work structure,’ ‘mind-set shift,’ ‘metathought,’ and ‘scientific mentality’; I took to associating such terms as ‘ineluctability’ or ‘impossibility’ with my lack of will. I even made imprudent comparisons between East and West, and passed judgements whose gravity left me terrified. (Freely and Dawe 13–14, my emphasis)

Here, the focus on East and West makes it reasonable to see both Hayri İrdal’s transformation and the development of the Time Regulation Institute as part of a westernization process. Even though this process is viewed in an overall positive way in this paragraph, the phrase “ciddiliğinden kendim de ürktüğüm hükümler’ judgments of a gravity that scared even me’ cuts into the narrative from a very different perspective, opening it up for ironic readings that will be elaborated on below.

As in texts by Moran and in other texts by Tanpınar, Hayri İrdal’s East–West dichotomy corresponds to an Islam–Europe dichotomy in which Islam is associated with the old and Europe with the new, as seen in the following paragraph:
Everyone knows that our former way of life depended on the clock. Indeed, according to what I later learned from time-setter Nuri Efendi, the best customers of European watch-making were always Muslims, and among them the most religious people of our homeland. The clock dictated all manner of worship: the five daily prayers, as well as meals during Ramadan, the evening iftar and morning sahur. The clock was the surest way to God, and our forefathers regulated their lives with this in mind. (Gürol, *Time* 41–42; Freely and Dawe 21)

In this paragraph, Islam is associated with old manners, in opposition to Europe, a place for manufacturing clocks.

When introducing Doktor Ramiz, the narrator describes his appearance in a way recalling the description of the westernized dandy:

> Kendisine mahsus eski ile yeni arasında bir dil, hemen hemen o kadar yapmacık bir kıyafet ve başta Frenk taklidi sivri bir sakalla bir çehre uydurmuştu. (Saatleri 126)

> He had concocted a language as affected and artificial as his attire, both of which vacillated between old and new, and he wore a little pointed goatee in the French fashion. (Freely and Dawe 133)

The word translated as French here, is “Frenk,” an old word for “European” in the Levant.

The Story

I will now proceed from a general overview to a more detailed analysis of certain aspects of the novel. In this and the following chapters, I will discuss how story and narrative, time and place of narration, and the narrator as an ironist are used to guide our reading of irony in this novel. In a separate chapter, I will add some reflections on the irony of the title before presenting a detailed analysis of how irony comes about in some central passages in the novel.

As far as the story is concerned, it covers events starting in the late 17th century. This is a rather short-term historical perspective compared with that of Tanpinar’s *Huzur*, in which the historical background extends back beyond the beginning of the Ottoman Empire around 1300. *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* is concerned with the new era, the era of transition from an old,
Eastern society to a new, westernized one, and the story does not extend into the future or beyond the time of narration.

In chapter 4, the narrative shifts from commentary to a mainly chronological story following Hayri İrdal from the time of his birth, via his psychoanalytic treatment and the establishment of the Institute, to the time of narration on the novel’s last page. It is this chronological story that constitutes the backbone of the main narrative.

Episodes from before Hayri İrdal’s birth are inserted, especially into his childhood narrative in part I. It is worth noting that these stories also concern topics that are central in shaping events after World War I. Two main topics here are Hayri İrdal’s relationships with clocks and with father figures. In fact, these two topics combine in the stories of the big clock that, during his psychoanalytic treatment, he remembers from his childhood (Saatleri 101).

Within the main story there are analepses to an even more distant Ottoman past, including, most significantly, analepses to Hayri İrdal’s family history, which reaches back to his father’s great-grandfather and to a certain Şeyh Ahmet Zamanî (lit. ‘Shaykh Ahmet the Timely’), believed to have lived in the time of Sultan Mehmet IV (Saatleri 8). Also known as Avci Sultan Mehmet ‘Sultan Mehmet the Hunter,’ this sultan ruled from 1648 to 1687 (Kramers) and is associated with the siege of Vienna in 1683 and the massive land losses in the northwestern parts of his empire following that defeat. Within the westernization discourse developed since Tanzimat, this second defeat at Vienna is sometimes referred to as the obvious starting point of the shift in the power balance between the Ottoman Empire and Western Europe in favor of the latter. It is worth noting that the analepses reaching this far back in Ottoman history differ in relevance to the main story from the analepses to family history. Relations to a more distant past are always encompassed by an atomosphere of myth, legend, and hearsay, an atomosphere that also encompasses events related to Hayri İrdal’s lifetime, but to a lesser degree.

There are also prolepses, none of which extend beyond the time of narration. As mentioned above, Hayri İrdal does not only write about the Institute and its founder. However, when he does write about other things, he often relates them to the Institute, as seen in the following:

Daha sonraki zamanlarda, enstitümüz kurulmadan evvel işsizlikten evde çocukların mektep kitaplarına zaman zaman göz attığım gibi, bazen bütün günümü geçirdiğim Edirnekapı veya Şehzadebaşı kahvelerinde gazeteleri hatme mecbur kaldığım zamanlarda ufak tefek tefrika parçaları ve makaleleri de okudum. (Saatleri 7)

Before we established our institute, when I was unemployed and spent my days at home, I would often find myself leafing through my children’s schoolbooks; at other times, when I was left with nothing to do but recite the Koran, I would whittle away my hours in the coffeehouses of Edirnekapı and Şehzadebaşı,
The adverbial phrase “enstitümüz kurulmadan evvel” ‘before the establishment of our institute,’ repeated elsewhere in the narrative (e.g. Saatleri 131), is central because it temporally relates other events to the Institute’s existence. Just mentioning the Institute is important, because it upholds awareness of it in the readers’ minds, and the word “enstitü” ‘institute,’ which is used, evokes the title of the novel, which uses the same word.

Another point worth mentioning is that in this paragraph the narrator refers to an activity that many of the first readers of the novel would have been engaged in while reading it, namely reading aloud and listening to the reading of newspapers, including serial novels, in cafés. Since this event is not just a well-known event in the readers’ lives, but an event that they might themselves be engaged in while reading this novel, it contributes to the narrative’s effect of self-reflection. It is an example of how the novel topocalizes the reading of itself.

The childhood account in part I includes the intriguing story of the death and resurrection of Hayri İrdal’s paternal aunt (Saatleri 62–68), which serves to foreshadow the earth-shaking transformations that the protagonist and his communities will experience after the war.

The aunt’s abrupt transformation stands in sharp contrast to her brother, Hayri İrdal’s father. He is a conservative figure whose goal in life is to save enough money to build the mosque that his forefathers dreamt of, symbolized by the huge floor clock that fills their living room (Saatleri 26–29).

The metamorphosis of Hayri İrdal’s aunt involves her radical turn against “fathers,” and as such she stands in sharp contrast to Hayri İrdal, whose life seems to perpetually come under the spell of father figures, such as Abdüsselâm Bey, Doktor Ramiz, and Halit Ayarcı. Hayri İrdal’s aunt is one who, having been dead and resurrected, rebels against the fathers, travels to Vienna, “finds herself,” and returns as a new person. She is an interesting parallel and contrasting figure to Hayri İrdal, as she represents the happy transformation into a westernized person who takes control of her own life (68–69), while Hayri İrdal represents the cost of letting oneself be transformed by the demands of others.

Juxtaposed to her story of freedom is Hayri İrdal’s story of a life lived in respect for father figures. Because such a life requires the destruction of the “young” person’s freedom, there is no room for his creativity outside what the authority figures define as sanity, at least until Hayri İrdal writes down his memories.

The year 1913, just before the outbreak of World War I, is described as “hayatımın en harika devri” ‘the most wonderful period of my life’ (Saatleri 73). Hayri İrdal becomes part of a theatre group, in which his role as an actor
parallels rather than contrasts to his later role in the Institute, though it contrasts to his role as a narrator.

After returning from World War I, Hayri İrdal is first happily married to Emine for several years (Saatleri 81). The tranquility of this period is broken by the return of his relatives from Anadolu Harbi ‘The Anatolian War’ (87). This reference is interpreted by Feldman as specifically referring to the eastern front in the Caucasus (1914–17) during World War I (1914–18) (“Ahmet Hamdi” 545). However, due to its place in the story, I am instead inclined to read it as a reference to the Turkish War of Independence (1919–22), in its time referred to as Milli Mücadele ‘The National Struggle.’ In this case, the reference underlines the novel’s Istanbul-centric worldview, in which Anadolu ‘Anatolia’ indicates the rural areas.

Another aspect of this Istanbul-centric worldview is that there is no reference in the novel to the political capital having moved. The Time Regulation Institute is situated in Istanbul; at the same time, it is a national institution. This is striking since one of the main changes that Istanbul experienced after the war was the moving of the capital to Ankara. There is, however, one mention of Halit Ayarcı going to Ankara to discuss matters concerning the Institute (Saatleri 227).

Part II seems to be made up of events from the chaotic 1920s. Here, Hayri İrdal meets Doktor Ramiz after having been sentenced to judicial psychiatric treatment (97). This is when Hayri İrdal’s memories of the past start to gain renewed significance in the present. Rather than just treating him with psychoanalysis, Doktor Ramiz introduces Hayri İrdal to Freudian and Jungian theory (113), after which Hayri İrdal develops his own criticism of psychoanalysis and presents papers at international conferences together with Doktor Ramiz (123). Hayri İrdal is also introduced to friends of Doktor Ramiz at a café in Şehzadebaşı, and his engagements with the Society for Psychoanalysis and the Spiritualist Club are said to have lasted for four years (172). These experiences in part II pave the way for Hayri İrdal’s adventure with Halit Ayarcı and the Time Regulation Institute in part III.

The establishment of the Institute seems to take place in the 1930s, as indicated by references to cinema actors and actresses of this period, such as “Jeanette Mac Donald,” “Rosalinne Russel,” and “Martha Egerth,” who correspond to the real-life actresses Jeanette MacDonald, Rosalind Russell, and Marta Eggerth (Saatleri 147–48).

Although World War I, as mentioned, occupies a central position in the story as a turning point, it constitutes a gap in the narrative between parts I and II. Considering that Turkey under the Young Turks underwent a series of wars lasting over a decade, the minimal space given to these wars in the novel is striking, especially since Hayri İrdal served in World War I.

As the Institute grows, it becomes associated with a range of new institutions: a new building designed to resemble a watch on top of “Hürriyet Tepesi” ‘Freedom Hill’ (Saatleri 344; Gürol, Time 305) and “Saat Sevenler
Cemiyeti” ‘The Clock Lovers’ Society’ (Saatleri 343; cf. Freely and Dawe 367), the idea of which spread worldwide leading to more than thirty similar associations and three similar institutions being created abroad, starting in South America, then spreading to the Far and Near East and to several countries in Europe (Saatleri 343). The list of these institutions continues with “Milletlerarası Saat Tröstü” ‘The International Clock Trust Fund,’ a bank called “Saatleme Bankası” ‘The Clocking Bank,’ a cooperative, and a new neighborhood for the employees of the Institute, called “Saat Evleri” ‘The Clock Houses’ (Saatleri 344; Gürol, Time 305). The name of Hayri İrdal’s own “Villâ Saat” suggests it is another possession in this enterprise (Saatleri 10).

Time and Place ofNarration

The narrative was prompted by an immediate situation, as it was written shortly after Halit Ayarcı’s death. It is also made clear in the same pages that the narrator writes in order to tell the history of the Time Regulation Institute (Saatleri 11), whose best days have now passed (13) and whose founder has recently died (10). At the time when Hayri İrdal sits down to write, three weeks have passed (10) since Halit Ayarcı died in a car accident (368).

Another reason why the commemoration of Halit Ayarıcı feels urgent to Hayri İrdal is doubtless the recent upheavals that the Institute has experienced. Shortly before Halit Ayarıcı’s death, it was decided that the Institute should be dissolved; this decision was somewhat altered with the interference of Halit Ayarıcı, after which it was decided that it should not be totally dissolved, but rather continue under very different circumstances (Saatleri 13, 368).

The death of Halit Ayarıcı directly prompted the narrator to write his memoirs, since he now feels obliged to record the history of the Institute, a history that he states only Halit Ayarıcı could have written better (Saatleri 11). The mere intention to write the story of the Institute and its founder in order to preserve their memory is ironic. Although the intention is to preserve the memory of the fabulous Institute, the tale becomes a manifestation of the end of the Institute. This story emerges out of the hegemonic discourse of the Institute, but after its fall and colored by traces of other earlier discourses.

Though not explicitly stated in the text, it is possible to determine the time of narration as the mid 1950s based on the information that the narrator was born in the mid 1890s and that, at the time of writing, he has just turned sixty (Saatleri 11). In other words, Hayri İrdal’s time of narration is contemporary to the time when Ahmet Hamid Tanpınar first published the serial novel in 1954. According to the narrator, Hayri İrdal was seventeen years old at the beginning of 1912 (57), meaning he was born in the 1894–96 period. However, the birthday Hayri İrdal himself recognizes differs slightly from the birthday said to have been inscribed by his father in official records, “16
Recep-i Şerif, sene 1310,” according to the late Ottoman hijri calendar (23). Feroz Ahmad’s explanation of the changes in calendar systems in Turkey illustrates how these changes are connected to westernization:

Until 1917, the Turks had used three different methods of dating: the lunar Islamic system which began with year one in 622 AD when the Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina; the modified Julian calendar with the 13 day difference with the Western, Gregorian; and the Gregorian calendar which was used for official purposes. In March 1917, the Unionists introduced a modified Gregorian calendar with the traditional years retained. The Kemalists ended the confusion by adopting the Gregorian calendar which went into effect on 1 January 1926. The Islamic way of keeping time, with the new day beginning with the evening prayer, made way for the international clock. These changes facilitated communications with the outside world, especially in matters relating to business. For the same reason, in 1935 Sunday was made the weekly holiday, bringing the Turkish working week in line with that of the West. (80)

Gürol erroneously translates “16 Recep-i Şerif, sene 1310” by “16.7.1910” (41). The corresponding Gregorian date given by the online Tarih Çevirme Kılavuzu (Date Converter) of Türk Tarih Kurumu ‘The Turkish History Council’ (TTK) is instead 3 February 1893. Despite this, Bayramoğlu and Feldman have given 1892 as the year of Hayri İrdal’s birth (Bayramoğlu 123; Feldman, “Clock-Setting Institute” 39; “Saatleri Ayarlama” 538). In any case, this date means that Hayri İrdal’s father has registered his son as one to four years older than the age Hayri İrdal later recognizes. This might seem to be an authorial error, but is probably not. Low-income families like that of Hayri İrdal would benefit from having their children married off or sent away for military service earlier. So the discrepancy between these dates makes Hayri İrdal’s father look like one of those fathers who lie about their children’s birthdays to make them seem older than they are.

The place of narration is said to be the narrator’s home, Villâ Saat, in Büyükdere, which lies along the Bosporus north of Şişli (Saatleri 10). This is a spacious house in which he, despite telling his readers that he has “no great interest” in things such as reading and writing (7), sits down in the early morning before his servants wake up to write his account (10, 132, 365). The narrator depicts himself as a man holding a pen, just as he repeats his statement from the first sentence with a twist:

18 Freely and Dawe have chosen to refer only to the Islamic calendar in their translation, rendering “16 Recep-i Şerif, sene 1310” (Saatleri 23) as “the sixteenth day of the holy month of Recep in the year 1310 of the Islamic calendar” (Time 20). The date is thus “exoticised” in the translation by a somewhat lengthy explanation, while Turkish readers in the 1950s would recognize the short version as one of several normal ways to render dates.
Evet, ne okumaktan, ne yazmaktan hoşlanırım. Bu böyle iken bu sabah önümden koca bir defter, hâırlarımı yazmağa uğraşıyorum. Hattâ bunun için her gün olduğundan daha erken, saat beşte kalktım. (Saatleri 9)

So I never was one for reading or writing. But here I am this morning, struggling to write my memoirs in the oversized notebook before me. In fact I woke up at five o’clock—much earlier than usual—with this very task in mind. (Freely and Dawe 6)

As we see in this sentence, there is already a slide from not caring much for reading and writing to not liking reading and writing. This strengthens a certain discrepancy introduced in the first sentence: On one hand, Hayri İrdal, as both narrator and protagonist, takes active part in his life, writing included; on the other hand, he—again, as both narrator and protagonist—shows a total lack of awareness of his own agency. This discrepancy is fundamental to a structure that forms the novel as a whole. Although the narrative tells us that Hayri İrdal is writing it, which one would think demands a certain degree of authority associated with authorship, the narrative keeps pointing to other characters as constitutive of Hayri İrdal’s life as we read about it, mainly Doktor Ramiz and Halit Ayarcı.

The Ironist Narrator

In chapter 1, reader attention is soon directed towards the events concerning the Time Regulation Institute and its founder, Halit Ayarcı. The irony in this discourse can be discerned in several ways. One way is to recognize the discrepancy between what the narrator tells us that he is doing and what he actually does.

Hayri İrdal is writing down his memories as the result of a change in his life situation. He is far from a neutral narrator, being too entangled in the events to describe them with detachment. It appears he is writing on behalf of someone else, trying to incorporate the perspective of his former boss, Halit Ayarcı, when he states:

Bana öyle geliyor ki, gördüklerimi ve işittiklerimi yazmak, gelecek nesillere karşı en büyük vazifemdir. Kaldı ki mülisesemizin tarihçesini benden daha iyi yapabilecek tek insan, Halit Ayarcı, artık aramızda değildir. (Saatleri 11)

It seems to me that my greatest obligation to future generations is to record all I have seen and heard. For only one person could have written the history of our institute better than myself, and that man, Halit Ayarcı, is no longer with us. (Freely and Dawe 7)

This double perspective also makes the narrator’s comments about the Institute ironic. While praising the Institute, he also expresses reluctance to
awaken the shadows of the past (Saatleri 51). “The past” is an ambiguous reference, because there are several stages in Hayri İrdal’s story.

An abrupt shift occurs early in the story when the narrator, having just praised Halit Ayarcı, mentions the criticism of a book Hayri İrdal had written for him and the Institute. There is clearly a discrepancy between the praise of the Institute and its director and the criticism of this book. Some commentators have interpreted this discrepancy as suggesting that the praise of Halit Ayarcı and the Institute is an example of “disguised praise,” i.e. that the narrator praises Halit Ayarcı while in fact mocking him. Moran wrote:

Şimdi, romanın başındaki ilk yirmi sayfaya bakacak olursak ne görürüz? Bu İrdal’ın bize kendini ve Halit Ayarcı’yu tanıttığı, anılarını niçin yazdığını açıkladığı bir çeşit ‘giriş’dir. Tanpınar burda hiciv için ‘abartmalı sözdeövgü’ yöntemi kullanıyor. (Ahmet Mithat’tan 319)

Now, what do we see when we look at the first twenty pages? This part is an ‘introduction’ where İrdal introduces himself and Halit the Regulator to us and explains why he writes his memoirs. Tanpınar is using an ‘exaggerated pseudo-praise’ method. (Gürol, “Time Regulation Institute” 20)

It should be noted that the comic effect of irony is evident from the very beginning. References to how the Institute was criticized during its last years of existence invite the readers to take up another perspective regarding the Institute than that of praise:


After tearing to pieces The Life and Works of Ahmet the Timely, [which I had written] they went on to attack all our other studies. For days on end, we would open the papers to find reproductions of our book covers under preposterous headlines that implied the works were somehow subversive or only worthy of derision: The Effect of the North Wind upon the Regulation of Cosmic Time, penned with such painstaking attention to detail by the head of our Millisecond Branch (also husband to our family’s youngest sister-in-law); or Time and Psychoanalysis and The İrdal Method of Time Characterology, both by my

19 I would like to draw attention to the phrase “kitaplarının kapakları sanki çok güldünt şeyler,” which literally means “as if these book covers were something laughable.” In Freely and Dawe’s translation this corresponds to the phrase “that implied … worthy of derision” (my emphasis), but according to Redhouse Turkish–English Dictionary, the word güldünt has a looser meaning of “funny, comical, laughable, ridiculous.”
dear friend Dr. Ramiz; or Halit Ayarcı’s *Social Monism and Time* and *The Second and Society*. (Freely and Dawe 10)

Although the narrator here is mocking the critiques for treating the titles published by the Institute as funny, the notion of the Institute and its employees being laughed at invites the readers to read these titles as comical.

However, neither the narrator nor the protagonist Hayri İrdal is a trustworthy figure, the narrator because of his emotional state after the decision to dissolve the Institute and after the death of Halit Ayarcı, and the protagonist because of the distance with which he is generally described. The distance between the younger and the older Hayri İrdal makes it easy to conclude that the younger version was less knowledgeable, perhaps even naïve, as commentators before me have also noted. Without using the word ironist, Moran comments on Hayri İrdal as a naïve narrator:

*Kapalılığı ile toplumun yarı içinde yarı dışında yaşayan bir adam olması, ona, topluma dışarıdan, farklı bir açıdan bakmak olanağını sağlar. (Moran, Ahmet Mithat’tan 299)*

İrdal’s childlike purity, half-mad strange personality, his antisocial behavior, and his being a man who is both inside and outside of society, provides him with the chance of looking at society from the outside, from a different perspective. (Gürol, “Time Regulation Institute” 2)

In this way Hayri İrdal’s vision of writing *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* in order to praise Halit Ayarcı and his Institute is juxtaposed to his tale of how he, a man of little education, growing up in traditional urban surroundings in Istanbul, was gradually drawn into the elite, which is engaged in westernization. In this tale, Hayri İrdal’s naïveté is, as elaborated on below, partly explained by references to fundamental needs.

A Comment on Freedom

Chapter 3 functions as a political meta-comment on the different periods of Turkish history that Hayri İrdal had lived through (*Saatleri* 21–23). It takes the form of an essay on the subject of freedom, a theme described by the narrator as “çocukluğumun belli başlı imtiyazı” ‘my childhood’s greatest privilege’ (*Saatleri* 21; Gürol, *Time* 39). When the narrator says that he has received news of freedom arriving in his country seven or eight times in his short lifetime, he does not specify the events to which this news were connected. Four top candidates that come to mind are the Young Turk revolution (1908), the occupation of Istanbul (1918), the proclamation of the Republic (1923), and the victory of the Democratic Party (1950). Other candidates for the list are the war-changing victory over the Greeks in the
Battle of İnönü (1921), the recapturing of Smyrna one year later (1922), and the end of World War II (1945). Although the story of the Time Regulation Institute most closely recalls the efforts of the Republic under Atatürk, it would be wrong to read the novel as a comment on one political period alone. Rather, the ambitions for total change, a new life, modernization, and freedom that the Institute espouses recall ambitions expressed during several political transitions, including the last one for the narrator, the landslide victory of the Democratic Party in 1950, which for a decade ended the rule of the People’s Republic Party founded by Atatürk.

In Hayri İrdal’s essay, political declarations of freedom are juxtaposed to the idea of individual freedom, or at least to a sense of experienced freedom in life:

Evet, bir kere bile kimse bana gittiğini söylemediği halde, yedi sekiz defa geldi; ve o geldi diye biz sevincimizden, davul zurna, sokaklara fırladık. (Saatleri 21)

Yes, seven or eight times, and no one ever bothered to say [i.e. tell me] when it left; but whenever it came back again, we would leap out of our seats in joy and pour into the streets to blow our horns and beat our drums. (Freely and Dawe 18)

There is an emphasis here on public experiences of celebration whenever freedom was announced, whereas the individual was not involved whenever it disappeared. When Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü was first published, these lines must have raised questions about the direction of the ruling Democratic Party just as much as they invited critical review of the reforms and victories of previous decades.

The before–now dichotomy is applied in this essay too. Hayri İrdal’s concept of freedom is paradoxically rooted partly in childhood (Saatleri 21, 22), which in the subsequent chapters gains a sense of being untouched by modernity. The entrepreneur Halit Ayarcı is a father figure who gives Hayri İrdal a central position in his modern and westernizing enterprise, which is quite the opposite to Hayri İrdal’s tranquil childhood. When reciting the sayings of Halit Ayarcı about freedom, the narrator is caught between praise of his former boss and mockery of the very idea of freedom:

Nihayet şu kanaata vardım ki, ona hiç kimsenin ihtiyacı yoktur. Hürriyet aşkı, –haydi Halit Ayarcı’nın sevdiği kelime ile söleyeyim, nasıl olsa beni artık ayıplayamaz, kendine ait bir lugatı kullandığım için benimle alay edemez!– bir nevi snobizmden başka bir şey değildir. Hakikaten muhtaç olsaydık, hakikaten sevseydik, o sık sık gelişlerinden birinde adamakilli yakalar, bir daha gözümüzün önünde, dizimizin dibinden ayırmazdık. Ne gezer? Dah a geldiğinin ertesi günü ortada yoktur. Ve işin garibi biz de yokluğu pek çabuk alıştıyoruz. (Saatleri 22)
At the end of the day, I must conclude that no one really needs such a thing in the first place. This love of liberty—and here I’ll borrow a phrase much loved by Halit Ayarcı, as he can no longer reprimand or tease me for dipping into his personal lexicon—this love of liberty is nothing more than a kind of snobbism. If we really needed such a thing, or if we truly felt passionately about it, then wouldn’t we have grasped onto one of its many avatars and never let it out of our sight? But to what end? The next day it already would have vanished. How strange that we accustom ourselves to its absence so quickly. (Freely and Dawe 19)

This paragraph presents a typical example of how irony builds in this novel. The sudden shift in the evaluation of the word “hürriyet” ‘freedom/liberty’ from something to love and treasure to nothing but snobbism represents one ironic cut that affects more than the idea of liberty. It also affects the target of mockery. While Hayri İrdal was once used to being mocked by Halit Ayarcı for using his vocabulary, here it is Halit Ayarcı who ends up being mocked for his use of this flashy expression “hürriyet aşkı” ‘love of liberty.’ This does not mean that Hayri İrdal has no reverence for liberty or for Halit Ayarcı.

Another ironic cut occurs when Halit Ayarcı, so highly praised in chapter 1, is described here in less flattering, almost opposite, terms. He has obviously had the habit of reprimanding and mocking Hayri İrdal, but still he is referred to as if he is a reliable source of counseling. This reminds readers to be utterly critical of the narrator’s judgment. Another element here is the unmarked transition from Hayri İrdal citing Halit Ayarcı in one sentence to giving his own comment in the next. Together, these elements enable and build the irony. The sentence, “Hakikaten muhtaç olsaydık, … dizimizin dibinden ayırmas-dık,” translated to “If we really needed such a thing, … never let it out of our sight?” gains two very different meanings. In the context of Hayri İrdal mocking the concept of freedom, the conditional sentences function rhetorically to say “We don’t really need such a thing as freedom” and “we don’t feel truly passionate about it.” On the other hand, it can be read as wishful thinking about how freedom could be achieved if people really felt drawn to it. Even though that is the opposite of what the sentence says on the surface, it makes sense that this narrator might express such wishful thinking “unconsciously,” as it were, given the discrepancies when he describes Halit Ayarcı.

Moreover, irony is not detected only at the sentence level in this chapter. Rather, it affects the fundamental before–now dichotomy and thus the discourse of westernization at the core of this novel. Even though childhood at first glance seems to stand in opposition to Halit Ayarcı and the Institute, the narrator takes care to place the paradox of freedom securely within his childhood on the Istanbul peninsula, represented by a watch that the protagonist received as a gift from his uncle on the occasion of his circumcision, known in Turkey as a rite of passage:

Twice a day I would walk from Edirnekapı to Fatih, plunging into a new fantasy with every dawdling step. But as I approached the age of ten, a passion came to sully this happiness. My life’s rhythms were disrupted, it would seem, by the watch my uncle gave me on the occasion of my circumcision. For no matter how innocent a passion might be, it is still a dangerous thing. But I was saved by my spirited nature. It even gave my life a direction. One might almost say it gave my life shape. For it may well have been this passion that led me to freedom’s door. (Freely and Dawe 20)

This short paragraph is full of ironic cuts, such as the sudden appearance of a watch and the ambiguous references to time, which alter the meaning through surprising turns of narrative. Bearing in mind that Hayri İrdal was born in the mid 1890s, his approaching ten years old would point to a time when Sultan Abdulhamit II was still a sovereign monarch, a way of ruling that was altered during the Young Turk revolution. The essay is building expectations of a political event that will change the protagonist’s life when it introduces the gift of a watch. Instead of altering the meaning of the previous sentences altogether, the watch becomes an ambiguous symbol of revolution in both a political and a personal sense. The fact that the watch was a gift on the occasion of Hayri İrdal’s circumcision also confuses this rite-of-passage symbol further, making it represent the old tradition and Islam at the same time as it represents something modern, technological, and Western. Instead of political revolution comes a reference to circumcision, which marks the transition between childhood and adulthood. In Turkey this clearly identifies the circumcised individual as male—since only boys, typically when aged 7–13 years, are circumcised—and as Muslim—since Christians in Turkey are not ritually circumcised, while Jewish boys undergo a very different circumcision rite as newborns. The watch comes to symbolize both the tradition and transgression at the very heart of Hayri İrdal’s social identity. Instead of freedom being a state that Hayri İrdal gains through his circumcision, there is a watch, which awakens a passion and promises to eventually open the door to freedom. On what occasion this “door to freedom” will actually open is not clear. It could have been on the occasion when he received the watch. As phrased here, however, it could also be understood as a prolepsis, foreshadowing Hayri İrdal’s apprenticeship in the time-setter Nuri Efendi’s shop, or the establishment of the Institute.
The Frame of the Novel

Structurally, the novel consists of Hayri İrdal’s narrative within a frame, which we could call the authorial frame, since it might be associated with an implied author. This frame is the division of the text into four parts indicated by numbers and subtitles, their subchapters indicated by numbers, an introductory epigraph, and the novel’s title. Even though these elements are parts of the work of fiction that we call the novel, they stand out from the rest of the work in several ways. One thing that separates them from the rest of the text is that they belong neither to the narrator nor to any other agent referred to in the text. In other words, the text does not tell us who inserted these elements.

By allusions, the frame places the story within the context of other literature and literary movements from the 19th and 20th centuries. One constituent of this frame is the organization of the text into four parts, with successive chapters starting from one within each part. The four parts are:

1) “Büyük Ümitler” (Saatleri 5), “Great Expectations” (Gürol, Time 27; Freely and Dawe 1), thirteen chapters (Saatleri 5–74)
2) “Küçük Hakikatler” (Saatleri 75), “Small Truths” (Gürol, Time 85), “Little Truths” (Freely and Dawe 77), ten chapters (Saatleri 75–177)
3) “Sabaha Doğru” (Saatleri 179), “Towards Dawn” (Gürol, Time 305; Freely and Dawe 189), eleven chapters (Saatleri 179–340)
4) “Her Mevsimin Bir Sonu Vardır” (Saatleri 341), “Every Season Has an End” (Gürol, Time 327; Freely and Dawe 365), two chapters (Saatleri 341–68)

The division into these four parts corresponds neither to the timeline of the Institute nor strictly to the subdivisions distinguishable in the narrative development of the text. First, part I consists of a three-chapter introduction, clearly distinguishable from the childhood narrative that follows in part I. Part II is distinguishable as the first part of the narrative about Hayri İrdal’s adulthood after World War I. At the center of part II is Hayri İrdal’s trial and subsequent association with Doktor Ramiz, which makes this part distinguishable from parts III and IV, in which his association with Halit Ayarcı and the Time Regulation Institute are instead in focus.

The subtitle of part I alludes to Charles Dickens’ Great Expectations and of part III to the literary movement Fecr-i Ati ‘The Dawn of the Future,’ named after a Turkish literary journal promoting modernism around 1900. The subtitle of part IV is somewhat paradoxical. As a structural comment, this subtitle serves partly to tie the novel together as a whole, which is smoothly aligned with the established pattern of the four seasons of the year. At the same time, it disrupts this pattern, because the whole is not called a year, but,
rather surprisingly, a season, and while years are often experienced as repetitive wholes, there is certainly something unfinished about seasons. So, read as a comment on the narrative, this last subtitle articulates a dual vision of both a story repeating itself over and over again, and a story after the end of which we can expect something completely different. In that way, it simultaneously emphasizes the end of the Institute period and the even longer era of Hayri İrdal’s post-World War I life, associating the latter with hope for a new beginning.

Another constituent of the authorial frame surrounding Hayri İrdal’s narrative is the epigraph on the title page, standing as a comment on the whole narrative. The epigraph is a couplet of the early 19th-century poet İzzet Molla, rendered in late Ottoman Turkish transliterated according to modern Turkish spelling:

Bihakk-ı Hazret-i Mecnun izâle eyleye Hak
Serimde derd-i hıredden biraz eser kaldı (Saatleri 3)

Please God, for the sake of His Excellency Majnun make go away
The traces of the pain of consciousness which remain in my head
(Gürol, Time, v)²⁰

This couplet is part of a poem in İzzet Molla’s divan, i.e. collection of poetry, and in XIX. Asr Türk Edebiyatı Tarihi, Tanpınar paid considerable attention to İzzet Molla, whom he regarded as the most recent innovative artist of the old literary tradition. Tanpınar makes him a focal point of the transition between old and new literature during Tanzimat because he writes in “the old genres” at the same time as he shows concern about the effects of westernization as they had started to be felt at the beginning of the 19th century.

The couplet refers to the famous romance Layla and Majnun, which is about the young poet who, afflicted by love for the unreachable Layla, withdraws to the desert and becomes mad. The couplet’s lyrical speaker likens himself to Majnun as he prays for destruction, since unbearable knowledge, or reason, remains in his head. This epigraph sets a romantic and quite melodramatic tone for the whole narrative, introduced by alluding to both the romance tradition, by its reference to Majnun, and to the topic of westernization, by its reference to İzzet Molla.

It is always difficult to determine how an epigraph ought to be read in relation to the rest of a work, but given Tanpınar’s view of İzzet Molla, this epigraph seems to invite readers to engage with the novel in light of both the topic of westernization and the topics of love and madness. Of these topics, many commentators relate the novel only to the first, as they read the novel as

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²⁰ In the translation by Freely and Dawe, this epigraph is simply omitted.
satirical, as a comment on society, and overlook the aspects of madness and love, which have to do with the protagonist’s yearnings and desires.

My dissertation is no exception in this respect, as it focuses on westernization. However, I would like to emphasize that reading Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü while closing one’s eyes to the aspects of love and madness leaves readers without a comprehensive understanding of what is at stake for the protagonist of this narrative. The novel’s allusions to the romantic tradition as well as to madness in literature combine in an interesting way with Freudian thought, since the first page of the narrative tells us that Hayri İrdal has undergone psychoanalytic treatment. Read against the background of this treatment, Hayri İrdal’s childhood story about the standing clock evokes the Freudian reading of a standing object in a dream as a phallus. During psychoanalytic treatment, Doktor Ramiz tells Hayri İrdal that what he suffers from is “the father complex,” to which Hayri İrdal responds that he has no father complex; rather, he loves his father (Saatleri 105–08). The fact that Hayri İrdal is a married man, having been serially married to two women, does not alter the fact that the central romances of the narrative are the same-sex relations between a younger Hayri İrdal and the father figures he connects with. The minor roles his wives play in the narrative underline the male-centric nature of the narrative.

It should be emphasized here that the Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü romance is hardly sexual in the sense of erotic, but the generational aspect is evident in that the novel portrays the old Hayri İrdal telling about the relations and aspirations of his younger self. Against the young Hayri İrdal of the story stands the narrator Hayri İrdal, who to write the story must understand more of the events he renders now than he did as they happened. Still, the narrator gives an unconvincing impression of his being as young and naïve as he ever was. The protagonist’s longing for the new and for freedom, which is revealed in connection with several events throughout the story, can be characterized as his strongest, yet seemingly suppressed, desire, and as something that reveals the romantic core of this novel. This desire is not being mocked in the narrative—although tendencies towards collective freedom hysteria are—nor is the nostalgia for childhood and Ottoman times that often shines through. However, in retrospect, this sentiment from the character’s younger days now overlaps with the narrator’s renewed desire for freedom coupled with self-destructiveness after Halit Ayarcı’s confusing death.

From the narrator Hayri İrdal’s first description of Halit Ayarcı, there is the sense that he is revealing a delirious mind. As the narrative proceeds, negative descriptions of Halit Ayarcı interrupt the praises and strengthen the impression of a narrator who is insane or on the verge of madness. In Hayri İrdal’s highly ambiguous presentations of Halit Ayarcı, a critique of a society blinded by ideology and by the power of its leaders can be discerned. The personal aspect of their uneven man-to-man relationship gives a certain gravity to the story, as it emphasizes how much is at stake for Hayri İrdal in their relationship.
Allusions and Parallels to Dickens and Proust

Besides Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, Proust’s masterpiece, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, is a work that stands out as a model for Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü. A shared feature of these three novels is first-person narration, a technique frequently used by modernists. Pip, Marcel, and Hayri İrdal are all telling stories about themselves, as are the narrators of Ağaoğlu’s *Ölmeye Yatmak* and Pamuk’s *Yeni Hayat*.

*Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* recounts events of the years after the World War I, as forecasted by key events before the war. One way to view the events from Hayri İrdal’s childhood within the narrative is that the narrator selected them due to their later implications for the Institute. Another interpretation is to say that they present Hayri İrdal’s formative living conditions, which led to his personal crisis, after which he underwent various transformations, eventually becoming co-director of the Time Regulation Institute and a writer. For instance, in part I there is a paragraph in which the narrator comments on the relationship between childhood and adult life through reflecting on Nuri Efendi and Halit Ayarcı:


Nuri Efendi and Halit Ayarcı—my life circled these two great poles. One I met when I was still quite young, at a time when my eyes had only just opened to the world and the people in it. The other stepped into my life when I had lost all hope, when I believed the story of my life was at an end. These two men, so distinct in virtue and mentality, were likewise distinct in their understandings of time, but in me their opposites merged in such a way as to never again diverge. I was the product of their combined efforts. I was like the secondhand watches Nuri Efendi repaired by carefully assembling parts made by different craftsmen; I was a mechanism made of two personalities combined and harnessed to the caravan of time, an ‘amended’ alloy, a composite of art. (Freely and Dawe 32)

Here we see an interesting combination of two father figures, Nuri Efendi and Halit Ayarcı. They are described both as opposites and poles, and as an indivisible unity. Hayri İrdal is defined in a similarly dichotomous way, both as a “mekik,” i.e. a ‘weaver’s shuttle,’ moving between these two poles in the
web of life, and as a “muhassala” ‘product’ of these two opposites merging. Nuri Efendi and Halit Ayarcı might in other words be viewed as representatives of the old and the new in Hayri İrdal’s life, together constituting a dichotomous entity.

In choosing the war as the turning point of the narrative, Tanpınar’s work displays a concern for the past that finds a parallel in that of Proust. Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü aspires to reflect on new matters by looking back on imperial times, similar to how an adult Marcel in Proust’s work recalls incidents from pre-World War I times with both a sense of nostalgia and a new perspective that shapes the way he sees things and the selection of things he recalls from the past. Somewhat similar to Proust’s Marcel, Hayri İrdal is backtracking in time lost, but also trying to connect a more distant past to a more recent one, both seen relative to the time of narration.

The parallels between Proust’s and Tanpınar’s novels are not only evident on a technical level. In both novels the more distant past is the period before World War I, and the more immediate past is the post-war period. World War I, and in Tanpınar’s case the decade of political upheavals surrounding it, is in both cases a turning point between a more distant and a more immediate past.

Interpretations of the Title

The plural in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü indicates that the novel is about “setting the clocks or the times right,” about “regulating” or “fixing” clocks or times. The translation The Time Regulation Institute, used both by Gürol and by Freely and Dawe, is probably the best one in English, but considering the historical background of the novel, namely the westernizing reforms and especially the standardization of time measures implemented in the early years of the Turkish Republic, the title could also be interpreted as The Institute for Standardizing Time Measures or as The Clock-Setting Institute, the latter having been used in Feldman’s translation and some articles in English.

The multiplicity of possible translations arises from the multiple meanings of the words in the noun phrase Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, the unfamiliarity of this phrase in Turkish, and the multiple ways to interpret it in light of the novel. Saat means clock, hour, and time of day. Ayar means setup, adjustment, and standard. According to the online dictionary Güncel Türkçe Sözlük (Modern Turkish Dictionary) of TDK, enstitü means an establishment

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21 The shuttle metaphor is not used in either of the two published translations into English. The sentence “İşte benim hayat mekiğim bu iki kutup arasında dolaştı,” literally ‘Indeed, my life shuttle moved back and forth between these two poles’ (Saatleri 34) corresponds to “my life circled these two great poles” in Freely and Dawe (32).
attached to or not attached to a university, generally conducting research and in some cases also education.

One thing that both the English translations lack is the specification implied by the word saatleri, which consists of the word saat plus the plural suffix -ler and the accusative suffix -i. Both suffixes serve to specify the object saat. Firstly, the selection of this word makes the verbal noun phrase saatleri ayarlama stand out as different from the familiar one saatı ayarlama, which, depending on context means “adjusting the time,” “setting the clock right,” or “fixing the clock.” In this phrase, the accusative suffix -i entails a specification, showing that a specific clock or time is being considered, while the same phrase without accusative suffix on the object, saat ayarlama, would have the general meaning of “clock setting,” “fixing clocks,” or “time regulation.” Hence, even though saatleri ayarlama enstitüsü is an unfamiliar term, the accusative suffix -i implies by its nature a discursive familiarity regarding which times, clocks, or hours are referred to. Secondly, compared with the phrase saatı ayarlama, the addition of the plural suffix to saatleri ayarlama enstitüsü implies a further specification, which evokes the sense of there being certain hours, clocks, or times in plural—two or more—that this institute is prepared to fix.

Although saatı ayarlama ‘fixing the clock/adjusting the time’ is a familiar phrase, inserting the plural suffix makes it unfamiliar and thus open to several interpretations. Is the institute only prepared to undertake the same action multiple times, that is, fixing not one clock but many, or setting the time of not only one clock but of many? Or should we read saat here in a more general sense, interpreting the phrase as referring to times that the institute is set to arrange in suitable relations with each other? Both are possible interpretations of the unfamiliar term saatleri ayarlama enstitüsü. There are many translations one could think of that would take this sort of specification into consideration: The Institute for Setting the Clocks Right, The Institute for the Regulation of Times, The Institute for Adjusting the Times, etc.

In his MA dissertation, Erol Köroğlu has read the theme of “time-fixing” as alluding to ongoing reformation processes in Turkey in the early 20th century, involving not only the above-mentioned official transition from a hijri calendar to the Gregorian calendar, but also such things as the Istanbul ferries moving away from presenting their schedules in relation to the daily times of prayer to implementing schedules following a daily 24-hour system. Interestingly, while the implementation of nationwide time standards in Europe is often seen as a late 19th-century phenomenon related to the spread of railways and their need for exact timetables, one of the ideas behind institutionalizing one time standard in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü is the desire to regulate the clocks at the piers in Istanbul, which serve passenger ferries crossing the Bosporus and the Golden Horn (Saatleri 192–93). As a curious fact, Ertop refers to an interview Tanpınar gave when the novel first came out in serial form, in which Tanpınar says that his experience with
confusing ferry schedules was what initiated the idea of writing this novel (320). This anecdote illustrates how the story refers to the contemporary world of its first readers.

Turkish readers today can also immediately notice the parallel names of the Institute and its founder, as the root *ayar*, meaning “setup,” “adjustment,” and “standard,” is a shared element of the names *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* and Halit Ayarçı. In addition to creating a link between the Institute and its leader, the fact that Halit Ayarçı already had this surname when he and Hayri İrdal first met, suggests that the Institute was established after the surname reform in 1934 (*Saatleri* 184).

The title may, of course, refer to the Institute in the novel, but it seems to emphasize the “Institute” for the regulation of times at a more abstract level as well. The following sentence hints at another way in which to understand the Institute in relation to the novel:

Asırımın belki en büyük, en faydalı müessesesinin, Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü’nün onun gözlerinde birdenbire beliren bir parıltıdan bugünkü hâline gelişini gün gün hayatımın bir parçası gibi yaşadım. (*Saatleri* 11)

It was in this spirit that I witnessed the Time Regulation Institute—perhaps the greatest and most important organization of our century—evolve from a sudden spark in his eyes to the splendor it enjoys today, or did, rather, yesterday. (Freely and Dawe 7)

The reference to “Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü” here is ambiguous. It might refer to the Institute told about in the novel and at the same time it might be a self-reference to the novel as a “time regulation institute” in itself. The plentiful metanarrative commentary makes strong connections between Hayri İrdal’s life and the novel. One reflection that shows this is as follows:

Kendi kendime, yatağında uzun zaman düşünüyordum. ‘Hayri İrdal, dedim, çok şey gördün, geçirdin. Yaşın ancak altmış olduğu hâlde birkaç ömrünü yaşadın.’ (*Saatleri* 11)

I lay in bed thinking for quite some time. ‘Hayri İrdal,’ I said to myself, ‘you have seen so much of the world, and you have witnessed so much as well. Although just sixty years old, you have lived the lives of several men combined.’ (my trans.)

When lying in bed, Hayri İrdal thinks about his experiences as corresponding to those of many lives. In light of such freedom of thought, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* stands out as an economical and well-organized work. In my view, the title *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* may very well be read as referring to the novel, which is a tool for organizing times and events, an institute for regulating times, as it were. The novel creates its own reality and organizes that reality in its own way. In other words, there is a double reference in the
Some Discrepancies in the Narrative

Inside the frame is Hayri İrdal’s narrative, which consists of two parts, i.e. the introduction and the rest, the latter constituting the main narrative, constructed along the lines of the story about Hayri İrdal and the Time Regulation Institute. In this story there is, as mentioned above, one turning point when Hayri İrdal returns from the war and his father dies, and a climax is reached with the establishment of the Institute. Another radical change in Hayri İrdal’s life occurs with his writing of memoirs, an act whose result is left unresolved at the end of the novel.

However, Tanpinar wrote a final chapter, or appendix to the narrative—a letter from Halit Ayarcı to Doktor Ramiz, which serves as a metanarrative to all the preceding chapters—that is not included in the original first or second editions of the novel, but published separately later (e.g. Alptekin 66–70). Gürol has incorporated it as an appendix to his translation (Time 327–30), and Moran speculates upon what reasons Tanpinar might have had for writing this letter, and what made him decide to publish the book without including it (Ahmet Mithat’tan 320–21n11). Since it is not part of the published novel analyzed here, I will not engage in a detailed interpretation of this appendix here. Suffice it to say that it confirms that total annihilation is the result of Hayri İrdal’s narration, adding that Hayri İrdal commits suicide and Halit Ayarcı gives the judgment that he was crazy.

The introduction comprises the first three chapters. This part is a commentary that introduces the rest of Hayri İrdal’s narrative. The narrated time in the introduction is as close as the novel gets to the time of narration, which means that all events referred to in the introduction are analepses,
referred to as events of “the past,” while the main narrative distinguishes clearly between the old days in part I, extending to World War I, and the new era afterwards, in parts II–IV.

The introduction invites its readers into a self-referential narrative, a narrative that comments on its own narration. Here, the narration of events is secondary to commentary, which threatens to take over the whole narrative. In that sense, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* is a self-referential narrative from beginning to end. At the beginning, this becomes clear when this first-person account first tries to give the impression of relating all that Hayri İrdal has read and not read throughout his life, and then turns to what he has written, before it describes what he is writing now and what he wants the readers to think about it. Emre Ayvaz has noted the discrepancy between the narrator’s statement that Hayri İrdal has “no great interest” in such things as reading and writing, and what he shows that this character is capable of through the narrative. There is a striking disparity between what the narrator does and what he claims to do.

In the introduction, references to the past are not arranged chronologically. Rather, they are mentioned to sustain the narrator’s statements concerning his narrative. An example of this variation between past and present tense is seen in the first paragraph:

I have never cared much for reading or writing; anyone who knows me can tell you that. Unless you count Jules Verne or the Nick Carter stories I read as a child, everything can be traced to *A Thousand and One Nights*, *A Parrot’s Tale*, the armful of history books I’ve had occasion to pass my eyes over (always skipping the Arabic and Persian words), and the works of the philosopher Avicenna. Before we established our institute, when I was unemployed and spent my days at home, I would often find myself leafing through my children’s schoolbooks; at other times, when I was left with nothing to do but recite the Koran, I would whittle away my hours in the coffeehouses of Edirnekapı and Şehzadebaşı, reading articles in the newspaper or the odd episode of a serial. (Freely and Dawe 4)

Comparing the original Turkish with its English translations, we notice that Turkish uses many fewer finite verb forms. The literary standard that confronts the readers of a novel such as *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* places considerable information in subordinate clauses where the verb is in the form
of a participle, converb, or converbal phrase. With a syntax corresponding more closely to the Turkish original, the first sentence could be: “Anyone who knows me can tell you that I have never had much interest in the business of reading and writing.” The Turkish phrase “büyük bir ilgim olmadığımı bilirler” ‘know that I have never had much interest’ could mean that what his friends know is that Hayri İrdal ‘did not have’ or ‘does not have’ much interest in reading and writing. The participle olmadığımı is, like many subjugated verb forms in Turkish, tense neutral. Thus, Turkish grammar here confirms a narratological truth, namely that the distinction between now and then is unstable. Even though the combined form “have (never) cared” is a finite verb form constructed very differently from Turkish participles, it conveys as much of the ambiguity concerning the present as does olmadığımı, since it is unclear whether the narrator who utters these words still lacks interest in reading and writing, and whether his current writing represents a radical change.

One signal that the narrator still lacks interest in reading and writing is the phrase “Jul Vern ve Nik Karter hikâyeleri.” Feldman has drawn attention to the fact that the books Hayri İrdal says he has read are all translations (“Ahmet Hamdi” 538–39), a sign of Hayri İrdal’s relation to a process of westernization. What I will focus on here is instead this phrase, which literally means “Jules Verne and Nick Carter stories.” This confuses the distinction between author and protagonist by paralleling the author Jules Verne with the protagonist Nick Carter, confusing fiction and reality. If we look at the translations into English, Freely and Dawe have “helped” the text a little by translating the phrase as “Jules Verne or the Nick Carter stories,” while Gürrol has kept the confusion with the phrase “the stories of Jules Verne and Nick Carter” (27). This confusion regarding author and protagonist reflects the confusion regarding Hayri İrdal’s intention in telling his story: Is he interested or uninterested in telling it? And is he telling us his story or rather what he thinks Halit Ayarcı would have wanted him to tell? In fact he shows both interest and lack of interest in telling his story, and he shuffles between telling it from the perspective of the westernized elite that he has joined and the perspective of the simple Oriental from Istanbul’s old neighborhoods that he used to be.

Hayri İrdal first tells us what he read in his childhood, that he has read for his children at home and for friends at a café, and that he has undergone treatment at a judicial medical facility (Saatleri 7). Then, after mentioning his own father, he continues by telling us that he has written a book, already published, about a certain Ahmet Zamanî, ‘Ahmet the Timely.’ Ahmet Zamanî is a quasi-religious soothsayer, and a fount of anecdotes about clocks and humans alike, and Hayri İrdal is the one who knows the tales and anecdotes associated with him. The book Hayri İrdal wrote about this soothsayer has been translated into several languages, and the Institute has received a visiting scholar from Holland, whom Hayri İrdal took to a graveyard where they found Ahmet Zamanî’s grave (Saatleri 8–9). This is
another example of confusion between fiction and reality in the novel. Although there is no proof of the historical reality of the figure Ahmet Zamanî, Hayri İrdal’s book about him having lived in a certain century is said to have had great effects when it was published. One is the effect of its having been translated and well discussed. Another effect, which becomes clearer at a later stage, is that the legacy of Ahmet Zamanî serves the purpose of legitimizing the Time Regulation Institute both by sustaining its purpose of building a bridge between civilizations and by rooting its innovations in pre-war society.

Hayri İrdal’s ways of relating to fiction and reality show themselves to be even more intricate, as we learn that the character of Ahmet Zamanî is largely based on Hayri İrdal’s memories of Nuri Efendi, his childhood master in watchmaking. The idea of Ahmet Zamanî is born out of a conversation in which Halit Ayarcı first asks Hayri İrdal to write a book about Nuri Efendi:

Fakat siz de Nuri Efendinin hayatını anlatan bir kitap yazın. Şöyle Avrupalıca bir kitap. Bunu yalnız siz yazabilirsiniz ve vazifenizdir de... Bu adami dünyaya tanıtmalyiz.

Bu kitabı yazmadım. Daha fazla yardımı için onun yerine aynı fikirleri ve malzemeyi kullanarak Ahmet Zamanî Efendi’nin Hayatı ve Eserleri’ni yazdım. Acaba bu ustama bir ihanet midir? (Saatleri 35)

‘You shall write the life of Nuri Efendi, a book in the European style. Only you can meet such a challenge—it is your duty to introduce this man to the world.’

I never wrote the book; instead I wrote The Life and Works of Ahmet the Timely, using all the same ideas and materials, as it was deemed more beneficial and more contributive to the politics of our institute. Was this a betrayal of my master? (Freely and Dawe 33)22

Instead of writing about Nuri Efendi, Hayri İrdal uses what he has learned from his previous master to write the book about Ahmet Zamanî, thus preparing the ground for the Time Regulation Institute. By telling us this, narrator Hayri İrdal underlines that in his reality, relations between past and present, East and West are more intricate than the basic dichotomies of the discourse of westernization would imply.

As mentioned above, references to the founder of the Institute, Halit Ayarcı, function in a way similar to references to the Institute. An example of this is seen in the Introduction, where description of the massive criticism of the book that Hayri İrdal has written shifts abruptly to praise for Halit Ayarci’s positive role in it:

22 “Ahmet the Timely” is Freely and Dawe’s translation of “Ahmet Zamanî.” It makes sense to translate meaningful names and epithets like this in a literary translation, though I retain them as spelled in the Turkish original in my text.
My book was translated into several languages, and its critical reception abroad was as solemn and profound as it had been at home: this alone should prove that our dear friend Halit Ayarcı—may he rest in peace—was not at all mistaken when he discerned our need for the illustrious Ahmet Zamanî to have existed, nor was he wrong when he assigned him to the century in question. (my trans.)

We see here how Halit Ayarcı is said to have given importance to the book that Hayri İrdal has written in at least two ways. Firstly, since the praises that surround Halit Ayarcı encompass the Institute and its publications, his person challenges the critical notions referred to from the outside. Secondly, since Doktor Ramiz and eventually Halit Ayarcı are portrayed as the ones responsible for initiating the Institute and its publications, Hayri İrdal is not to be praised or blamed even for the texts he has written. Similar links to the Institute and its founder are made with varying frequency throughout the book, upholding a discrepancy between Hayri İrdal as a naïve character just following orders, and Hayri İrdal as one who has authored texts before and is now narrating Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü.

Ambiguous Catastrophes

Part II is where memories from the past start to gain renewed significance in narrated time. As Hayri İrdal returns from World War I only to find himself fatherless and jobless (Saatleri 77–78), he needs to reestablish his own life under very different circumstances. At this turning point in history, Hayri İrdal finds himself caught in a struggle between his personal efforts to start a new life and the legacy of his old life, which despite all the difficulties associated with it, nonetheless grants him a degree of stability (78). Perhaps it is the clash between hopes and realities that makes the narrator look back at this turning point in life as the starting point of a never-ending series of catastrophes (86). If we assume the wide scope of the novel as a discourse of praise for the magnificent things Hayri İrdal has experienced in a new and westernized era after the war, the next thing we see is that this discourse is challenged by the view of a never-ending series of catastrophes after the war.

Given the praise of the Time Regulation Institute and its founder in part I, it is paradoxical that the post-war period, which includes the meeting between Hayri İrdal and Halit Ayarcı and later the founding of the Institute, is introduced in this way. It creates tension in the narrative, since it is not clear
whether the catastrophes in part II are to be read as events to be superseded by the Time Regulation Institute praised in part I, or rather as a platform for the founding of the Institute, in which case part II comes as a strong corrective of the narrative in which the opposite of the praise in the introduction comes strongly into play.

At exactly this turning point, there are two paragraphs strongly characterized by the ambiguities of the situation in which Hayrî İrdal finds himself:

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I have chosen to quote the English translation of Freely and Dawe here as it is, because even though ambiguities are lost in some phrasings, they have managed to compensate for this by strengthening them in others, something I will not explore in detail here.

As Hutcheon has stressed, “irony rarely involves a simple decoding of a single inverted message,” “it is more often a semantically complex process of relating, differentiating, and combining said and unsaid meanings—and doing so with some evaluative edge” (Irony’s Edge 89). The ironic discourse in the two above paragraphs comes about in a field where different worlds of discourse come together and collide in one communicative process. These collisions are strong signals of irony that, according to Hutcheon, emerge because the community enables them to (89).

Irony is evident in the two paragraphs quoted above at several levels for readers who see the parallel between Hayri İrdal falling into the trap of the past when getting back in touch with the father figure Abdüsselâm Bey and the later event of getting entangled with Halit Ayarçı. As soon as the similarity

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Not wishing to get tangled in the web of the past, I refrained from seeing my old acquaintances. Besides, there was no one left save for Abdüsselam Bey. To guarantee I would not cross paths with the poor man I’d once loved so dearly, I changed my walking route, avoiding the direct road to the War Office, which I visited quite frequently in those days, and taking the streets behind the Şehzade Mosque and Direklerarası instead.

But in the end the old man came and found me. This was three months after my return. Early one morning a carriage pulled up in front of our house and with some reluctance I peered out of the window and saw Abdüsselam stepping down. ‘Where’s that unfortunate son of yours?’ he bellowed at the doorstep. (Freely and Dawe 80)
between the two father figures is established, the negative description of Hayri İrdal’s reunion with Abdüsselâm Bey in the narrative, not to speak of the despair we imagine as having led to their entanglement in the actual course of events, establishes itself as a difference at the heart of similarity. This difference is somewhat surprising in view of several of the discourses in play here. One thing is that even though the immediate post-war situation is referred to as utterly difficult, the narrative is still colored by a light tone characteristic of the narrator’s comfortable position at the time of narration. The radical choice to refrain from seeing old acquaintances is an example of an event that, despite the straightforward reference to it in the narrative, bears witness to a former Hayri İrdal acting out of strong conviction in the actual situation. The immediate post-war conditions seem characterized by even more poverty and despair than those before the war, and this is surprising given the introduction to the novel, which praised an institute and an entrepreneur typical of the post-war period.

Discursive differences are further marked by ironic cuts that activate the discrepancy between Hayri İrdal’s narrative and the context of Abdüsselâm Bey’s dominance to which Hayri İrdal once subjected himself. It is not that Hayri İrdal wanted to get entangled with Abdüsselâm Bey after the war, but the old man was his only acquaintance left in Istanbul, and in a time of hardship Abdüsselâm Bey could provide him a place to live, a wife, and support for education and work (Saatleri 78–81). Regarding the school he attended after the war, the narrator reflects:

With his [i.e. Abdüsselâm Bey’s] encouragement, and Ferhat Bey’s even more enthusiastic support, I enrolled in the Post and Telegraphy Academy. I don’t know why they chose this particular school, which seemed rather modest, at least from the outside; it was, after all, a time when most schools were so hard up for students that they had no choice but to rely on recruiting agents, even offer financial incentives to recruit students. Though the two men were very fond of me, their feelings about me hadn’t really changed. And Abdüsselam Bey had more important considerations in mind. My education wouldn’t last long; moreover, students were given a little pocket money. We came to the conclusion that working with telegraphs was not so different from working with watches and clocks—perhaps because they too ticked and had inside them this thing known as a mechanism. (Freely and Dawe 81)
We see that there is much more to Hayri İrdal’s comment that he did not know why the school he attended had been chosen for him. One thing is that he needed support and had to rely on his benefactors. The comment describing the school as modest says something about Hayri İrdal’s greater ambitions. The notion of his benefactors’ opinions about him not having changed implies quite some criticism of their lack of knowledge of him. When it is said that Abdüsselam Bey “başka sebepler de gösteriyordu” ‘gave other reasons as well’ (cf. “had more important considerations in mind”; Freely and Dawe 81), this shows that the choice of school was discussed, and that one reason expressed for enrolling Hayri İrdal in the Telegraphy School back then was that telegraphy was not so different from watch-making. The young Hayri İrdal went to the school in question on this basis, perhaps already knowing about the other reasons for this choice of school, even then.

The narrator Hayri İrdal adds at least two more reasons for this choice: firstly, his benefactors had a false image of who he was and, secondly, they had to save money. What we observe in this paragraph is, in other words, that Hayri İrdal’s naïveté portrayed in narrated time is juxtaposed with quite a harsh analysis at the time of narration. In that way, the narrator shows without telling that a lot of Hayri İrdal’s choices in the past were made out of necessity, not due to his wishes. Pointing out the material conditions in narrated time, the narrator gives a trustworthy explanation of Hayri İrdal’s presumed naïveté back then. What is not explained is the lack of critical distance in Hayri İrdal’s praises for his newly deceased benefactor Halit Ayarcı. On the other hand, his older examples also show that historical distance might be needed in order to formulate an incisive analysis. In other words, Hayri İrdal’s open critique of his previous benefactors invites ironic readings of his naïve portrayal of the newly deceased Halit Ayarcı in the present.

Regarding his marriage, Hayri İrdal says outright:

Abdüsselam Beyin beni o kadar ısrarla kendi isine damat yapması, Emine’nin sevine sevine benimle evlenmesi kadar gülünç, budalaca bir şeydi. (Saatleri 80)

It was … as absurd as Abdüsselam Bey’s insistence on my marrying Emine or Emine’s exuberant acceptance of my proposal. (Freely and Dawe 83)

In this paragraph the translators have altered the phrase “kendisine damat yapması” ‘making me his son-in-law,’ which corresponds to “my marrying Emine” in the translation. The reflection of his marriage being arranged and seemingly being as much about becoming Abdüsselam Bey’s son-in-law as about marrying Emine colors the later praise of his wife:

Emine, şirin, saf ve her şeyden evel iyi insandi. Hayat karşısında şaşılack bir cesaretiardi. Ömrü küçük bir kuş gibi Abdüsselam Beyin evi denilen kafeste geçmişti. Dünyası orada tanıdığı insanlardan ibaretti. Evlendiğimiz zaman,
Emine was a charming and innocent young woman; above all she had a good heart. In the face of adversity she showed remarkable courage. Her life in Abdüsselam Bey’s villa had been that of a caged bird. Her world was made up of only the people she knew there. At the time of our marriage she was a stranger to the outside world; taking her first tentative step into it, she nearly turned around and scampered back inside. But she seemed to have been wise since birth: almost never was she caught off guard. Not even the strangest situations fazed her. Always possessed of sound judgment, she was brave and affable to the end. (Freely and Dawe 83)

The words cesaret ‘courage’ and cesur ‘brave’ stand out in this paragraph, where they are used about Emine, who is said to have been raised in a cage like a little bird, and afraid and insecure when taking her first steps outside the house at the time of her marriage. When Emine in these circumstances is described as brave, it says more about the circumstances than the person. Thus, even though this paragraph explicitly describes Emine, it also says a great deal about Abdüsselâm Bey and about Hayri İrdal’s relationship to him. Since we know that Emine grew up in Abdüsselâm Bey’s household, these ironic descriptions of Emine hardly going out say a great deal about how old-fashioned her upbringing has been in the house of Abdüsselâm Bey.

Looking in the rear-view mirror, Hayri İrdal shows how he returned from the war with the intention of managing his life himself. However, Abdüsselâm Bey found him, and years later, Hayri İrdal states that it was because of his weak will that he surrendered to the old man (Saatleri 86). The reference to his weak will creates tension with other bits of information presented in this chapter. Firstly, the events related give the impression that Hayri İrdal had material needs, perhaps even feelings of despair, that did not leave him with much choice when it came to accepting Abdüsselâm Bey’s support, so the narrator’s comment that Hayri İrdal’s evolving relationship with Abdüsselâm Bey was based on his weak will seems at odds with the events described. In other words, this comment contains a rather surprising dissimilarity at the heart of similarity, signaling that these words are open to other interpretations of what is being said. Secondly, if weak will was what made Hayri İrdal surrender to this old man, is that also true of his attachment to father figures in general, including Doktor Ramiz and Halit Ayarcı at a later stage? The similarities between Hayri İrdal’s relations to all three of them suggest that comments on one of them might be comments on one or both of the others. Although the narrator’s comment here seems at odds with the descriptions of the protagonist’s relation to Abdüsselâm Bey immediately proceeding it, it gives a new glimpse into Hayri İrdal’s relationship to Halit Ayarcı for those
readers who see both the discrepancy in this comment at a local level and the parallels in Hayri İrdal’s attachment to father figures at the global level of the narrative.

The descriptions of Hayri İrdal’s poor state after the war, combined with his job-seeking efforts and strategies to avoid old acquaintances, give a glimpse into the narrator’s state of mind, at odds with his stated purpose of describing the magnificent person Halit Ayarcı and The Time Regulation Institute. If Halit Ayarcı is a parallel to Abdüsselâm Bey, and Hayri İrdal’s meeting with Halit Ayarcı occurs because of his meeting with Abdüsselâm Bey, this means that their relationship is primarily based on broken dreams. Descriptions of Hayri İrdal’s strategies immediately after the war bear witness to hopes that he once had that his life would turn out differently, and to wishes that it had at the time of narration. These expectations of a radical new life taking over after ties to the old one are broken are typical features of a westernization discourse. But the narrator shows that the opposite happened in Hayri İrdal’s life. After the war, he did not manage to break his ties to the old, he did not leave Eastern traditions behind, and the dreams he once had of starting a brand-new life on his own were never realized. In other words, these descriptions invite interpretations of the novel as being mainly about all the things that happened instead of the hopes that Hayri İrdal had for a brand-new life. Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, as established above, is among other things a story about Turkish westernization, and such an interpretation contains a radical critique of that discourse. While westernization in the official discourse is portrayed as a tool for progress and improvement, narrator Hayri İrdal reveals, in glimpses, that it is as much the opposite, a tool for regression and personal failure.

Post-War Trial

In this chapter, I will look more closely at the process leading to the trial in which Hayri İrdal is eventually sentenced to judicial medical treatment and meets Doktor Ramiz. This story is interesting because it raises questions about how to treat older discourses from before the war in the new world, and how to distinguish between true and false, sane and insane, in these discourses.

The “meaningless mistakes” that set off an “unbroken series of disasters,” of which the trial is one (“mânasız yanlışlıklar”; “birbirini peşini bırakmamış felâketler dizisi”; my trans.; Saatleri 86), have to do with Abdüsselâm Bey starting to mistake his granddaughter for his own mother, something Hayri İrdal and Emine blame on the old man not being in full possession of his mental faculties (Saatleri 88). The description of how it all began tells of a far-reaching confusion concerning generational roles affecting the whole family. After the newlyweds’ first child is born, it is told:
Tabiî Abdüsselâm Bey daha ilk günden itibaren başının ucundan ayrılmadı. Konağın eski âdeti üzerine çocuğa benim yerime o ad verdi. Ve yanlışlıkla benim annemin adı olan Zahide adını vereceği yerde kendi annesinin adı olan Zehra’yı verdi. (Saatleri 86)

It goes without saying that Abdüsselâm never left it untended from the day the baby was born. In line with an old custom of the villa, it was he who named the baby, not me. And though he had intended to give the child the name of my mother, Zahide, in the confusion of the moment he chose his own mother’s name, Zehra. (Freely and Dawe 89–90)

The confusion occurring during the name-giving ceremony concerns not only Abdüsselâm Bey giving the baby a wrong name, but also him, instead of the father, being the one to name the child, the eski âdet ‘old custom’ expected in Turkish society. When this phrase is used about the rather unusual event of a father-in-law naming his grandchild, it depends on an ambiguity of language only possible in the context of this villa, where Abdüsselâm Bey should have been the one naming his own children. Although readers see that this is not the customary way to name a child, the narrator uses this phrase without further comment, leaving the phrase “old custom” in there, charged with the opposite meaning if read in a broader context: The “old custom” of Abdüsselâm Bey naming the children in this house is instead the new, and surprising, event of him naming his grandchild.

The surprising exchange of roles here is what leads to utter confusion when Abdüsselâm Bey begins to refer to his granddaughter not only by the name of his mother, but also as valide ‘mother’ (Saatleri 87). This complete confusion of generations might be seen as a humorous play on the father-and-sons concern in the Tanzimat novels discussed by Parla.

The death of Abdüsselâm Bey is the next event that enhances the confusion around Hayri İrdal. It is said to happen after a few years of happy marriage and at a time when other relatives had returned from war in Anatolia, which likely means after the Turkish War of Independence. The death of Abdüsselâm Bey immediately leads to inheritance-related questions because the house is full of more-or-less compatible wills that he had written. A typical introduction to the countless wills is cited in the two following paragraphs:

Biz Emine ile her gün birkaç tanesini yırtıyoruz hâlde yine ölümünden sonra kucak dolusu vasiyetname çıkmıştı. Hemen hepsinde biçare ihtiyar ‘servet-i mevcudesini’ ‘validesi Zehra Hanıma’ terk ettiği söylüyor ve bizim onun tehsil ve terbiyesine son derecede dikkat etmemizi şiddetle istiyordu. ‘Annesi kerimem Emine Hanım ile, babası oğlum Hayri Efendinin tahsil ve terbiyesine itina etmeleri ve yetişip evlenene kadar...’ diye devam eden, bitip başlayan bu vasiyetnamelerde kendi kizımızı müşfik ihtiyar bize emanet ediyordu. (Saatleri 87)
Though Emine and I would tear up at least a few of those every day, great piles of them emerged after his death; almost all stated that he was bequeathing his remaining wealth to his ‘mother Zehra Hanım’ and strongly urged us to give the utmost attention to her education and upbringing.

‘That her mother and my daughter, Emine Hanım, and her father and my son, Hayri Efendi, look after Zehra and pay due attention to her education and upbringing until she is married …,’ and so on—thus a gentle old man’s will entrusted us with the care of our own daughter. (Freely and Dawe 90)

Hayri İrdal and Emine treat the written wills as the foolish statements of an old, confused man who has started to think of his granddaughter as his mother, tearing them up whenever they find them. However, the confusion surrounding them takes another turn when relatives pour into the house after Abdüsselâm Bey’s death and it turns out that two such wills have been handed to two notaries, becoming legal documents that require a court decision as to which one is legally binding (Saatleri 87). Potential heirs could claim a right to things mentioned in the will that had long since been sold, and claim that Hayri İrdal and Emine had deliberately tricked their forgetful old father into believing that their daughter was his mother. The question regarding the wills seems to be solved when a court ruling annuls them both, adding a reprimand of Hayri İrdal. The narrator sums up the situation:

Neticede zaten hükümsüz olan vasiyetname bir kere daha iptal ediliyor, ben ayrıca mahkeme huzurunda münasebetsiz konuştuğum, velinimetimin hatırlasına hürmetsizlik ettiği için tazir ediliyordum. (Saatleri 89)

In the end the will (which in any case had never been legally binding) was annulled, and I was merely reprimanded, first for showing disrespect to the memory of my guardian, and then for speaking nonsense in a court of law. (Freely and Dawe 92–93)

This ruling defines a pattern that will be repeated: Hayri İrdal bears witness in court by relating experiences and stories from his life, and the court dismisses them as nonsense or madness. For readers who know Hayri İrdal’s story, this says something about the court judging him.

Friends and colleagues of Hayri İrdal then start to become concerned. They are said to have been thinking that Hayri İrdal’s family, especially his daughter, has been deprived of something that was legally theirs (Saatleri 89). When a colleague invites Hayri İrdal for a drink, he turns out to be very curious about just how Abdüsselâm Bey had been able to take out so many loans. Even though Hayri İrdal explains that Abdüsselâm Bey had pawned odds and ends, his friend persists, wanting to know exactly how Abdüsselâm Bey had tricked the lender into giving him more and more loans (91). That is when Hayri İrdal remembers an old legend he heard from one of the local originals from his childhood. Seyit Lütfullah had told him about the treasure of Emperor Andronikos, which included the diamond of the şerbetçibâşı ‘head
sherbet maker,’ which belonged to the palace of the sultan (91). While Hayri İrdal thinks this would be good material for a joke, the result turns out differently:

Could I not enjoy a little joke on this fool who had dragged me into this tavern out of errant pity and was now trying to uncover some new way to deceive people?

‘Imagine if he had the Şerbetçibaşı Elması. Then surely he could’ve said to his creditors something to the effect of, “I’ll never sell it. It’s an heirloom. But it will repay all my debts when my children eventually do sell it!”’

[Sabri Bey gave credence to this Sherbet Maker’s Diamond.]

‘That’s right!’ Sabri Bey cried. ‘That’s exactly what must have happened.’ (Freely and Dawe, 94; interpolation from Gürol, Time 98)23

This story is told with a stoicism formed by the knowledge of what happened later. A sentence like the first one, in which the narrator rhetorically asks whether he might not enjoy a little joke on this fool, is a signal for the readers to assume a negative answer. No, Hayri İrdal should not tell a joke, because it will not be received as one. When Sabri Bey first confirms Hayri İrdal’s story, saying that is the way it must have been, this could mean that he is confirming the idea that Abdüsselâm Bey might have tricked his lenders by telling them about possessing this legendary diamond. Hayri İrdal, who has grown up in an environment where the legend of this diamond is well known, tells this joke assuming that the absurdity of lenders extending credit on such grounds would be obvious to everyone, is surprised to hear that Sabri Bey instead confirms the reality of the diamond. Hayri İrdal understands his failure when Sabri Bey follows up with specific questions about the diamond, asking whether Hayri İrdal has ever seen it (Saatleri 94).

One thing that this story shows is that a common basis for distinguishing between legend and history is absent. Consequently, a fantasy is treated as real. This situation is difficult for Hayri İrdal to escape. Firstly, Sabri Bey argues that as the diamond has a name, there must be some reality to it.

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23 The sentence quoted from Gürol’s translation has simply been omitted by Freely and Dawe. In the two translations we also see another difference in that Gürol has translated “Şerbetçibaşı Elması” as “Sherbet Maker’s Diamond,” while Freely and Dawe, contrary to their strategy elsewhere, uses the word Şerbetçibaşı ‘Head Sherbet Maker’ in its Turkish form to designate the diamond.
Secondly, he argues that it is similar to the case of “Kaşıkçı’nın Elması” ‘the Diamond of the Spoon-maker’ (Saatleri 92). That story concerns the world’s fourth biggest diamond, known through Ottoman annals to have been discovered by a spoon-maker who received a peculiar stone from a fisherman who had found it when combing through a rubbish heap along Istanbul’s shoreline. Regardless of whether this story is true or false, the Spoon-maker’s diamond is a real part of the collection of treasure at the Museum of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul (Onder), and the mention of it in the novel makes readers accept that Sabri Bey and others might think that Hayri İrdal’s diamond story is about a real diamond as well.

After Hayri İrdal’s meeting with Sabri Bey, the word is out about the Şerbetçibaşı diamond. The next thing that happens is that Hayri İrdal is brought to court again since Abdüsselâm Bey’s creditors now start legal proceedings against his heirs. The creditors have heard about the diamond and want compensation for this unclaimed inheritance (Saatleri 93–94).

In the courtroom, Hayri İrdal is soon at the center of the proceedings because he has shared a roof with Abdüsselâm Bey in recent years. Other witnesses can now tell a different story about the Şerbetçibaşı diamond. Rumors and hearsay have established that it has been in the imperial treasury and that Abdülhamit I had given it to one of his favorite courtiesans (Saatleri 94). When Hayri İrdal is asked about this he answers: “Hayır, dedim. Kayser Andronikos’un hazinesinde idi!” (Saatleri 94), “No, the diamond was part of the treasure of the emperor Andronikos!” (Freely and Dawe 98). This is an ironic cut where the discrepancy between what the judge is asking and what Hayri İrdal answers is clear. While the judge is asking for the truth about a diamond perceived to be real, Hayri İrdal answers what he knows from the stories without commenting on their relation to reality. His answer is said not to have pleased them a bit and was put down as an attempt to appear mentally unfit (94).

This is followed by an outburst from Hayri İrdal after one of the creditors, Naşit Bey, who is married to his resurrected aunt, testified that Hayri İrdal’s father was so greedy that he once tried to bury his aunt alive. Hayri İrdal shouts out what he believes is true, that his aunt did die, and that she came back to life (95–96). After that the judges withdraw for fifteen minutes before announcing that Hayri İrdal is to be sent to the Adli Tip ‘Justicial Medical Facility’ located in one of the annexes to Dolmabahçe, a former royal palace (Saatleri 97).

These stories of Hayri İrdal in court can be read as critical comments on westernization. They show that the official judgment of the past lacked the ability to distinguish between fiction and reality. When the judges, despite their own misconceptions of the past, rule Hayri İrdal insane based on his nonsensical stories, this says something about the strong mechanisms in place to redefine history, recognizable from periods of strong westernization reforms in Turkish history.
Irony of Western Science

The story takes a new turn when Hayri İrdal begins his treatment with Doktor Ramiz. The doctor is introduced as a specialist in psychoanalysis who has just returned from studies in Vienna (Saatleri 99). The narrator claims that even on his first day of treatment with Doktor Ramiz, Hayri İrdal notices the doctor’s passion for psychoanalysis. For the young doctor, psychoanalysis is everything, like a religion. On the other hand, it does not take Hayri İrdal long to understand that Doktor Ramiz is discontented with the situation in Turkey, where he has not been granted the opportunities that he wants to change his homeland using the miraculous tool of psychoanalysis. Indeed, Hayri İrdal is to be his first patient, and the following paragraph says much about the starting point of the special relationship between the two:

Belki beni de kendisi gibi bir sınıf dışı, bir gayri memnun zannediği için sevmiş, himayesine almıştı. Viyana’dan döndüğü günden beri herkese dargın, hemen hemen, yapayalnız yaşıyordu. (Saatleri 99)

Perhaps he took a liking to me and offered his protection because he saw in me another sorrowful outcast. Since his return from Vienna, he had, in his bitterness, swept his life empty of friends. (Freely and Dawe 104)

This paragraph is interesting because several themes meet and are reshaped here. Doktor Ramiz, who came into Hayri İrdal’s life to cure him of madness after a court sentence, is here portrayed as at the same level as Hayri İrdal. They are both “sınıf dışı” ‘outcasts,’ and perhaps Doktor Ramiz is the one who is in greater need of a cure, given his loneliness in a country that simply cannot grasp the value of Freudianism. The situation described is clearly connected to the discourse of westernization. Doktor Ramiz represents the West with the newest science that nobody in Turkey has learned to value yet. At the same time, he represents the naïve Westernizer of the East in the way that he approaches this new science superficially as a new religion, a cure for everything. The way in which he introduces the Western science of psychoanalysis brings to mind Homi Bhabha’s use of Jacques Lacan’s term “mimicry,” an “ironic compromise” within the conflictual economy of colonial discourse (Bhabha 85–6). In Doktor Ramiz’ treatment, Hayri İrdal is about to become a tool for westernization, as he will prove the value of psychoanalysis in a Turkish context. On the other hand, Hayri İrdal will also, through his memories and watch-related stories, bring some Eastern perspectives into play with Freudian theory as he starts to learn it from Doktor Ramiz.

After ten days Doktor Ramiz has concluded that Hayri İrdal has a father complex, and even worse, that he is still in search of a father, himself being a child (Saatleri 105–108). In other words, Doktor Ramiz confirms that he is still a patient at a time when Hayri İrdal has hopes of being released from
forced treatment. Yet both Hayri İrdal’s perspective, that he and the doctor might both be outcasts on the same level, and Doktor Ramiz’s perspective, that the real patient is Turkish society at large, load the narrative with ambivalence. There are several ways to read this diagnosis ironically, for instance, as a diagnosis of Turkish society, as a diagnosis of Hayri İrdal’s relationship with Doktor Ramiz, and as a false diagnosis.

The next turn of events is when Doktor Ramiz starts to instruct the patient in psychoanalysis:

Doktor Ramiz yüzüme âdeta şefkatle baktı.
–En iyisi işe baştan başlamaktır. Ben size kısaca öğretirim. Psikanaliz...
İnsaf, merhamet, yangın var... Hayır, psikanaliz...
İlk ders akşamda kadar sürdü. Akşamüstü Doktor Ramiz bana Almanca basılmış bir konferansını bırakarak gitti. (Saatleri 113)

Dr. Ramiz looked at me with something akin to compassion.
‘Best would be to start from the beginning. I will teach you the basics. Psychoanalysis—’
‘Have mercy, gracious no! Fire! Anything but psychoanalysis…’
My first lesson continued until nightfall. Before he left he gave me one of his conference papers published in German. (Freely and Dawe 119)

This rendering of Hayri İrdal’s thoughts reinforce the reaction of surprise that readers may experience when the doctor says he will teach his patient psychoanalysis. This scene suggests the odd possibility that psychoanalysis might have been introduced to Turkey by one progressive doctor through a single patient in the 1920s. In being transferred from Vienna to Istanbul, from West to East, psychoanalysis becomes something different. Hayri İrdal likened it to a religion for Doktor Ramiz, and in these terms, Hayri İrdal can be interpreted as an early receiver of an esoteric message, the first disciple in a movement about to grow. Another consideration is what this turn of events does to Hayri İrdal’s position in the narrative. Doktor Ramiz’ initiative to teach Hayri İrdal psychoanalysis marks a turn in their relationship, reminiscent of when Hayri İrdal reflected on their both being outcasts. It certainly does not reverse the hierarchical relationship between them. Rather, it suggests a redefinition of it from a doctor–patient to a teacher–student relationship. This redefinition occurs in a context in which Hayri İrdal is still judged to need treatment, so his conditions are far from those of a typical student. His thoughts express concern, but he nevertheless immediately adjusts to his new role. Although Doktor Ramiz’ initiative might be considered an act of bringing the two of them to a more equal level as experts on psychoanalysis, Hayri İrdal’s reaction shows without additional comment that he is instead acting like a typical apprentice subordinate to his master, recalling his prior position relative to Muvakkit Nuri Efendi and Abdüsselâm Bey. Instead of further comment on this from the narrator, a conversation
follows between Hayri İردål and his wife Emine, which underlines the comedy in his new situation:

The following day I was informed I had a visitor. It was Emine. Her face was even paler than before, and her cheeks were drawn. She looked at me hopefully, but she could hardly hold back her tears. I tried to seem cheerful so as to offer some consolation.

‘Haven’t you been released yet?’ she asked.
‘No,’ I said. ‘We’ve just begun. I had my first lesson yesterday.’
‘Lesson? Have you lost your mind?’
‘Just a lesson really. I’m studying psychoanalysis!’

I gave her a brief account of what had happened. It was heartbreaking to see the shadow of a smile pass over her face beneath her teary eyes. She understood the absurdity of the situation but didn’t have the heart to laugh. (Freely and Dawe 119)

Together with the references to smiles and laughter, there are references to tears and sorrow. This combination of opposite feelings emphasizes the contrast between what Hayri İردål experiences and what he says he does. Against the background of how his studies in psychoanalysis came about, it is ironic when he says that he is having lessons in psychoanalysis. His reflections on Emine’s reactions confirm that he understands he is still in prison and not a typical student. When he gives the impression that he is a student, readers are invited to look for other explanations as to why he says such a surprising thing. One explanation is the one that Doktor Ramiz gave in his diagnosis, namely that Hayri İردål has a father complex and is still like a child in search of a father; another is Hayri İردål’s judgment that they are both outcasts in their society, in which case his fondness for theatre might also influence how he adjusts to the world. In this way, the narrative is loaded with different possible interpretations of a central turn of events, interpretations that will continue as intertwined lines of development as the story proceeds.

Also in the eyes of Doktor Ramiz, different perspectives are intertwined and played out against one another. Hayri İردål is interchangeably his patient and student; perhaps the doctor is not even aware of the distinction between the two. A new turn of events occurs when Hayri İردål is instructed to dream better dreams, as his doctor proclaims:
–Sizden hastalığınıza daha uygun rüyalar gömeniz istiyorum. Anladınız mı? dedi. Bütün gayretinizi sarf edip öyle rüyalar görmeye çalışın! Evvela sembollerden kurtulmalısınız. Babanızı rüyanızda kendi çehresiyle gördünüz mü iş değişir, her şey düzelsin...

–Ben her zaman babamı kendi çehresiyle görürüm. Zaten öyle gördüm mi babam olmaz, başkası olur.


‘I want you to have dreams that are more in line with your illness. Do you understand me? Use everything in your power to try and have the right kind of dreams. First you must free yourself of symbols. Once you see your father’s true face in your dreams, everything will change, and from there everything will fall into place.’

‘I always see the true face of my father in my dreams. Besides, if it’s not his face, then naturally it’s not my father but someone else.’

‘It’s not that simple. Such things occur without you commanding them. This is why you need to rally your willpower and do your best to free your father of the symbolic associations he has taken on. When these symbols are removed, it will be that much easier for you to free yourself from him—which is to say, from this inferiority complex you have inherited from him. I shall write you a list of the dreams you shall have this week.’ (Freely and Dawe 121)

Again, the aspect of comedy is underlined in the conversation that follows between Hayri İrdal and Doktor Ramiz:

Ve elime bir kâğıt parçası uzattı.

–Doktor, isteyerek rüya görülür mü hiç? Reçeteyle rüya… İmkânsız.
–Bu müspet bir ilimdir, dostum! Burada itiraz olmaz. (Saatleri 115)

And a few minutes later he handed me a piece of paper.

‘But, Doctor, can dreams be ordered up in such way? A prescription for dreams ...? This is impossible.’

‘This is a forward-thinking science, my good friend. No objections allowed!’ (Freely and Dawe 121)  

In relation to westernization, irony works in at least two ways here. Doktor Ramiz applies psychoanalysis in a surprising way when ordering specific dreams from his patient, and this can be read both as mockery targeting the westernized doctor’s failure, as if he has misunderstood the point of Freud’s science, and as mockery targeting Freudianism itself. The doctor’s exaggerated top–down way of talking draws attention to aspects of Freudian thought that were criticized by Lacan and others later.

24 The phrase “a few minutes later” is an addition in Freely and Dawe’s translation that does not correspond to any phrase in the Turkish text.
What follows is that Hayri İrdal indeed dreams more in line with the Freudian prescription. After six weeks he is released from the treatment facility, and among friends, Doktor Ramiz starts to introduce him as “meslek hayatımın en mühим hastası” (Saatleri 125), “the most important patient of my career” (Freely and Dawe 132), emphasizing how he has demonstrated “hakikî bir baba psikozu” (Saatleri 125), “a true father complex” (Freely and Dawe 132). However, his relationship with Doktor Ramiz has just begun. On his day of release, Doktor Ramiz tells Hayri İrdal that their work will continue outside of the treatment, and that they will prepare a conference paper together (Saatleri 123). Hayri İrdal is then introduced to a kiraathane, a traditional café (literally a ‘reading house’) in Şehzadebaşı on the Istanbul peninsula, where he is received as a hero since Doktor Ramiz had told his acquaintances there all about his patient, praising his various talents, his knowledge of old customs, and his proficiency in repairing watches and clocks (Saatleri 125; cf. Freely and Dawe 132).

This coffeehouse in Şehzadebaşı is significant in Hayri İrdal’s story, because the people he meets there will surround him for the rest of his life. Some of them will later work with him at the Time Regulation Institute (Saatleri 127), and it is here that he will first meet Halit Ayarcı.

The Open-ended Result of Writing One’s Story

As mentioned above, the radical turning point of Hayri İrdal narrating his story is left uncommented on as the novel has an unresolved ending. Writing the novel is a way for Hayri İrdal to put himself at the center of his own life. At the same time, it might be seen as political suicide, because it cuts the ties to the father figures on whom the protagonist has so far based his life. Hayri İrdal’s account also threatens the power structure of the Institute, where Hayri İrdal has committed himself to a submissive role. The power structure at the Institute resembles the hierarchy between father and sons, generation being the defining factor. The question of East and West becomes intertwined with that of generation, because East implies childhood and West adulthood. Hayri İrdal, who in relation to the other central figures at the Institute, first among whom is Halit Ayarcı, has taken the role of a son, alters the hierarchy as soon as he starts writing—it could be added, in a Western genre. However, Hayri İrdal’s conscience about this hierarchical alteration is only gradually revealed in the novel; the story tells us that he sees himself as a minor, relative to the father figures such as Halit Ayarcı, but his writing takes charge of them.

Research emphasizing satire has asserted that Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü criticizes inappropriate westernization, which is depicted as being absurd. This criticism has focused on externals, however, and not gone into depth in trying to answer some key questions that the novel raises. This is because in this approach westernization is seen as the exercising of power, while the
novel shows that the central element of westernization is the disclaiming of power.

Since the novel so clearly applies a critical approach towards westernization it has often been said to be conservative, and Tanpinar’s emphasis on the links between new and old has meant that he has often been read as a political conservative. This might be because the official Turkish ideology emphasizes the Republic’s break with the past, not its continuance, which is as crucial to Tanpinar’s Institute as is the break.

Concluding Remarks

In this section I have shown how Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü distinguishes itself as taking part in a discourse of westernization, and how it invites readers to read the narrative as ironic. Central to my analysis has been to scrutinize the narrator and protagonist Hayri İrdal’s positioning of himself in relation to the East–West and before–now dichotomies, both of which are central to the discourse of westernization. In the story they work together to organize opposite places and periods in Hayri İrdal’s life. His pre-war years are established as having taken place in a now-inaccessible East, while his post-war years have brought him into a central position at the Time Regulation Institute, representing the West.

Irony often manifests itself in discrepancies between narrative levels, where the narration of things reveals surprising incompatibilities with the events being told. The narrative draws attention to the difference between narrative levels by means of explicit references to the narrator’s time and place of narration juxtaposed to the times and places of Hayri İrdal in the story.

Regarding the central story of Hayri İrdal’s participation in the Time Regulation Institute, ambivalence comes from two sides: firstly, the narrator’s position, from which he can render the events and comment on them in retrospect and, secondly, the pre-war story of Hayri İrdal’s childhood and youth, which lays a foundation for the reinvention of history that happens later.

The establishment of the Time Regulation Institute can be interpreted as manifestating a certain ideological framing of westernization with the function of gaining control over conflicts. Starting from chapter 1, the narrator reveals his ambivalence towards the Institute. Firstly, he still identifies with it because it is where he has worked for many years until recently and is therefore the direct source of his wealth. Secondly, he refers to severe criticism that has led to the dissolution of the Institute and perhaps even instigated the death of its leader, Halit Ayarçlı, who has recently died in a car accident. It is clear from the beginning that even though Hayri İrdal appreciates its work to its very end, the Institute’s role of controlling the inherent conflicts within the discourse of westernization has been temporary at best.
In addition, a growing number of narrator’s comments express the opposite of reverence towards Halit Ayarcı as the narrative proceeds. Throughout the narrative there are ironic cuts that subvert Hayri İrdal’s praise of Halit Ayarcı and the Institute. Early in the novel, when the depiction of the Time Regulation Institute is still predominantly positive, there are comments cutting into the narrative, revealing that Halit Ayarcı has terrified Hayri İrdal. Later, when the depictions of Halit Ayarcı mocking and reprimanding Hayri İrdal become more dominant, there are instances of the narrative switching abruptly to praise. In addition to undermining the narrator’s credibility, these ironic cuts make readers look for other signals as to interpret what else might be meant.

A focus of my analysis has been part II, which tells about the immediate post-World War I years, which are interesting because they come after the dissolution of the old society, or the East as a somewhat consistent order, but before a new order of things is established by means of the Institute. In other words, this part of the novel depicts a society in chaos with regard to how memories of the old society are to be integrated within a new ideological frame of westernization. In part II, Hayri İrdal’s stories about pre-war life first bring him to court, where he is accused of being a criminal and then judged as mad and sick. Hayri İrdal is then celebrated as a scientist of sorts, since, according to Doktor Ramiz, he makes significant contributions to the science of psychoanalysis in Turkey. Within the narrative, certain aspects of Hayri İrdal’s contribution seem to be well-considered criticisms of Freudian and Jungian theory and Doktor Ramiz’ application of it to diagnose Hayri İrdal as well as Turkish society with a father complex. Part II is also where we see the forerunners of the Time Regulation Institute in the esoteric establishments founded by Doktor Ramiz, where psychoanalysis and metaphysics are mixed with memories and legends of the old society and quasi-sociological theory based on the East–West dichotomy.

Regarding what the novel means while saying something else, I think that the central question is not why the Institute is wrong, but how it has become so important for the protagonist, and why it is important for the narrator to answer for his role in it. Hayri İrdal tells the story of a man who has identified with a westernization project and benefited from it at the cost of losing himself. The narration of his story is the opposite process, of regaining his self at the cost of ridiculing the much-praised Institute, and with it the westernization of Turkish society. This narrative humorously illustrates an example of the many who do not fit into the established discourse of westernization and progress. The narrator writes himself toward destruction as he renders his personal story of the Institute of which he has been a central part; his account makes his continued existence at the Institute improbable, as his account threatens the power structure it is built on.

In the end, Hayri İrdal’s mission of writing down his memories to praise Halit Ayarcı and the Time Regulation Institute is a double failure. Not only
has he managed to reveal the absurdities and wrongdoings of Halit Ayarcı, himself, and other representatives of the Institute. By so doing, he has also undermined the basis of his own welfare, since it is closely tied to his father figures and the Institute.

Throughout my analysis I have cited several examples in which I have observed what Hutcheon calls “irony’s cutting edge,” i.e. places in the text where the surprising occurrence of difference at the heart of similarity, or unexpected dissimilarity, openly invites readers to make ironic interpretations of the text. For instance, the watch described as a life-changing circumcision gift embodies promises of change, recalling the political promises of revolution and reform. Ironic cuts in the narrative of Halit Ayarcı affect our reading of Hayri İrdal’s relationship to the Institute. Regarding part II, I have provided examples of how irony cuts into the narrative of Abdüsselam Bey, a father figure from the immediate post-war period who serves as a precursor of Hayri İrdal’s relationship to Halit Ayarcı.

In sum, it is striking how Tanpınar, while mocking the structure of a society deeply affected by the discourse of westernization, manages to elevate the individual. Despite Hayri İrdal’s life being a failure and his narrative so incredible, some notion of the choices he has made serves to explain his actions in a profound way. Before all the absurdities Hayri İrdal experiences after moving into the household of Abdüsselam Bey, we see his desire to build a new life on his own terms when returning from the war. Half reluctantly, half out of material need, he subjects himself to Abdüsselam Bey, then Doktor Ramiz, and lastly Halit Ayarcı. A central paradox in the life of Hayri İrdal is thus how he experiences great changes while being directed by others. While the established discourse of westernization makes the narrator praise the father figures behind the changes that have brought Hayri İrdal to where he is today, many ironic cuts within this discourse of praise serve to undermine it. At the same time, glimpses in part II of Hayri İrdal as a free man with his own longings and wishes may explain why he is seemingly sincere when identifying with the discourse of westernization.
The Ironic Discourse of Westernization in Ölmeye Yatmak

Her Şey Hiç, Tek Gerçek Yalnızlık.
—Adalet Ağaoğlu, Bir Dügün Gecesi

All Is Naught, and Solitude the Sole Reality.
—my translation

Ölmeye Yatmak is a highly poetic work, both in its use of imagery and in the way it builds up ambiguities through juxtaposing texts. As in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, irony comes about through discrepancies between an individual voice and the discourses it takes part in.

As I did in my analysis of Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, in this section I will examine how the discourse of westernization is presented through irony in Ölmeye Yatmak. I will start by analyzing the role of the East–West dichotomy in the novel and proceed by discussing how irony is engendered in the narrative. This will be discussed in light of selected examples, before reaching a conclusion of this section of my dissertation.

Westernization in the Novel

İleri emphasized in his 1973 article “Adalet Ağaoğlu’nun Romani” that Ölmeye Yatmak features westernization, as he focused on the main character Aysel, “who stands in the battle between East and West and tries to find a path closest to our own realities” (‘Doğu-Batı kavgasında kendi gerçeklerimize en yaklaştan yolu arayan”; my trans.; 38). The battle between East and West refers to the westernization efforts that Aysel’s generation, as the first of the Turkish Republic, is described as participating in due to their Kemalist education. One thing the novel thematizes is Aysel’s schooling and teaching career. In the introduction to Hayata Bakan Edebiyat (Life-Observing Literature), an anthology of articles on Ağaoğlu edited by Esen and Köröğlu, Esen claims that Aysel, the protagonist of the Dar Zamanlar trilogy, has, through the troubles she experiences, become representative of the Turkish woman of the Republic (1).

In the small Anatolian town where Aysel grows up, westernization is presented through the struggles of her primary school teacher to implement the new Kemalist ideals of the Republic. This schooling, rather than the
traditions of the town, becomes a foundation for who Aysel has become: a well-educated urban woman struggling to find her place in the society. *Ölmeye Yatmak* can be seen as staging a continuous battle between a discourse of westernization that threatens to control the individual and the individual’s desire for change. Aysel’s situation resonates with a dilemma formulated by Chatterjee:

The ‘new woman’ was to be modern, but she would also have to display the signs of national tradition and therefore would be essentially different from the ‘Western’ woman. (9)

Rather than being Aysel’s own expressed concern, the expectation that she should be a good Turkish woman in comparison with Western women is expressed in other parts of the text, most directly in the diary of her male school mate, Aydın.

**Ironic discourse**

In *Ölmeye Yatmak* the hierarchical structure of the text categories establishes a basis for irony, because text fragments figuring beneath the headings of Aysel’s log are loaded with meanings that differ from and partly contradict what they would have meant if standing alone. Likewise, the composition of the novel affects the way we read Aysel’s log, since we read it in light of information that we receive about Aysel’s background in subordinated text fragments. The narrative thus breaks down any stale opposition there might be between “before” and “now.” Everything rendered from the near or distant past becomes fertilized with an inherently dual potential within the ambiguous transformative process that is the here and now. Uncertainty regarding whether Aysel will live or die is part of the ambiguity concerning her situation. Hence, it is possible to read the inserted texts as simultaneously pertaining to both death and life. It is essential that the ambivalent process of dying or starting to live affect various parts of the story.

Another basis for irony throughout the novel is how it builds “sexual potential” in an ambiguous way regarding both other stories, especially the alluded-to films, and its readers. In the very first paragraphs of the book, sexual expectations are established through a slow-paced scene in which we follow Aysel and an attendant from the hotel elevator into her hotel room:


We have taken the elevator altogether sixteen floors up and stepped out at the sixteenth floor. I am walking behind the young man who will show me the room. A short corridor is passed. (my trans.)
The sentences establish a mild tension between the pronouns ben ‘I’ and biz ‘we’ used about the two persons in the scene. The text introduces an elevator, a building with at least sixteen floors, the first-person narrator, a young man, and a short corridor. The setting is a typical modern urban one. The concept of westernization is visualized here not only in the references to the tall building and the elevator, but also in the social acts described. Being alone and meeting with foreigners in a large metropolis are acts of a westernized individual, easily recognizable from Turkish films of the same period, which typically start by establishing dichotomies between traditional and modern life in combination with rich–poor, good–bad, East–West, and peasant–urban in order to create an imaginative world in which all opposites compromise with romantic love (Altun and Uzun).

The slow pace helps create an exciting tension as the two characters walk down the corridor. As in movies, this creates mystery, which leads to curiosity as the text continues:

Bir odanın önünde durdu. Ben de durdum. Kapıyı açtı, içeri girdik. (Ölmeye 1)

He stopped in front of a room. I stopped too. He opened the door; we entered. (Ervin 24)

There is an uninterrupted movement from the bottom floor through the elevator to the sixteenth floor, then through the corridor to the door of the room. A pause follows, as the door must be opened before the two characters move into the room. Although the narrative in this log is personal, the presentation is cinematographic: More than a narrator revealing her heart to a diary, Aysel resembles an actress placed in front of the reader’s eyes. Somewhat surprisingly in comparison with the films alluded to, it is not so much the woman as the young man who is objectified. The hotel attendant is not referred to by name, but by function: He is there to show the guest to her room. The next paragraph can be read as a humorous play on expectations in which the author sustains the tension between the two characters, constantly shifting the subject of the sentences:


The curtains are firmly closed. The guy asked for permission to pull them back and show me the outside. I balked at that. He turned on the lights. Opened the bathroom door. He turned on the lights there as well. Asked me if I needed anything. I told him I didn’t and paid his tip; he left. (my trans.)
The slow pace upholds a scene in which the reader’s gaze follows each of the objects the young man touches: curtains, lights, the door to the bathroom, the lights. The tension between the two characters builds until the young man asks whether the guest wants anything. There is another ironic cut as he is paid his tip and leaves. This ironic cut comes abruptly and breaks a growing expectation of intimacy between the two; the narrative abandons the inclusive “we” form for the excluding “I” form and renews the focus on Aysel as a subject of the narrative, as well as an object within it. The irony persists because the latent eroticism of the opening scene does something to the westernized environment: The hotel, the city, and the westernized lifestyle Aysel represents by simply being where she is have been presented as a configuration that gives rise to erotic expectations, and the narrative soon picks up this tension in another way, this time in an exchange between the narrator and reader:

O çıkınca kapıyı hemen kilitledim. Bütün ışıkları söndürdüm. Çarşabuk soyundum. Köşedeki yatağı açtım. Çırılçıplak içine girdim; ölmeye yattım. (Ölmeye 1)

As soon as he left I locked the door. I turned off all the lights. I hurried to take off my clothes. I pulled back the covers of the bed in the corner. I lay down in bed totally naked; I lay down to die. (my trans.)

The door is locked and the lights are turned off as the hotel guest now hurries to take her clothes off, prepares her bed, jumps into it, and lies down to die. The last sentence represents another ironic cut. The emphasis on the hotel guest, now lying naked in the bed, is not only on her as an object. Questions that arise from the simple sentence “ölmeye yattım” (“I lay down to die”) generate considerable ambiguity, implying things as different as death and orgasm. Whatever it means to lie down and die, this sentence, which connects to the title of the novel, is not referring to any visual act or appearance of the hotel guest actually dying; rather, it is a reference to her personal, inner experience at that moment, abandoning the cinematographic perspective for a personal one. This ironic cut gives a glimpse of the subjectivity of the hotel guest. That short glimpse has a retroactive effect, making us reconsider the preceding paragraphs. The bed scene is thus loaded with irony as Aysel is displayed as part victim, part agent, partly dying, partly resurrecting. The sudden turn of the narrative has a comical effect as well. It turns the well-known sexualized narrative into a parody of itself, as the young man is simply told to leave the room while the woman takes care of herself. This ironic cut establishes a new strategy for readers to engage with the novel, contrasting the gaze that objectifies Aysel to the empathetic view that enables the reader to see the world through her eyes.
Time and Place of Narration

The protagonist of the novel, Aysel, is a woman in her forties, a university lecturer, and a writer, well-acquainted with realist novels and contemporary cinema, both Turkish and Western (Ölmeye 180). Aysel speaks, or rather has her thoughts reported, from a hotel room in contemporary Ankara where she “lies down to die.” There are several references to places in Ankara throughout the novel (e.g. Ölmeye 21, 43, 66, 111). We follow Aysel and her classmates from primary school in the mid 1930s to around 1970. Recently, i.e. a short time before “lying down to die,” Aysel has even published a book (23).

The time of narration is not mentioned, and the narrator of the log is not mentioned by name. This is also the case in fragments that belong to a third-person narrative running through the novel. Because they also lack a specified narrator, they stand out from other textual elements that have explicit narrators and narratees.

A reference to a newly engraved tombstone for a man named Timur Yurdaer, son of Celal, who lived from 1943 to 1968, suggests that the frame narrative takes place in 1968 (Ölmeye 43), as Fethi Naci also has concluded. However, references to the films Zor Yıllar and Benimle Dalga Geçme suggest a later date (21, 41–42). According to IMDB, Zor Yıllar is the Turkish title of an American comedy drama called Impossible Years, released in the USA in December 1968 and in Turkey in January 1970 (“Release Info”). In other words, the story partly overlaps in time with the story of Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, which, as we saw, runs up to the 1950s. The cultural climate of the late 1930s is also the background of Tanpinar’s novel Huzur, but Ağaoğlu’s perspective on this period is different from Tanpinar’s. Written in the early 1970s, Ölmeye Yatmak looks back at the 1930s from Aysel’s point of view around 1970, and while Tanpinar’s novels adhere to the rule in late Ottoman novels of keeping Istanbul as the central scene, the main scenes in Ölmeye Yatmak occur in an Anatolian town as well as in Istanbul and Ankara.

The frame of the novel is Aysel’s log, which we follow from 7:22 AM to 8:49 AM. The log covers a total time span of one hour and twenty-seven minutes, and it includes about eighty-five pages in a novel that alternates between various types of text.

Apart from the log, the novel consists of text fragments from the past that are reciprocally related to the log, shedding light on what has brought Aysel to where she is now when read in light of her current situation. Some texts, such as diary entries and letters, are either written or received by Aysel, while others, such as readings of newspaper articles, are not obviously linked to her.

Aysel’s log can be understood as an account of her past that casts light on her current situation, and both past and present are increasingly revealed over the course of the novel. Although the log is a first-person narrative, Aysel is not presented as its actual narrator; instead, the log presents her thoughts by means of internal focalization, meaning “the reader is not told anything that
transcends the mind of the focal character” (Stühring and Köppe 192). Ervin has commented that “an invisible editor is heard here, speaking in a tone of pseudo-scientific objectivity that lends an ironic contrast to the subjective, emotional turmoil of the character Aysel” (25). The gap between the unnamed narrator(s) and the naïve figure of Aysel is highlighted by references to her understanding of time, which differs from the time references introducing log entries. At 07:55, Aysel wonders what time it is (Ölmeye 103). At 8:31, she looks at her watch after having slept (259), and after having noticed that it has stopped at 8:10, she wonders what day it is (261), and even starts speculating about how many days might have passed, two to three or even four (265).

The Relationship between Structure and Irony

To discuss the irony in the novel in greater depth, I will show how the hybrid nature of the text makes it produce parallel, at times contradictory, messages and overlapping contexts. The novel, in all its intertextual hybridity, is a whole whose different parts interact, and in which irony serves to give an established discourse of westernization a new turn. As the almost one-and-a-half-hour long log develops over the course of the novel, we learn more both about the immediate reasons why the main character has lain down in a hotel room and about how the character develops during her visit, while the other texts inserted into the narrative contribute by providing background to her act. I will begin by showing how Aysel’s log integrates with other texts in the novel.

As already mentioned, Fethi Naci argued that the novel consists of two parts: the minor part about Aysel and the major part about Turkish history between 1938 and 1968 (28). This does not seem to be an adequate categorization of the different textual parts that constitute Ölmeye Yatmak. Through close reading, I have identified the following four main categories, with subdivisions, of the various texts that interact in the novel. The chart groups the text fragments according to the genres letter, log, story, and diary, which are easily distinguishable in the novel. That being said, there are also subdivisions of various text types and genres within the main third-person narrative. I have marked two such subdivisions in the chart, both under the subcategory “Readings from the Ulus gazetesi.” Although these readings at first glance seem to be newspaper articles, they are not simply articles from the newspaper Ulus, but rather readings of them by Aysel’s primary school teacher, Dündar. Consequently, these text fragments should be seen as a sub-category of the main third-person narrative, with which they share narrator but not voice.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Aysel’s log</th>
<th>Third-person narrative</th>
<th>Readings from Ulus gazetesi</th>
<th>Aydin’s diary</th>
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<td>Aydin Aysel 343</td>
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The text fragments are of various lengths, and each type of text occurs at various frequencies. The only constant factor is that each chapter starts with a log entry from the hotel room. Other dominant text types are the third-person narrative, Aydin’s diary, and various letters to and from Aysel. The ideas and evaluations about Aysel that Aydin articulates are also reflected more explicitly in Aysel’s log and letters. With and without references to Aydin, she contemplates what it means to be a girl, a Turkish woman, to be free, modern, etc. Throughout the third-person narrative, there are changes in voice,
shifts in focalization, and thematic breaks that are not marked in the chart above. I have separated Dündar’s readings in the chart because when they appear early in the novel, they stand out as longer semi-independent texts that differ significantly from other parts of the third-person narrative, such as the school play story in chapter 1.

Looking in detail at how the structure is highlighted within the text, we might start by looking at chapter 1. It is marked by the Roman numeral “I” above the text, which is also introduced by the notation “Saat 07.22” ‘Time 07:22’ (Ölmeye 1). This establishes a pattern that continues throughout the novel. Aysel’s log entries are always introduced with a new Roman numeral and a new time reference. Chapter II starts on page 21, where the Roman numeral II on top of the page is followed by “Saat 07.28” ‘Time 07:28.’ There are thirteen such chapter headings altogether, the last of which reads “Saat 08.49” ‘Time 8:49’ (353). Each heading includes more than one text fragment, and only the first one belongs to the log category.

The numbers I have given these five categories reflect a loose hierarchy made much more visible in the novel by the organization of these texts, which are all subordinated to a plan of thirteen chapters—each of which, however, constitutes a collection of various types of texts. In the chart above, the references to page numbers show how many text fragments there are in each category, as well as the order in which they follow one another. For example, there are thirteen text fragments belonging to the category designated “Aysel’s log.” These are short and always interjected with various numbers of text fragments from other categories.

The other text fragments follow these log entries, which could be considered the frame of the novel. It is possible to read the organization of the texts as a hierarchy in which Aysel’s story is the leading narrative, influencing and influenced by other texts. Within each chapter various kinds of text are inserted, giving glimpses into Aysel’s background.

The various text fragments, belonging to the four genres mentioned above, are linked through internal references. This creates interaction between the log and the other texts that link them together as a whole. For example, I will illustrate how references to Aysel are used to establish her as the protagonist of the novel. If we look at chapter 1, it consists of one short log entry, which is a first-person narrative that does not mention Aysel’s name, and a longer third-person narrative, which relates the story of school teacher Dündar and his class in a Turkish town during the early stages of the Republic (Ölmeye 3–20). Aysel appears, at first without being in focus, as one of the school children alongside Semiha, Namık, Sevil, Ali, and others. The attention to Aysel increases throughout the second half of this passage, first through a narrowed focus on Aysel in the school scene (14–17), and then through the background information given about her father, Salim, and mother, Fitnat (17–18). However, so far there is no explicit link identifying the girl Aysel in the school story of the 1930s with the first-person speaker in the log entry. That link
appears for the first time in chapter 2, where the log entry starts with free-
indirect discourse, and the first sentences read:


I am not going to class. The secretary will be baffled since I have not told anyone that I am not going. She will see the students roaming in the corridor at the time of my class, and they will say ‘Aysel has not come.’ And they will be happy. (my trans.)

Chapter 2 immediately links to the previous chapter by repeating the word “class” and other words associated with school. The reader understands that the first-person narrator “lying down to die” in the log is a teacher who has skipped class, her name being Aysel. The new information sheds light on the previous chapters: The signifier “Aysel” creates a link in the third-person narrative, despite the role change, between the schoolgirl by that name and the woman, a teacher, who lies down to die. Through words associated with school, students, and corridor, continuity is established between Aysel’s past life as a schoolgirl and her present life as a university lecturer, and this prepares the reader to look for even more connections and differences between then and now.

The differences between “before” and “now” in the narrative are just as striking as the similarities. Aysel is no longer a schoolchild, but a teacher. In other words, there are both similarities and dissimilarities between Aysel’s distant and immediate past, and this duality of continuity and discontinuity is used in the making of irony: The distant past can simultaneously be understood both as the starting point of Aysel’s current problems and as a time that stands in opposition to these problems—maybe even as a source of aspirations and desires to overcome current difficulties.

There is a significant time gap between the log and other text fragments. The third-person narrative, Aydın’s diary, and the letters represent different time spans, and they progress chronologically, as does the log. So, while the timeframes of the third-person narrative, Aydın’s diary, and the letters overlap, Aysel’s log presents a jump forward to around 1970, when Aysel’s life has changed radically, even before the particular day when she lies down in the hotel room. In other words, the log represents the narrated “now,” from which we look back at Aysel’s past from the mid 1930s to 1960.

If we look at the timeframe of Aydın’s diary and the letters, we see that these two text categories cover approximately the same period, i.e. the late 1930s–1945, extending from a few years before Aysel’s primary school graduation in the small town to her graduation from high school in Ankara less than ten years later. Neither the diary entries nor the letters are precisely dated. The diary entries give dates, but not years. However, references to
films, political events, and the lives of the people involved help readers understand that both the letters and the diary entries occur in chronological order and cover this specific period. The texts belonging to the third-person narrative category are also chronologically arranged, and reflect a period that starts in Aysel’s school days in the mid 1930s but ends much later, in 1960, with references to the coup d’état, here called *devrim* ‘revolution,’ occurring on May 27th of that year (*Ölmeye* 356).

Ironic References to *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*

*Ölmeye Yatmak* contains several references to film and literature, and the timeframe of one and a half hours also parodies the 19th-century novels *Madame Bovary* by Flaubert and *Anna Karenina* by Tolstoy, both of which present classic examples of women lying down to die. In contrast to Aysel, Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina are depicted in long, drawn-out scenes in which they lie down for weeks and months and eventually fade away. The reference to these iconic characters is explicitly emphasized in chapter 2, where Aysel thinks:

Acaba ne zaman öleceğim? Ne zaman tamamlanacak can çekişmesi. Kız öğrencilerimden biri, Anna Karenina ya da Madame Bovary gibi ölüme yattığımı göre, kim bilir nasıl güler! Kafa kafaya verip ne dalga geçerler bu tür seçimlerimizle... (*Ölmeye* 23, ellipsis in orig.)

I wonder when I will die. When will this fading away be completed? If one of my female students sees me lying down here to die like Anna Karenina or Madame Bovary, she’ll laugh who knows how much! Putting their heads together they [i.e. the students] will have lots of fun over the choices that we have made … (my trans., my interpolation, ellipsis in orig.)

Irony is present at many levels in this short paragraph. To begin with, it is found in the intertextual references to the novels by Flaubert and Tolstoy. The actual references to these works make the differences between Aysel’s act and those of her literary models as obvious as the parallels. The contrast between the timeframes of Aysel’s act and the acts of her two predecessors in the art of lying down to die is only one striking difference between them. Aysel is portrayed as less trustworthy since she repeats the melodramatic description of herself as “lying down to die,” while this irony is reinforced by referring to students who will make fun of her. As a result, Aysel’s understanding of the situation is marked as an individual experience, while the reader might look for other implications.

One of the differences between *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*, on one hand, and *Ölmeye Yatmak*, on the other, is the radical presentation of a
woman who is at the same time a subject and an object. While the stories of the female protagonists in *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina* are told by male narrators, Aysel is a woman in charge of telling her story. At the same time, Aysel is the object of the narrative, both in the log fragments where she is described through a first-person pronoun, and in the other fragments where she is described through a third-person pronoun. This double perspective creates ambiguity around Aysel’s situation in the hotel room. From one perspective, the image of her lying naked in bed is a symbol of the intimate, personal story that Aysel shares with each reader. From another perspective, it is a repetition of a sexist discourse in which the female body is objectified for the reading masses. This duality creates an ironic effect within the frame story, since it generates the potential for many possible twists in the course of the narrative’s development.

Through her insistence on an unconventional understanding of life, Aysel is revealed as a typical ironic character. It is not that she does not know that she is being ridiculous in the state that she is in, but, like Don Quixote in Miguel de Cervantes’ 17th-century Spanish novel, she insists on imagining herself and the world from the perspective of classic literature. Just as *Don Quixote* parodies earlier chivalric novels, *Ölmeye Yatmak* parodies modern classics. In both cases, the differences between how the reader sees the character and how the character sees himself or herself are as striking as the similarities. In both cases, likening oneself to older, fictive types—knights in one case, and women lying down to die, in the other—takes a performative form. Rather than representing a woman lying down to die, *Ölmeye Yatmak* presents a person who enacts a woman lying down to die.

There are, however, more layers of irony here. Firstly, though Aysel repeats the phrase “lying down to die,” she is the one who imagines the students making fun of her for using this phrase. Secondly, the first student she imagines making fun of her acting like Anna Karenina or Madame Bovary is female. Emphasizing that the student who sees this is a woman invites readers to a gendered reading, implying that it takes a female perspective to grasp the humor. The comedy of acting like Anna Karenina and Madame Bovary in her situation is made perfectly obvious, perhaps suggesting that similar comedy also inheres in the originals.

**Ironic Meanings of “Lying down to die”**

I mentioned in the introduction that the titles of the novels could be read ironically in relation to their content. In the case of *Ölmeye Yatmak*, the title mentions the act of “lying down to die,” while the timeframe of the log referring to Aysel lying down in a hotel room is less than one and a half hours. At the end of the novel, Aysel walks out of the hotel alive, inviting ironic interpretations of the title, which seems absurd if taken literally. What I want
to emphasize through my analysis is how Ölmeşe Yatmak brings different contexts together and yields ambiguity, inviting diverse, at times opposite interpretations for those who see the inherent irony of the work.

The words of the title frame the novel beyond simply heading the frontispiece. They are also taken up on the first and last pages. First, the phrase “ölmeye yattım” ‘I lay down to die’ appears on the first page ( Ölmeşe 1). The act of lying down ends in the last paragraph of the book with the sentences “Ben de yeniden giyiniyorum işte” ‘And I put my clothes on again’ (363; my trans.) and “Dışarı çıktım” ‘I went out’ (364; my trans.). Aysel dresses and walks out into a misty April morning in the capital city (363–64). The act of lying down to die in the hotel room is thus over. Ölmeşe Yatmak seems to convey meaning in contrast to rather than in confirmation of what actually happens in the narrative: the production of Aysel’s 85-page log and the presentation of various types of texts, recounting stories from the past that interrupt the log.

Aysel’s intention of “lying down to die” makes the reader seek reasons for this recent abrupt change in her life. Ironic cuts encourage readers to seek alternative meanings of the phrase on other textual levels than that of her train of thought. Is she sick? Will she commit suicide? Is she going to have an orgasm? As is the case with the word “to die” in English, “ölmek” is a Turkish verb with many connotations. Whatever interpretation we choose, it is a strong word, indicating a dramatic transgression—denoting perhaps extinction, perhaps exaltation or a radical new existence. Throughout the log, Aysel repeatedly reflects on and revises the statement that she has lain down to die (e.g. Ölmeşe 21, 23, 41, 43, 61, 112, 190, 222, 226, 231, 260, 261, 316). What we do know is that her stay in the hotel is a break from her normal life—at least a pause, a scene in which she is alone and can reflect. Her lying down in a hotel bed while skipping the class she is teaching at the university is a radical change in her life.

Lying down to die evokes words such as surrender, change, new life, and end. Aysel articulates these oppositions later in her log at 7:55:

Besbelli. Bu hâlâ yaşamak için bir savaş. Kendimizi doğrularsak ölümün gereği kalmayacak! Yaşamaya, hayır; yakınınlara devam edilecek. Yeni doğmuş bir çocuk gibi, her gün hiç de yeni olmayan bir şeye şaşılacak. Beklenecek… ( Ölmeşe 112; ellipsis in original)

It’s completely clear. This is still a struggle for life. If I’m to correct myself, there won’t be any need for death! There will only be continued life, no, continued complaint. Like a newborn child, there will be new amazements every day over things far from new. More waiting … (my trans.; ellipsis in original)

In statements like these, we see that Aysel is aware that she is not necessarily on the verge of dying in a literal sense. Rather, her act of lying down to die
assumes the quality of an act of transition between two lives: the life she had and the life that might continue afterwards.

İleri has suggested that Aysel’s act of “lying down to die” is a way for her to gain self-awareness through the process described in the novel:

. . . Aysel, çok geç kaldığini, artık bir işe yaramayacağını anladığında belki de tam anlamıyla bilinçleniyor. Harcanmış, iyı niyetli bir kuşağı bütün sancısını “ölüme yatmakla” çekiyor. (38)

Perhaps Aysel . . . is becoming, in the true sense of the word, self-aware just when she understands it is too late, that her efforts will not amount to anything. By ‘lying down to die’ she is submitting to the throes of her exhausted, kindhearted generation. (my trans.)

In other words, İleri suggests that Aysel is not self-aware from the beginning, and adds that she only gains self-awareness when it might already be too late. He might mean that Aysel, through a process of “lying down to die,” gains a consciousness that challenges the uncritical application of the westernization program that has formed her generation. I find İleri’s addition of “belki de” (“perhaps”) essential here, because the uncertainty it expresses regarding the outcome of this process is fundamental to our understanding of the whole narrative. Perhaps Aysel is becoming more self-aware during the narrative, perhaps she is not. The outcome of this process is never clear.

At 8:31 there are statements in Aysel’s log confirming that she does not think she will actually die (Ölmeye 259). Additionally, there is an explanation of how she metaphorically understands what it is to die, namely gaining an understanding of having lived (260). Perhaps Aysel is dying in the sense that she, through the act of lying down in bed in the hotel room for one and a half hours, is gaining an understanding of having lived. However, there are signals in the texts that she does not die even in this sense. The text does not give a clear answer but permits an ironic ambiguity as to what Aysel achieves through her act and what will follow from it. The critical review of her life contained in Ölmeye Yatmak can be seen as the main achievement of her impulsive act. Aysel’s lying down to die might be understood as a reaction to aspects of her current life as a teacher, which the log will keep revealing to us. It might equally be understood as the result of something that happened in her early schooldays and youth, which is the topic of other texts within the novel, namely the third-person narrative, Aydin’s diary, and numerous letters.
Conflicted Thoughts

The sexualized strains within the frame story are confirmed directly by Aysel’s log at a later time, 7:42, which can be read in contrast to another paragraph referring to her sexual pleasure (Ölmeye 61):


The kid who brought me here was very considerate by not going into long explanations. He turned away and left at once. Actually, the one being considerate was the young man down at reception. He didn’t ask much, just shoved me a slip of paper that I needed to fill in. I had to write my name on it. That was the trickiest part. I didn’t want him to know me. Most university kids work at hotels in the evenings. Yesterday? At first glance, the receptionist must have thought that I was going to meet a man. Or that I was returning from a customer. I walked into the hotel like a refined whore. Early. Tired. A branch of lilac in my hand. A wilted branch of lilac doesn’t fit the hands of a refined whore. But you never know. Any whore could bring with her a cheap souvenir of the night. (my trans.)

We see in this paragraph that Aysel is worried not so much about what she does as about the assumptions that people might make about her. She is worried that she might be taken for a prostitute. This ambiguity of the situation that Aysel experiences parallels the ambiguity we see in the narration of Aysel as a character: To tell Aysel’s personal story, the narrator is forced to use language that objectifies her, a dilemma seen in the classics Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina as well. Some of the criticism written about Ölmeye Yatmak reveals that the author herself risked being branded “loose,” i.e. of lower moral quality, by writing Aysel’s story.

Another way to understand Aysel’s act is to think of dying in the sense of sexual arousal. At one point where Aysel stands up from the bed, 8:31, she notices this part of her act:

I get up. I realize that greasy sweat has made my hair stick to the back of my neck. When, why, and through the distress of what sleepwalker has this sweat gushed from the depths of my neck? I love how the sweat slowly cools down as if feathers gently caress my neck. I’m getting an almost sexual pleasure from it. This pleasure most certainly draws on my intuitive feelings, and I begin to cry as if crying for someone who has not deserved to die. Not restraining myself from becoming weak. (my trans.)

This scene confirms that the sexual aspect of Aysel’s act is one key to understanding what is going on during the one and a half hours in the hotel room, and there are several other references to sexual tension throughout the novel. A parallel scene is when, after one of her student Engin’s visits, she seeks to find pleasure in herself before the mirror:


I still don’t dare to undress in front of the mirror. I went out into the hallway and undressed there. Afterwards I threw myself into the shower in a totally dark bathroom. As tepid water kept touching my body, I felt all the more pleasure. I wished I could never leave. I’d let all rubbish pour over me. I felt an enhanced relationship with my body. (my trans.)

The context of Aysel remembering this episode is her reflection on conversations she had with Engin and Ömer about personal freedom. The subject of being free is a recurring topic in the third-person narrative, Aysel’s log, and Aydın’s diary. The issue of whether or not she is free is also raised in one conversation with Engin that Aysel recounts in the log (Ölmeye 358):


So tell me, Engin, is she free, the woman who is looking at you now, full of admiration and trust? Has she at least become freer? Tell me, Engin. Did she save some things? Is that possible? Is it possible to be saved and save all by oneself? (my trans.)

One dilemma with a discourse of freedom is that it can turn back on itself. The discourse of westernization with which Aysel and others in her generation have been raised is one that incorporates the ideals of a gender-mixed society. This discourse promises freedom from traditions that are understood as working against the ideals of freedom. Over the past two months, however, Aysel seems to have broken not so much the restrictions of stale tradition—at
times seen as Kemalism’s counterpart—as the unspoken restrictions upheld by the westernization process. Aysel’s personal revolution after meeting Engin is described as an experience of freedom. In relation to the freedom discourse with which she is raised during the first period, the second period can be viewed in two contradictory ways: either as a final breakthrough of the freedom that her teachers and other advocates of the values of gender mixing have taught her in opposition to traditional gender restrictions, or as a breakaway from the male-dominated discourse in which the discourse of westernization still participates, articulating ideals of gender mixing while still agonizing over the more radical freedom implied by the concepts of individual autonomy and gender equality.

The ironic legacy of the freedom discourse is part of a greater discourse of westernization embedded in Aysel’s train of thought. This leads to a peculiar duality when thinking about Aysel’s position in the society that surrounds her: Even though Aysel is lying all alone in the hotel room, her thoughts involve the society around her and build expectations as to what will happen the moment she leaves the room. Will her personal experience of freedom be embraced as an example of the ideals that her generation was raised with, or will she be rejected as Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina were rejected by their bourgeois societies? While Madame Bovary and Anna Karenina are both framed in a way that invites readers to see them as cautionary examples of the bad consequences that liberation has for women, Aysel’s story invites more fundamentally ironic readings. Until the very end of the novel, readers are left without clear answers as to whether Aysel has been brought to imprisonment or freedom.

In the hotel room, Aysel seems at first very restricted in her relationship with her own body. She gradually feels more pleasure in her body as she comes to think of conversations she has had with Ömer, Aydın, and Engin. The log adds new meaning to these conversations. While they, from their different perspectives, saw a problem with Aysel that kept her from taking part in the freedom that their ideologies promised, in Aysel’s stream of thought it is instead the positions of the three men that become problematic. For different reasons, they keep Aysel from participating in freedom on terms similar to their own, closing their eyes to the individual freedom and pleasure that Aysel, in contrast, has already started to experience within her own body.

Later, as Aysel lies in bed at 8:43, she listens to sounds coming from the corridor. She hears the voice of a woman talking to another person; a door opens, is closed, and then locked (Ölmeye 221). Aysel can hear the gurgling sounds of someone taking a shower. She speculates as to whether the woman is an “işkadını” ‘business woman’ or a “hostess” ‘flight attendant’ (Ölmeye 221), but concludes that she must be an “orospu” ‘whore’ (222). Aysel’s experience of sharing a corridor with this person makes her consider her own position:
Bir orospunun sesi bu. Kabul etmeliyim. İşkadını falan nerden çıkıyor? Hostes ya da? Bu da bir iş işte, işler içinde... Bir orospuyla aynı çatı altında bulunma incitiyor mu yoksa beni? Ve saygıdeğer oluşumu ve yüce düşüncelerimi ve anlamlı ölümümü?

Sesi ayırdedince bir tedirginlik duydum. Hâlâ da sürüyor bu. Şimdi yatağı o denli temiz, odayı o denli namuslu bulmuşuyorum galiba. Buraya girdiğimde öyle mi bulmuştum? Oysa buraya fahişe gibi girdiğimi bir ara düşünmüştüm. (Ölmeye 222)

It’s the sound of a whore, it is. I’ve got to admit it. Why did businesswoman or the like occur to me? Or hostess? This is also a job, for sure, one of the jobs there are … Am I perhaps being offended by staying under the same roof as a prostitute? Or does it offend my venerability, my noble thoughts and my meaningful death?

As soon as I distinguished the sound, I felt uneasiness. It’s still there. Now I probably don’t think the bed is as clean or the room as decent. Did I think they were when I entered the room? Rather, I did think for a moment that I was entering it like a prostitute. (my trans.)

In these two paragraphs, Aysel’s conclusion that the other woman is a prostitute seems to draw on her own fear of being seen as one. The next step is that Aysel, by being close to the woman she concludes is a prostitute, sees herself as being considered one too. This prompts further thoughts about how being viewed as a whore affects her and her situation. Again, her thoughts are rooted mostly in her own situation, in what she experiences in the present, in the sparse sounds she hears from the corridor and the other room, but her thoughts include thinking about her past and considerations about people outside the room.

The irony of the sexualized discourse is reinforced at the very end of the novel. As it is now clear that Aysel has been in the hotel room for less than one and a half hours, she takes the elevator the sixteen floors down, pays her bill, and leaves through the swinging door (364). By renting the hotel room for such a short time, Aysel seems to affirm expectations that the purpose of her stay was to have a sexual encounter. As soon as the perception of Aysel as a sexual object is re-invoked, the image of her as a person acting individually is also reinforced when she pays her own bill. The sentence “Otele faturamı ödedim” (“I paid my bill to the hotel”) is emphasized by being separated from the other sentences (364).

The Problematics of a Possible Pregnancy

The act of lying down in the hotel room means that Aysel both lets parts of herself die and begins a new life. This becomes clearer when we are told that the direct cause of her impulsive act might be feelings that perhaps indicate
pregnancy (Ölmeye 40). For Aysel, pregnancy seems to imply death for her social identity due to gender expectations that are only strengthened through
the ideology of westernization, and is also the direct initiator of the individualistic acts of “lying down to die” and writing first-person narratives.

The information that Aysel might be pregnant comes through a reference to her urge for pickles: “Canım turşu istiyor” ‘I want pickles’ (Ölmeye 40). This urge is soon referred to with the word “aşerme,” a verbal noun referring to the craving for certain kinds of food that pregnant women sometimes experience, and it leads to a series of thoughts in which Aysel considers whether she might in fact be pregnant. Aysel’s possible pregnancy is thus established as a motif that will recur throughout the novel (e.g. 66, 104, 110, 184, 189, 225). A striking stylistic feature when the possibility of a pregnancy is launched is the frequent use of questions. Together with the verb “bilemeyeceğim” (“can’t possibly know”), which is emphasized in a sentence separated from the others, the questions convey the image of a naïve woman who observes specific changes within her body.

The thought of a seed that might be growing inside her creates the image of a new life in the middle of the scene in which Aysel lies down to die. Life and death are present at the same time through the image of the baby that might or might not be present and might be the beginning of a new life or, brought to mind by the recollection of Aysel’s previous experience of an aborted pregnancy, another encounter with death. We see that the thought of a possible pregnancy raises other questions for Aysel, concerning her womanhood, her relationship with her husband, and so on. The words and phrases such as “ilk” ‘first,’ “ilk kez” ‘first time,’ and “şimdi” ‘right now’ mark her situation as something new, while the words “bitti” ‘finished,’ “kesildi” ‘cut off,’ and “ölü” ‘dead’ uphold the images of death (Ölmeye 40).

Aysel’s craving for pickles prompts her spontaneous thoughts about her life, linking her thoughts of lying down to die to her thoughts of having slept with her student. Aysel thinks that sleeping with her student Engin might account for the possible pregnancy, and she points this out quite early, in chapter 3, at 7:36 (Ölmeye 41). After stating that she slept with her student, she subsequently evaluates how she feels about it and reflects on what it means in light of her pursuit of freedom. Aysel met Engin at the university, by a printing press in the printing house where he works and where Aysel has had her book printed (280). She has spent almost all her free time with her young student for the last few weeks, and it is three months since he first slept over at Aysel’s apartment (154, 180). The last time he visited her at home was the night before her log starts (61, 103). The way Aysel thinks about their intercourse shows that she considers it a groundbreaking event. The proximity between the two acts of lying with her student and locking herself up in a hotel room makes them parallel acts, and Aysel’s reflections on before and after can be read in connection with either.
In an imagined conversation with her close friend Aydın, Aysel explains more of the challenge if she is pregnant:


If Aydın were to know about it, he would tell me to go and sleep with my husband, Ömer, at once. ‘Just sleep with him.’ If I’d ask why, he would say, ‘So that, if you’re pregnant, the father of the child should be clear, it should be him.’ Again, I’m laughing. This time even loudly. Only at the threshold of death am I slipping away from the solemnity that has lasted for so long, my way of looking seriously at everything. ‘The father of the child …’ Yet, my solemnity and way of looking seriously at things have still been useful, I think. Aydın had a thing that stuck in his mind: To sleep with me. He had never given up on this thought. Who would have become the father of the child in that case? Probably Ömer still. (my trans.)

Just as the pregnancy might and might not be a reality, the implications of Aysel’s reconsiderations might and might not be relevant to her life outside the room. It is in the secluded space where she lies down alone that her thoughts are being stretched until they become their own opposites. This creates the possibility for the extramarital affair to be presented in this ironic way, as a “first,” a groundbreaking event, and at the same time, as an experience that has happened without leading to any radical changes in her present life. Within this secluded space, the possible pregnancy represents both life and death; it evokes Aysel’s reconsiderations of her own life and of recent experiences that might be seen both as the beginning of something new as well as the end of her past life. For the first time, she has slept with a person other than her scientist husband, Ömer (Ölmeye 317). The act of lying down to die changes how she thinks about her position:

Kendi gözümde yeniden güzellesip büyüyorum. Yeniden, bana verilen bütün haklarını giyiniyorum; bu haklarla yeni haklara uzanıyorum. Türkiyede ayrıcalıklı aydın kadını oluyorum yeniden. Ölümümü kendim seçmiştim İşte. Kendim için de ölüyorum... (Ölmeye 111; ellipsis in original)

In my own eyes, I become beautiful and grow again. Again, I dress up in all the rights that are given to me; with these rights I reach for new rights. Again, I become a privileged intellectual woman of Turkey. My death was indeed chosen by me. And I’m dying for myself … (my trans.; ellipsis in original)
The bed in which Aysel lies down naked and the hotel room where the door is closed and the curtains pulled down become, not spaces between a clearly defined “before” and “after,” but rather interspaces where any thought of previous events might stand for the end of something old and the starting point of something new. This duality, or even plurality, in meaning is the result of the irony at play in the novel.

In chapter 8 of Aysel’s log, at 8:23, Aysel thinks of two possible outcomes of lying in the hotel room: either dying, or dressing and returning to her usual life (Ölmeye 226). The option of walking back to her normal life seems quite easy in her train of thought, and Aysel explains it by recalling the privileges of intellectuals. At the end of the novel, Aysel does get dressed and walk out of the hotel, but we do not know what the results will be.

The Irony of Reform

The double potential for life and death pertaining to Aysel’s situation in the the hotel room has an ironic effect on the situations she recalls from the past. It also affects the text fragments inserted into Aysel’s log. For instance, after the log entry in chapter 2 follows an eight-page text fragment under the heading “Dündar Öğretmen Ulus Gazetesi Okuyor” ‘Teacher Dündar reads the newspaper Nation.’ According to the Wikipedia article, this was a daily newspaper originally known as Hakimiyet-i Milliye (Sovereignty of the Nation) and renamed in 1934. It started as an information channel for the nationalist movement in 1920 and became closely linked to the ruling party that subsequently took the name Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi ‘Republican People’s Party’ (“Ulus”). Dündar is the teacher known from chapter I, and the text fragment ends with two paragraphs about his class following a reference to the state of the centrally governed education program:

Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, ülkemizde öğrenci sayısının 54 000’i bulduğunu gururla açıklamıştır.


The National Education Department proudly announced that the number of pupils in our country has reached 54,000.

The first pupils of teacher Dündar to graduate were Aydın, Sevil, Ali, Aysel, Namık, Semiha, Hasip, and Ertürk. Eight children have thus left the school. But with the help of the local governor, fourteen new pupils have been registered. (my trans.)
In this paragraph, Aysel’s class becomes an example of education reform in the early Turkish Republic. The language is in the same newspaper reportage style as in the rest of the text fragment. It is as if Dündar selects and quotes from the newspaper. A comical effect is created when the schoolchildren being read to are mentioned in the newspaper being read. The fact that they and their teacher are mentioned in the Ankara daily illustrates the close link between their education and the party establishment in the capital. Another comical element of this paragraph is how it highlights the destabilizing effect that the ongoing language reform had on the Turkish language in this period:

Bir Kültür Bakanlığı vardır. Bütünleme sınavlarına *engel sınavları*, ekim ayna *birincîteşrin*, Adalet Bakanlığı’na *TÜZE Bakanlığı* denilmektedir. (Ölmeye 24; emphases in original)

There is a Culture Department. Final exams are called *barrier exams*, the month of *ekim* [i.e. Turkism meaning ‘October’] is called *birincîteşrin* [i.e. a slightly Turkified word for ‘October’], the Adalet [i.e., Arabism meaning ‘justice’] Department is called the *TÜZE* [i.e. neologism meaning ‘justice’] Department. (my trans.; my interpolations; emphasis in original)

For unclear reasons, some words are italicized throughout the six pages, such as in this paragraph. It seems likely that the italics are used to indicate the words that Dündar pronounces with emphasis. The lack of quotation marks indicates that these sentences represent Dündar’s paraphrasing of, rather than direct reading from, the newspaper. He might feel the need to emphasize words that are new, that have a striking form, or are important to note for other reasons. What this short paragraph shows regardless of the italics is that the language used at the time was a language in transition because of the ongoing language reform: It is full of neologisms, some of which—such as “ekim” for “October” and “ sınav” for “exam”—have stuck, while others—such as “tüze” for “justice”—have not. On the other hand, some words used would be considered old-fashioned today and even in the early 1970s, for example, “birincîteşrin” for “October.” The text fragment displays no consistency as to whether the italicized words are neologisms or well established, but the italics still seem to emphasize the lability of the language. Especially given the knowledge that readers from the 1970s and later have regarding which words survived the language reform, the language of the 1930s seems very labile. The possibility of sudden change, of life and death, is not unique to Aysel as she lies isolated in bed in the hotel room; instead, they are characteristic of a time of reform known as westernization, which affects the very language Aysel is brought up speaking.

*Öğretmen* ‘teacher,’ is, for example, a neologism based on the verbal stem *ögret*—to teach—to which is added the imported suffix “–man/men,” designating a person who carries out the act involved. It was introduced during the Turkish language reform, which followed the alphabet reform of 1928, in
order to replace the formerly used Arabism muallim ‘teacher,’ but here it is also used to replace the colloquial title hoca, used for teachers either in combination with their names or not. This usage of the word öğretmen might reflect a tendency in the historical period, but in the long run öğretmen has not managed to replace the word hoca, which is widespread today. It is also possible that the use of this word in the novel does not reflect an actual usage at the time, but rather is a pun intended to mark the close relationship between the westernizing reforms and Dündar’s person and work as a teacher, as if to show that he is particularly eager to use the neologisms.

The total number of pupils in the country was 54,000 when Aysel attended school. That number is contrasted to a much higher number given later. Towards the end of the novel, it is said in a report-like section of the third-person narrative that the total number of pupils in primary school has reached 1,625,452 (Ölmeye 350). Together, these pieces of information give a glimpse into an educational revolution through which Aysel is one of the first children to be reached by programs of mass education.

Another paragraph of Dündar’s paraphrase is clearly given in the narrative with the intention of mocking the nature of the reforms of the 1930s:

Another writer of ours has, in an anecdote with the heading ‘Village workers of Ankara,’ said, ‘In the midst of a very modern and civilized cityscape, there is one worrying aspect of Ankara: the miserable clothing of the working villagers one comes across as they walk the boulevards in large groups in the evenings. The worst thing would be if a foreigner saw these clothes, thinking that all Turkish villagers are so poor and helpless.’ (my trans.)

This paragraph highlights a social gap between the elite and commoners in the newly established capital of the Turkish Republic that was already being discussed in literature of the 1930s. For example, in Yakup Kadri’s Ankara, first published in 1934, the gap is seen as so severe that only a strong leader can compensate for it. In the political climate of the 1970s, the description of poor village workers that we see here would evoke a class perspective for most readers. The message that Ankara experienced class conflict in the 1930s may be present in the text in order to fulfill most readers’ expectations. While the Ulus writer who wrote this anecdote in the 1930s does not draw that conclusion, a discrepancy arises between readers’ expectations and the writer’s intention; this creates an ironic cut through which the initial writer’s perspective is mocked. That writer’s concern draws on a discourse of westernization in which one’s surroundings are viewed and evaluated from
the imagined perspective of foreigners, here interpreted as people from the West. Instead of further explaining this view or sentiment within the text, Ağaoğlu situates it in a context in which it is perceived with irony, saying as much about the attitude towards villagers in Ankara in the 1930s as about these villagers and their clothing.

The Complications of a School Play

The main part of chapter 1 renders the story of a school play that the teacher Dündar stages with his class in the late 1930s. It illustrates how the school becomes a scene where old traditions clash with the new ways introduced by westernization programs. The school building is referred to as an old Armenian building (Ölmeye 3), indicating that the building had belonged to Armenians expelled during World War I. It serves as a reminder of a pre-war society very different from that of the newly established Republic, inhabited as it was by another population.

The text of the school play follows directly after the log entry in which the narrator says she is lying down to die, establishing an ambiguity between life and death; however, the tone here is fairly light. As Ervin has described it, this is a scene where “Ağaoğlu gives free rein to her considerable gift for irony” (30). During the rehearsals, there is an inspection by the school’s headmaster after a complication occurs in which one of the children, Aydın, complains about Aysel’s hair:

Kaymakam’ın oğlu Aydın, en şıkları, yüreklilikle bağırdı:

‘Aysel saçlarını örmemiş ama öğretmenim!..’ Kızın sarıya yakın kumral saçları ta beline kadar dökülüyor. Sıtmadan sarı yüzü hemen kiraz alına döndü. Belinden aşağı bir ter indi. Başöğretmen iyci çattı. Öğretmen Dündar’a can sıkıntısıyla baktı:

‘Gördünüz mü işte?.. Daha saç meselsesi bile…’

Öğretmen Dündar’ın içini öfke bürüdü. Aysel’den çok Kaymakam’ın oğluna kızıyordu: Bu oğlan da ikide bir, birini gammazlar. Pis şımarık. Bıktım bu kendini beğenmiş meretten. Ama neme gerek, her şeyi yine tastamam işte. (Ölmeye 5)

The son of the local governor was the best-dressed among them, and now he shouted courageously:

‘Look, my teacher, Aysel has not braided her hair!’

All heads turned to Aysel. Her brown, nearly blond, hair was hanging down to her waist. Her face, yellow from fever, turned immediately to cherry red. Sweat poured down from her waist. The headmaster sniffed, and looked wearily at the teacher Dündar:

‘What did I say? Even problems with hair …’

Dündar was filled with rage. He was mad at the son of the local governor rather than at Aysel: This kid was constantly watching others. Damn. I am fed
up with that contemptuous dirty bastard. But what is it good for? I can’t keep an eye on everything anyway. (my trans.)

In these paragraphs the focus is mostly on Dündar. He puts energy into arranging what is the first school play of its kind in the history of the town, and he needs to convince the headmaster, among others, that it is a good idea. This is the context of Aydın’s sudden, obtrusive comments about Aysel’s hair. When all heads turn towards Aysel, there is a shift of focus from Dündar’s project to the schoolgirl Aysel. This shift of focus has a double effect.

First, the focus on one of the school children presents the situation in a naïve light. Instead of receiving an explanation as to why Aydın’s comment creates a problem for the adults in the scene, we become involved in Aysel’s physical reactions: she blushes and starts sweating. Against this, the reactions of the adults seem exaggerated: the headmaster’s confirmation of Aydın’s view of Aysel’s unbraided hair being a problem, as well as Dündar’s harsh thoughts about Aydın. Aysel’s naïve perspective casts an ironic spell on the reactions of these adults. Even though what they say and think does not reveal why they act as they do, their reactions come to have a second, ironic meaning for the readers. Their reactions explicitly evince that Aydın’s comment and Aysel’s unbraided hair are problematic, but what they ironically show is that this occurrence stirs up anxieties truly originating in something else, whatever that may be.

Secondly, the placing of this episode about Aysel as a schoolgirl between the adult Aysel’s log entries makes us read this text fragment in relation to the frame story. Because Aysel is alone in the hotel room, any information given about her in social settings is especially important to the attempt to understand her as a person.

Despite such challenges during rehearsals, Dündar succeeds in staging the school play. The description of how the spectators are placed reveals some of the worries the teachers have had in setting up such an event for the first time:

Erkek kadın ‘umum’ bir yerde ilk bulunuşları. Yine de Başöğretmen akıl etmiş: İlk sıralar, sandalyeler gerisinde, yerli halktan erkeklere ayrı, kadınlara ayrı yerler ayırtmış. (Ölmeye 8)

It was the first time men and women came together in a ‘public’ place. But the headmaster had thought of it; the first rows, behind the chairs, were set aside for men and women at separate places. (my trans.)

This paragraph presents an interesting example of how gender segregation is implemented in a new social setting in a society where such segregation has been the rule. The headmaster has thought of placing men and women separately because the villagers are not used to mixed seating. However, arranging cultural activities, like this one, in which men and women intermingle is a central part of the westernization program. Even though the
headmaster is credited with this arrangement as if it were a strategic compromise between gender mixing and gender segregation, this implication comes after his exposure as someone who does not consider all sides of things, exemplified by his reaction to Aysel’s unbraided hair. He is, therefore, not the most trustworthy figure. This phrase can be read ironically because it creates an awareness not only of what the headmaster has thought of—a certain setup of chairs—but also what he has not thought of.

One thing he seems unaware of is that by arranging places along gender lines, he has become responsible for introducing gender segregation in a new setting. Rather than constituting a compromise between the school’s ideology of gender mixing and the villagers’ hesitancy regarding it, this arrangement forces the spectators to divide themselves along gender lines. The arrangement also creates another form of segregation, as it is only behind the two first rows that gender segregation is applied. The first two rows comprise people of a higher class: landowners and officials, both men and women (Ölmeye 8). Thus, gender mixing becomes a symbol of the rich, while gender segregation becomes a symbol of the poor. The issue of class difference visualized through the degree of gender mixing versus gender segregation is introduced here for the first time, and it will follow Aysel up to the time when she lies down in the hotel room.

Another noticeable factor in the headmaster’s organization of the seating is that the degree of westernization becomes a class marker. The upper-class viewers are seated in a gender-mixed zone in front, while the lower class viewers, or locals, are situated farther back in gender-segregated zones. This organization establishes the expectation among people of all classes that the upper class will be more westernized—more open to the new forms and habits being introduced through the westernization programs advocated by the political leadership of the country. Another result is that typical signals of being westernized, such as sitting in a gender-mixed space, wearing a hat, dancing in pairs, etc., also become class markers. Since the upper class is expected to integrate what are considered Western habits and values more easily, adapting to them becomes a way to show participation in the upper or middle class, while resisting such habits becomes a way to signal participation in the lower class.

The show continues with humorous descriptions of clashes between traditional village life and the program of westernization. While town officials and parents are watching their children on stage, a circumcision band is playing for the dancing. Rather than playing traditional dances, however, the band plays polkas and rondos. Western dances are introduced to the villagers for the first time, and with curious effect:

Birkaç memur çocukundan gayri, hemen hepsi polka ve rondonun adını bile bu müsamereden ötürü duymuşlardı. Kız ve erkek öğrenciler ilk kez birbirlerine değeceklerdi. Ama, onca provaya karşın değemiyordu. Adımları
Except for some of the civil servants, almost no one had as much as heard of polkas and rondos before this show. For the first time, girls and boys among the schoolchildren were to touch each other. But despite many rehearsals, they still wouldn’t get close to each other. They mixed up the steps. When they should have embraced each other, they stopped one meter from each other. And this was enough to create intense passions between the boys and girls, one of which led to one of the two throwing herself into the river and drowning. (my trans.)

Again, we see how irony cuts into a light story with dramatic effect. Until its last sentence, this paragraph refers to a clumsy dance that the children are performing. At this point, however, we learn that one of the schoolchildren later threw him- or herself into the river and drowned because of the passion inspired by the dance between the girls and boys. Until this, the description of the show is mostly funny. For example, the information that the band playing is a circumcision band has a humorous effect, because it creates an image of people acting in an unusual setting, which is a well-established source of humor (Bergson). In addition, there are the descriptions of the children not being able to dance correctly. Since they refuse to touch one another, they end up dancing to the polkas and rondos in a very peculiar way. The last sentence creates a tragicomic effect by suddenly describing what seems to be a suicide with the banal explanation that it happened as a result of these dances. This explanation is simplistic or naïve: The children performing the dance that night are children attending the same town school, and they have plenty of opportunities to fall in love with one another.

The banal narration is comical. Through these lines, the author creates the impression of a naïve narrator who believes that one clumsy rondo or polka performance is enough to explain why two persons fall in love and why one of them subsequently commits suicide. The voice of this narrator might very well be the younger self of the novel’s protagonist, Aysel. It might also be the voice of the simple-minded villagers, reporting gossip or communal “hearsay” from Aysel’s youth. In this way, the banality of the narrative indicates distance from the voice of the protagonist, the well-educated Aysel.

Both the confusion of the children on stage and the uneasiness of their parents regarding moral standards are described through several humorous examples over the next few pages, and the narrator gives an interesting commentary on how conservative concerns are handled:

Seyirciler arasındaki eşraf ve esnaf babalar, polka ve rondo ile kirlenen namuslarını örtbas etmek için durmadan öksürüyordur, kafalarındaki bütün sıkıcı düşünceleri kovalamak için gerekli gerekşiz gülmüyorlardı. Medeni olmak...
buyrulmuştu. Eh, ne yapsın onlar da, medeni olmuşlardı işte. Suç kendilerinde değilidi. (Ölmeye 14)

Among the spectators there were fathers in the upper and the lower classes who continuously coughed in order to cover up how their honor was being sullied by the polkas and rondos, and they laughed at the most unsuitable places in order to chase all tiresome thoughts out of their heads. They'd been told by decree to become civilized. So what could they do, now that they had become civilized? It was not their fault. (my trans.)

We see here that even though the process of westernization is viewed by conservatives as threatening, the ideology of westernization gives them opportunity to see the decree for change as coming from the outside. Since westernization is an external influence, those who engage in its processes cannot be held responsible for it. As a result, processes involving “westernization” are easier to engage with as no one present can be held responsible for them.

In the last paragraph of the text about the school play, irony is achieved through the discrepancy between very simple oral language and an exalted tone:

Program gece saat ona doğru, çocukların yine sünnet bandosu eşliğinde söylediğimiz ‘Onuncu Yıl Marşı’ ile son buldu. Çok şükür. Çok şeyler başarılı olmuştu. Çok şeyler de başarılı olmuştu ama, Dündar Öğretmen de, elbet çocuklar da, her savaştan açık alınlı çıkıldığına ta yurekten inanmışlardır ya: Nasıl olsa, ne olsa, Türk’üm, Cumhuriyet’iz, göğümüz tunç siperi… (Ölmeye 20; ellipsis in original)

The program ended towards ten o’clock in the evening as the children sang the tenth anniversary march accompanied by the circumcision band as earlier. Fortunate, that. Many things had been accomplished. Many things had likewise not been accomplished, but the teacher, Dündar, and indeed the children had believed with all their hearts that they had come through every struggle with success: However it goes, whatever it takes, we are Turks, we are the Republic, our chests are shields of bronze. (my trans.)

The last sentences are, from the perspective of a distanced narrator, presented as something the teacher and the school children collectively thought in the moment. The tone of the final sentences recalls patriotic chants that the children might have been instructed to recite aloud on other occasions, similar to the still-common practice of having Turkish school children gather around the Turkish flag to sing the national anthem at both the beginning and end of each week. The distance from which the narrator renders the patriotism in this moment creates a layer of parody and leaves the readers wondering about the peculiar dynamics of the scene.

At the same time, Aysel’s story, which frames this scenario, adds yet more potential meanings. First of all, the patriotism we see surrounding the school
children and being enacted by them in a demanding social setting—the first school play performed in a certain Turkish town—adds context necessary to grasp the urgency that the adult Aysel feels when “lying down to die” in the hotel room thirty years later. The verbal aspect of the finite verb in “her savaşan açık alını çıkıldığına ta yürekten inanmışlardı” (Ölmeye 20), “had believed with all their hearts that they had come through every struggle with success” (my trans.), helps link Aysel then to Aysel now. The ambiguity is even more pronounced when it comes to the subjunctive sentence, as the verb “çıkıldığına” (“come through”) is tense neutral. In other words, they believed that they had come through every struggle with success, but had they? The ambiguity concerning the answer to this question points out the instability of the situation described. The word savaş means “war” as well as “struggle,” so it stands out as a strong word in the context. Together with the ambiguity resulting from the verb forms, this sentence conveys the haunting message that struggles, or even war, might continue to follow these children, and that they might not always win.

Conversation Partner or Obstacle to Freedom

The first male figure Aysel thinks of in the bed scene is Aydın, the one who commented on Aysel’s hair during the rehearsal of the school play. He is introduced in the log in chapter 3, at 7:36. He and Aysel have kept in contact over the years, and the last time they met was in Ankara six months before (Ölmeye 39).

At one time, they used to sit and listen to French songs all night, which is said to be their way of criticizing the incapable governors of their country (39). The social status of each was radically altered by the coup d’état in 1960: Aydın lost his status as a result of his association with the Democratic Party, which was overthrown by the coup d’état, while Aysel, a socialist with a communist bent (356), benefited from the change in power, as evidenced by her current position as a university lecturer.

In bed, Aysel thinks that she should have called Aydın before lying down to die. She is convinced he would have rushed on a plane and come to her at once if she had called him (39). At the same time, Aysel thinks of the reactions of her mother, who is living with her, and her husband, due to return home late from a business trip, should she not return that night (40); ultimately, she does not decide to call any of them.

Aydın is also the male figure that we follow most closely through the book. His diary entries are spread throughout the novel and make up the third largest text genre next to the third-person narrative and Aysel’s log. His diary starts the summer after the school play when he has recently moved to Istanbul to study at the Galatasaray boarding school (32). His diary entries come in five separate segments, the last of which is dated summer 1945. In other words,
there is a time gap of about twenty-five years between Aydın’s diary and Aysel’s log. While Aydın’s diary tells of several occasions when he and Aysel were unable to see each other, Aysel’s log refers to Aydın as a person whom she meets regularly, though not often.

In chapter 10, at 8:40, Aysel finally calls Aydın in Istanbul, but gets a busy signal and hangs up (279). This occurs after new considerations in chapter 9, at 8:31, which come to her mind when she notices that her watch has stopped at 8:10, and she wonders whether it is morning or evening. Aysel rises from bed as a feeling of sexual pleasure replaces the feeling of waiting for death (261). Aysel finally does talk to Aydın on the phone, and in chapter 13, at 8:49, he promises to come (357). Before making that phone call, Aysel considers the positive and negative implications of calling Aydın. In an imagined dialogue Aydın becomes a focal point of Aysel’s reflections on herself and her own identity. Whether she is going to talk with him about lying down to die, about becoming civilized, or about which men she has or has not slept with, the image of Aydın becomes a tool for thinking through the problems of her identity. Her thinking about whether she should ask Aydın “İşim bitti mi demek bu?” “Does it mean I’ve made it?” (262; my trans.) introduces a topic further developed in chapter 11, at 8:44: that the desire to call Aydın is not so much grounded in a longing to be and talk with him, as in the opposing desire to say some necessary things and end it with him. This becomes clear when Aysel, having tried to call Aydın on the Istanbul line, thinks of calling his telephone in Ankara (325). She thinks of telling him about a dream she just had, and adds: “Aydın’dan tüm olarak ancak böyle kurtulabilirim,” “That’s the only way I can get rid of Aydın” (325; my trans.). Here, “Aydın” stands not only for Aysel’s experiences with him, but also for a set of conflicting expectations that he, among others, has set for Aysel in order for her to live up to the ideal of a respectable Turkish woman (326).

Looking more closely at the earlier period of Aysel’s life, several text fragments create an impression of freedom associated with the mixing of men and women promoted by Kemalism and its discourse of westernization. This is highlighted mostly through recurring discussions of the relationship between Aysel and Aydın, which we glimpse in Aydın’s diary, Aysel’s log, and her letters. The first example comes from Aydın’s log. During the first fall, after Aydın has moved to his aunt’s in Istanbul and started his studies at Galatasaray, he thinks about Aysel:


Poor Aysel! In my opinion she is never going to be a Turkish girl as our Great Leader wants. Our teacher explained this during rehearsals for our school play.
In Europe girls easily make friends with boys. I knew that already. But is it possible to make friends with simple girls like ours? (Even if we succeeded, our teachers would be mad.) If I were to ask Aysel about a class, she would turn totally red. (my trans.)

The mixing of men and women is connected to nationalism and the ideology of Atatürk: For a girl to be a friend with boys is, from Aydın’s perspective, to be a good Turkish girl according to Atatürk’s standards. It also means being like people already are in Europe. Aydın experiences several paradoxes when trying to apply this ideology in his personal life. One is the gender-specific difference in expectations when it comes to achieving the national goal of gender mixing. Aydın experiences that he, as a boy, must take the initiative to make friends with girls, such as Aysel and the girl visiting his aunt with her mother. But he thinks that Turkish girls are simple and easily offended, and he gives examples of this: Aysel always blushes, and the visiting girl bursts into tears. These reactions stand in contrast to what he would expect to see in Europe, where girls are said to easily make friends with boys.

Aydın’s claim that Aysel will probably never become a Turkish girl according to Atatürk’s definition exemplifies how Aydın blames girls individually for social restrictions that apply generally to all girls of his generation. The hierarchy of the different text fragments stands for a special kind of irony here. Since Aydın’s diary is framed by Aysel’s log, his text is more likely to be read as gendered than if it were part of a larger narrative from a man’s perspective. Aydın’s accusations of the two girls are consequently inflected with irony. When he naively suggests that Turkish girls are simple minded, that accusation easily reflects back on himself, because it shows he lacks a conscious strategy for dealing with the obvious gender differences in the expectations he describes. Aydın has already noted the discrepancy in adults, and even in the teachers who actively promote the westernization ideology, between what they say and do when it comes to applying the ideology of gender mixing. He claims that teachers would be angry if the boy students did make friends with the girls, and he sees that the girl who bursts out crying finds refuge and affirmation with her mother.

This paragraph highlights several paradoxes inherent in the ideology of westernization. One is that Turkey is perceived as European, but still not fully so. Europe is both here and somewhere else. For individuals such as Aydın and Aysel, this means that they are expected to act like Europeans even while subjected to arbitrary restrictions—even being punished according to an unknown and unexplained set of values. One attempt to resolve this dilemma is seen in the teachers’ strategy of teaching westernization as a process. They say: We are becoming Europeans, and one day Turkish girls will look at Turkish boys as brothers. These messages are conveyed ironically, however, as they are retold and consequently critiqued by Aydın’s narrative. At the same time as Aydın tells us how the teachers try to adapt the westernization
ideology to make it work, they reveal that the discourse is fundamentally unworkable.

Aydın’s different constructions of the first-person plural pronoun also attempt to navigate the paradoxes posed by an ideology of westernization. “Biz” ‘we’ is used to mean, firstly, “we the people under one leader,” secondly, “we in Turkey as different from those in Europe,” and thirdly, “we boys as different from girls.” In this way Aydın makes it possible to fit into a “we” that constantly shifts meaning, a “we” to which Aysel lacks first-hand access because she is a girl. Initially, the expectation to become European is applied to all citizens, as is the permission not to become fully European yet. But in the process of becoming European, girls and boys meet with different expectations of responsibility. A hierarchy is established in which males are formed to view themselves as primarily responsible both for applying westernization and for adapting values believed to be non-Western and typical of Turkey, while females are included, not directly, but secondarily as members of a greater national “we.”

Freedom through Intercourse

Engin, the student whom Aysel has slept with, is also introduced in chapter 3. Aysel comes to think of him as the probable father of the child in her womb (Ölmeye 41), while her relationship to Engin is later described as connected to fear (154). When thinking about the intercourse they had, Aysel thinks of a kind of mental pleasure and of freedom:

Karnımda bir çocukla öleceğim. Özgürleşmek ve özgür kılmak adına olacak bu da! Gülmemiş de ne yapayım?

I am going to die with a child in my womb. And it will happen in order for me to be free and to set free! Such a joke!
Yes. I slept with my student once. I experienced a short-lived, different kind of pleasure through this intercourse. That’s a fact. It was perhaps more of a lust springing from my mental rather than from my physical resources. (my trans.)

At this juncture the log moves smoothly from Aysel lying down to die to the account of her sleeping with her student. The two acts stand close to each other in Aysel’s train of thought. The words “özgürleşmek” (“to become free”) and “özgür kılmak” (“to set free”) are central in Aysel’s thinking, but it is not clear exactly which of her acts is associated with freedom. When she thinks she will die with a child in her womb in order to be free and to set free, this could relate either to the act of dying or to the act of intercourse with a student. In this
paragraph, freedom might be understood as pertaining to both, but when she refers to her current state as ‘my imprisonment’ ‘tutukluğum’ (42), readers understand that her lying down to die is not only a story of liberation; instead, “imprisonment” may still be mentioned in contrast to her pregnancy or the sexual act that led to her pregnancy, which might still be associated with a liberating process. The contrasting images of imprisonment and liberation potentially pertain to the same acts and create a text latent with irony. Just as Aysel’s lying down to die is a continuation of a certain period in her life that began with her sleeping with her student, it can also be seen as a continuation of a much longer period starting with being a pupil in Dündar’s class. The purpose of liberation is, in any case, directly ridiculed in the sentence “Gülmeyp de ne yapayım,” literally ‘What can I do but laugh.’ There is a cutting edge here, and it has the effect of steering the irony in a certain direction by adding a new perspective on what has just been said. It is an invitation to view the former statement about liberation as absurd. It also makes it clear that Aysel’s purpose when sleeping with her student or when lying down to die is not actually to be or to set anyone free. The cutting edge gives this statement of purpose the character of a quotation. It can be understood as a quotation of something Aysel has believed to be true earlier, or of a discourse that is not her own that she reacts against now.

The Ambiguous “Hymen of Womanhood”

After this, Aysel thinks about her relationship with the student in terms of a Western movie and develops the language with which she talks about her later experiences:

Ortada yalın bir şey var şimdi: Gebeysem bu çocuk ondandır. Öğrencimden. Zor Yıllar için bir konu. Ama hiçbir yerli film, bir öğrenci odasında, kendi öğrencisinin odasında, bir doçent hanımın kadınlz zarının yeniden nasıl bozulmuş olduğunu göstermez. Şimdi bu böylece söylüyor sams kendî kendime, az sonra ölmüş olacağım içindir. (Ölmeye 41)

Something is clear here: If I am pregnant this child is from him. My student. It’s like a theme of Impossible Years. But no local film would show how a female staff member, in the room of a student, in the room of her own student, had her womanhood’s hymen ripped open again. (my trans.)

We have seen how Aysel relates herself to characters in literature. Films, Western as well as Turkish, are another resource through which she comes to terms with herself and her situation. The implication is that her situation demands representation through fiction, and Aysel is an active creator in formulating her own narrative. A central metaphor that Aysel introduces here is that of losing her virginity, or of having her hymen “ripped open again.”
Apart from the physical image of a hymen being ripped open, losing one’s virginity is most of all a strong concept of change in connection with having one’s first sexual experience in cultures where the value of women’s sexual abstinence before marriage is held in high esteem. This change is considered significant on many levels, individually as much as concerning a woman’s place and status in society. Using this metaphor to describe her extramarital affair with her student, as well as her later affairs with other men, Aysel stresses the great impact that these sexual encounters have had on her at many levels. The paradox is that even though she now thinks of these experiences as crucial to her own radical transformation, it is only now—as she, using another metaphor, is about to die—that she formulates it in this way.

The topic of a kadınlık zari ‘hymen of womanhood’—as opposed to the familiar term kızlık zari ‘hymen of virginity’—is soon repeated and developed when Aysel thinks about the first time she slept with her student, Engin (Ölmeye 44). Later, Aysel thinks of her sleeping with Engin as a transformation:


Again, I was a girl full of life. All of me, my whole intellect, my hair, lips, breast, waist, my worldview, my laughter, my way of talking was pouring out. I was at the same time respectable and disrespectable, perfect and imperfect, clothed and naked. Both a woman and a human being. (my trans.)

The topic of becoming a woman is repeated here and seen in relation to becoming an academic, and to becoming human. The experience of sleeping with Engin has had very contradictory results for Aysel, who feels that she is both respectable and disrespectable, perfect and imperfect, clothed and naked. She also feels that she is both a woman and a human being, as if these two last identities were opposites too.

**Mixed Feelings for Atatürk**

In the log, the adult Aysel records her own reflections on her experiences of being subjected to the conflicting expectations of being a woman and being a westernized person. One such scene is where she renders a haunting dream of meeting Atatürk at her thesis defense:

Cebimizin dibini bir türlü bulamıyorum. Atatürk ise durmadan, ‘Hani tezin?’ diye yelpazeleyip yüzüme yüzüme üflüyor. ‘Nerde tezin? Göster tezin? Hani tezin? Hani tezin?’ Sağ yanındaki yeşil gözü altı profesörle sol yanındaki yeşil...

I just cannot find it in the bottom of my pocket, while Atatürk keeps fanning my face with his own breath, saying ‘So, where is your thesis? Show us your thesis, will you? Where is your thesis? Your thesis?’ However, the thick volumes in the hands of the six green-eyed professors to his right and the six green-faced professors to his left, are not books. They are all plates for food. They also have knives and forks. This time they’re sitting around the table. Marking time with the knives and forks, they chant: ‘Bring your thesis on, bring your thesis ooon! Bring your thesis on, bring your thesis ooon!’ I’m obviously not aware that I have hurriedly put a pan of dolma in front of them. All of a sudden, I realize this is not my thesis, it’s a pan of dolma. I am so embarrassed. Above all, I’m embarrassed because of Atatürk. I want to tell him that this is not actually my real thesis. (my trans.)

For Aysel, Atatürk is not only the personification of a westernization program facilitating gender mixing; he is also the vision of a moral demand standing above gender-based expectations. While professors call for Aysel’s thesis, yet eagerly mark time with their knives and forks, as if demanding that Aysel live up to a traditional female role and serve them homemade food, Atatürk is the only figure demanding the real thesis, embarrassing Aysel because she has instead fulfilled gender-defined demands by serving them dolma, i.e. stuffed peppers.

Atatürk occupies a central position in the formation of identity for Aysel and her primary-school classmates. This is formulated in a paragraph in the third-person narrative. Through references to the ruling party splitting up in order to prepare for a two-party system, it is made clear that the time commented on is 1945, while the actual time of writing is the late 1960s:


Those who had finished primary school the year Atatürk died were now old enough. But they were still like children to the degree that they would not know what a democracy with one or a few parties would mean. What the adults did and would do was all good. The only thing needed now was to take part in all these good things. That’s what one grew up for. (my trans.)
In this paragraph the relationship between Aysel’s generation and the spiritual leader of their country is highlighted through the alternations of the name Atatürk (“Father Turk”) with words for adults, children, and growing up. The style of the language here makes it possible for the narrator to state that the two-party system was introduced because “the children” of the Republic were now old enough for it. When it is added that they were not old enough to know what a democracy consisting of one or a few parties is, it is from the perspective of the 1960s, a period with several political parties, and a period when the coup d’état of 1960 had created an ideology emphasizing the failures of the two-party system and especially of the ruling Democratic Party led by Adnan Menderes throughout the 1950s. However, the naïve style also invites an ironic reading of the text as paradoxical. The view that Aysel’s generation grew up as children of Atatürk, eventually being old enough for a two-party system, is not the “objective” view of the narrator, but rather the perspective of the state leadership. The naïve reproduction of this perspective functions as an ironic critique, posing questions not only about the success or failure of the Democratic Party, but also about how democratic the Republic is in its foundations, as the discourse ventriloquized here is rather paternalistic.

Looking back at the school play, the way in which the content of it connects to Atatürk and the national ideology is articulated by Dündar in an introductory speech he gives to the parents before presenting the play Meslekler ‘Professions,’ which he has written himself:

Atamızın çizdiği yolda şerefli vatanımıza yararlı birer insan olmak için mesleklerini buna göre seçsinler; buna göre yılmadan, usanmadan bu güzel, bu eşsiz vatan için çalıșınlar. Gerekirse uğrunda ölsünler… (Ölmeye 15; ellipsis in original)

They [i.e. the schoolchildren] should choose their professions along the path that our father [i.e. Atatürk] has established in order for each of them to become a useful human being for our fatherland; accordingly, they should work ceaselessly and without fear for this unequaled fatherland, and die for it if necessary. (my trans.)

What Dündar expresses here is an ideology that is probably best understood in light of the decade of war (1912–22) that led to independence for the Turkish nation. Dündar expresses an ideology that puts the fatherland before the individual. According to Dündar, who speaks in front of parents who must have had their own experiences of war, the purpose of the individual is to serve the fatherland, either by choosing a profession that aids the nation or by dying for it. This ideology is rooted in Atatürk, who can also be understood as a personification of the fatherland.

There are at least two reasons why the narrative dwells on Atatürk as much as it does. First, Atatürk, which means “Father Turk,” a name officially granted to him by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, was in his lifetime
already seen as the “father of his nation,” and his role as president in a one-party state made him head of the reform programs often referred to by his later name, “Atatürkçülük,” “Kemalism,” or variations on these terms. Second, following a coup d’état in 1971, the 1970s saw the peak of veneration of Atatürk as part of a program emphasizing core national values. The author’s choice to focus on Atatürk in the novel might therefore be as much a commentary on the Atatürkist revival of the 1970s as it is on Atatürk’s position in Turkey in the 1930s.

The assimilation of this ideology by the school children is confirmed later. For example, in Semiha’s letter to Aysel, she comments on the news that Aysel will continue her studies in Ankara, even though her family disapproves:


Oh, Aysel, happy you as a Turkish girl! My beautiful sister, you wrote that you all cried sobbingly the day our Father Atatürk died, your friends, your teachers, and even your administrators. Believe me when I say I also cried sobbingly when I read this, both because of the death of our Grand Leader and because of my own fate. If I had been there at school, I would have cried with you all. At home I cried secretly, my sister. No one understood what was going on. (my trans.)

The reaction of crying over Atatürk’s death tells us something about the personal attachment that the two girls felt to the leader of their nation. This paragraph also tells us that this reaction was context bound. Aysel cried together with other students, teachers, and administrators at school, while Semiha, who was at home with her family, cried only when reading about how Aysel and the others had cried—and she had to cry secretly. Later, we are also told that Sevil’s violin teacher cries each time she thinks of Atatürk, and this makes Sevil cry, too (Ölmeye 125).

Another scene in which Atatürk appears—alluded to by a portrait in the concert hall where they are listening to one of Beethoven’s symphonies—includes a moment when Aysel remembers the period of her engagement to Ömer:

We see that Atatürk has become a guarantor of Aysel’s and Ömer’s kind of relationship, one between two academics engaged in the same pleasures, such as listening to Beethoven.

Similarly, Atatürk is a central figure in Aysel’s reflections concerning her recent experiences with her student, Engin. In one sentence Aysel thinks of her watching Engin, his room, and Anıtkabir, i.e. the monumental mausoleum built around the burial place of Atatürk in central Ankara (Ölmeye 226). Thus, the death of Atatürk becomes a parallel to the death of Aysel, just as the burial of him seems significant for Aysel’s new beginning. The vision of Aysel looking at Anıtkabir while in bed with Engin ends with her turning her back to the tedious, old mausoleum and letting her gaze dwell upon Engin’s clothes hanging on the other side of the bed (228).

The relation between manhood and fatherland is brought up later in Aysel’s log in an attempt to explain why she has lain down to die:

Nerede olduğumu anlamak için böyle bir denemeye girişmenin, vatanı kurtarmak uğruna bir erkeklik organını karşısında dolaştırmanın utancıdır belki de benim burada ölmeye yatmanın nedeni. (Ölmeye 321)

To understand where I am, perhaps the reason why I’ve lain down to die here, is the shame of getting entangled in such an experiment, of having a male organ move around in front of me for the sake of saving the fatherland. (my trans.)

When “saving the fatherland” is mentioned here, it connects Aysel’s feelings about sleeping with her student to a discourse of heroism. It lets the reader glimpse a train of thought in which “having a male organ move around in front of me” answers the demands of the less explicit side of the discourse of westernization: the sexist side primarily presented in Aydın’s diary, both where he explains the attitudes of teachers and parents regarding the different gender roles and where he relates his difficulties in socializing with girls. When the link between the discourse of westernization and the sexist discourse is made overt, as it is here in Aysel’s log, it has a surprising effect because the two notions, “saving the fatherland” and “having a male organ move around in front of oneself,” are rarely closely connected; indeed, Aysel’s logic may seem a bit absurd. At the same time, this linking serves as an ironic cut as it opens up the potential to read the intimate implications of the explicitly political, patriotic discourse seen throughout the novel.
Concluding Remarks

In this section I have shown how the discourse of westernization is presented through irony in Ölmeye Yatmak. As in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, irony comes about though the discrepancies between the individual voice and the discourses it participates in.

A central feature of Ölmeye Yatmak is the textual hybridity manifest in the structure of each chapter based on a log, with various texts following each log entry. In the beginning, westernization manifests itself through the log, which presents images of Aysel, a westernized woman in the modern, urban setting of Turkey’s capital, Ankara. The function of this scene is later strengthened with memories of Aysel’s village in the 1930s, serving as an Eastern scene contrasting to the westernized capital.

Another way in which this novel participates in the discourse of westernization is through discussions of education, starting with Aysel’s childhood, when she went to school in one of the first gender-mixed classes. This gender mixing followed the official ideology of Kemalism, which formed Aysel as she continued her education and became a university lecturer.

Aysel’s story from childhood until she lies down to die is the story of her being subdued by the tenets of westernization as formulated in the Kemalist program of the Turkish Republic. As a woman, she has benefited from this process, since she has been granted access to positions previously restricted to men in her society; at the same time, the ideology of westernization has denied her other aspects of being an individual woman with her own desires, like choosing with whom she wants to dance. Her narrative seems to arise in reaction to the restricted space in which Aysel can define herself in a society where the discursive regime is based on an East–West dichotomy that forces its participants into opposite positions.

Aysel’s first reaction is to isolate herself. Through the narrative, she experiences something that makes her recount her relationship to westernization and its promises of freedom. As her story develops, she is increasingly aware of how her gender has been used to restrict her freedom. The central paradox is that while her account might be seen as a personal awakening, a tool for achieving individual freedom, it also highlights certain aspects of her identity as a woman that threaten to destroy her as a social being if she tries to live an integrated life. Various letters as well as Aydın’s diary highlight how Aysel’s body is a battlefield between ideological expectations.

An ironic edge is evident in Aysel’s narrative from the beginning, where it becomes clear that “lying down to die” is not literally about dying. Ağaoğlu’s experience as a playwright shines through in the first chapter, in which Aysel’s entry into the hotel is depicted in cinematic terms. The early descriptions of her undressing and “lying down to die” create suspense with sexual undertones. This style of narration evokes images and conceptual constructs from Turkish movies in the 1960s and 70s, in which westernized women are
portrayed as promiscuous, and as available objects of desire for male spectators. These images are soon juxtaposed to the inner voice of Aysel, as she lies naked in bed, reflecting on her past and present life.

Aysel is simultaneously both an object available for the reader’s gaze and a subject taking command of her own story. In her log, Aysel returns to this paradox several times, reflecting on society’s expectations of her as a westernized, educated woman in contrast to how she is situated, like a prostitute alone in a hotel room.

As mentioned above, there is a widespread critical view that Aysel represents Turkey’s “lost generation,” and this conclusion emphasizes the tragic aspects of Aysel’s situation as if she were primarily a victim. In contrast to such an interpretation, my own reading emphasizes the novel’s irony. The novel never states that Aysel is only a victim; from the beginning to the end, Aysel is a character well aware of being perceived as both a free woman and a whore. What Aysel experiences is growing awareness of what it means to be an autonomous individual within this discursive regime.

In Aysel’s story, a distinction is made between the distant past of her childhood and early adulthood and, on the other hand, her more recent past. In her recent past there are two turning points that highlight womanhood as the main field where westernization is played out (to be compared with the father figures in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü). The first is her life-changing experience of sleeping with her student, an act likened to breaking her “hymen of womanhood.” The second turning point is her very recent sense that she might be pregnant. These turning points are instrumental to irony in the narrative, as they create ambiguity when it comes to which part of Aysel’s past her current situation is a response to. If “lying down to die” is meant to signify a radical turn in her life, it obviously has very different implications if this turning point is seen in relation to her life before the liberating experience of sleeping with her student, or in relation to her life as an adult woman finally starting to experience individual freedom at a level she has learned to expect through her westernized education.

A central contribution of Aysel’s individual story to the Turkish discourse of westernization is the way in which it uses irony to highlight gender as an aspect of this discourse. At the end of the novel, Aysel seems to walk out of the hotel more aware of the pervasive restrictions that she, necessarily or not, experiences arising from alternately listening to the expectations of those around her and to urges springing from within her.

An effect of the novel’s unique form is that it foregrounds narration over narrative. Besides presenting the story of Aysel’s past, elements such as the collection, selection, and organization of text fragments into one narrative illustrate how to reflect on the past from within the here and now. The telling of the story becomes as much the subject of the novel as the story being told.

Even though the frame created around the narrative is presented as one person’s recounting of a personal tragedy, the story becomes more like a
representative account of the first decades of the Republic—from the perspective of the Republic’s first generation, now grown up—than a trustworthy representation of an individual. In other words, Aysel’s log ceases to be the sincere account of a personal tragedy that it—ironically—claims to be, and becomes an analogy of the experience of the first generation of women in the Turkish Republic.
The Ironic Discourse of Westernization in *Yeni Hayat*

_Evet o bana yeni bir hayat buldu. Bu eski şeylerden şimdi çok uzaktayım._
—Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, _Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü_

_He created a new life for me. I am far removed now from those old occurences._
—Ender Gürol, _The Time Regulation Institute_

In this section I will examine how Pamuk applies irony in representations of westernization in *Yeni Hayat*. The novel presents itself as a romantic tale about how a book and a girl changed the life of a young man, the narrator-protagonist Osman. This main story develops into an odyssey in which we follow the protagonist through different parts and strata of modern Turkish society. It includes a triangular relationship of love and jealousy set around 1980 and described from the perspective of a frame story in the early 1990s, close to the time of narration.

At the same time, there are signals that the novel can also be read ironically as a story about certain politically inclined ways of reading texts, recognizable through references and allusions to various radical oppositional movements as well as to state ideology known from the turbulent recent history of Turkey.

There are several similarities to the two previously discussed novels when it comes to how structure is used to create ironic representations of westernization, but also striking differences, both of which will be discussed. I will first illustrate how the novel evokes a discourse of westernization. Then, I will discuss how the novel’s structure establishes a foundation for irony, after which I will give examples of how irony happens throughout this novel.

**Westernization Revisited**

Westernization has previously been treated by analyses of the political aspects of *Yeni Hayat*. Ecevit, for instance, lets Turkey’s quest for identity and the pains of westernization frame her political reading of this novel (Orhan 190). A typical departure point for analyzing the discourse of westernization in *Yeni
Hayat has been the conspiracies and counterconspiracies of the broken-hearted shopkeepers in chapters 7–11 (e.g. Oktay 236–37; Göknar Orhan Pamuk 168–80).

My reading argues that the discourse of westernization is present through recognizable dichotomies from the beginning to the end of the novel. As in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Ölmeye Yatmak, the discourse of westernization is based as much on a before–now dichotomy as on an East–West dichotomy. According to Mani, Yeni Hayat is “a novel that transforms the meaning of home and belonging” through “the tragicomedy of a controversial book, first mystified and mythologized and then parodied by the narrator” (151). Expectations, longings, and fears that westernization answers to are already present as Osman reads the book that “changes his life.” The East–West debate, or the discourse of westernization, is something Osman is introduced to through both spatial and historical leaps from his home in Erenköy by references to travels, literature, and other pieces of art.

As far as the title is concerned, it alludes to the Turkish discourse of westernization as well as to a romantic literary tradition of change more broadly. It conjures up the image of a “new life,” which in the context of Turkish literature is strongly associated with top–down reforms. The theme of having one’s life changed is shared with Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Ölmeye Yatmak. In Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, Hayri İrdal’s life is said to have changed because of his meeting with Halit Ayarcı, while more immediate reasons for change preceding the narration of that story are the death of Halit Ayarcı and the dissolution of the Institute. In Ölmeye Yatmak, a significant change occurs when Aysel visits a hotel room instead of going to class; underlying that visit is the change occurring when she sleeps with a student of hers and later feels pregnant. In Yeni Hayat, the life of the protagonist apparently changes when he reads a certain book, but the way in which this change is narrated invites readers to look for alternative explanations for this change.

Dichotomies Established

Chapter 1 tells of the first reactions of the protagonist to reading a book at home and of a nighttime stroll he takes in his neighborhood that same day. What he sees is described in terms of striking contrasts between “old” and “new”:

Eski dünya, orada, karşısında, yanımda, sokakların içinde, tandık bakkal camekanları, Erenköy istasyon meydanındaki ışıkları hâlâ yananan çörek fırını, manavın meyve sandıkları, el arabaları, Hayat Pastanesi, köhne kamyonlar, mușambalar ve karanlık ve yorgun yüzler olarak çevremdeydi. Gecenin
My old world was all around me, in the street across from me, here, there, everywhere, in the form of familiar grocery-store windows, streetlights at the Erenköy Station Square, bakery ovens still baking çörek, fruit crates that belonged to the greengrocer, pushcarts, the pastry shop called Life, dilapidated trucks, tarpaulins, tired and obscure faces. Part of my heart, where I carried the book as if it were a sin, had frozen itself against all the forms that were softly shimmering in the city lights. (Gün 9–10)

This paragraph is relevant to the westernization theme because, although it opens with a description of “the old world,” the contrasts are what strike us in its portrayal of Erenköy Station Square. Distributed among the words for “old,” “dilapidated,” “darkness,” and “tired faces” are “light,” “fruit,” and “life.” Here, some discrepancy is already observed between what Osman is said to be seeing—the old world—and what he is described as seeing: a world full of contrasts between old and new, dark and light, death and life. Through these dichotomies, the novel soon establishes a basis for irony, and dialectical positions of old and new are seen throughout the novel.

Osman feels attracted to the world in the book and wants to assume its perspective. At the same time, he finds himself fearing that he will be unable to find his way back to the world as he left it if he answers the call of the book and embarks on a journey (Yeni 12). The book is said to emit light, turning his life upside down:

Öyle güçlü bir etkiydi ki bu, okuduğum kitabın sayfalarından yüzüme ışık fışkırıyor sandım: Aynı anda hem bütün aklımı körleştiren, hem de onu pırıl pırıl parlatan bir ışık. Bu ışıkla kendimi yeniden yapacağımı düşünüyorum; bu ışıkla yoldan çıkacağımı sezdim, bu ışıkta daha sonra tanıyacağım, yakınlaşacağım bir hayatın gölgelerini hissettim. (Yeni 7)

It was such a powerful influence that the light surging from the pages illumined my face; its incandescence dazzled my intellect but also endowed it with brilliant lucidity. This was the kind of light within which I [thought I] could recast myself; [I felt that] I could lose my way in this light; I already sensed in the light the shadows of an existence I had yet to know and embrace.25 (Gün 3)

Illumination, recasting life, new ways, and new life—these are all general ways to describe radical change. They could, for instance, describe a religious experience or a revolutionary awakening as much as an intense experience of art. By not specifying which ideology and values are affecting the protagonist, distance is created, inviting ambivalent readings of the alluring text. This

25 The verbs in square brackets are my interpolations in Gün’s translation based on the Turkish original. As I will discuss below, they signal a narrative distance emphasized from the beginning of the novel.
ambiguity. This ambiguity relates to the discourse of westernization too, as this discourse could be understood as a cultural system not clearly defined as political, religious, or something else. Instead of presenting Osman’s radical turn as resulting from a certain ideology or certain values, *Yeni Hayat* invites readers to view reading as a phenomenon to be interpreted. Perhaps Osman’s experience of radical change is mostly related to where he is in life, as a young man studying at university while still living with his mother.

Irony through Style

One example of the narrator parodying his own narrative is when he seems to assume the voice of a Turkish fortune teller. This happens in the middle of a sequence about how the book emits a light that opens up a new world, and not only in a good way:

> Bu dehşetle birlikte, kitaptan yüzüme fışkıran ışıkta köhnemiş odalar gördüm, çılgın otobüsler, yorgun insanlar, soluk harfler, kayıp kasabalar ve hayatlar, hayaletler gördüm. Bir yolculuk vardı, hep vardı, her şey bir yolculuktu. (*Yeni* 10)

> In the light that surged from the book into my face, I was terrified to see shabby rooms, frenetic buses, bedraggled people, faint letters, lost towns, lost lives, phantoms. A journey was involved; it was always about a journey. (Gün 5)

Deeply affected by the light seeping from the book, Osman sees things that hint both at what he will experience and at his past life experiences that are now being “illuminated.” The narration of what Osman “sees” in the light of the book recalls the oral discourse of fortune-telling, commonly carried out among friends over coffee cups. This is true both for the rendering of the specific figures that he sees—as if they were figures appearing in a coffee cup—and for the repetition of there being a journey. In particular, the sentence “Bir yolculuk vardı, hep vardı, her şey bir yolculuktu” ‘There was a journey, it was always there, everything was a journey’ seems designed to evoke these associations with fortune-telling.

The topic of reading and having one’s life change is framed by multiple allusions to literature. References to people reading self-help books parody the idea of reading and having one’s life change in a way that hits back at *Yeni Hayat* itself. Another signal of irony is the narrator’s inclusion of the discourse of fortune-telling, which creates latitude for ironic readings of Osman’s life-changing reading experience.

Although this kind of humorous language sets the tone for Osman’s story, this does not mean that the whole novel is marked as parody. It is as if the author, through references to a real world and descriptions of a young man with recognizable thoughts and desires, wants his readers to identify sincerely
with Osman, who is reading a book and having his life changed, as much as the author, through an overload of literary devices, wants us to see the pathos of Osman’s approach to literature. The fact that Osman is behaving as though he believes sincerely in the book marks him as a naïve figure, while comments that reveal his distance from this part of the story mark the narrator as an ironist.

**Structure of the Novel**

Its references to places, historical events, and literature make *Yeni Hayat* a complex narrative, but its seventeen chapters are straightforwardly organized into three distinguishable parts:

1) Introduction: chapters 1 and 2
2) Main part, first journey: chapters 3–14
   a) First movement: chapters 3–6
   b) Stay in Güdül and the mansion of Dr. Narin: chapters 7–11
   c) Second movement: chapters 12–14
3) Epilogue, second journey: chapters 15–17

The whole narrative is organized around two series of bus rides that constitute two parallel journeys separated by a gap of fourteen years. On his journeys, Osman is led by the book to become a killer in the first journey and to be killed in the second one.

The first journey occurs about a year after Osman’s father has died. It is inspired by a book and instigated by a meeting with Canan, a girl from Nişantaşı, Istanbul. The young student Osman secretly leaves the corridors of Istanbul Technology University, where he is studying, and his mother in the neighborhood on the Asian side, where they live, and rides the bus, first with Canan, in search of a third person, Mehmet, the third party of a triangular love affair. After a long stay in the village of Güdül, Osman leaves on a mission to track down Mehmet, eventually shooting and killing him, and then escaping from the crime scene without being caught.

The story then quickly moves towards the epilogue. Osman returns to the same neighborhood and marries another woman, with whom he lives until the second journey. The last three chapters present a second journey that mirrors the first one. In the early 1990s, Osman, now thirty-five years old, leaves his safe home with a wife and children and embarks on a bus journey throughout Turkey, driven by the feeling that he can reach the secret at the heart of the book. Towards the end, an increasing number of signals hint at an approaching end, which finally occurs when Osman dies in a traffic accident. This happens on the very last page of the novel, marking the end of both journeys.
Throughout the novel, the story is interposed with the comments of a more knowledgeable narrator, and with analepses reaching back to Osman’s childhood. Still, childhood remains a mysterious land, revisited only to shed light on events occurring in narrated time.

The novel can be briefly summarized as follows: A young man kills out of jealousy for a girl with whom he has not yet had sexual relations; years later, he dies in search of the secrets of a book and for the love affair he once experienced but never fully lived. Far from being the romantic tale of the new life a person experiences after reading a book, Yeni Hayat ends up being the story of a man who, in his mid thirties, recalls dramatic events he experienced in his early twenties. These events involve him being a killer, leading him to embark on a journey that ends in his death, apparently still in search of the truth behind the alluring book imbued with great promise as well as fear.

Yeni Hayat displays several similarities to Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Ölmeye Yatmak when it comes to the use of the novel’s structure to create ironic representations of westernization. There are also striking differences, not least in the different positioning of the protagonist Osman and how he becomes involved in the discourse of westernization.

Firstly, Osman does not experience the same transition as did Hayri İrdal and Aysel from an Eastern background to a more Western environment. Rather, he grows up in Erenköy, an Istanbul suburb around an old train station on the Asian side. According to descriptions in the novel, this is a typical middle-class neighborhood—one might even say “westernized.” Except for his journeys into Anatolia and other short interludes, he continues living in that neighborhood. Osman’s life thus develops quite differently from that of Hayri İrdal, who hails from traditional quarters on the Istanbul peninsula and, after working in the bustling neighborhoods of Galata, ends up in a mansion in Büyükdere, and from that of Aysel, who grows up in a small Anatolian town and later moves to Ankara.

Secondly, a feature that Yeni Hayat shares with Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Ölmeye Yatmak is the marked difference between the perspectives of narrator and protagonist in narrated time. How large the distance is between narrated time and time of narration is unclear from the beginning, since the actual time gap of fourteen years is only revealed towards the end (Yeni 252). This late disclosure of the time of narration differentiates the work both from Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, in which the narrator’s position in time and place is mentioned both in the introduction and at the end, and from Ölmeye Yatmak, in which Aysel’s log represents a frame story very close to the time of narration. Most of the main narrative is about how Osman and Canan, inspired by a book, travel on buses from Istanbul to Anatolia. This story is told in retrospect and there are signals hinting that the story took place around 1980. For instance, in chapter 2 there is a reference to Osman reading the newspaper Milliyet and the column of Celal Salik, who, in Pamuk’s 1990 novel Kara Kitap is shot down in the streets in early 1980, an allusion to the
actual assassination of journalist Abdi İpekçi in the same streets in early 1979. This suggests that the narrated time in *Yeni Hayat* is before 1980. However, in Güdül, at the convention for broken-hearted shopkeepers, one of the shopkeepers tells Osman that Celal Salik is dead and that somebody else is writing in his stead (93); this is another allusion to *Kara Kitap*, in which the cousin of Celal Salik, Galip, starts writing columns in his stead. Moreover, the convention takes place at *Kenan Evren Lisesi*, a high school named after Kenan Evren, the general who led Turkey through the coup d’État of September 12, 1980 and the following years of military rule (86–87). This suggests that the narrated time is the early 1980s. Since the convention of broken-hearted shopkeepers takes place in summer, it would be 1981 at the earliest. An aspect of the story that does not fit this interpretation of the time of narration is that there is no mention of military rule in the form of soldiers in the streets or on the buses, or of a curfew or other military restrictions on civil life. This would suggest that the narrated time is either the late 1970s or even later, in the 1980s.

**Verbs Signaling Irony**

The first two chapters function as an introduction that invites an ironic approach to the story by means of stylistic devices. Firstly, the two first chapters resemble each other in a schematic way. Chapter 1 presents a book and the effects of reading it on the protagonist, an engineering student in his early twenties who lives at home with his mother in Erenköy (*Yeni* 9–13). Chapter 2 presents Osman’s experience of falling in love when he meets the girl Canan from the posh district Nişantaşı on the European side (20, 23, 37). While Erenköy is the setting in chapter 1, the Taşkısla campus where Osman and Canan are both students is the setting in chapter 2. Here, Osman observes Canan carrying the same book as the one that has affected him so much the previous day (21). As quoted above, the first sentence of the novel reads:

Bir gün bir kitap okudum ve bütün hayatım değişti. (*Yeni* 7)

I read a book one day and my whole life was changed. (Gün 3)

As if continuing this story without intermission, the first two sentences of chapter 2 read:

Ertesi gün aşık oldum. Aşk, kitaptan yüzüme şişkaran şişk kadar sarsıcıydı ve hayatım çoktan yoldan çıktığını bana bütün ağırlığıyla kanıtladı. (*Yeni* 20)
The next day I fell in love. Love was every bit as devastating as the light that surged from the book into my face, proving to me how substantially my life had already [long since] gone off the track.  

The initial sentences of the two first chapters are interlinked by applying the same indicative mode and finite verbal forms in “hayatım değişti” ‘my life changed’ and “aşık oldum” ‘I fell in love.’ This makes them stand out from the general mode of the narrative, in which the protagonist’s experiences are presented mostly through subjunctive clauses embedded in sentences with modifying finite verbs such as “sanıyordu” ‘I was thinking’ and “hissettim” ‘I felt.’  

The first sentence in chapter 2 is similar in form to the first sentence in chapter 1, inviting similar interpretations of the two (Yeni 20). This sentence is also marked as ironic because it comes as a surprising contrast to the description of Osman in the last paragraph of chapter 1, where he is seen masturbating while indulging in distant dreams of “pretty girls, dreams of happiness, my future sweetheart, wife” (“güzel kızlar, mutluluk hayalleri, gelecekteki sevgilim, karım”; Gün 15; Yeni 19). In addition, chapter 1 tells us that Osman was afraid of “drowning in love” and of being unable to get pretty girls to love him (“aşktan boğulmaktan”; Gün 14; Yeni 17). Osman’s love affair is presented as embedded in the experience of reading the book but comes as a surprisingly abrupt change in the order of events within the narrative.  

After the ironic cut in the first sentence in chapter 2, a time reference in the next sentence, which is in the same unmodified style, hints as to the direction readers may look in search of alternative explanations of Osman’s state. While the descriptions of him reading a book and falling in love may seem exaggerated, a more plausible explanation for Osman’s feelings at this point is that his life is already “off track.” That phrase seems to refer to a major, negative turn in his life that occurred earlier. The word “çoktan” ‘long since’ suggests a change occurring before the main narrative begins. At this point, it is not made clear what incident or incidents forced Osman’s life off track, but based on references internal and external to the text, the novel develops various hints as to what might have happened.  

Through evaluative verbs, the narrator indicates distance from the romantic aspirations that filled the protagonist when reading the book. In a paragraph quoted early in the chapter on the discourse of westernization, there is a distinctive repetition of verbs in simple past tense used to frame Osman’s thoughts: “sandım” ‘I thought/supposed,’ “düşündüm” ‘I thought,’ “sezdim” ‘I sensed,’ and “hissettim” ‘I felt’ (Yeni 7). In both form and content, they generate distance between Osman’s thoughts and feelings in narrated time and
the consciousness of the narrator at the time of narration. In addition, whenever “sandım” ‘thought’/‘assumed’ is used, the reader is invited to be outrightly suspicious, because it is a verb that indicates subjective assumption rather than objective statement.

These words are used to speak indirectly about narrated events framed within the narrator’s discourse, in which how the protagonist was experiencing things becomes as much a topic as the events experienced.

One consequence of the narrative distance thus actualized is the critical approach it invites readers to take. Without further comments as to what the narrator thinks of the events he underwent in the past, readers are invited to make their own evaluations.

The introductory sentences to chapters 1 and 2 lack a similar modification, making them stand out as overtly assertive, surprisingly exaggerated in a way that prompts ironic approaches in the form of disbelief of their content and curiosity about signals as to what else might be meant. As a matter of fact, the opening sentence of the novel is later repeated in modified form. In chapter 9, in an explicit comment on a young man reading the same book, Dr. Narin tells Osman about his son’s experience reading the book before he left home:

Dr. Narin oğlunu kendisine karşı çıkaran şeyin bir kitap olduğunu bir kere daha söyledi. Oğlu bir gün bir kitap okumuş ve bütün dünyasının değiştiğini sanmış. (Yeni 124; my emphasis)

Doctor Fine [i.e. Dr. Narin] repeated once more that what had turned his son against him had been a book. His son had read a book one day and thought his whole world had changed. (Gün 129; my emphasis)

The close resemblance between the sentence that Dr. Narin uses to describe his son Mehmet’s experience of reading the book and the opening sentence of Yeni Hayat makes the sentence a comment on the protagonist Osman’s experiences, confirming the initial sentences as open to ironic interpretation. Osman reacts to Dr. Narin’s utterance accordingly. Taking it as a critique of his own experience with the book, he responds with silence and fear since he does not want to start an argument (Yeni 124).

In an intriguing turn of events at the end of Yeni Hayat, the narrator comments on his own death—he understands that he will die just seconds before the bus he is riding and a truck is going to crash—clearly destroying any possible illusion of a narrator resembling a living person outside the text.

At the very end of the novel, the aim of Osman’s journey is formulated as almost the opposite of what it was in the initial sentence:

Oysa ben evime dönmek istiyorum, yeni bir hayata geçmeyi, ölmemi hiç mi hiç istemiyordum. (Yeni 275)
Yet I wanted to return home. As for crossing over into a new life, as for dying, I had no wish for it whatsoever. (my trans.)

Although this sentence, expressing the thoughts of Osman just as he understands that he will die in a few seconds, seems to say the opposite of what was said at the beginning of the novel, it confirms the irony permeating the whole novel. It is between these opposites of life and death, of staying at home and traveling, that the narrative evolves.

As I showed in this chapter, the story of the younger Osman who reads the book and falls in love is told from a distance. Towards the end, it becomes clear that the story of the first journey is being told about fourteen years later. However, the second journey is also described from a peculiar distance. Structurally, this distance is created by an overload of analepses and comments reaching back in time, both to Osman’s memories of the first journey, and further back, not least to a meeting with uncle Rıfkı, a former colleague of his father, twenty-three years earlier. The focus of these analepses and comments creates the image of a narrator still living within the realities of the first journey, distant from the contemporary life of the protagonist.

Westernization in a Web of Connections

As mentioned above, *Yeni Hayat* deploys a kind of “hysterical realism,” a term that Wood uses to describe literature that “borrows from the real while evading it” (148). Wood asserts that this kind of fiction is replete with “inhuman stories, ‘inhuman’ not because they could never happen, but because they are not really about human beings” (148). Instead of trustworthy characters, Wood sees in this line of literature figures immersed in a web of connections, and an emphasis on telling how the world works (175).

Many elements of the novel serve as signals to stop our interpreting it as mere parody. In particular, there are references to recognizable lived lives, and they come in three categories.

Firstly, there are references to places, people, and events in an external world. To this category belong railway buildings, catastrophes of war and migration, Atatürk, book impoundment, the distribution of illegal books among university students, General Kenan Evren of the 1980 coup, political assassinations and disappearances, business magnate Vehbi Koç, singer Michael Jackson, etc. They contribute to the hysterical realism that characterizes this kind of postmodernist fiction.

Secondly, references to specific events in Osman’s life have the potential to make readers empathize with him, despite not believing him. These references establish a main character and a story recognizable from real life despite the fantastic frame of the dramatic content of the story.
Thirdly, there are numerous references and allusions to film and literature, such as the 1930 movie Der Blaue Engel and the novels Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers, and Kara Kitap. These create a contextual patchwork that informs our interpretation of the novel.

Ironic Comment through Evaluative Verbs

While an ironic reading of this story could entail a simple inverted reading of Osman’s statements (e.g. “one day his whole life changed [but in fact it didn’t]”), a more obvious approach is for readers who see the irony to seek alternative explanations as to why the past Osman felt the way he did. Throughout the book, there is a discrepancy between the eager young man who, on impulse, is led into something resembling a war zone, and the revised sense of revolution by accident conveyed by the narrator’s account. While a crucial aspect of first-person narratives is that they blur the distinction between narrator and protagonist, both referred to with first-person pronouns, the time lag between them here is the most obvious sign that they are not the same. Instead of being a narrative presenting the consequences of reading a book, Yeni Hayat becomes a narrative about how a book came to have such grave consequences in Osman’s life.

As mentioned above, a common feature of first-person narratives is that they often blur the distinction between the thoughts and feelings of the character in narrated time and the narrator’s comments at the time of narration. One illustrative statement in Yeni Hayat occurs in the following sentence, where the last clause appears ambiguous:

Bütün bu süre boyunca kitap masamın üzerinde duruyor ve ışığını yüzüme saçarken, odamdaki öteki eşyalara benzer bildik tanıdık bir şey gibi gözüküyordu. Bunu, önümde açılan yeni bir hayatın, yeni bir dünyanın varlığını hayretle ve sevinçle karşılarırken hissettim: Hayatımı böylesine değiştirmek olan kitap aslında sıradan bir eşyaydı. (Yeni 8)

The book lay on my table reflecting its light on my face, yet it seemed similar to the other familiar objects in the room. While I accepted with joy and wonder the possibility of a new life in the new world that lay before me, I was aware that [I felt this:] the book which had changed [was going to change] my life so intensely was in fact something quite ordinary. (Gün 4)

Since the last clause is embedded by a colon after the verb “hissettim” ‘I felt,’ this sentence appears to refer to something the protagonist felt in narrated time, yet it could also be understood as a comment by the narrator. As we see, the colon makes a great difference here. Without the colon, the only direct object of “hissettim” ‘I felt’ would be “Bunu” ‘this’ at the beginning of the Turkish sentence, and “bunu” would then refer directly to the content of the
previous sentence. The colon suggests that the following sentence should also be understood as a complement of “hissettim.” With a full stop, the latter sentence would instead have been understood as the narrator’s comment. Furthermore, the embedding created by the colon affects the whole main clause that follows, including the relative clause within it. The result is that “Hayatımı böylesine değiştirecek olan” ‘which was going to change my life so intensely’ also becomes more ambiguous. It can be understood both as the protagonist’s suggestion about his future within narrated time and as the narrator’s comment. This ambiguity mirrors the reciprocal relationship between world and text. The life-changing book is not only a source of a new light shaping the narrator’s new way of looking at the world, but is also part of this new world. At one level, the characters of the novel are engaged in a political reality and a culture in which certain strategies for action are available.

Decisive for the plot’s development is not only how the protagonist interacts with the people, stories, and events encountered on his travels through Turkish society, but also how these experiences blend with the aspirations arising from the book he is reading. Both the book and the society he lives in are seen as both matter and idea. Oddly, the protagonist already shares the narrator’s evaluation that the book is in fact matter. At the same time, the protagonist is convinced that there is light streaming out of the book, a conviction seemingly not shared by the narrator. It seems ironic that the protagonist simultaneously sees the book as pure matter and as a source of light streaming into his life and changing it. From the outset, the book in the novel is established as something life changing as well as “something quite ordinary.” The ambiguity here lays the ground for a perception of irony permeating the whole novel.

Competing Ways of Westernization

In Yeni Hayat’s web of connections, railway building is an early example of westernization in the story, imbued with nostalgia and juxtaposed to the haunted bus rides that the protagonist embarks on. Through their visibility, railways represent a memory of the drastic changes westernization can bring. Rıfkı Hat, who like Osman’s father worked on the railways, used to write articles for the railway magazine, and these are described as “articles for the Railway magazine about railway fever” (“Demiryol dergisine demiryolculuk atesi üzerine yazilar”; my trans.; Yeni 16), suggesting that railways used to represent a westernization project that evoked enthusiasm.27

27 Cf. Gün’s translation: “articles in Rail magazine for railroad buffs” (12).
An example of the nostalgia surrounding railways is seen when, during a journey to southeastern Turkey, Osman remembers an occasion in his childhood when he and his father visited uncle Rıfkı, who stated:

“Dünyanın öbür ucu da olsa trenlerin uğradığı herhangi bir yerde yaşayabilirim ben,” demişti. “Çünkü uykudan önce insanın bir trenin düdüğünü duyamayacağı bir hayatı hayal bile edemiyorum.” (Yeni 191)

‘I could live anywhere at all, provided trains go there, even if it is a whistle stop at the end of the world,’ he had told us. ‘I cannot even imagine a life where one cannot hear a train whistle before dropping off to sleep.’ (Gün 204)

Apart from showing how fond uncle Rıfkı must have been of trains, this statement reveals how railways represent a more universal program for westernization than the later nationalist approach. While uncle Rıfkı was dedicated to stories involving railways, aunt Ratibe tells Osman it did not take long before such stories declined in popularity in favor of illustrated novels about historical heroes: “bütün o Kaan’lar, Karaoğlan’lar, Hak’an’lar, yani Bizanslılarla savaşan Türk cengaverleri” (Yeni 236) “all those illustrated historical romances, such as Kaan, Karaoğlan, and Hakan, created in response to the fad for Turkish warriors battling the Byzantines” (Gün 252).

Uncle Rıfkı had children’s books published in a series entitled Yenigün Çocuk Maceraları ‘Adventures of Children of the New Day’ (Yeni 16; my trans.).28 The term “Yenigün” ‘New Day’ is a known trademark in Turkey, used by several companies in various fields. A swift web search shows that it is the name of a construction and industrial company, a newspaper, as well as a backgammon-game manufacturer. The title of this comic series refers to a culturally established name that, like the title Yeni Hayat, alludes to positive expectations of what westernization brings. The topic of westernization is underlined from chapter 1 through references to the comic books Pertev ile Peter (Pertev and Peter) and Kamer Amerika'da (Kamer in America), both of which the protagonist Osman has read as a child (Yeni 16; 17). Similar titles in the same series include: Nebi Nebraska'da (Nebi [i.e. “the Prophet”] in Nebraska), Mari ile Ali (Mary and Ali), and Demiryolu Kahramanları (Heroes of the Railroad) (Yeni 112–17). The East–West perspective in these books is evident when Kamer (a Turkish girl’s name that, according to TDK’s online Kişi Adları Sözlüğü (Dictionary of Personal Names), is of Arabic origin and means “moon”) visits America, and when Pertev (a Turkish boy’s name of Persian origin) meets Peter (a Western boy’s name of Greek origin). The moon is associated with Islam, partly because of the lunar calendar, and partly because it symbolizes beauty in Ottoman poetry and other branches of Islamic art. Placing Kamer in America and Peter of the West next to Pertev of the East

is thus an unfamiliar expression of the theme of East meeting West. Similarly, the Turkish characters in *Nebi Nebraska’da* and *Mari ile Ali* are said to bridge racial issues between blacks and whites and between the majority and indigenous populations by means of their knowledge of Islam, Sufism, and Central Asian shamanism (*Yeni* 113–14).

The positive image of westernization conveyed in the comics by uncle Rıfkı confirms that they present westernization in a naïve and hopeful light, in contrast to the fearful approach of Dr. Narin, who in chapter 9 presents his belief in the great conspiracy of the West. This contrast was already presented in chapter 1 through references to other life-changing books that the protagonist has already heard of and feared:

I had heard of others who had read a book only to have their lives disintegrate. I’d read the account of someone who had read a book called *Fundamental Principles of Philosophy*; in total agreement with the book, which he read in one night, he joined the Revolutionary Proletarian Advance Guard the very next day, only to be nabbed three days later robbing a bank and end up doing time for the next ten years. I also knew about those who had stayed awake the whole night reading books such as *Islam and the New Ethos* or *The Betrayal of Westernization*, then immediately abandoned the tavern for the mosque, sat themselves on those ice-cold rugs doused with rosewater, and began preparing patiently for the next life which was not due for another fifty years. (*Gün* 13)

The references to *İslam ve Yeni Ahlak* (*Islam and the New Ethos*) and *Batılılaşma İhaneti* (*The Betrayal of Westernization*) evoke opposite sentiments towards westernization compared with uncle Rıfkı’s book series. While the titles of the comic books for children evoke curiosity regarding East meeting West, *Batılılaşma İhaneti* is clearly negative, and the word “betrayal” suggests a conspiratorial side of the political program of westernization. The way they are juxtaposed to uncle Rıfkı’s children’s books implies a historical shift in attitude towards the political process of westernization, from an official position marked by positive expectations and curiosity towards the West to outright hatred and contempt in some oppositional groups.

Some of the books mentioned here are actual books. *Felsefenin Temel İkeleri* (Fundamental Principles of Philosophy) refers to a book originally written in French by the French–Hungarian Marxist philosopher Georges Politzer, executed by the Nazis in 1942 (“Georges”). This book reached many
in Turkish translation but, according to Turkish Vikipedi, is known to be the first book impounded after the coup d'état of September 12, 1980 ("Felsefenin"). On the other hand, İslam ve Yeni Ahlak (Islam and the New Ethos) does not seem to refer to any well-known actual book. However, its title is general enough to apply to some Islamist works. A swift web search shows that the concept of a “new ethos” is found in some Islamist works both from Turkey and the Soviet Union in the 20th century. The title Batılılaşma İhaneti (The Betrayal of Westernization) refers to a 180-page book by the conservative writer and journalist Mehmet Doğan. First published in 1975, it has, according to information accessed through the website Kitapyurdu, been met with great interest and reprinted many times.

The reference to Felsefenin Temel İlkeleri beside references to İslam ve Yeni Ahlak and Batılılaşma İhaneti indicates that the narrator positions these two books on political Islam and westernization as radical works in line with the Marxist book prohibited by the coup leaders. At this point in Yeni Hayat, the religion of Islam is mentioned in combination with “new.” In other words, this reference does not evoke the image of Islam as something traditional and old, but rather as a source of something new and radical.

A wide range of texts is thus brought into Yeni Hayat through references and allusions. Uncle Rıfkı’s children’s books and Mehmet Doğan’s book clearly participate in a Turkish discourse of westernization from very different perspectives. The juxtaposing of these opposite though limited works on westernization within Osman’s story is a significant aspect of Yeni Hayat’s contribution to this discourse. Their framing within the wide range of romantic, political, and religious works referred and alluded to in the novel is as significant as their juxtaposition in the story. While books most clearly engaged in the discourse of westernization are shown as purveying contradictory messages in Osman’s life, their framing shows that they represent only part of a broad tradition of literature expressing expectations of change in a young man’s life.

Several parallels between uncle Rıfkı’s children’s books and Yeni Hayat are drawn in the novel. These are already mentioned in chapter 1, where the books are said to have had a similar effect on him as the book Osman is reading (Yeni 16). Although it is not immediately stated that the book Osman is reading now is about westernization, the references to these children’s books give hints regarding the content of that book.

At the same time, the books with more politically radical content also have a parallel in the book Osman is reading, since it is described early in the novel as illegal. In chapter 1, it is said that Osman carries it “as if hiding a crime” (“bir suç saklar gibi”; my trans.; Yeni 14), and in chapter 3 it is clearly stated that the book is prohibited.

References to various texts in Yeni Hayat affect not only how the novel participates in the discourse of westernization, but also how it produces irony. For instance, right after first mentioning the radical Marxist and Islamist books
that Osman has learned to fear, he comes to think of a third category of “life-changing” books, namely self-help books like *Aşkın Özgürlüğü* (*The Freedom of Love*) and *Kendimi Tanıdım* (*I Learned to Know Myself*) (*Yeni* 17):


I had even met some who got carried away by books with titles like *Love Sets You Free* or *Know Yourself*, and although these people were the sort who were capable of believing in astrology, they too could say in all sincerity, ‘This book changed my life overnight!’ (*Gün* 13)

Since these titles refer to a category of books so different from the politically radical ones just mentioned, they evoke surprise, creating an ironic cut. When people are said to testify to how these books changed their lives overnight, this establishes a mocking tone that redounds on *Yeni Hayat* by echoing its opening sentence. If the ironic intention behind the title *Yeni Hayat* and its opening sentence has not so far been obvious, this explicit mockery through similitude to these books serves to establish it.

A sign of how Rıfkı’s enthusiasm for railways affects the readers of the book is that both Osman and Mehmet, after several bus trips, settle near train stations. Osman moves back to Erenköy in Istanbul, and Mehmet to the secluded town of Viranbağ in southeastern Turkey.

The closest parallel between Rıfkı’s comic books and *Yeni Hayat* is drawn when Osman, out of jealousy, tracks down Canan’s former boyfriend Mehmet and finally finds him in Viranbağ along one of the railway routes in southeastern Turkey (*Yeni* 207–15). This is also a place where the juxtaposition of the opposite approaches to westernization as seen in the books of uncle Rıfkı versus the book of Mehmet Doğan manifests itself. At this point in the story, Osman is sent on a mission on behalf of Dr. Narin to track down all those who have read and distributed the prohibited book *Yeni Hayat*, which he claims is a tool of the great conspiracy of the West. Mehmet, who at this time identifies as Osman, is one of those engaged in rewriting this book. When meeting Mehmet, the protagonist Osman identifies himself as Dr. Narin’s son, Nahit. He tells Mehmet how much the content of the prohibited book resembles the content of *Pertev ile Peter*, and reflects on whether he, inspired by the latter, should settle the dispute about Canan in a peaceful way rather than by shooting him, which he ends up doing (*Yeni* 209, 214–15).

While *Pertev ile Peter* symbolizes westernization as a happy synthesis between modernization and tradition, the shots in the movie theater come to symbolize the opposite, the ultimate clash of lethal conflict. However, this killing does not imply Osman’s adherence to Dr. Narin’s counter-conspiracy against the great conspiracy of the West. Rather, his killing of Mehmet comes
at a time when he has expressed dismissiveness toward Dr. Narin and seems to be acting on his own behalf.

Since this assassination means that Osman (aka Nahit) kills Mehmet (aka Osman), the killing is also self-referential. It implies that Osman kills Osman in order to become Osman again, and by so doing the “new Osman,” whose life was changed by reading a book, also dies. If read as a symbol of where westernization brought Turkish society by the end of the 20th century, it is a harsh image.

Allusions and Self-references through the Title

Associated with an abrupt shift from old to new, the title *Yeni Hayat* recalls expectations of abrupt change known from books such as *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* and *Ölmeye Yatmak*. *Yeni Hayat* is also the title of Ziya Gökalp’s 1918 anthology of patriotic poems, and a concept discussed in other writings of his, not least the 1911 essay “Yeni Hayat ve Yeni Kıymetler” (“New Life and New Values”). Gökalp’s concept of new life has been scrutinized by Göknar and Mani in comparison with *Yeni Hayat* (Göknar, Orhan Pamuk 177–79; Mani 156–71).

In the novel, *Yeni Hayat* also refers to caramels (*Yeni* 260) and to the book that the protagonist of *Yeni Hayat* is reading when his life is being changed (234, 237, 239). Furthermore, this title corresponds to Dante’s *La Vita Nuova*, also referred to and cited in *Yeni Hayat* (241). The abundance of allusions and references to the title *Yeni Hayat* is another feature of “hysterical realism,” a sign of how irony encompasses the whole narrative as it creates uncertainty regarding the narrative in the reader.

When it comes to the reference to caramels, this forecasts the kind of illusive reality effect that Pamuk developed further in *Masumiyet Müzesi* and the Museum of Innocence. Filled with “nostalgic” artifacts, which are referred to in Pamuk’s novel, the museum creates an image of actual artifacts from a specific period in Turkish history being put on display. However, as I learned from one of the museum guides during a visit in 2012, many of these artifacts were specially created for the museum, and did not actually exist in Turkey at the time referred to in Pamuk’s fiction. In the Museum of Innocence, parallel to the caramels in *Yeni Hayat* are the soda bottles labeled “Meltem,” depicted in Pamuk’s museum catalog *Şeylerin Masumiyeti* (*The Innocence of Objects*; 80). According to Pamuk, the *Yeni Hayat* caramels were real caramels, widespread in the 1950s, produced by various factories in addition to the original one (Öteki 149–50), and in the story of *Yeni Hayat*, they are no longer available in the 1990s. In chapter 17, a Mr. Süreyya, who used to write rhymes accompanying the caramels, tells Osman the story behind the *Yeni Hayat* caramels, which for three decades had let people in Turkey experience the existence of a new sentimentality, a new taste, and be reminded of a lost time.
Throughout *Yeni Hayat*, more and more information makes it possible to associate the book that Canan, Osman, and Mehmet are reading with *Yeni Hayat*, the book that we are reading. When he, beginning in chapter 4, embarks on bus journeys, the *Yeni Hayat* narrative recalls the book Osman has been reading because of parallel details such as shabby rooms, frenetic buses, and bedraggled people (*Yeni* 9). It is later referred to as *Yeni Hayat*, and said to be about Osman (*Yeni* 234, 237, 239). It is even revealed that the book Osman is reading was written by Rıfkı Hat (*Yeni* 140). As a metanarrative twist, the novel thus challenges its own time of narration. While the time of narration in *Yeni Hayat* is the early 1990s, the *Yeni Hayat* mentioned in the novel was supposedly written in the 1960s, then impounded but copied and rewritten several times (*Yeni* 249). One effect of the ambiguity concerning the narration of the novel is that the narrator seems untrustworthy.

There are three possible interpretations of the relationship between *Yeni Hayat* and *Yeni Hayat* in *Yeni Hayat*. Firstly, *Yeni Hayat* in *Yeni Hayat* might be perceived as another book, somewhat similar to how Dante’s and Gökalp’s works of the same title are other books. Mani’s interpretation supports this view, when he describes it as an inexpensive book, published by an obscure press in Istanbul, providing “incomplete sketches of social values” (152).

Secondly, *Yeni Hayat* in *Yeni Hayat* could be the same book as *Yeni Hayat*. This view resonates well with Göknar’s description of the novel as self-referential (*Orhan Pamuk* 180).

Thirdly, *Yeni Hayat* in *Yeni Hayat* could be an earlier version of *Yeni Hayat*. Or rather, as Bakioğlu emphasizes, *Yeni Hayat* in *Yeni Hayat* is a book that is constantly reread and rewritten as various characters in *Yeni Hayat* are depicted reproducing the text. In her interpretation, this results in the creation of multiple fictive worlds that parallel one another, leaving it to the model reader to “transcend the boundaries of his own world and move on to another to interact with other readers” in a process that seems to invite the reader not only to link the different versions of *Yeni Hayat* in *Yeni Hayat* but also to link these versions to *Yeni Hayat* (Bakioğlu 14).

The rewriting of this life-changing book by the protagonist and other characters through different periods in the novel sees its parallel in references to repeated historical efforts at westernization. Various periods in modern Turkish history are referred to, all of which feature different, at times opposite, versions of westernization. Through railway building in the early 1900s, Kemalist reforms of the 1930s, Rıfkı Hat’s comic strips of the 1950s and 1960s, his book *Yeni Hayat* from the later 1960s, Osman’s first journey around 1980, his second journey in the early 1990s, as well as descriptions of young men being radicalized, evoking images of the 2000s, *Yeni Hayat* is marked as part of a repetitive story of westernization.
The Ironic Remark of Alternative Authorship

As a first-person narrative, *Yeni Hayat* presents itself as Osman’s narrative, and the suggestion that Rıfkı Hat is the implied author is another invitation for readers to look critically at the narrative, as it underlines that Osman is a product of fiction. This adds to the narrative distance with which Osman’s story is told from beginning to end, as discussed above.

At one point, the narrator Osman comments on the idea of Rıfkı Hat being the author of *Yeni Hayat* in *Yeni Hayat*. This is at the moment when Osman meets Mehmet in order to kill him, and they have a conversation about the book. The narrator cuts into the presentation of Osman’s thoughts, saying ironically, “Actually, everything was quite simple” (“Aslında her şey çok basitti”; my trans.; *Yeni* 212), and continues by proposing Rıfkı Hat as the author of the book:

Demiryolu dergisine yazan, otobüslerden ve otobüs kazalarından nefret eden ve bağnaz bir demiryoluçu olan ihtiyarın teki, kendi yazdığı çocuk kitaplarından ilhamla öylesine bir kitap yazıyordu. Sonra, yani yıllar sonra, çocukluklarında bu resimli romanları okumuş biz iyiniyetli gençler o kitabı okuyor ve hayatımızın tepeden turnağa değiştiğine inanıyor ve hayatlarımızı kaydınyorduk. Ne sихir olmuştu bu kitapta, ne keramet hayat ta! Nasıl olmuştu bu iş acaba? (*Yeni* 212)

A fanatical old guy who wrote for the railway magazine and who despised bus travel and bus accidents had written some sort of a book, inspired by the children’s comics he had penned himself. Then, some years later, optimistic young men such as ourselves who had read those comics in our childhood happened to read the book, and believing that our whole lives were changed from top to bottom, we slipped off the course of our lives. The magic of this book! The miracle of life! How had it happened? (Gün 227)

The exclamatory words at the end of this paragraph themselves seem to contradict the statement that anything about this book is “quite simple.” Regarding the idea that uncle Rıfkı is the author of the book Osman is reading, it is a captivating thought, but it does not make the interpretation of the book simple, rather the opposite. The book that Osman and Mehmet are reading around 1980 is said to have been written in the 1960s by Rıfkı Hat, to be about Osman, and to bear the title *Yeni Hayat* (*Yeni* 140, 147). This book shares many features with the book *Yeni Hayat* that we are reading, even in terms of content (e.g. railways, buses, and accidents). In addition to proposing a possible author of the book Osman and Mehmet are reading, this paragraph launches the idea of Rıfkı Hat being the implied author of *Yeni Hayat*, the Pamuk novel that we are reading. However, this idea is marked as ironic, because it immediately conflicts with readers’ observations that *Yeni Hayat* has an implied author situated in Istanbul in the early 1990s. There are too many references to Turkey in the 1970–92 period for the novel to be
interpreted as having an implied author who wrote the book in the 1960s. While the idea of Rifki Hatt as the actual implied author is impossible, this does not mean that there is no truth to this ironic statement. The thought of *Yeni Hayat* as a novel presciently written in the 1960s about the early 1980s and early 1990s draws attention to how Turkish history moves in cycles. Confirming what De Man says about the ahistoricity of discourse, this underlines how the discourse of westernization reflects conflicts that are not easily pinned down in history, a confirmation only strengthened when one sees the possibility of reading the novel as prescient of our time, twenty years after it was first published. While the narrator keeps rendering Osman’s story at a distance, creating latitude for disbelief on the part of readers and mocking comments by other characters, certain details of the story, regardless even of its fantastic development, make it appear to be a sincere reflection of intense and disturbing events in a young man’s life. Some of these details reflect fairly universal experiences of transition between childhood and adult life, while others instead allude to a specific Turkish culture of political murders enveloped by silence.

**Transgression of Boundaries in Istanbul**

The love story between Osman and Canan, which soon evolves into a triangular drama involving Mehmet as well, is a tool for organizing various examples of desires in order to transgress boundaries within the topography that the novel creates, and these desires include transgressions between East and West. The characters’ desires range from yearnings for radical change giving rise to something new to nostalgia for memories of the past, from wishes to break out to yearnings to return home.

Throughout the novel, the main characters display inward movements towards home in Istanbul and outward movements, mostly towards Anatolia. Both directions of desire are present both in the center, represented by Istanbul, and in the periphery, represented by Anatolia. The foundation for these movements between center and periphery is Osman’s movements within Istanbul. This chapter will discuss some examples of the transgression of boundaries within the center and make a suggestion for how to map them within the topography of Istanbul.

At the beginning of chapter 2 when Osman first takes the commuter train from Erenköy to Haydarpaşa, and from there a passenger ferry across the Bosphorus, this is not expressed as a journey from East to West by using the terms “Asian side” and “European side.” Rather, this journey marks a transition from home to school, from childhood to adult life, from a state of living at home with his mother to a first experience of love. It answers Osman’s longings for change, transition, and escape:
Böylece, daha sonra annem beni çağırdığında akşam yemeğini yemek için odamdan çıktım ve yeni bir dünyanın alışmaya çalışan bir acemi gibi masaya oturup onuyla konuşmaya çalışmım. Televizyon açıktı, tabaklarda kıymalı patates, zeytinyağlı pirasa, yeşil salata ve elmalar vardı. Annem karşıya yeni taşınan komşularından söz etti, benim bütün öğleden sonra, aferin, oturup çalıştığımdan, çarşın pazarından, yağmurdan, televizyon dördüncü haberden, haberleri anlatan adamdan. Annemi seviyordum, güzel, nazik, yumuşak ve anlayışlı bir kadındı ve kitabı okuyup ondan ayrı bir dünyaya girdiğim için suçluluk duydum.  

It was in this state that I left my room when my mother called me to supper; I sat down like a novice unaccustomed to a new place, and tried making conversation. The TV was on; before us were platters with a stew of potato and chopped meat, cold braised leeks, a green salad, and apples. My mother brought up the new neighbors who were moving in across the street, my having sat down and, bravo, worked all afternoon, her shopping trip, the downpour, the evening news on TV, and the newscaster. I loved my mother; she was a good-looking woman who was gentle, temperate, and sympathetic; I felt guilty of having read the book and entering a different world than hers. (Gün 8)

Even though Erenköy is not marked as particularly Eastern or traditional, some of the same yearnings for progress that colored Osman’s readings of uncle Rıfkı’s comic books can be recognized in the descriptions of Osman entering the posh quarter of Nişantaşı, where Canan lives with her family. This quarter borders Taşkışla, the campus where Osman and Canan met, and Osman goes there in search of Canan:

Aralık sonuna doğru bir akşam, Janan’ın mahallesine, Nişantaşı’na gittim. Ana caddede, yılbaşı için aydınlatılmış vitrinler ve alışverişten dönen çocuklu şık kadınlar arasında kararsızla uzun uzun yürüdüm, yeni açılmış sandviççilerin, gazete-dergicilerin, patisserie ve elbisecilerin vitrinlerinin önünde oyalandım.  

One evening toward the end of December, I finally went to Canan’s neighborhood in Nişantaşı. For a long time, I walked aimlessly along the main street where smartly dressed women with children were doing their shopping at stores decorated with lights for the New Year season; I studied the windows of trendy sandwich shops, newsstands, patisseries, and clothing stores. (Gün 34)²⁹

Nişantaşı is the district where Pamuk grew up, defined by Catharina Dufft as the center of Pamuk’s fictional world (103–04). For instance, this is the neighborhood where Rüya escapes from her husband, Galip, in *Kara Kitap*, and where Galip in the same novel moves into the flat of the columnist Celal Salik, a shared cousin of his wife and himself. It is also where Ka, the

²⁹ Gün has chosen the spelling “Janan” and “Jelal” for “Canan” and “Celal,” obviously in order to facilitate a phonetic reading closer to the Turkish pronunciation of these names among readers unfamiliar with Turkish.
protagonist of *Kar ‘Snow,’* grows up a few blocks away from the novelist Orhan, who also figures as a character in that novel. In *Yeni Hayat,* the reference to nicely dressed women with children in this paragraph emphasizes the aspect of childhood. When Osman enters Nişantaşı, he enters the world of Pamuk’s childhood as described in his 2003 book *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir.*

Nişantaşı also manifests a harmonious meeting with the West, here strongly connected with the notion of class. The mentioning of shopping, illuminated windows, new cafés, and pastry shops points to the wealth of this neighborhood and a class difference between Osman, from the average middle-class district of Erenköy, and Canan. However, this class difference is not depicted as an obstacle between the two of them, but rather as piquing Osman’s curiosity. The illuminated streets and shopping in connection with the New Year season mark Osman’s observations as not only having to do with confronting a richer part of the city, but also a district more highly marked as westernized, because shopping for gifts before New Year is not a traditional habit in Muslim families, but rather a practice that inhabitants of Nişantaşı have copied from Westerners and Christians who shop for Christmas gifts. In later years, it has even become a disputed practice, stated by Islamists to be a sign of Turks taking on the customs of infidels (e.g. Shafak), but there is no trace of Osman sharing that perspective.

The topics of childhood and Western lifestyle are again brought up when Osman visits Canan’s parents at their home and his eyes fall on a picture of Canan on the piano:

Resimde, dokuz yaşındaki, saçları örgülü Canan, sanırım bir ilkokul piyesi için büründüğü, Batı’dan arak, küçük kanatlı sevimli melek kıyafeti ve hüzünlü çocuk bakışıyla annesinin ve babasının yanında belli belirsiz gülmüşüyordu. (*Yeni* 39)

It was a picture of a nine-year-old Janan in pigtails, wearing a sweet angel’s costume, which I assumed was for a school play, whose every detail down to the tiny wings was appropriated from the West, standing between her parents and smiling slightly through the melancholy countenance of childhood. (Gün 36)

This picture represents the image of a happy, uncomplicated, Westernized childhood typical of Pamuk’s nostalgia, permeating *Yeni Hayat* as well as other works of his. If we compare this with Ağaoğlu’s *Ölmeye Yatmak,* we recognize that the picture here recalls the school play motif, serving as a scene for introducing new habits from the West, but in contrast to Aysel, who experienced a conflict between school and home, the picture of Canan as a Western-style angel is here placed at the center of her parent’s home, and while Aysel was mocked by her schoolmate Aydin and her teacher for not having fixed her hair properly, Canan’s Western hairstyle becomes the focus of Osman’s desire.
While railways and comic books represent a cheerful and organized form of westernization from childhood in Erenköy, Canan’s picture from a school play as well as the “illuminated happiness” of streets prepared for the New Year represent the same in Nişantaşı. A dark and chaotic alternative is inserted into the lives of Osman and Canan in Istanbul by means of the book, and on their bus rides around Anatolia, they have first-hand experiences of more frightening ideas about westernization, involving conspiracies and killings.

In the triangle of Canan, Osman, and Mehmet, Osman from Erenköy finds himself in the middle, feeling a double attraction towards the West, represented by Canan from Nişantaşı, and the East, represented by Mehmet from Güdül. He feels attracted to the land of the book, which initially seems to be equivalent to the land of Canan, and when Canan and Mehmet disappear in Anatolia, he feels drawn to follow them.

Parallels to *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*

From their short introduction to the town of Güdül, it is obvious that the Istanbul-centered narrator notices peculiar results of the meeting between old and new, East and West. The depiction of clocks reminds us of Tanpinar’s Time Regulation Institute. Similar to the Institute in Tanpinar’s novel, Pamuk creates a miniature of Turkey through the shopkeepers’ convention (*Yeni* 87–88). The coup d’état of September 12, 1980, is known to have led to liberalization reforms of the Turkish economy, and at the high-school marketplace named after General Kenan Evren of the coup, a clock symbolizes the final settlement of the East–West debate. It incorporates an imam figure announcing, in reformed Turkish, “Allah uludur!” ‘God is Great!’ at every time for prayer and a gentleman dressed in Western style repeating Atatürk’s slogan: “Ne mutlu Türküm diyene!” ‘Happy the one who says: I’m a Turk!’ The narrator states that this is a perfect settlement of the East–West conflict, and it is easy to interpret the imam as representing tradition and the East, while the gentleman in Western dress represents the West. Since they are both part of one clock, they seem to represent a happy fusion of East and West. However, in the Turkish text, it is also obvious that both the imam and the gentleman through their language represent Kemalism, Atatürk’s program of westernization. In his time, mosques were obliged to replace the traditional calls for prayer in Arabic with new ones in reformed Turkish. “Allahu akbar” was replaced with “Tanrı uludur,” so “Allah uludur!” represents a fusion of these two standards. Furthermore, through the exaggerated language of the narrator and the comical vision of this clock, it is easy to read between the lines an intention to mock the westernization program it represents as something superficial.
The clock as an established symbol of westernization is repeated later when Osman is introduced to Dr. Narin’s spies and assassins, who are all named after clocks such as Zenith, Seiko, and Serkisof. When Dr. Narin explains the relationship between “our people” and clocks, it echoes the claim in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* that Muslims have always been the greatest consumers of clocks (Yeni 151).

*Yeni Hayat* also evokes another question concerning Hayri İrdal in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, namely that of a young man with a father complex. While Hayri İrdal is a character who is always searching for a father figure, Osman reacts with contempt to the possessiveness of Dr. Narin, whose talk he generalizes as typical of all fathers. For Dr. Narin, mentioning the conspiracy is meant to explain why his son has turned against him. However, the narrative has built expectations that Osman’s meeting with Dr. Narin will reveal more about his relationship to the great conspiracy of the West, and the long talks about his son postpone this revelation. However, when Dr. Narin mentions the conspiracy, we see how his relationship to his son largely explains his relationship to the conspiracy. He sees the escape of his son as an insult against his role as a father, and he regards this as an attack on the core values of the country.

**Subcultures of Anatolia**

An alternative life is presented to Osman and Canan through Mehmet who has been to the world that the book describes. His disappearance is what first sparks Canan and then Osman to make their own journeys around Anatolia, where Mehmet disappears after having been shot. This happens on the hill on the way to Gümüşşuyu, near the Taşköşla campus, and through an intertextual interpolation from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, Mehmet becomes the escaping rabbit who leads the way into a wonderland:

Mehmet’in vurulup düştüğü yerde, kaldırmadaki kar eriye eriye çamurlaşmıştı. Başı takkeli iki yaşındaki bir çocuğun şık ve güzel annesi geçiyorlardı oradan. ‘Tavşan nereye kaçmış anne, tavşan nereye?’ dedi çocuk. (Yeni 32–33)

The snow on the spot where Mehmet fell had melted into mud. A two-year-old kid wearing a beanie went by with his stylish and attractive mother.

‘Mom, where did the rabbit go?’ the kid said. ‘Where, Mom?’ (Gün 29)

This allusion to *Alice in Wonderland* is another example of events in *Yeni Hayat* being juxtaposed to children’s literature, and it has a comical effect, with consequences for readers’ interpretations of the otherwise grim incident of the shooting.
Even before leaving Erenköy, we see Osman’s attention shift from railways to buses and to the beginning of the horrors that Osman will soon experience during his bus rides (Yeni 46–47). Once, while Osman is sitting on a bus, an old man, a fellow passenger, tells him that he thinks that life is an accident; a few moments later they experience a fatal bus accident (50). Later, a similar crash leads to the scene in which Osman and Canan first see each other again. After Canan has been in hospital for a while and recovered, she and Osman continue their travels and experience another accident, after which they do a peculiar thing: They steal the identity cards of another couple and become Ali and Efsun Kara. The bus journeys lead to transitions that are central to the story, and the descriptions of these journeys are contradictory, filled as they are with light and hope for the future and with darkness, death, and blood as normal constituents of their new life.

After this bus accident, Osman and Canan first hear about the war against the book. They are told about it by the dying girl Efsun Kara, with whom Canan is soon to exchange identities (83–84). Ali and Efsun have already met Dr. Narin, and what Efsun says about Dr. Narin and the secret convention of shopkeepers foreshadows what will happen in the next few chapters. After having stolen the identities of Ali and Efsun Kara, Osman and Canan are able to enter the national congress for broken-hearted shopkeepers at a rural hotel, from which they are taken to Dr. Narin, who turns out to be the father of Mehmet. Mehmet, however, is an identity he took after leaving his father’s home, where his name was Nahit (110).

After a receptionist with a Hitler moustache has registered them at the front desk of the İkbal Oteli, a young man who says he wears dark glasses because he is Michael Jackson takes the imposter Kara couple to the venue of the shopkeepers’ convention, Kenan Evren High School, whose name flashes in neon lights, recalling the bars in Beyoğlu, Istanbul (86–87).

After the meeting in the exhibition hall, the shopkeepers are led to a huge restaurant where they are to eat dinner. At the entrance, the women are separated from the men. This is a peculiar scene, because gender segregation is far from Atatürk’s vision of modern Turkish life, and this principle of organization could not have been very widespread in society in the early 1990s when Yeni Hayat came out. The scene recalls how the school inspector in Ölmeye Yatmak applied gender segregation for the simpler townsfolk coming to watch the school play. While the scene in Ölmeye Yatmak depicts the confusion arising when Atatürk’s principles of gender mixing are first implemented in an Anatolian town, the scene in Yeni Hayat is instead a futuristic vision of how gender segregation could be implemented in social strata other than the Istanbul elite.

Despite first appearances, Dr. Narin’s project is not opposed to modernization. Rather, it couples his strong, personal will and popular sentiment to lay the foundation for an unstoppable movement to found a new state that will reject the influence of the West (Yeni 131–32). Given the
political influence that Islamists have acquired in Turkey today, it is tempting to agree with the Guardian reviewer Mark Lawson regarding Pamuk’s prescience. Dispersed throughout Yeni Hayat are references to manifestations of Islamism already evident around 1980. For instance, one of the intelligence reports in Dr. Narin’s archive states that the Nakshibendi order, which is today associated with Turkey’s ruling party AKP as well as with the influential preacher Fethullah Gülen, was one of several factions struggling to gain ascendancy at the Istanbul University where Nahit is studying (Yeni 134; cf. Gün 140–141). Nahit has no association with any of these factions, as he is busy reading the book of Rıfkı Hat “like some hafız reciting the Koran” (“Kuran okuyan bir hafız gibi”; my trans.; Yeni 134). This surprising metaphor describing Nahit reading the book, within a paragraph juxtaposing his engagement to his co-students’ engagement in various political and religious factions, suggests the ironic interpretation that Yeni Hayat is not actually about Osman’s engagement with a book entitled Yeni Hayat, but rather treats, by analogy, young men’s ways into extremism.

Westernization in Yeni Hayat within Pamuk’s Oeuvre

Towards bed-time in Güdül, Osman is approached by a man who wants to talk in a friendly, man-to-man way. He warns Osman about Dr. Narin, in a way recalling the narrator’s comment on the whole narrative:

‘Artık kendimiz olmamıza imkân yok. Bunu ünlü köşe yazarı Celal Salik bile anlamış ve intihar etmiştir.’ (Yeni 93)

‘There is no way that we can be ourselves any longer, a fact that even the well-known columnist Jelal Salik realized, which led to his suicide; [...]’ (Gün 94–95)

This shopkeeper, who from Osman’s perspective is depicted as a bit suspect, warns him against Dr. Narin; he also presents an alternative explanation of the death of Celal Salik, known from Kara Kitap and clearly alluding to the former columnist Abdi İpekçi of the newspaper Milliyet, assassinated in the street in Nişantaşı in 1979. References to Celal Salik and his columns are also found in Pamuk’s later books. He is mentioned in Kar, Kafamda Bir Tuhaflık, and Kırmızı Saçılı Kadın. At this point in Yeni Hayat, it is the first time in Pamuk’s work that Celal Salik’s death is described as a suicide. The explanation that he had realized that “there is no way that we can be ourselves anymore” fits the subject matter of Celal Salik’s columns, which make up every second chapter in Kara Kitap. This insight of Celal Salik is of course dangerous to people like Dr. Narin, who is building an organization intended to ensure that Turks keep parts of their original selves intact.
The message conveyed by the stranger in Güdül is similar to what Brendemoen and Uysal have seen as Pamuk’s main message in his work. This rejection of the idea of an original state untouched by foreign influence, and the futility of striving to return to that state is what Brendemoen calls “Orhan Pamuk’s humanism” (“Orhan Pamuk’un Hümanizmi” 81–82). Uysal reaches a similar conclusion in her analysis of Benim Adım Kırmızı, which she reads as an investigation, and ultimately rejection, of the “modern” idea of an original self (379).

Concluding Remarks

In this section I have examined how Pamuk applies irony in representations of westernization in Yeni Hayat. Due to its combination of allusions and references to cultural products as well as to events in recent Turkish history, this novel is well described by Wood’s concept of “hysterical realism.” It participates in the discourse of westernization through combining the repetition of well-established tropes and references to contemporary society, on one hand, with some uncannily prescient depictions of the radicalization of a young deluded man, on the other.

More specifically, Yeni Hayat participates in the discourse of westernization in several ways. Firstly, it marks its participation in a well-known discourse of radical change by means of its title, as well as through references to railways, bus rides, books, and other cultural artifacts associated with westernization. The way in which Osman experiences the world after having read the life-changing book emphasizes that this discourse is not only about progress or change in a positive way. Rather, it is a discourse in which dichotomies such as light–darkness and new–old are found side by side. In other words, Yeni Hayat displays typical features of the discourse of westernization as already seen in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Ölmeye Yatmak.

Secondly, through its focus on personal experience, this novel lets the discourse of westernization interact with romantic expectations of love and brings it into a personal quest for identity—a dynamic known from the other novels analysed here. While Hayri İrdal had a generational quest to oppose father figures who defined his place within a society marked by the discourse of westernization, Aysel had a gender quest originating in expectations of women among the political initiators of Kemalism that opposed popular sentiments during a process of reform and westernization. Osman’s quest, on the other hand, focuses on texts.

The westernization discourse is explicitly present from the first chapter through references to various kinds of books. On one hand, there are the comic books for children, presenting westernization in a positive, naïve, yet nationalistic manner, since they portray Turks and Islam as superior to
America and secularism in the meeting between East and West. On the other hand, there are references to Islamist literature about the betrayal of westernization. The protagonist Osman’s journey at first mostly echoes the naïve children’s books, marked as it is by positive expectations of radical change and new life; however, it is gradually colored by experience of westernization in its negative form. After meeting with the “heart-broken shopkeepers” at a convention in Anatolia, he is introduced to Dr. Narin’s ideas about the great conspiracy of the West, as well as to his own counter-conspiracy of agents tracking down distributors of the illegal book that inspired Osman to pursue this journey in the first place. *Yeni Hayat* alludes strongly to *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* in its reuse of the watch motif, ludicrously recycled in the form of spies named Zenith, Seiko, and Serkisof.

My analysis has shown how dichotomies such as life–death, darkness–light, before–now are present throughout *Yeni Hayat*, supporting the East–West dichotomy. Westernization is present in different versions, not only through the books referred to, but also through memories of different periods of Turkish history over the last century. As in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* and *Ölmeye Yatmak*, narrative distance is marked and used to signal irony. A difference from the other two books is that the position of the narrator is not revealed before the end. The suspense created by keeping both narrator and time of narration unknown reflects the protagonist’s quest to find out who wrote the illegal book that he experienced as life changing. This emphasizes that the discourse of westernization is, as Foucault described it, “a fragment of history” (*Archeology* 131). In *Yeni Hayat* the discourse of westernization is represented in various versions over decades of Turkish history during which processes of westernization repeat themselves, at the same time as the novel defies a specific time reference for its narration.

Another feature shared by *Yeni Hayat* and the two other novels analysed in this thesis is the way in which the novel juxtaposes expectations of a political discourse of westernization with romantic expectations of personal change through references to literature. While *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* is framed with a quotation from Sufi tradition and alludes to Dickens’ *Great Expectations* and Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*, in *Ölmeye Yatmak*, Aysel parodies Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina*. *Yeni Hayat* alludes to a wide range of literature, and has been read as a Sufi quest, a Bildungsroman, and a triangular love story. The themes of finding love and coming of age are present in all three novels, intertwined with the theme of East meeting West.

However, the field in which love and westernization meet differs between the three novels. In *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, Hayri İrdal’s quest for love is played out in relation to father figures and expectations of westernization, so the central field there is the generation gap. In *Ölmeye Yatmak*, Aysel’s reflections about love concern her being a woman and how that forms her relationship to westernization, so the central field there is gender. In *Yeni*
Hayat, Osman’s search for love is related to his reading, rereading, rewriting, and searching for the truth behind a book called Yeni Hayat, so the central field there is text.

Another difference between Yeni Hayat and the other two novels is that it ends tragically, while the others are open-ended. Even though their stories expose strong structures in society holding the protagonists down, both end with the possibility that narrating one’s story could be a liberating project for the individual. Osman, however, not only kills a person during his first journey, he also ends up being killed at the end of his second journey. This does not leave the protagonist with any hope of gaining the liberation and new life that westernization has promised him. Osman does not take command of his story but loses himself in a labyrinth of text.

Still, Yeni Hayat is also a narrative that holds the individual to be more important than ideology, in that it presents a recognizable image of a young man led astray by texts and discourses promising him new life.
Final Remarks

Çünkü hiçbir şey hayat kadar şaşırtıcı olamaz.
Yazı hariç. Yazı hariç. Evet tabii, tek teselli yazı hariç.
—Orhan Pamuk, Kara Kitap

Because nothing is as surprising as life. Except for writing. Except for writing. Yes, of course, except for writing, the only consolation.
—Maureen Freely, The Black Book

In this dissertation I have investigated ironic representations of westernization in three Turkish novels first published in 1961, 1973 and 1994: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar’s Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, Adalet Ağaoğlu’s Ölmeye Yatmak, and Orhan Pamuk’s Yeni Hayat. These novels display in various ways overt parody and satire, and they also use more subtle means of subversion.

As stated in the introduction, this research aims to advance discussion of what literature can achieve in a heavily politicized field such as the discourse of westernization. My investigation has been directed by the research question: How is the discourse of westernization presented through irony in the selected Turkish novels of the late 20th century?

To answer this question, I started by examining westernization as a Turkish discourse based on a combination of the East–West and before–now dichotomies established in Turkish literature studies over almost a century of research and debate. Furthermore, Linda Hutcheon’s definition of irony as a discursive practice that signals “difference at the heart of similarity” has been applied, together with Wayne Booth’s guideline of “learning where to stop” the interpretation of irony.

Separate analyses of the novels Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, Ölmeye Yatmak, and Yeni Hayat considered how these works engage in the discourse of westernization with irony. My study has noted several parallels and differences between these three novels, some of which have already been discussed in the concluding remarks following each book analysis. My study has shown how the title of each novel can be read ironically. Furthermore, it has scrutinized how structure participates to achieve irony by establishing narrative distance. Each novel engages differently in a wide discourse of westernization through numerous references to places, people, and events in an external world, and to film and literature. In the following, I will explore
in greater depth certain central issues concerning these novels’ ironic representations of westernization.

The Short View of Turkish Westernization

By focusing on irony, I have highlighted these novels as creative and dynamic fields of language. Although applied differently, two features stand out as parallel in the three novels. On a structural level, they all use first-person narration in ways that reflect innovative approaches to life and literature, and this feature makes them stand out from realist literature that applies third-person narration. On a thematic level, they all depict a process of westernization focused on Turkey in the 20th century. They present a “short view” of Turkish westernization, with the turning-point between old and new situated in the 20th rather than the 19th century. This is somewhat surprising, since the “long view” of transformation, as Nergis Ertürk called it, starting in the mid 19th century, is common in studies of Turkish literature, while the short view, typically centered on Atatürk’s reforms in the 1920s and 30s, is more common in introductions to modern Turkish history. On the other hand, the short view corresponds to the outlook of the texts, printed as they are in the reformed language using the Turkish-Latin script introduced in 1928, distinguishing them clearly from pre-20th-century Ottoman Turkish texts and bearing witness to the impact of Kemalist reforms, though the handwritten manuscript behind Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü was in the Arabic-based Ottoman Turkish script. This novel is also the one among these three books that displays the longest view of transformation by making World War I a major turning point.

Ironic Representations of Westernization

In their novels, Tanpinar, Ağaoğlu, and Pamuk take command of the westernization discourse by integrating and molding it within their narratives. The novels are both products of westernization and aware of being part of a discourse of westernization that they comment on and contribute to. My analyses have illustrated how each novel exhibits the discourse of westernization in its own way while subverting it through irony. In the following, I sum up some similarities and differences between the novels and add some reflections concerning my results.
Deconstruction of Westernization and Revision of History

Tanpinar initially presents a discourse praising the Time Regulation Institute and its leader Halit Ayarci juxtaposed to the narrative about Hayri İrdal’s life, in which the turning point between old and new in the process of westernization is World War I.

Irony is highlighted partly through the state of emergency during which this story is told shortly after the death of Halit Ayarci, under the threat that the Institute will be dissolved. This state of emergency can explain the tone of an inherently unreliable narrator who constantly dismantles his narrative by invoking paradoxical claims.

This discourse praising the Institute and, by analogy, the Turkish Republic is undermined, partly through instances of mockery, but more profoundly through the alternative story of the Institute represented by Hayri İrdal’s life. This is a story not so much about the genuine qualities of the leader, Halit Ayarci, but rather a story about the personal reasons an individual might have to become involved with a leader like Halit Ayarci in a fantastic enterprise like Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü.

Instead of the established discourse of westernization centered on Atatürk’s successful reforms, the novel tells the story of an Institute emerging after the turmoil of devastating wars. The discourse of the novel distorts the established discourse of westernization as a process taking a society from East to West. Instead, the process of creating the Time Regulation Institute involves inventing a discourse of westernization in which memories, stories, and ideas of the past are mixed with those of the present in creative ways where distinctions between fact and fantasy are systematically blurred.

Although the creation of a Time Regulation Institute is an innovative process to which Hayri İrdal contributes with his story-telling, the novel’s discussion of the “father complex” highlights traditional aspects of how paternalistic societies are organized around “father figures.” Hayri İrdal’s freedom is restricted by several father figures, from Abdüsselâm Bey via Doktor Ramiz to Halit Ayarci. The paternalistic organization of the Time Regulation Institute is thus nothing new, but rather a repetition of well-established patterns. Even Doktor Ramiz, who introduces Hayri İrdal to Freudian thought, is an example of a paternalistic figure who restricts Hayri İrdal’s freedom and exploits his dependency. By highlighting suppressive patterns underlying the organization of the Institute, the novel distorts an established image of westernization as a liberating force. Through the example of Doktor Ramiz and his version of Freudianism, this critique hits Western science as much as Eastern practice.

In other words, Hayri İrdal’s ironic discourse does something to the well-known Republican discourse of westernization. From the individual perspective of Hayri İrdal, westernization is certainly not a liberating force. By showing how both the repetition of paternalistic patterns and the
integration of stories from the past permeate the Institute, the novel deconstructs the discourse of westernization by distorting its fundamental tenet of there being a gap between East and West understood as opposites. While rejecting this discourse, the novel embraces an ideal of individual freedom, which is not only juxtaposed to the promises of societal freedom commented on early in the novel, but is acted on as a fundamental commitment of Hayri İrdal’s narration.

Furthermore, the novel rejects a Kemalist understanding of Turkish history that presents Atatürk’s reforms as the orbit of radical change between before and now. While deconstructing the East–West dichotomy, Hayri İrdal’s story recognizes World War I as a fundamental historical turning point.

Feminist Revision of Kemalism

While the discussions of Hayri İrdal’s father complex exemplify how Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü centers on a generation gap, Ölmeye Yatmak is instead concerned with gender. As in Tanpınar’s novel, narrative distance is established within a first-person narrative in which the current situation involves Aysel alone in a hotel room, reflecting on the current crisis of a possible pregnancy and her memories of the past, involving her Kemalist schooling in the village where she grew up.

Irony is established through the paradoxical presentation of Aysel, a woman both subdued to a discourse objectifying her as a woman and an independent, well-educated woman who, through the process of reflection in the hotel room, takes command of her own narrative. In this process, the westernization discourse that Aysel has grown up with promises individual freedom and new opportunities for women as well as men.

As a parallel to Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, this narrative also reveals how the processes instigated through westernization are not as new and radical as promised. Alongside westernization, Aysel has always met the expectations of gender segregation and the demands directed towards her as a woman, restricting the individual freedom that westernization has promised her.

From the perspective of this male-centered discourse of westernization, Aysel has been a failure. Far from living up to the expectations of her as a successful, educated, westernized woman, she fears being judged as a whore. On the other hand, Aysel’s narrative undermines this male-centered discourse in which women are treated as objects.

A central paradox in Aysel’s story is that the same forces that made it possible for her to become an independent well-educated woman also led her to possible disaster, as she might become an outcast because of her sexual life. By establishing her at the center, the narrative turns the event of her sleeping with her student from a source of disaster to a new awakening.

Ölmeye Yatmak parallels Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü in its deconstruction of an extant version of westernization that restricts the freedom of the
individual. However, Ağaoğlu’s novel shows a commitment to Kemalism absent from Tanpınar’s novel, in that Aysel’s subversion of the male-centered discourse involves her own revision of Atatürk. Just as Atatürk’s reforms are portrayed as the foundation of Aysel’s westernized schooling, the leader is also central to her act of transforming death into life. This is most clearly visualized through Aysel’s remembrance of sleeping with her student, reclaiming her womanhood while gazing at Atatürk’s mausoleum.

Irony’s Evoking of Silenced Traumas

While Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü highlighted restrictions imposed on the individual by the generation gap, and Ölmeye Yatmak attacked gender expectations, Yeni Hayat centers on the effect of literature.

While sharing the view of Turkish westernization as a 20th-century phenomenon with the other novels discussed here, the perspective is different in Pamuk’s novel. Hayri İrdal looked back from the perspective of the 1950s, soon after the heyday of Kemalist reform. Aysel revised her life from the perspective of about 1970. In Yeni Hayat, the narrator looks back at a longer process from the perspective of the early 1990s.

Related to this different perspective, Yeni Hayat displays greater variety, applying different versions of the discourse of westernization over time. Nostalgic visions of happy meetings between Islam and the West are juxtaposed to conspiracy theories of Western influence and to the counter-conspiracy striking back. Yeni Hayat relates to decades of westernization and evokes different versions of its discourse in connection with images of watches and railways as much as to references and allusions to film and literature. The exaggerated tone has a comical effect and signals parody.

At the same time, another kind of irony is in play in this novel. Parallel to Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Ölmeye Yatmak, first-person narration is used to highlight distance between the protagonist back then versus the narrator now. In Yeni Hayat, this distance serves to highlight Osman as a naïve young man who sincerely believed in a book that promised him a new life. While mocking the promises of books and men alike, Yeni Hayat does not mock the young man’s longing for change. In other words, there is a kernel of sincerity regarding the desires of the protagonist, which parallels the rendering of Hayri İrdal’s and Aysel’s longings for freedom in Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü and Ölmeye Yatmak. To read like this demands that readers involve irony because they need to shift their focus from what is being said to the contours of what is not being said, the silenced traumas.

The effect of irony, which in Yeni Hayat hits the text hard, makes readers look in the text for those “other riches” that Wayne Booth hinted at (Rhetoric of Irony 190). It is in this search for “learning where to stop” that the contours of Yeni Hayat’s alternative message reveal themselves through hints both of a personal trauma involving the death of Osman’s mystified father and the
assassination of his father’s colleague, uncle Rıfkı, and of a collective trauma involving the repetition of devastating wars.

Within this interpretive frame, the protagonist of *Yeni Hayat* is both a victim and a perpetrator of this trauma, as the novel reveals how he became a killer. This is parallel to the dual role of the narrator-protagonists in *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* and *Ölmeye Yatmak* as both victims and agents when taking part in the discourse of westernization that suppresses them as individuals. *Yeni Hayat* takes this to its extreme by letting the narrator-protagonist be a killer and in the end killed.

**Westernization after Irony**

After the interrogation that the discourse of westernization has undergone in the novels analyzed here, a question arises concerning where these ironic representations leave westernization.

In the introduction I hypothesized that these novels represent literature that, while engaging in the discourse of westernization and thus repeating certain ideologically determined understandings of itself in relation to East and West, nevertheless does not imply that westernization is a valid episteme as such. Even though I still think that is true, some comments should be made.

Firstly, the discourse of westernization does not come in just one form, but attaches several recognizable features to its fundamental core, which is to understand processes of change in terms of an East–West dichotomy in combination with a before–now dichotomy.

Secondly, the novels confirm that such a discourse exists and, while subverting it through attacks on its different forms, one could argue that they do not deconstruct the discourse of westernization altogether. For instance, while *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*’s Hayri İrdal mocks the Institute and its arbitrary revision of history, his life story sticks to a historical understanding of World War I as a radical turning point between before and now that, when connected to Hayri İrdal’s movement from the Istanbul peninsula to north of the Golden Horn, evokes images of East and West within Istanbul’s topography. While criticizing a male-centered version of westernization, *Ölmeye Yatmak*’s Aysel keeps reverence for Kemalism as a foundation of change in the lives of Turkish women. Orhan Pamuk’s *Yeni Hayat* seems to go further in its deconstruction of the discourse of westernization when depicting its variants as mere repetitions of a fictive idea through history, which more than anything has the function of silencing truth.

In all cases, there is the question of whether these narratives serve to reject the discourse of westernization or rather to confirm it by repeating it and adding even more stories to it. To a certain extent, the critique that all texts about westernization in one way or another add to this discourse is valid. The
three novels studied here have certainly not brought an end to the discourse of westernization in Turkish culture.

However, the discourse of westernization does come to an end within these novels for two reasons. Firstly, they disrupt this discourse from within through their attacks on its integral opposites. Secondly, they turn their backs on the discourse of westernization by subsuming it in what could be called the ironic discourse of the novel, whose focus is not the demands of westernization but rather the sentiments of individual persons.
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