The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

RAMPANT MODERNISM AND ITS CITYSCAPES: ALFRED DÖBLIN’S BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ, ROBERT MUSIL’S DER MANN OHNE EIGENSCHAFTEN, AHMET HAMDİ TANPINAR’S SAATLERİ AYARLAMA ENSTİTÜSÜ

A Dissertation in

Comparative Literature

by

İpek Kismet Bell

© 2011 İpek Kismet Bell

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2011
The dissertation of İpek Kısmet Bell was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Djelal Kadir  
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Comparative Literature  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Nergis Ertürk Lennon  
Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature

Martina Kolb  
Assistant Professor of German and Comparative Literature

Daniel Purdy  
Associate Professor of German

Alan Sica  
Professor of Sociology

Caroline D. Eckhardt  
Professor of Comparative Literature and English  
Head of the Department of Comparative Literature  
Director of the School of Languages and Literatures

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
Abstract

This study investigates the nature of literary Modernism and social modernity through three modernist novels that represent analogous historical ruptures and conditions in early twentieth-century Vienna, Berlin, and Istanbul. Focusing on *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930, 1932, 1943) by Robert Musil, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) by Alfred Döblin, and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (1954, 1961) by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, I engage in a comparative study of socio-historical and cultural symptoms, manifestations, and consequences of Austrian, German, and Turkish modernisms as dramatized in these novels. As a whole, this project seeks to contribute to the critical study of Modernism and modernity in general, and to the study of alternative Modernisms and modernities in particular.

The city is often a stage for modernization as manifested in literary Modernism. Each of these novels dramatizes modern(izing) life in the authors’ respective cities. Each chapter of this study explores one of various specificities of modernity in each city (Vienna, Berlin, Istanbul)—and, metonymically, each culture—as they are translated into/by the narrative of these modernist authors. I read the modern city in terms of its inherent contradictions and as analogous to Modernism, with its concomitant paradoxes and ironies, where I define irony in its modernist iterations as a simultaneously anarchic, subversive, and constructive mode of philosophico-critical self-reflection. Musil, Döblin, and Tanpınar create out of this trinity—the city, modernity, irony—these novels as allegories of Modernism and as sites of ironic self-reflection. Furthermore, the problematic relationship between modernity and religion as it plays out in the urban
settings of these novels portrays religion as yet another dysfunctional institution of modernity.

This comparative study brings together three authors and three novels which have not been read side by side before, and thereby contributes to the growing recognition of multiple modernities.
Table of Contents

Abstract...........................................................................................................................................iii
Acknowledgments............................................................................................................................vi
Introduction.......................................................................................................................................1
I. The Temporal City: Time as Experience and Experienced Time...............................................12
II. The Ironic City: Modernity and Its Ironies..............................................................................63
III. The City of God: A Modernist Contretemps...........................................................................118
Conclusion.......................................................................................................................................180
Bibliography.....................................................................................................................................184
Acknowledgments

I am grateful beyond words for the selfless support, guidance, and dedication of my dissertation advisor, Professor Djelal Kadir. Having worked under his tutelage will forever be one of the most valuable privileges of my life.

I would like to thank my committee members, Professors Nergis Ertürk Lennon, Martina Kolb, Daniel Purdy, and Alan Sica, for their insightful comments and suggestions. My appreciation goes to Professor Caroline Eckhardt, head of the Department of Comparative Literature, and Professor Richard Page, head of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, for the wonderful teaching opportunities they provided. I would also like to give special thanks to Professor Thomas Beebee for his genuine care and for his willingness to help me professionally.

The office staff in the Department of Comparative Literature and the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures have gone above and beyond in helping me whenever I needed assistance. I am indebted to them for making my life as a graduate student much easier. I will always remember them for their generosity and helpfulness, and for the wonderful people that they are. My thanks go to Irene Grassi, Lynn Setzler, Bonnie Rossman, Jamie Frazell, Mona Muzzio, Sharon Laskowsky, and JoElle DeVinney.

I have been blessed with the friendship, love and support of a group of very special people who have provided me with much needed personal and academic guidance during my years as a graduate student. My undying gratitude goes to Selin Akpınar, Yuka Amano, Narjis Benjelloun, Ziad Bentahar, Riadh Bounatirou, Professor Juana Celia Djelal, Jessica Humeniuk, Mariano Humeniuk, Alida Kamer, Ayşe Kaya, Ashş

I am immeasurably grateful to my parents, Nilgün and Mehmet Kısmet, and my brother, Eren Kısmet, for the unwavering support and endless love they have given me.

Sizi çok seviyorum!

Most significantly, I would like to thank my beloved husband Jameson Kısmet Bell for his kind patience and undying support, and for motivating me and inspiring me when I needed it most. Seni seviyorum canım!

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents, Süheylâ and Nihat Karaveli, and Güzin and Fethi Kısmet. The love and prayers they sent me from thousands of miles away gave me the strength to finish this project. I love them deeply.
Introduction

Modernity as a discourse “interrogates the present” (Gaonkar 14) and travels through geographies, taking with it social practices, cultural forms, and institutions. This movement is referred to as modernization. As such, there might be as many modernities as there are epochs and geographies in human history. In order to exist throughout human history, modernity has identified itself with change and progress. While the societal/industrial aspect of this perpetual change is identified as modernization, its aesthetic manifestation is identified as Modernism. At the site where modernity and modernization converge, Modernism emerges as a new consciousness that reflects, often in a paradoxical manner, the phenomena that result from this convergence.

Modernism is a state of consciousness able to see all around it, into the past, the present, and the future, all the while focusing on itself. It is a constant “just now” and a critical construct whose shape and color are never in clear focus precisely because it consists of myriad contesting practices, styles, and theories. The modern tradition, then, is one of fragmentation and rupture caused by the flux of change, progress, and Modernism’s identifying desideratum—the new. It is a tradition that perpetuates itself by constantly negating and reasserting itself, hence Peter Bürger’s observation throughout The Decline of Modernism that modernity is defined by contradictions.

The contradictions of modernity are inevitably felt in the day-to-day experiences of individuals, especially, and almost exclusively, in those of the fin de siècle urbanite. As Lewis Mumford writes, “[t]he cities of the nineteenth century embodied with utmost fidelity all the confusions and contradictions of the period of transition” (144). He adds that “[t]hose centers in which the new energies and the new discipline of society were
most completely focused showed the greatest departures from the best norms: between 1820 and 1900 the chaos of the great cities is like that of a battlefield, proportionate to the very extent of their equipment and the strength of the forces employed” (144). The early-twentieth-century modern city, then, becomes not only the locus of modernity, but also the setting for the dramatization of modernity and its inherent paradoxes in modernist novels.

The present study explores different manifestations of modernity in three imperial cities, Vienna, Berlin, and Istanbul, as they are narrated in the novels of three modernist authors whose different cultural and social backgrounds have converged at crucial historical junctures. I read Austrian writer Robert Musil’s (1880-1942) Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften (1930, 1932, 1943) [The Man Without Qualities (1953, 1955, 1960)], German writer Alfred Döblin’s (1878-1957) Berlin Alexanderplatz (1929) [Berlin Alexanderplatz (1931)] and Turkish author Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar’s (1901-1962) Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü (1954, 1961) [The Time Regulation Institute (2001)] as narrative instantiations—in the stylistic and contextual specificities of their respective authors—of modernity’s inalienable ruptures, crises, and contradictions which are most poignantly experienced in the modern city. Within a broader framework, this study traces modernity’s—and thereby its artistic expression, Modernism’s—manifestations in different historical, cultural, and social contexts.

The comparative study of these three modernist novels implicitly aims at contributing to the gradually but steadily growing critique of, on the one hand, the East-West dichotomy traditionally employed in the study of modernity and Modernism, and, on the other, the monistic narratives on (Eurocentric) modernity. Even though both Musil
and Döblin hail from a geography typically delineated as the West (central), and Tanpınar belongs to a historically Eastern (peripheral) culture, in my analyses of their novelistic expressions of modernity I have refrained from categorizing these authors as such.\(^1\) Furthermore, instead of writing within the narratives of belatedness and imitation which frame many a study on the condition of modernity and Modernism in “non-Western” cultures, thereby privileging a singular (and “Western”) modernity, I instead advocate the discursive move towards what an increasing number of scholars call alternative or multiple modernities.

As one critic asserts, “[w]e can no longer […] take for granted that modernities are various recurring instances of a Modernity” (Larsen 239). The same critic goes on to argue:

> We often hear sentences such as the following one concerning so-called second or third world countries: ‘Modernity arrived late in country so and so, but when it finally arrived the typical effects x, y, and z occurred there also.’ This may be true, but the tacit argument is that it happened out of necessity. Modernities, on the other hand, with relative and contextual definitions are in themselves concepts of transformation and heterogeneity, not like Modernity a complex but basically homogeneous phenomenon that results in change. Modernities simply are transformations and the contrasts defining them are elements involved in the specific transformations that occur in a specific context (240).

Similarly, Turkish sociologist Nilüfer Göle writes against “the mono-civilizational definitions of modernity” and “the unidimensional construct of ‘Western modernity’,” instead calling for “the recognition of the multiplicity of definitions, trajectories and appropriations of modernity in different geographical and cultural contexts” (42).

Gregory Jusdanis, too, in his book *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture* criticizes

---

\(^1\) From a historical and geographical perspective, each of the cultures represented by Musil, Döblin, and Tanpınar (Austro-Hungarian Empire/Austria, German Empire/Germany, and Ottoman Empire/Turkey, respectively) has been and is both central and peripheral, both Western and Eastern. Hence, it is important to reiterate the fluidity of such categorizations.
“the Eurocentrism and chronocentrism in modernization theories, namely, the way they project the traits of western culture to other times and other societies” (xiii). Finally, Charles Taylor argues the necessity of a “theory of alternative modernities,” which should be able to “relate both the pull to sameness and the forces making for difference” (182).

As such, this study should be read as an exploration of both diverging and converging specificities of Austrian modernity, German modernity, and Turkish modernity each of which is, in its own way, a historical, cultural, and social transformation set against the backdrop of Vienna, Berlin, and Istanbul, respectively, within the narratives under discussion. In these narratives, which are considered to be among the finest specimens of Modernism, Musil, Döblin, and Tanpinar dramatize and reflect on the transformations taking place in their respective cities during the first decades of the twentieth century.

As modernist novels, *The Man Without Qualities*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and *The Time Regulation Institute* share certain stylistic and conceptual features, simultaneously retaining the unique characteristics of their distinct local modernities. Modernism (re)presents in its works the complex nature of modern existence. Almost all modernist works share the characteristics of being self-conscious, experiential, and experimental; however, it is not possible to speak of a singularity of style when it comes to Modernism. Each modernist text is highly individualistic and autotelic, which makes Modernism less a style than a search for one. The literary works of Modernism are highly conscious artifices that shock their reader with the presentation of unfamiliar—at times even radical—realities. Each novel under discussion in this study, in its own way,
distinguishes itself from the literary tradition of its respective culture through stylistic
and/or contextual innovation at the time of composition.

Robert Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities* is an approximately 1400-page
(depending on the edition) unfinished novel of ideas written in what Musil calls an
essayistic style. In it, Musil, through his protagonist Ulrich, explores alternative ways of
synthesizing the “precision” and the “soul” of modernity whose perplexing vicissitudes
define both the social and the political realms of the Vienna of 1913. When the first part
of the novel appeared in 1930 it “immediately aroused great excitement in literary circles,
and was extensively reviewed in the press and in journals in Musil’s native Austria and in
Germany” (Mehigan 1). For the most part, this excitement was due to the stylistic novelty
of Musil’s narrative, as well as due to the ambitious undertaking of the novel’s author,
namely, to experiment with various possibilities of analyzing and bringing together
discordant components of modernity as they manifested themselves in pre-war Vienna.

The initial reception of Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* was similarly
steeped in excitement and praise within the German literary circles of the time. The
German scholar Wulf Koepke writes that “[t]he experimental nature and the complexities
of [Döblin’s] texts have earned him the praise of many writers and critics, but only one of
his major novels has enjoyed enduring popular success […]: *Berlin Alexanderplatz*
(1929), which was hailed as the outstanding German big-city novel […]” (vii).² Koepke
argues that Döblin’s novel owes its success to both its narrative use of the montage
technique—a term first used by Walter Benjamin in his 1930 review of Döblin’s novel—

² According to Koepke, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* “sold more copies in the first weeks than all Döblin’s
previous books combined” (126).
and to its subject matter, the city of Berlin. Döblin’s novel has established itself as the first, and perhaps the most complex, big-city novel in German literature.

Musil’s and Döblin’s Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, initially did not enjoy such wide recognition and critical or public acclaim with his novel *The Time Regulation Institute* which first appeared in serialized form in a Turkish newspaper in 1954. Only after the novel was published as a whole in 1961—a few months before Tanpınar passed away—did it slowly start receiving critical recognition. Despite the delay, however, critics did not fail to discern those unique contextual characteristics of Tanpınar’s narrative, which have since then established it as one of the most complex modernist novels of Turkish literature. In a review originally published in 1962, critic Tahsin Yücel highlights the ambivalent and paradoxical nature of Tanpınar’s narrative and remarks that any reader of *The Time Regulation Institute* will be engulfed in feelings of unease because s/he will be unable to find solid and fixed points of departure toward a singular interpretation of the novel (113). As in most modernist novels, the reader is denied comfortable categorizations and readily available interpretations of the text.

Another critic, writing in 1963, argues that Tanpınar’s narrative distinguishes itself from the works of Turkish literature hitherto published with its acutely ironic tone and keen historical and socio-cultural critique of Turkish modernity dramatized within the metonymic setting of *fin de siècle* Istanbul (Tecer 129).³

³ In fact, Tanpınar’s critique and analyses of Turkish modernity were so keen that, presumably due to a fear of political persecution, he wrote an addendum to his novel right around the time of its publication in 1961. This addendum, which never got published as a part of the novel, was a letter written by one of the characters of the novel, revealing to the reader that the protagonist and the narrator of *The Time Regulation Institute* suffers from delusional paranoia. After Tanpınar decided against including this letter at the end of his novel, he gave it to one of his students and told him that he could keep it. For the full text of this letter see Alptekin 66-70.
The point of convergence for the novels of Musil, Döblin, and Tanpinar under discussion in this study, then, is the array of modernist characteristics of their narratives, which are set in three different imperial cities marked by historical, social, and cultural rupture. An analysis of the historical context within which these three novels were composed falls beyond the scope of this study; however, it is important to note the analogous histories—and fates—of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, German Empire, and the Ottoman Empire pre- and post-WWI, which is roughly the time period these novels are set in. As such, the focus of this study is not on the ways in which the three empires were politically, economically, and militaristically interwoven during this period; my focus is, rather, on the novelistic manifestations of their common histories in the modern period and within the framework of city narrative. As I hope the close readings of *The Man Without Qualities*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and *The Time Regulation Institute* will reveal in the ensuing chapters, the manifestations of modernity as they are dramatized in these novels are now shared, now distinctively local, and underscore the different dynamics of each modernity, Austrian, German, and Turkish, respectively.

Before I move on to the structure of this dissertation, I would like to briefly comment on the question of whether Musil, Döblin, and Tanpinar were aware of each other’s works. Musil’s diaries and Döblin’s letters yield ample evidence that the two German-speaking authors knew one another personally and read several of each other’s works. In a diary entry written around 1919, Musil criticizes Döblin’s 1918 novel *Wadzek’s Battle With the Steam Turbine* for being “nervös” [nervous] and “wiederholt” [repetitive] (*Tagebücher* 204). Ironically, in another entry written around the same time—and presumably still referring to *Wadzek’s
Kampf—Musil brags about how concise he always is in his writing, and accuses Döblin of writing narratives that are too long (Tagebücher 207). Finally, in an entry written around 1938, Musil praises Döblin’s interesting and “temperamentvolle Ausführung” [spirited execution] in Wallenstein (1920) [Wallenstein] and Berge, Meere und Giganten (1924) [Mountains, Seas and Giants] (Tagebücher 458). Aside from his article “Das Epos Alfred Döblins” [Alfred Döblin’s Epos] which was published in the newspaper Berliner Tageblatt in 1926, there are no known critical essays written by Musil on the works of his German counterpart, specifically none on Döblin’s Berlin Alexanderplatz (1929).

Döblin, in a letter he wrote in 1931, refers to Musil as “von [ihm] sehr anerkannte selbständige neue Robert Musil” [the new self-employed/independent Robert Musil who is highly recognized by him]⁴ (Briefe II 66). In an earlier letter dated 1927 and sent to German playwright, novelist, and Nobel laureate Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946), Döblin writes that Musil had recently contacted him and asked his cooperation in establishing a Rilke Foundation. Finally, in an eulogistic letter written in 1942 while Döblin was in exile in California, U.S.A, the German author expresses his deep sorrow at the news of Musil’s recent death, which incidentally also occurred while Musil was in exile in Switzerland. Reminiscing about the last time he spoke with Musil (in Paris, 1936 or 1937), Döblin writes that Musil’s “Werk wird noch wirken, die Qualität seiner Arbeit war stark und verhinderte eine größere Verbreitung seiner Bücher” [work will continue to have an effect, the quality of his work was powerful and hindered the wider recognition of his books] (Briefe I 276).

⁴ All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are mine. Where an English translation of a text is available, I have used it; in other instances I have translated the texts myself.
Even though Tanpinar was very well read in numerous literary traditions, and despite his documented familiarity with several prominent German writers and philosophers, there is no evidence that he read Musil or Döblin⁵. However, it has been documented that Tanpinar travelled extensively in Europe between 1953-1959 and visited Vienna on one occasion (Akün 16). Similarly, the Austrian and German authors, respectively, were presumably not aware of their contemporary Turkish counterpart, given the absence of any references to Tanpinar in the personal and critical corpus of both Musil and Döblin. Yet, the modernist dramatizations of certain key components pertaining to the common histories of their respective cultures in the novels under discussion here bring these three authors much closer on a literary and critical plane than any personal relationship might have permitted.

Each chapter of this dissertation will discuss a crucial aspect of modernity as it is experienced in fin de siècle Vienna, Berlin, and Istanbul, in The Man Without Qualities, Berlin Alexanderplatz, and The Time Regulation Institute, and the way in which urban manifestations of modernity are explored within these modernist narratives. In chapter one, “The Chronic City: Time as Experience and Experienced Time,” the focus will be on the concepts of time and temporality as modern, urban phenomena. To that end, I will start by reading the three novels under discussion in conjunction with Henri Bergson’s (1859-1941) theory of time, specifically his durée, and explore how each author dramatizes the changing temporal consciousness of his (modern) time which finds its most powerful manifestation in the fast-paced setting of the modern city. Furthermore, I hope to show how the protagonist of each novel experiences the temporal rupture of

⁵ For a full list of non-Turkish authors, philosophers, and artists whose names appear in Tanpinar’s novels and essays see Emil 97-120.
modernity which results in the dichotomies of fragmented vs. unified time and Erfahrung vs. Erlebnis.

Such dichotomies and disjunctions intrinsic to modernity inevitably breed ironic outcomes. The relationship between modernity and irony will be the focus of chapter two, “The Ironic City: Modernity and Its Ironies.” In his chapter, I will read the Parallel Campaign in *The Man Without Qualities*, the eponymous Time Regulation Institute in Tanpinar’s novel, and the central square Alexanderplatz in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* as three modernist urban institutions which are simultaneously symptomatic of, and metaphoric renderings for each author’s ironic exploration of the historical and socio-cultural realities of his respective modernity. My discussion of these three institutions will also aim at explicating the reason(s) for Musil’s, Döblin’s, and Tanpinar’s prevalent ironic constructs in their narratives, as well as determining whether and how their ironic approach to these modern urban phenomena render their novels allegories of modernity.

If Modernism can be described as an array of cultural and aesthetic movements, as well as cultural tendencies that are caught and experienced in a perpetual present, then modernity is best understood as an attitude of questioning this perpetual present. In other words, modernity as the condition of being a conscious part of a continuous duration, renders time “Modernity’s chronic anxiety, whose phases of acuity often border on neuroses” (Kadir 12). As such, pathological obsession with time and continuity will be the focus of the third and final chapter, “The City of God: A Modernist Contretemps.” This chapter will start with the assertion that time is depicted as chronic and pathological in the novels under discussion, and that the protagonists, as well as several other characters within the narratives, become the prosopopoeia of a temporal epidemic
characteristic of modernity, and most poignantly felt in the modern city. I shall further argue that each writer explores religious and spiritual possibilities as a cure for this epidemic, and discuss Musil’s experimentations with mysticism through his protagonist Ulrich and his sister Agathe, Tanpinar’s Sufi character Nuri Efendi (the clock maker), and the transcendental experience Döblin’s protagonist Franz has with Death at the end of the novel.

Finally, I hope the present comparative study of Robert Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities*, Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar’s *The Time Regulation Institute* will unveil the coexistence of those forces specifically felt in the modern city that, in the words of Charles Taylor, both “pull to sameness,” and “[make] for difference” among the condition(s) of a variety of modernities.
Chapter I—The Chronic City: Time as Experience and Experienced Time

This chapter will explore how time is represented in Berlin, Vienna, and Istanbul. My discussion will focus on *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) [ *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1931)] by the German author Alfred Döblin, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930, 1932, 1943) [ *The Man Without Qualities* (1953, 1955, 1960)] by the Austrian writer Robert Musil, and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (1954, 1961) [ *The Time Regulation Institute* (2001)] by the Turkish novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar. How do Döblin, Musil, and Tanpınar treat and portray the passage of time? The particularities of their treatment of and attitude towards the passage of external/objective and internal/subjective time draws directly from the historical and socio-cultural specificities in the three respective cities as the loci of modernity. This chapter will also look at the various specificities of modernity in each city/culture, and how they are translated into the narrative styles and the contextual agenda of these modernist authors. By reading these three authors side by side I shall begin to trace the influence of modernity and literary modernism in these different cultures, a pursuit that I believe will underscore the existence of multiple modernities.

In Döblin's novel, the city of Berlin takes the foreground as the locus of constant re-construction and renewal; the technologies used to enable these transformations convey a sense of speed (one of the prime examples of this is the big machine used to dig a hole for a new subway station in Alexanderplatz; numerous times in the novel the crowds walking hurriedly in different directions in Alexanderplatz are emphasized; the eponymous square becomes the epitome of the speedy passage of time). Moreover, as Mendilow argues, montage technique enables Döblin to reveal the depth of human
predicament through the intensity of the novel's protagonist Franz's inner experience in
the modern city (32). The mind-boggling activity of the city and the nature of the
protagonist's reaction to it are manifest in the fragmentary, film-like format of the
narrative. It is at this juncture that Döblin employs different planes of temporality to
convey both the external manifestations (the city) and the internal symptoms (subjective
consciousness) of modernity.

Tanpnar makes use of time in an entirely different way. The concept of time is
used on a metaphorical level to dramatize the nature of Turkish modernity. *The Time
Regulation Institute* represents two different planes of temporality, Eastern and Western,
and offers a pungent critique of the efforts to replace one with the other. As Kürşat
Ertuğrul points out, in Tanpınar's novel, "modernite-zaman ilişkisi, bu ilişkinin
modernitenin 'eşiğindeki' bir toplumsal-kültürel alan içinde yaşanmasının doğurduğu
günlüklükler ve eğretilikler bağlamında eleştirilir" [200; the modernity-time relationship
is being critiqued within the context of the absurdity and humor that is brought out when
this relationship is experienced within a socio-cultural space on the 'threshold' of
modernity].

Modernism has a complex relationship with temporality. Even though the word
Modernism etymologically derives from Latin roots that mean “just now” and “today,”
which connote ephemerality and transitoriness, Modernism is perpetual. Perhaps it is in
certain ways similar in nature to Henri Bergson’s *durée*, “a continuous progress of the
past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances” (“From Creative
Revolution 70). Bergson argues that time is a constant flow and permutation, that nothing
is static. In other words, we live in a perpetual “just now,” a continuous agglomeration of
disparate and at times contradictory phenomena. By this definition, we live in an endless
Modernism, as Modernism, too, looks at the past, devours the present, and looks
into/anticipates the future.

In modernist art and criticism, the ephemerality of time and of the present
translates into a concern and an infinite fascination with the elusiveness of impressions.
Walter Pater defines impression as the result of loosely bringing together and grouping a
myriad external objects inundating the mind, with the help of the cohesive force that is
the reflective faculty. James Joyce’s “epiphanies,” or Virginia Woolf’s “moments” serve
as fleeting embodiments of this definition. Pater writes of these “impressions of the
individual mind” that are “in perpetual flight” (113). Each impression, he asserts, “is
limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible
also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of
which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is” (113). The
quick movement and dissipation of impressions in the ephemerality of “moments” are
two of the key preoccupations of the modernists.

This chapter will explore how Döblin, Musil, and Tanpinar capture and convey, in
their respective narratives, the fleeting impressions of the modern city, the fluidity of
their protagonists' consciousness, as well as the passage of time in an era characterized by
intense modernization. I will explore mainly the manner in which these three novels that
come from different historical, socio-political, and cultural backgrounds share a concern
with time and the way in which this concern reflects itself in the respective narrative
structures of these modernist novels.
Modernism is the art of modernization. It is the art of a ruptured, fragmented and paradoxical age where Darwin’s theories of evolution, Freud’s theories of psychoanalysis, and Marx’s theories on capitalistic societies have changed the world irrevocably, where the faces of urban areas have been painted with the dominating colors of perpetual mechanical and industrial advancement and where ephemerality has established itself as one of the chief cultural values. In addition to Darwin, Freud, and Marx, Henri Bergson's seminal work *Time and Free Will*, in which he introduces the concept of duration as a theory of time and consciousness, has contributed significantly to the way in which temporality came to be understood and employed in modernist texts.

Georg Lukács, in *The Theory of the Novel*, defines the eponymous genre as "heterogeneously contingent and discrete" in contrast to the epic, which, he says, is "homogeneously organic and stable" (76). He goes on to write that "the greatest discrepancy between idea and reality is time: the process of time as duration. […] Only the novel, the literary form of the transcendent homelessness of the idea, includes real time – Bergson's *durée* – among its constitutive principles" (120-21). In that sense, according to Lukács, the novel also distinguishes itself from drama, as "drama does not know the concept of time: it is subject to the three unities, and […] the unity of time signifies a state of being lifted out of the duration of time" (121).

Going beyond simply "includ[ing] real time," the modern novel concerns itself contextually with the concept of time, and this concern becomes reflected in the stylistic characteristics of many a modernist text. What A. A. Mendilow calls "the time-obsession of the twentieth century" (6) undoubtedly becomes one of the greatest constituents of modernist narratives, permeating the plot, as well as the form of the text to such an extent
that the modern novel becomes the epitome of this obsession. The increasing pace of living brought about by the advent of technology, transition from rural to urban spaces, transience of the elements that make up modern life—what Baudelaire calls "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent" (12)—social and economic changes among other vicissitudes of modernity are factors that have created the obsession Mendilow assigns to the twentieth century. "The time-obsession" of modernist novelists such as the three authors under discussion in this chapter, in turn, finds its origins in their realization that "the static symmetry of the old self-contained plot can no longer be imposed in the dynamic formlessness of life which they feel as a variable flowing rather than as an unchanging being" (Mendilow 8). As such, many modernist authors strive to write about time, as time and speed (the relation of distance to time) became the defining elements of modern life. In fact, Thomas Mann writes in *The Magic Mountain* that "if it is too much to say that one can tell a tale of time, it is none the less true that a desire to tell a tale about time is not such an absurd idea" (541).

Henri Bergson's *Time and Free Will*, first published in 1889, transformed the idea of time as a homogeneous medium that allows quantification "in which our conscious states are ranged alongside one another as in space, so as to form a discrete multiplicity," into time as a heterogeneous medium consisting of qualitative changes "which melt into and permeate one another, without precise outlines, [...] without any affiliation with number" (90, 104). The following passages from Bergson's seminal work reiterate and provide an evidentiary basis to Lukács' argument that the novel is the only literary genre among whose essential principles lies "real time":

There is a real duration, the heterogeneous moments of which permeate one another; each moment, however, can be brought into relation with a state of the
external world which is contemporaneous with it, and can be separated from the other moments in consequence of this very process. The comparison of these two realities gives rise to a symbolical representation of duration, derived from space. Duration that assumes the illusory form of a homogeneous medium, and the connecting link between these two terms, space and duration, is simultaneity, which might be defined as the intersection of time and space (110).

Bergson extends his theory of real time and duration to explicate the nature of "feeling." He defines feeling as a constantly changing organic entity with a life, a past, a present, and a future of its own. The feeling owes its livelihood to "the duration in which it develops […] whose moments permeate one another" (133). To separate and quantify these moments in an effort to analyze and rationalize the feeling results in the spectralization of the feeling as it loses "its life and its colour" becoming a mere shadow (133). Although the "juxtaposition of [these] lifeless states" enables the feeling to be translated into words and gives it the illusion of logic, in reality it is a spurious endeavor to separate the moments of duration and present them as distinct from one another.

Bergson is clearly aware of the challenges of expressing in words the immediate consciousness of the mind and the fluidity of feeling. As soon as a name is assigned to a feeling it is taken out of its duration and set aside as a distinct quantifiable element of a homogeneous medium, space. The following passage serves not only as Bergson's theoretical insight into the subjective consciousness and feeling in their relation to time, but it also posits the workings of a modernist novel as we shall see shortly in the works examined in this chapter:

Now, if some bold novelist, […] shows us […] under this juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known us better than we knew ourselves. This is not the case, however, and the very fact that he spreads out our feeling in a homogenous time, and expresses its elements as words, shows that he in his turn is only offering us its shadow: but he has arranged this shadow in such a way as to make us suspect the extraordinary
and illogical nature of the object which projects it. [...] Encouraged by him, we have put aside for an instant the veil which we interposed between our consciousness and ourselves. He has brought us back into our own presence (133-34).

The modern city becomes the locus in which the shifting nature of time, as diagnosed here by Bergson, is most vividly experienced. Mark Anderson writes that "the modern city offers its inhabitants a giant stage for theatrical performance, quotidian mini-spectacles, street 'happenings,' [...] accident and randomness break into this stylized, mechanized realm, unmasking its disordered temporality, violence, and falsehood" (145). Modernist masterpieces of twentieth-century literature engage in and employ a new conception of time, one that insists on direct and up-to-date involvement in the changing present. The qualities that create the present moment change nowhere faster than they do in the modern city and it is this speed of change that brings with it a "longing for the immediacy of experience" (Huysen and Bathrick 6) in the modern subject. Representing the experience of living in the modern city and translating it into language is one of the main concerns of the modernist novel.

Henri Bergson and his philosophical corpus are also the point where the three authors under discussion in this chapter converge. Kürşat Ertuğrul points out that "Tanpınar'ın [...] biçimsel, nesnel, numaralandırılmış zaman anlayısının eleştirisi Henri Bergson'un zaman felsefesiyle birebir örtüşmektedir" [199; Tanpinar's critique of regarding time as formal, objective, and quantified goes hand in hand with Henri Bergson's philosophy of time]. In a similar vein, Abdullah Uçman argues "Tanpinar'ın eserlerindeki, historicite anlamında tarihın daima öne çıkartılması ve sanat eserleri vasıtasıyla içinde yaşadığı zamanı aşma duygusu, bir ölçüde Fransız filozof Bergson'a [...] bağlıdır" [108; [t]he constant prioritization of history in terms of historicite and the
feeling of transcending his time through works of art in Tanpınar's works lends itself to a certain extent to the French philosopher Bergson. Tanpınar himself talks about the turn-of-the-century and early twentieth century as "Freud'un, Bergson'un gayrişuur ve şuur altı nazariyelerinin, zaman telâkkilerinin, sürrealist şiirin rüyasının, […] sürat ve makine hayranlıklarının birbirine karıştığı bu seneler […]" [“Zeki Faik” 255; the years in which the Freudian and the Bergsonian theories of the unconscious and the subconscious, interpretations of time, the dream of the surrealist poetry, […] fascination with speed and the machine commingle with one another]. In another essay he admits to the fact that Bergson has inevitably entered into the realm of modern literature (“Hasan-Âli” 131-143).

The critical corpus surrounding Robert Musil's oeuvre has contradictory views on Bergson's influence on his essays and novels. Tim Mehigan argues that the publication of Musil's diaries in 1976 unearthed what he calls "influences on Musil that had not been widely appreciated, notably […] the French philosopher Henri Bergson" (4). However, he provides no connection between Musil's work and that of Bergson to further his argument. Musil wrote his dissertation on the Austrian scientist and philosopher Ernst Mach and was keenly interested in the relationship between psychology and physics. Even though he was trained in philosophy and experimental psychology at the University of Berlin (1903-1908) and "had some familiarity with Husserl, Freud, Simmel, and Bergson, […] he was not strongly attracted to any of them" (Luft 81). A diary entry by Musil is a testament to the apparent lack of influence of Bergson on the Austrian author:

Ein Feuilleton über Bergson beigelegt. […] Man wird mir nachsagen, ich sei von ihm beeinflußt. Ich habe ihn aber nire lesen können, weil mich Einzelheiten aufhielten, hauptsächlich seines Begriffs der durée créatrice und seiner Art, sie auf die Unterscheidung von Raum und Zeit zu beziehen. Ebenso widersteht mir
sein Verbindung: Raum → Wissenschaft und Zeit → Philosophie. Wo ich scheinbar ähnlich sage wie er, ist der Sinn doch ganz anders; und auseinandergesetzt mit ihm habe ich mich nie (Tagebücher 488).

[Have appended a review article on Bergson. […] I will be accused of being influenced by him. But I was never able to read him because I was held up by details, mainly be his concept of "durée créatrice" and the way he applied this to the distinction between space and time. In the same way I am opposed to his connecting space with science, and time with philosophy. Where I appear to say something similar to him, the meaning is, in fact, quite different; I have never dealt with him properly (Diaries 474)].

Unfortunately, Musil does not offer any further explication of Bergson's work in any of his essays, but it is generally accepted that the particular diary entry quoted above yields enough evidence to conclude that he was aware of Bergson's work and made a point to disagree with his theory concerning real time. Despite his self-proclaimed rejection of Bergson's views on temporality, however, I would like to argue that he has perhaps followed unwittingly in Bergson's footsteps as the narrative structure of his unfinished epic work The Man Without Qualities demonstrates.

Bergson, with his emphasis on experience as flux, contributed to the modernist writers' striving towards the precise representation of experience. A lot of their linguistic and stylistic experimentation was geared towards developing a new kind of literary language that would adequately represent experience as a cognitive process in flux. Musil, one of the greatest early modernist generation of authors, "was attempting to forge with the greatest possible precision a language of images that would portray the inexact process by which a character proceeds through life within the envelope of his individual perceptions, sensations, thoughts, and experiences" (Pike, “Robert Musil” 77). The search for a language that would allow him to represent these sensations and experiences
led Musil to develop a narrative style that subverted the traditional relationship between language and temporality.

Many critics have noted the conspicuous absence of historical causality and linear temporality within the narrative structure of *The Man Without Qualities*. Even though certain parts of the text are abundant with temporal data, the nature of this data is such that the reader is continuously denied a temporal structure that would "allow for a reconstruction of the 'real' order of events" (Jonsson 115). Stefan Jonsson argues that in the novel "[e]vents assumed to happen in temporal sequences are […] reshaped by a strong tendency to expand the present to the point where it swallows the past, transforming the latter into raw material for retrospections and interpretations through which the present, in turn, is abolished as a discrete and chronologically identifiable moment" (115). By using language in such a way as to turn the present "into raw material for retrospections and interpretations," what Musil is doing is representing the present as real time, or duration, as Bergson calls it. Bergson notes that "[w]ithin [him]self a process of organization or interpretation of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration" (*Time and Free Will* 108). In his narrative, Musil is similarly continuously reorganizing and re-interpreting the conscious states and the experiences of his characters to the extent that the temporal structure of the narrative becomes a heterogeneous medium consisting of discrete moments of experience. Such a narrative style is marked by a conscious effort to abandon the pretence of reproducing reality; instead, it introduces techniques that will "best evoke the unrational feel of it" (Mendilow 153).

When we turn to Döblin's corpus, we find no specific allusions to Bergson or his work; however, as we shall see, there are strong Bergsonian elements within the narrative
structure of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Döblin was a very prolific, but stylistically extremely uneven author. In fact, it has been noted by many critics that some of his novels are so different from each other that they seem as products of different novelists (Webber 170; Dollenmayer 5; Kort 23; Koepke 3). Furthermore, his novels are also notorious for being difficult to summarize due to their narrative structure. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is perhaps Döblin's most famous work, and one which has been associated with the aesthetic method of montage. It was Walter Benjamin who first used the word montage in association with Döblin's novel when he recognized it as the distinguishing feature of this seminal work (“Krisis des Romans”). The montage technique Döblin utilizes in the novel constitutes the convergence point of his work with that of Bergson's, and it presents reality in the modern metropolis in all its complexity.

Berlin was the first really modern city in Germany, and the fastest growing metropolis which brought with it both the excitements and the ills of modernity. Life in such an industrialized and fast-paced city resists a linear description. In Döblin's novel Berlin is always portrayed as a city that is constantly on the run, speeding towards change. Old buildings are being torn down, streets are lined with bigger and newer buildings, there are construction sites all around the city, and underneath it all runs the newly built subway system.6

The novel’s title, too, conveys the feeling of always being on the go. Alexanderplatz is a central square and a stop where several major streetcar and railway lines intersect. In the novel, the movement around Alexanderplatz consists of streetcars approaching and departing one after the other, and people coming in and out of the

---

6 For a filmic representation of Berlin and its inhabitants in Döblin’s novel, see Rainer Werner Fassbinder’s fourteen-part TV series *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, originally broadcast in 1980. The series was restored in 2007 and released as a DVD set the same year.
streetcars or walking through the square with their thoughts and conversations bumping into one another. The transitory images of the modern city—a fluidity that is challenging at best to translate into language—permeate the novel, and montage technique enables Döblin to represent the speedy ephemerality of these images with immense acuteness. Moreover, montage also offers the reader a suggestion of the fluidity of experience, of that duration which Bergson considers the meaning of life. Wolfgang Kort argues that "[w]ith this whole arsenal of technical devices […] Döblin created a work that […] strives for the dynamic portrayal of a living situation. […] Although literature can only portray events in time, that is, in succession, Döblin does achieve the illusion of the simultaneity of different events" (104).

The following passage from the novel is one of many instances where the narrator acts as a camera and presents to the reader the busy streets of Berlin:

Vom Platz gehen ab die Brunnenstraße, die führt nördlich, die AEG. […] Die Invalidenstraße wälzt sich linksherum ab. Es geht nach dem Stettiner Bahnhof, wo die Züge von der Ostsee ankommen: Sie sind ja so berußt—ja hier staubts.—Guten Tag, auf Wiedersehn.—Hat der Herr was zu tragen, 50 Pfennig.—Sie haben sich aber gut erholt.—Ach die braune Farbe vergeht bald.—Woher die Leute bloß das viele Geld zu verreisen haben.—In einem kleinen Hotel da in einer finstern Straße hat sich gestern früh ein Liebespaar erschossen (52-53).

[The wide Brunnenstrasse runs north from this square, the A. E. G. runs along its left side in front of the Humboldthain. […] The Invalidenstrasse trails off to the left. It goes towards the Stettin Station where the trains from the Baltic Sea arrive: Why, you're all covered with soot—yes, there is a lot of dust here.—How do you do? So long.—Has the gentleman anything to carry, 50 pfennigs.—Your vacation certainly did you a lot of good.—Oh, that tan will come off soon.—Wonder where people get all the money from to travel around like that.—In a little hotel over there in that dark street two lovers shot themselves early yesterday morning (33)].

Throughout the narrative, the camera—eye of the narrator—moves rapidly in the city, focuses on the movement on the streets of Berlin, zooms in on apartments through windows, and peeks into people’s lives. As the above passage demonstrates, Döblin
creates the effect of the moving camera above and through the city by means of overheard language. In fact, the entire text seems to be the epitome of what Mendilow writes about certain modernist novels (it is surprising that he does not mention Döblin in his analyses of early modernist authors): "Each word or word-group […] is like a single snap in a film; only when all the snaps are reeled off in rapid succession do they produce the illusion of motion and of three dimensional existence" (154). What Döblin accomplishes, then, by circumventing conventional and stable categories of language, logic, and causality, is representing the change and temporal continuity that constitute the present. It is exactly at this juncture that his narrative technique and understanding of the concept of time mirror Bergsonian principles of duration.

Speed is the defining element in Döblin's modern city. The protagonist of the novel, Franz Biberkopf, notes this fact as he is moving towards Alexanderplatz on a streetcar after he has been released from prison: “Und nun fing the Straße wieder an, die Häuserfronten, die Schaufenster, die eiligen Figuren mit Hosen oder hellen Strümpfen, alle so rasch, so fix, jeden Augenblick eine andere” (17-18). [“And now the street started once more, the house-fronts, the show-windows, the hurrying figures with trousers or light socks, all so quick, so smart, each moment another” (5)]. The initial pages of the novel introduce Franz as he is leaving prison after four years and going back to the city. The title of the first chapter, “Mit der 41 in die Stadt” (15) [On Car 41 into Town (3)] sets the tone of the entire novel: movement and speed are indispensable parts of life in Berlin. Alexanderplatz is the center of these urban phenomena: “Wie die Bienen sind sie über den Boden her. Die basteln und murksen zu Hunderten rum den ganzen Tag und die Nacht. Ruller ruller fahren die Elektrischen, […] über den holzbelegten Alexanderplatz,
Abspringen is gefährlich. [...] Die Züge rummeln vom Bahnhof nach der
Jannowitzbrücke, die Lokomotive bläst oben Dampf ab (165).” [“People hurry over the
ground like bees. They hustle and bustle around here day and night, by the hundreds. The
streetcars roll past with a screech and a scrunch, [...] away they go across the planked-
over Alexanderplatz, it’s dangerous to jump off. [...] The trains rumble from the railroad
station towards Jannowitz Brücke, the locomotive puffs out a plume of steam” (129)].
Alexanderplatz is covered with planks because there are multiple construction sites
around the square, the most notable of which is the construction site for a new subway
station. As if to reiterate the emphasis on elements of movement, speed, and change
permeating through the text, the narrator tells us that Franz Biberkopf is “einem
ehemaligen Zement- und Transportarbeiter” (11) [“an erstwhile cement- and transport-
worker” (1)] and repeatedly refers to his protagonist as such. The two jobs he has held
represent the change (construction, cement) and movement and speed (transportation)
that characterize the city of Berlin, as well as the novel itself.

Alexanderplatz, where individual and mass movement are key features, is above
all a place of transit. It is not surprising that “wind gibt es massenhaft am Alex” (166)
[“[t]here is a lot of wind on the Alex” (129)], as wind becomes the signifier for
ephemerality, speed, and movement. Andrew Webber argues that “[i]t is not by chance
that Franz Biberkopf has to travel to this, his proper location, at the start of the novel" and
describes the eponymous square as "a site of flow, intersection, and exchange rather than
of stable topographical identity" (172). The terms Webber uses to describe
Alexanderplatz resemble the terms Bergson uses to explicate his theories on mobility and
time. For Bergson, both mobility and time are indivisible, they are a heterogeneous flux
that cannot be separated into distinct parts. Hence, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* carries both contextual and formal traces of Bergsonian temporality.

The fluidity, indivisibility and heterogeneity of time as it is experienced in the city is underscored when it is juxtaposed with the way Franz experienced time while he was in prison. Life in prison was extremely structured, homogeneous, and linear as the following passage demonstrates:

Die Gefangenen müssen sich des Morgens auf das Zeichen zum Aufstehen sofort erheben, das Lager ordnen, sich waschen, kämmen, die Kleider reinigen und sich ankleiden. [...] bum, ein Glockenschlag, Aufstehen, bum fünf Uhr dreißig, bum sechs Uhr dreißig, Aufschluß, bum bum, es geht raus, Morgenkostempfang, Arbeitszeit, Freistunde, bum bum bum Mittag, [...] die Sänger haben sich zu melden, Antreten der Sänger fünf Uhr vierzig, [...] sechs Uhr Einschluß, guten Abend, wir habens geschafft. (19)

[The prisoners must immediately rise in the morning at the signal to get up, they must put their bunks in order, wash, comb their hair, clean their clothes, and dress. [...] boom, a bell, get up, boom five-thirty, boom six-thirty, doors unlocked, boom boom, we go outside, distribution of breakfast, working hours, recreation hour, boom boom boom, noon, [...] singers should step forward, they are to appear at five-forty, [...] at six the doors are locked, good evening, that's that (7)].

I would like to argue that the stark difference between the way in which Franz experienced temporality in prison (linear, homogeneous, orderly) and the temporality he is exposed to in Berlin once he gets out of prison (non-linear, heterogeneous, chaotic) is the underlying factor for his breakdown in the last chapter of the book. Determined to lead a decent life after he has been released from prison, Franz encounters severe disasters that prohibit his resoluteness. In fact, even the opening scenes of the novel foreshadow the disasters (particularly his breakdown at the very end, as we shall see) that are about to befall him. When the reader first encounters Franz, he stands pressed against the red wall of the Tegel Prison, as he finds himself letting one street-car after another go
by without being able to move towards them. Finally, he is able to take his first clumsy steps, walks towards the street-car stop and gets on the car. As the streetcar starts to move towards Franz's intended destination, Alexanderplatz, “dann stand nur noch sein Kopf in der Richtung des Gefängnisses (15).” [“only his head was left in the direction of the prison” (3)]. His temporary paralysis becomes quickly conquered by the speed and movement of the city.

One of the disasters Franz endures is especially symbolic of his ultimate disintegration. Towards the middle of the novel Franz is introduced to a group of people who he mistakenly thinks are fruit dealers, but who are in reality members of a burglary gang. Franz becomes especially close with one of the members, Reinhold, and one night finds himself unwittingly involved in one of the gang's burglaries. When he realizes the true nature of the incident he finds himself in, Franz becomes frantic and is consequently thrown out of the speeding getaway car by Reinhold. Another car hits Franz and he loses his right arm.

The image of speeding cars is one that emerges frequently in this novel.\(^7\) The underlying theme of speed and movement that is introduced on the first page of the narrative continues to permeate through till the end. In fact, as mentioned above, it is precisely these two phenomena that distinguish life in modern Berlin, and allow Döblin to utilize montage to give a sense of a fluid, heterogeneous, chaotic temporality. Bergson's "real time," or "duration" is experienced to the fullest in this modern setting and it is too much for Franz to bear. He is overwhelmed by the phenomena that make up

---

\(^7\) David B. Dollenmayer devotes a part of the second chapter of his book *The Berlin Novels of Alfred Döblin* to the relationship and correspondence between Döblin and the Italian Futurist Marinetti. Döblin was clearly well-read in the works of the Futurists and declared his agreement with their principles in several letters. In one of these letters Döblin writes: "We are supposed to […] try to achieve the tempo of reality" (qtd. in Dollenmayer 19).
the city and gradually crumbles underneath them. Losing his arm marks his physical disintegration which anticipates the mental breakdown he will suffer in the last chapter.

The last chapter of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is perhaps the most problematic one. This chapter has attracted a lot of critical attention; however, many of the critical readings seem to clash with one another. In the final two chapters of the book, Franz is arrested for his girlfriend Mieze's murder which causes him to go into a catatonic stupor. He is taken to a prison hospital where he stays for weeks and has several visions. One of these visions is the vision of death. In the course of these visions he recognizes his hubris against life, fate, and the city and comes out of his catatonia as a new man. At the end of the novel, exonerated from the murder, he finds a job as a doorman in a small factory.

“Wach sein, wach sein, es geht was vor in der Welt (454)” [“Keep awake, keep awake, for there's something happening in the world” (377)], Franz keeps telling himself in the last passages of the novel.

As Franz returns to the city for the second time after he is released from the prison asylum, he stands in Alexanderplatz as a completely different man. The panic with which he tried to absorb the chaos of the city during his first return at the beginning of the novel has been replaced by a confident calmness. As he looks around himself in the square, Franz observes that “[z]u sehen ist an dem nichts, war ja eine furchtbare Kälte den ganzen Winter, da haben sie nicht gearbeitet und alles stehen gelassen, wie es stand, die große Ramme steht jetzt am Georgenkirchplatz. [...] Und da laufen sie immer rüber (448-449)” [“[t]here is nothing to be seen there. It was terribly cold all winter, so they did not work and left everything lying around, just as it was, the big steam-shovel is now standing on the Georgenkirchplatz. […] The people keep crossing the square” (372-
The first thing Franz realizes when he looks around the square is an apparent lack of action. The construction site has been closed due to the weather and everything is lying still. Only later he notices that there are people walking around the square as always. However, this time Franz is not overwhelmed by the crowds and their incessant, fast movement. Unlike the first time, he does not need to hide away in quiet, dark courtyards from the swarms of people walking on the streets of Berlin.

Franz's ultimate reconciliation with Berlin is read by Dollenmayer as "a confirmation of the positive character of the city" (81). Generally, Döblin's Berlin is either read as a chaotic space, or an intricately ordered entity. Those critics who read Berlin as the epitome of chaos also interpret the protagonist as the victim of fate and conclude that the last chapter marks his inevitable surrender to and the acceptance of fate (Schöne 291-324).

During the catatonic stupor he suffered at the asylum Franz was by definition unable to move, and his bodily and mental functions slowed down to the point of a death-like experience. For the purposes of the discussion in this chapter, I read the last chapter of the novel describing Franz's days at the asylum and his subsequent re-entry into Berlin as the tale of a resurrected man who gets caught in the clash of temporalities. Unable to adapt to the flow of time in the city, Franz physically and mentally disintegrates until he ends up at the asylum and is, in a way, re-set like a timepiece. As one critic writes of Franz's days in the insane asylum, Franz "is beaten […] into [a] timeless suspension of reflection before, ultimately, he becomes capable of surviving in the world of temporal action" (Ziolkowski 209). After the whirlwind of movement and speed he experiences in

---

8 As we will see in Chapter III (“The City of God: A Modernist Contretemps”), the ending of Döblin’s novel is open to interpretation and can be read in more ways than one.
Berlin, he is so overwhelmed that he needs to lie still and just be for a while. As he emerges out of his catatonic state, he is able to reconcile his own subjective temporality with that of Berlin's and feels no longer like a victim drowning in the flow of time:

“Herankommen lassen. Die großen, flachen, stummen Ebenen, die einsamen Ziegelhäuser, aus denen rötliches Licht kommt. Die Städte, die an einer Strecke liegen, Frankfort on the Oder, Guben, Sommerfeld, Liegnitz, Breslau, die Städte mit ihren großen und kleinen Straßen. Herankommen lassen die fahrenden Droschken, die gleitenden, schießenden Autos (438-439)” [“Let them come, the great, flat, silent plains, the lonely tiled houses whence gleams a redding light, cities which lie along the same line, Frankfort on the Oder, Guben, Sommerfeld, Liegnitz, Breslau, from the stations the cities emerge, cities with their big and their little streets. Then let them come: the cabs driving along, the rushing, gliding automobiles” (364)].

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *The Time Regulation Institute* is another novel that investigates the potentially problematic relationship between subjective time and objective time. Deemed by Walter Feldman "the most complex novel written in Turkish until the […] novelists writing in the 1980s and 90s," (37) Tanpınar's narrative has been receiving increasingly more and in-depth critical attention during the last decade.

In order to have a better understanding of the setting of the novel—İstanbul during the first decades of the twentieth century—we need to turn to *Beş Şehir [Five Cities]*, a compilation of essays on Ankara, Erzurum, Konya, Bursa, and Istanbul that the author published fifteen years earlier, in 1946. The section on Istanbul consists of Tanpınar's observations in a city that has undergone significant social and cultural changes within a matter of a few decades and reveals to the reader how Tanpınar feels
about the new city that has emerged out of the national project called "modernization." A close reading of this section will help bring the underlying concerns in *The Time Regulation Institute* into clearer focus. The following passage serves as a summary of the section in question:

İstanbul [...] 1908 ile 1923 arasındaki on beş yılda o eski hüviyetinden tamamiyle çıktı. Meşrutiyet inkılabı, üç büyük muharebe, birbiri üstüne bir yığın küçük, büyük yangın, malı buhranlar, imparatorluğun tasfiyesi, yüzylıдрır eşliğinde başımızi kaşıyarak durduğuuz bir medeniyeti nihayet 1923’de olduğu gibi kabullenmemiz onun eski hüviyetini tamamiyle giderdi. (122-123)

[Between 1908 and 1923 Istanbul completely lost its old identity. The constitutional reformation, three big wars, numerous small and big fires one after the other, economic crises, dissolving of the empire, and finally adopting a ready-made civilization in 1923, at the threshold of which we had been sitting for a century, scratching our heads, rid Istanbul completely of its old identity].

Tanpınar goes on to lament that "Abdülaziz devrinden itibaren İstanbul hayatında hiçbir istikrar kalmamıştı" [177; “Since the era of Abdülaziz9 there has been no stability left within life in Istanbul”]. As the paragraphs follow one another, it becomes clear that Tanpınar is highlighting the loss of two elements that used to be an integral part of life in Istanbul, namely, stability and unity. It is important to understand just what it is that the author sees lacking or changing in the city, as this constitutes the central theme of *The Time Regulation Institute*.

"Eski İstanbul bir terkipti," [125; Old Istanbul was a composition/a unity10] writes Tanpınar. "Bu terkip küçük büyük, mânalî mânasız, eski yeni, yerli yabancı, güzel çirkin [...] bir yığın unsurun bibiriyle kaynaşmasından doğmuştu" [125; This composition/unity was born out of the melding together of numerous small and large, meaningful and meaningless, old and new, native and foreign, beautiful and ugly [...] elements].

---

9 Abdülaziz was the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire between 1830-1876. His reign is identified with the Tanzimat period that saw the beginning of drastic transformations in Ottoman society.
10 The Turkish word "terkip" can be translated as either "composition," or "unity."
According to Tanpınar, a sense of unity used to permeate among the inhabitants of Istanbul, as well. Istanbul used to be a city where people from all walks of life came together to pass a pleasant time regardless of class differences. With the change of economic conditions and the introduction of new modes of life imported from the West, the sense of camaraderie and community among Istanbulites gradually faded (131).

In several instances throughout the essay, Tanpınar uses the word "orchestra" to describe the essence of old Istanbul. The occasional disjunct voices within the orchestral makeup of the city do not pose a threat to the unity of the city because "[...] asıl yayı çeken ve âhengi gösteren şeyler bizimdi" [126; the leading string instrument and those things that showed harmony were ours]. Tanpınar goes on to enumerate "those things" that contribute to the harmonious climate that characterizes old Istanbul: "Bunlar şehrin kendisi, bizim olan mimarlık, bizim olan musiki ve hayat, nihayet hepsinin üzerinde dalgalan nan hepsini kendi içine alan, kendimize mahsus duygulanmaları, hüzünleri, neşeleriyle, hayalleriyle sadece bizim olan zaman ile takvimdi" [126-127; These were the city itself, the architecture that is ours, the music and the life that belong to us, and finally the time and the calendar that are peculiar to us with their emotions, sorrows, joys, dreams hovering over them all, encapsulating them all]. For Tanpınar, then, harmony and unity are strongly founded on the values, traditions, cultural practices, and sense of history peculiar to a society. Adhering to these centuries old values and traditions has created a sense of historical temporality and continuity which starts to

---

11 Berna Moran was the first critic to argue that Tanpınar composed his novel Huzur [A Mind at Peace] with strong adherence to a musical form. Moran likens the novel to a symphony, and each chapter to a movement (Türk romanına eleştirel bir bakış [A critical approach to the Turkish novel] 132). Following Moran, several other critics including Öğuz Demiralp, Zeynep Bayramoğlu, and Jale Parla among others, have underscored the important role music plays in Tanpınar's novels. Tanpınar was well-versed in both traditional Turkish/Ottoman and Western music. He was especially fascinated by the structural and conceptual unity musical forms exhibit.
disintegrate at the turn-of-the-century with the introduction of modernity into the
Ottoman culture. It should be noted that the emphasis he puts on the importance of
national values does not mean Tanpınar was an Ottoman traditionalist who pursued a
nationalist agenda (see Gürbilek). As Azade Seyhan points out, "[h]e is concerned about
what he perceives as a disorienting discontinuity" in tradition pervasive of his time and
strives both to voice his concern and to search for a remedy (16). Tanpınar calls the
notion of time that emerges out of this disintegration and discontinuity "disrupted" or
"broken" time as opposed to "unified" or "whole" time that characterized the old Istanbul
he describes in Beş Şehir.12 In many of his critical and poetic writings, Istanbul becomes
the locus of temporal shift, civilizational crisis and cultural loss as it is the city that
"embodies [...] the trauma of separation from a long-standing heritage" (Seyhan 136).

Fragmentation—of culture, identity, time, and ultimately of the composition that
makes up Istanbul—is another byproduct of modernization according to Tanpınar. In Beş
Şehir [Five Cities], he likens the civilizational artifacts and modes of life imported from
Europe in the name of modernization to isolated pieces of a theatrical costume.

"Hamlet'in siyah elbisesini, Ophelia'nın süslerini, Kral Lear'in sakalını tek başına
görmekten daha hazin pek az şey vardır. Böylesi bir tecrübe ancak bütünülüği sayesinde
bu terkibin yokluğunu aratmayan büyük eserler dayanabilir" [132; There are few things
that are more sorrowful than seeing Hamlet's black robe, Ophelia's ornaments, King
Lear's beard by themselves, standing alone. Only monumental works which, thanks to
their wholeness, do not allow for the disintegration of this unity, can withstand such an
experience].

12 In many of his essays, short stories, and novels Tanpınar refers to the latter sense of time as "yekpare zaman" [one-piece/whole time].
Tanpinar wishes Istanbul (and by extension, Turkey) to become such a "monumental work" that can sustain the shock of change and maintain its sense of cultural, social, and historical unity, as well as the sense of a unified time. Never an advocate of a blind and obstinate attachment to the past or an author who dwells in the past, Tanpinar's intellectual endeavour has been to establish a connection with the past and the ever-transformed present in order to reverse the stifling effects of rapid civilizational and ideological shifts that resulted in a historical and cultural rupture. At the end of his essay on Istanbul in Beş Şehir he writes that "[e]n büyük meselemiz budur; mazi ile nerede ve nasıl bağlanacağız, hepimiz bir şuur ve benlik buhranının çocuklarıyz, hepimiz Hamlet'ten daha keskin bir 'olmak veya olmamak' dâvası içinde yaşıyoruz. Onu benimsedikçe hayatımıza ve eserimize daha yakından sahip çıkacağız. Belki de sadece aramak ve bütün kapıları çalmak kâfidir" [208; This is our biggest problem; where and how will we reconnect with the past, we are all children of an existential crisis, we all live in a question of 'to be or not to be' more pressing than that of Hamlet. We will have a better sense of ownership of our lives and of our work\textsuperscript{13} as we own up to it [the past]. Maybe it will suffice to just search and knock on all doors].

"Search" is exactly what Tanpinar does in his novels, poems, and essays. He searches for a new temporal consciousness that will help Turkey reconnect with its past and achieve a sense of unified time. It is at this juncture that he echoes Bergson's claim that the "time which our clocks divide into equal portions" is an "illusion" (Time and Free Will 107). Such an understanding of time does not allow for a flow of consciousness and memory as it breaks and separates time into quantifiable parts. Both Bergson's and Tanpinar's philosophies of time rest on the premise that time is an unquantifiable

\textsuperscript{13} The word "work" here refers to the "büyük eser" [the monumental work] that he has mentioned earlier.
heterogeneous medium that is experienced as a flux. In fact, the last sentences of Tanpınar's essay on Istanbul serve as a rationale for his literary corpus, particularly for *The Time Regulation Institute*. Tanpınar writes, "[e]n iyisi, bırakalım hâtıralar içimizde konuşacakları saati kendiliklerinden seçsinler. Ancak bu cins uyanış anlarında geçmiş zamanın sesi bir keşif, bir ders, hulasâ günümüze eklenen bir şey olur. Bizim yapacağımız yeni, müstahsil ve canlı bugünün rüzgârına kendimizi teslim etmektir" (208). [Best of all, let us allow memories themselves to pick the time they want to speak within us. It is only during such moments of awakening that the voice of the past becomes a discovery, a lesson, in short, something that is added to our present. What we should do is to fashionably, productively and vigorously surrender ourselves to the winds of today]. It is clear in this passage that Tanpınar wants to see a bridge between the past and the present, very much like a Proustian "madelaine." The present moment is only meaningful if it can be connected to past moments. When there is a break between the two, what emerge are crises of identity and consciousness. *The Time Regulation Institute* is a story about an entire nation that experiences an immense disconnect between its past and its present, and the ways in which it tries to cover up this gap through cosmetic changes brought about in the name of modernization.

Turkish critic Jale Parla defines twentieth-century novels as narratives that battle against the ticktocks of the clock (16). She goes on to argue that Virginia Woolf uses the half-hourly chimes of Big Ben in *Mrs. Dalloway* to suggest the inadequacy of the tower clock to catch or mark the lived moments of the novel's characters despite its famous punctuality (16). Almost all the clocks in Tanpınar's novel suffer from a similar affliction. They represent neither the lived moments of the characters, nor their past or present
conscious experiences. In fact, they become the epitomes of the "huge disconnect" the Turkish nation suffers as a result of the violent rupture of their history and the sudden break with the past. The break with the past starts with the social and cultural changes that first emerged during the Tanzimat era (1839-1876) of the Ottoman Empire and reached its zenith between roughly 1925-1938, the period during which the Atatürk reforms were implemented.14

The following passage taken from a study on pre-Republic Istanbul aids in a better understanding of the changes taking place in the Ottoman capital with the advent of modernization a few decades after the Tanzimat era: “The hours of the day are still reckoned, in ancient Oriental fashion, from sunset to sunset, which is estimated with more or less exactitude. Many of the watches used in Turkey are made with two dials, one for Turkish and the other for European time, the former, to be correct, requiring daily regulation; and one may often hear the seemingly odd question asked: ‘At what time is noon today?’” (Garnett qtd. in Brummett 313). The new era and its imported technologies, then, became "associated with disrupting the old familiar Ottoman sense of time," and this disruption created the underlying dilemma of subsequent generations well into the first decades of the Republic, the dilemma of "time counted on imported clocks, or time governed, written, and controlled by Europe" (Brummett 311).

The confusions which a rapid transition from one standard of temporality into another caused in the daily lives of Turks was felt profoundly in their psyches. Tanpinar believes that the shock of shifting from a unified, whole (yekpare, as he calls it) time to fragmented, disrupted time created a national psyche marked by paralysis and laziness.

14 According to Tanpinar, pre-Tanzimat Istanbul was a cohesive whole. It stood as the symbol of a continuous and linear history representing the purest form of Ottoman-Turkish culture.
Halit Ayarcı, one of the main characters in *The Time Regulation Institute*, voices Tanpınar's concern when he refers to the people at the coffeehouse his friend and protégé Hayri İrdal frequents as "kapının dışında kalanlar" (131) ["those who remained outside the door” (131)]. 

"[B]u insanların hep bir aralıkta yaşayarlar gibi düşünüyordum," (131) ["it seemed to me that most of these people whom I knew lived in some sort of a limbo,"] continues Ayarcı, and adds, "[m]uasır zamaı girememiş olmanın şaşkılığı içinde yarı ciddi, yarı şaka, tembel bir hayat!" (131) ["leading a half-serious and half-farcical life of idleness in the bewilderment of their inability to live in modern times” (132)]. 

Tanpınar's defining quest is to find a way to step through the door and enter into a temporality that Turkish society can call its own. Mustafa Kutlu argues that "[k]apının içi bizim dünyamızdır. Kendi gerçeklerimizdir. Hayatımızın manalanacağı yerdi. Ama nedir? […] Günümüz Türk düşüncesinin de asıl meselesi bu değil miydır?" [4; inside the door is our world. Our own realities. The place where our life will acquire meaning. But what is it? […] Isn't this the main issue of Turkish intellectuals?]. According to Tanpınar, the "bewilderment" that has overcome the nation stems mainly from the fact that time is no longer experienced as a unified whole, but as disrupted and discontinuous. Parla argues that *The Time Regulation Institute* is a narrative of atomized time, and Zeynep Bayramoğlu writes that in this novel "müzikalite, bütünlük, sentez, devamlılık kırılmıştır, yekpare zaman zinciri kopmuştur ve artık sadece etrafta bir

---

15 This expression reminds one of another novel by Tanpinar, namely *Sahnenin Dışındakiler [Those Outside the Scene]*.
16 Here, the Turkish word "aralık" which can mean both "gap" or "moment" has been translated as a "limbo." In my opinion, the translator's word choice falls short of conveying Tanpinar's real concern and completely ignores his writings on and philosophy of time. I interpret the word "aralık" as the "gap" between the Ottoman past and the republican present which the new republic fails to bridge. Hence, the people of the new nation remain stuck in a "moment" of fragmented time, as they are not able to attain a continuous time and experience time as a flow.
17 Tanpinar uses the coffeehouse and the people who frequent it in the novel as a microcosm of Turkey.
takım kakafonik gürültüler hâkimdir" [14; musicality, unity, synthesis, continuity have been disrupted, the chain of unified time has been broken and all that is left is cacophonous noise]. Bayramoğlu goes on to associate what she calls "absolute time" with the Ottoman-Turkish cultural values and traditions from which the new republic was cut off, and she claims that the new Turkish society has veered sharply from the notion of absolute time as a result of this separation (151).

There are numerous clocks and watches dispersed throughout Tanpinar's novel. All of these time-telling devices function as symbols of the disconnect, the "bewilderment," and the atomization of the Turkish nation after the modernizing reforms were put into effect. The first watch to make its appearance in the narrative is also the first watch the novel's protagonist Hayri İrdal owns. He receives it at the age of ten, as a present from his uncle on the occasion of his circumcision. In his own words, this watch "hayatımın ahengi biraz bozulur gibi oldu," (23) [interrupted [his] settled state (40)] but as he adds, in the end it gives him a new direction in life and shapes his life.

Interestingly, the first thing Hayri does when he gets his new watch is to separate it into its parts and ultimately turn it into "bir daha hiçbir işe yaramayacak hiçbir zamanı saymasına artık imkân olmayan ğeri büğrü maden parçaları, pashlı veya parlak bir yığın enkaz" (29) [a heap of twisted and crooked waste consisting of rusty and shiny metal, which would certainly no longer permit the watch to tell any time at all (46)]. The watch that suddenly enters into Hayri's life only to disrupt its harmony and to give him an entirely new direction can be read as the new sense of time that is introduced into the Ottoman-Turkish culture during the Tanzimat era. It is important to note here that Hayri's

---

18 Bayramoğlu's notion of "absolute time" is similar to Bergson's "real time."
19 A more literal and fitting translation would be "disrupted the harmony of my life."
childhood coincides with the Abdülhamid II period that spans the period between 1876 and 1909, namely, the years following the Tanzimat era. The new technology that entered the lives of the Turks during the modernization efforts of this period and changed their lives irrevocably is symbolically mirrored in the life of Hayri. The notion of fragmented time is shown in Hayri’s obsession with breaking apart every watch and clock he gets his hands on.

Tanpinar portrays a society that has veered from its cultural roots, and consequently from a continuous and absolute time. The only character in the novel who represents this undivided time is Hayri’s master, Muvakkit Nuri Efendi (Nuri the Timekeeper/Clockmaker). He is a man who holds on to his roots and is aware of the ominous changes taking place around him. For that reason, he even avoids leaving his workshop lest he see clocks on the streets of Istanbul that are not regulated. Every other character in the novel, including Hayri, writhes within a ruptured time, struggling to find a center within their divided consciousness. This new consciousness is a reflection of the new time; its components are no longer in unison. At one point in the narrative, Hayri laments that he is "[t]ıpkı Nuri Efe ndi’nin o kadar dikkatle ve ayrı ayrı işçiliklerden gelmiş parçaları birleştirerek tamir ettiği, zaman kervanına kattığı hurda saatler gibi onlardan bir parça, onların 'muaddel' bir halitasi." (34) [like those watches Nuri Efendi repaired with such great care by assembling the diverse parts of different workmanship, and harnessed to the caravan of time, a mere ‘transformed’ alloy (50)].

In addition to the watch his uncle gave him, there are three time-telling devices that play important roles in Hayri’s early life. The first is the grandfather clock which the

---

20 Süha Oğuztem draws a parallel between the broken clocks and watches in the novel and the unharmonious, fragmented psyches of the characters. ("Hasta Saatler, Bozuk Şihhatler: Enstitü Sorununa Babasız bir Yaklaşım" [Sick Clocks, Ill Healths: A Fatherless Approach to the Problem of the Institute]).
family has named Mübarek (“the blessed,” “the sacred”). This clock has been passed down from Hayri’s great grandfather and represents the absolute/continuous time of the pre-Tanzimat era and the Ottoman-Turkish culture. It rarely works properly and resists repair because it is no longer capable of telling time in a society where time is ruptured and divided.

The second is a small clock standing on a table in Hayri’s parents’ room. Unlike the grandfather clock, this one is "dini veya uhrevi degdirdi. Tam aksine olarak laik bir saatti. Hususı zembereği kurulunca saat başlarinda o zamanın çok moda olan bir türküsünü çalardi" (28) [neither of a religious, nor of a spiritual character. On the contrary, it was secular. It had a special spring, which when wound, activated the clock to play every hour a tune that was in fashion at the time (45)]. This second clock represents the transitional period during which the roots of the past have been severed (it is a secular clock), yet traditional folk tunes have not been forgotten.

Finally, Hayri vividly remembers his father’s pocket watch which is a "pusulali, kiblenumali, takvimli, alaturka ve alafranga, mevcut ve gayrimevcut bünü zamanları sayan acayip bir saatti." (28-29) [queer sort of watch, equipped with a compass and with a pointer that indicated the direction of Mecca, as well as with a calendar which marked universal time, be it alla turca or alla franga, existent or nonexistent (46)]. This is the watch that represents the time in which the novel is mainly set. It is the ruptured time whose flow has been discontinued, the time of conflicting cultures, and the state of being out-of-joint. Even Nuri Efendi, who is the best of clock makers, cannot repair this watch.

The clear-cut stance Tanpinar holds with respect to the notion of time and its role in different cultures is something that cannot quite be grasped in Robert Musil's The Man
Without Qualities. For the most part there are obvious parallels between Bergson's philosophy of time and Musil's musings on temporality in the modern world which are revealed mainly through his main character, Ulrich. However, the ideological and philosophical planes Musil rests his epic work on are very slippery and do not readily allow the reader to attach any particular label to the novel.

As one critic notes, in the novel, "[t]he wider time horizon, greater perspective, later viewpoint […] are often emphasized through the use of the temporal adverb 'damals' [back then]" (Holmes 274-275). The adverb "damals" automatically creates a contrast between the past and the present, underscoring the differences between them, but still maintaining a continuity by way of reference and memory. Despite the frequent use of this adverb which suggests a bridging of the past with the present as elements from the past enter the present time and become a part of it, Musil also occasionally refers to the past as "forgotten" and "buried." For him, the turn-of-the-century represents a time when "überall standen Menschen auf, um gegen das Alte zu kämpfen" (55) ["everywhere people were suddenly standing up to struggle against the old order" (53)]. The "old order" according to Musil is dead, yet he still continues to refer to it throughout the novel.

The first chapter of the novel offers the most insight into what Musil's take on the changing temporal philosophies of his time might have been. The story of Ulrich, the man without qualities, starts on August 1913, approximately one year before World War I breaks out. As the reader encounters Ulrich for the first time, he is standing at one of the windows in his chateau-like house, "zählte mit der Uhr seit zehn Minuten die Autos, die Wagen, die Trambahnen und die von der Entfernung ausgewaschenen Gesichter der Fußgänger, die das Netz des Blicks mit quirlender Eile füllten (12)" [ticking off on his
stopwatch the passing cars, trucks, trolleys, and pedestrians, whose faces were washed out by the distance, timing everything whirling past that he could catch in the net of his eye (6)]. After spending ten minutes trying to catch all the fleeting images he sees through his window, he laughs and decides "daß er Unsinn getrieben habe (12)" [to stop all this nonsense (7)].

We are first introduced to Ulrich as a man of the modern world, observing that modern world from behind a window, trying to subject it to a temporal quantification. After only ten minutes, however, he realizes the impossibility of his task and gives up. His task, in other words, is to divide and quantify the individual moments of the flow of time in the modern city. In fact, there are numerous allusions to the word "flow" in the first pages of Musil's novel. We are told that on the streets of Vienna, "Autos schossen aus schmalen, tiefen Straßen in die Seichtigkeit heller Plätze. Fußgängerdunkelheit bildete wolkige Schnüre. Wo kräftigere Striche der Geschwindigkeit quer durch ihre lockere Eile führten, verdickten sie sich, rieselten nachher rascher und hatten nach wenigen Schwingungen wieder ihren gleichmäßigen Puls" (9) [Automobiles shot out of deep, narrow streets into the shallows of bright squares. Dark clusters of pedestrians formed cloudlike strings. Where more powerful lines of speed cut across their casual haste they clotted up, then trickled on faster and, after a few oscillations, resumed their steady rhythm (3)]. What is striking about this passage is the words Musil chose with which to depict some of the elements that make up life in the city. Words such as “shot” (schossen), “clotted” (verdickten), “trickled” (riselten), and “rhythm” (Puls) could have been easily used to describe blood flowing through the veins. The traffic in the city "strahlenförmig am Kern der Stadt entspringt, [...] äußeren Bezirke durchzieht und in
die Vorstädte münde[t]" (11) [radiat[ed] outward from the heart of the city to flow through its surrounding districts and empty into the suburbs (6)].

The sense of "flowing" in the city is well established in the first chapters and it also refers to the flow of time. "Die Zeit bewegte sich" (13) [Time is on the move (7)], says Ulrich, and in the description of modern Vienna, the dizzying flow of traffic becomes synonymous with the passage of time. At one point, Ulrich ponders upon "alle die Anstrengungen, die ein Mensch vollbringen muß, um sich im Fluß einer Straße aufrecht zu halten" (12) [all the effort it takes for a man just to hold himself upright within the flow of traffic on a busy street (7)] which can easily be read as the modern subject striving to keep up with the fast pace of the urban setting and the effort it takes him to adjust his inner consciousness to the flow of time and the flow of change outside him.21

After focusing in such detail on the present moment, Ulrich turns to the future and starts to describe a dystopic "überamerikanische Stadt, wo alles mit der Stoppuhr in der Hand eilt oder stillsteht" (31) [super-American city where everyone rushes about, or stands still, with a stopwatch in hand (26-27)]. What follows is a series of horrific images from an imagined future city and what makes this passage and the description of this city so ironic is that Ulrich himself was holding a stopwatch in his hand when he first appeared in the narrative and he was standing still looking out the window at the cars speeding away.

21 David S. Luft argues that in The Man Without Qualities Musil "examines the impact on consciousness of the transition from houses and horses to skyscrapers and trucks" (218). He goes on to write, "[t]echnology, pluralism, specialization […] give to modern life a quality of the inessential and accidental" (218). In fact, the novel begins with an accident involving a truck.
Is the "super-American" city Musil describes Vienna itself already, then? The sudden jump to the past in the ensuing paragraphs might perhaps shed some light on this question. The nostalgic tone of the following passage hints at Ulrich's dissatisfaction with the times and suggests that he might indeed be drawing a parallel between the dystopic American city of the future and the Vienna of his time. As he reminisces about the past, he remarks:


[in the good old days when the Austrian Empire still existed, one could [...] get off the train of time, get on an ordinary train of an ordinary railroad, and travel back to one's home. There, in Kakania, that state since vanished that no one understood, in many ways an exemplary state, though unappreciated, there was a tempo too, but not too much tempo (28)].

At first sight, it seems Ulrich is longing for the "good old days" of the Austrian Empire where one had access to their past, their "home," and where the pace of life was not so fast. In fact, here, one can even find elements of resemblance to the sentiments of Tanpinar about the lost Ottoman-Turkish culture. The name "Kakania," however, problematizes these assumptions. Kakania is the comical and absurd name Musil gives to the empire now vanished and, by doing so, he clearly reveals his attitude towards this lost past.22

Following the Compromise of 1867, the Austrian Empire became the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and gradually started its decline which was to culminate in the defeat

---

22 One is reminded of Nikolai Gogol’s short story “The Overcoat” where the protagonist’s name is Akaky Akakievich. In this short story Gogol engages in a social and political critique of nineteenth-century St. Petersburg.
and the dissolution of the empire at the end of World War I in 1918, a watershed year also for the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the dissolution of unity that gave way to the modernity dramatized by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar's *The Time Regulation Institute*. Alexander Honold stresses what he calls the "ironic playfulness" of Musil's first chapter and, he writes, it "indicates that the following action starts in Vienna, capital of Austria-Hungary, in August 1913. Reading this in 1930 or later, it was almost impossible not to be reminded of what happened one year later" (120). According to Honold, by opening his novel with a sunny weather forecast not only for Vienna, but for the entire Europe, Musil is being acutely ironic and setting the general tone of his novel. Almost exactly one year later, in July of 1914 World War I was to break out and wreak havoc in all of Europe. It is precisely because of Musil's overarching ironic tone throughout the novel that it becomes challenging to identify with certainty the underlying ideologies and philosophies of *The Man Without Qualities*.

In the next chapter we shall examine the use of irony and the absurd in Döblin's, Tanpinar's, and Musil's novels. Such drastic shifts in cultural values and modes of life as we have seen in these three novels have the potential to elicit ironic and/or sarcastic approaches from novelists. Sometimes using elements of the absurd or the ironic is the only way of coping with the overwhelming magnitude of change and civilizational shift that occurs within a society. For now, however, I wish to reflect on what the implications of discrepant, multiple modernities might be for the language, structure, metaphoric projection, and historical construction of the modern novel as exemplified by these three novels focused on their respective modernizing cities.
In his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* Max Weber argues that modernity is a two-sided coin whose one side is the flux of novelty and progress, and the other side is nothing more than standardization and routinization. Weber's dark vision of societal modernity follows from social modernization. Instead of resulting in the establishment of a rational utopia envisioned by the Enlightenment philosophers, the convergence of modernity and modernization culminates in what Weber calls an “iron cage” (or, a “steel-hard case” which is a more literal translation of the original German phrase “stahlhartes Gehäuse”), enslaving people within the tight boundaries of capitalism and bureaucratic domination. Social modernization, then, in Weber's view, is a form of normalization that rationalizes ambiguities, and a deadly uniformity/conformity that is afraid of contradictions. Philosopher Charles Taylor lists the components that accompany any given society through its transition from a “traditional” to a modernized society as “individuation, rise of instrumental reason, industrialization, urbanization, mass literacy, and the introduction of markets and bureaucratic states” (181). Taylor is also concerned with the conformity brought about by social modernization and laments that “[t]his outlook projects a future in which we all emerge together into a single, homogeneous world culture” (181).

Weber's vision of societal modernity finds an alternative in the Baudelarian vision of cultural/aesthetic modernity. Weber argues that modern culture is irredeemably fragmented and rendered meaningless by societal modernization. Baudelaire is no less aware of the effects of modernization, and his project is to aestheticize societal modernization in an effort to unify and redeem modern culture. Baudelaire’s modernist artist discovers the constant and the immovable amidst the flux of impressions
surrounding him. What makes this artist modern is not the recognition of the fact that the ephemerality of the present and the flux of impressions should be acutely observed, but the acceptance that the artist himself is the object of observation and elaboration. Such an artist creates in his works the true nature of modern experience at its fullest and produces works of art that are fine specimens of Modernism.

If Modernism is interpreted as the response of the imagination to the present, then at the turn-of-the-century that present is characterized by intense urbanization, mechanization, industrialization, crowds of people, and myriad paradoxes that come with the time. The modern city is the locus of modernization, hence it is also the locus of Modernism, making Modernism the art of the urban. In modernist art and literature, the urban seeps into the poetic, so much so that the city-novel or the city-poem become one of Modernism's main forms. As modernist writing encapsulates experience within the urban space of the city, the novel form expands the urban metaphor in an attempt to pursue urban experience. The city becomes a rich source of material for the modern novelist, who, in his work reveals an awareness that is intense and fragmentary, an awareness that includes both himself as a subject, and the external flux of phenomena rushing towards him. The city and the modern novelist, then, become parts of a single, racing, perpetual consciousness. The modern novel is the reflection of this consciousness.

It is my goal in this project to argue that there are as many and variant modernities as there are modern consciousnesses that are born out of the multiple urban loci around the world. As such, the three novels under discussion here are representatives of discrepant modernities precisely because their respective authors are the products of
different cultures that experienced societal modernity and, consequently, literary modernism, in different milieux.

One of the chief challenges of the modernists was to reconcile language with the social and political turmoil they found themselves in. When the shifting social and political conditions coupled with the rapidly changing urban phenomena, the language of nineteenth-century literature seemed to fall radically short of representing the new modern world of the early twentieth century. The European bourgeois of the nineteenth century had found comfort in the appearance of coherence that was created by the order of society. "This order was predicated on the idea that temporality could be mapped onto a spatial category […] thus producing the illusion that sequence—'first this happened, then that happened—is sufficient to generate meaning" (Gualtieri 160). Turn-of-the-century modernist writers gradually moved away from what their readers had long regarded as significant in human life and human experience, and instead focused on new concepts of temporality and consciousness thus breaking what one critic has called "the implicit agreement between author and readers" (Daiches 814) that had existed throughout the nineteenth century. The comforting palpability of objective reality was violently replaced by the slippery reality of twentieth century—which is only a sense of reality at best.

The seemingly incompatible relationship between language and the modern experience—and its relation to time—not only turns into a crisis of language and representation for the modern writer, but it also ultimately becomes one of the main motifs of modern literature.\(^{23}\) In the modern city, as well as in the modern novel, the rift

---

\(^{23}\) Written in 1902, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Ein Brief" [A Letter] is perhaps the most poignant expression of this crisis of language. At the time, Vienna had recently transitioned into an industrial society.
between objective reality and the subjective sense of reality that changes according to each person's private history and consciousness is widened by the clash between public time and private time. Hence, it comes as no surprise that modernist novels abound with characters who, "in opposition to an increasingly precise, increasingly insistent public time, [...] cling more and more to [...] intuition, to [their] private sense of duration" (Ziolkowski 196). As such, the clash between the two kinds of time becomes the underlying impetus for the experimental structural features of the modern novel.

In her essay "Modernity and its Fallen Languages: Tanpınar's Hasret, Benjamin's Melancholy," Nergis Ertürk explores the manifestations of a crisis of language in the works of Tanpınar and Walter Benjamin that is caused by a disruptive modernity.24 Echoing Hofmannsthal's lament, Ertürk points out that the language of modernity cannot adequately express the experience of the modern subject since it only "merely' represents the world," (50) and argues that "[f]or Benjamin, as for Tanpınar, in a world of disenchanted language the modern subject can no longer experience (erfahren) in the old, true sense of that term: rather, now, they live in a present tense of successive, uniform, empty intervals, severed from past and future" (52). I would like to expand upon two words that Ertürk uses here, namely, "erfahren" and "interval," both of which are crucial in the analysis of the metaphoric and structural projections found in Musil's, Tanpınar's

---

The Turkish word "hasret" means "longing" and has a nostalgic connotation.
and Döblin's novels. These two words become important for all three novelists in their effort to overcome the challenge of representing the modern experience in a narrative form.

"Erfahrung" is a term Benjamin uses in his essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in juxtaposition to another term, "Erlebnis," in order to delineate the dialectic between two different kinds of experience. According to Benjamin, Erfahrung is a full and reflected state of consciousness, and Erlebnis is characterized by an immediate or shock experience. In other words, Erfahrung is cumulative, profound, denotes a process and has a cognitive aspect, whereas Erlebnis is isolated, relatively superficial, and denotes experience without cognition. In his essay, Benjamin argues that urban experience of the modern subject is marked by a plethora of external stimuli which are often shocking and new. Consequently, an incident that has been identified as shocking is deflected and denied entry into a cognitive experience (Erfahrung) by the intellect, and instead it is “turn[ed] into a moment that has been lived” and “assign[ed] […] a precise point in time in consciousness” (Benjamin, “On Some Motifs” 163). As critic David Frisby aptly puts it, in the metropolis, “Erfahrung has been reduced to Erlebnis” (62). The protagonists, Ulrich, Hayri, and Franz are each, in their unique way, epitomic of this reduction and its effects on the modern city dweller.

The other word I would like to dwell upon, "interval," is one we have already encountered in this chapter in conjunction with Tanpınar's The Time Regulation Institute. Through the mouth of his character Halit Ayarçılı, Tanpınar describes the group of people frequenting a coffeehouse in Istanbul—perhaps a metonymy for the Turkish

---

25 Both “Erfahrung” and “Erlebnis” translate into English as “experience”; however, there is an important nuance in their meaning in German, hence Benjamin’s distinction between the two terms.
26 See footnote no. 16 on the translation of the word "aralık" into Turkish.
society at large—as those who live in an "aralık." To recapitulate, the Turkish word can be translated into English as a "gap," an "interval," or a "moment in time." This seemingly simple, yet loaded word which Tanpınar uses to describe a people who are stuck in a fragmented present severed from the past and the future is indeed emblematic of the condition Ertürk attributes to the modern subject in the above passage. This idea is also embodied in the eponymous Time Regulation Institute itself, whose purpose, by definition, is to oversee the division of quantifiable time into "moments" in a standardized and systematized fashion. The Institute, then, becomes the propagator of a fragmented present that is characterized by "successive, uniform, empty intervals."

Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and Musil's *The Man Without Qualities* assign a similar connotation to the word "interval" as they, too, are narratives exploring the implications and manifestations of a disruptive modernity within a society that is caught up in a particular moment in history. At the start of Döblin's novel, Franz is literally stuck in an "interval" if one considers the etymology of this word. Having derived from the Latin *intervallum* where *vallum* denotes "wall, rampart," "interval" literally means "between walls." And it is exactly from "between walls" that Franz first emerges as he is released from prison where he spent the last four years of his life. Right after he is set free from one "interval," he is thrust into another, namely Alexanderplatz. In the novel, Alexanderplatz functions as a figurative site representing the fragmented world of modern Berlin and it is above all a central stop in the railway system which makes it an intervalllic locus—a space between two tram stops.27

27 It is an interesting fact that today, in the center of Alexanderplatz rises a giant "Weltzeituhr" [Worldtime Clock]. This is a rotating circular installation that is divided into the time zones of the world, showing the time throughout the globe.
In a similar vein, Musil's protagonist Ulrich also lives in an "interval" in the course of the narrative, having taken "ein Jahr Urlaub" (47) ["a year's leave of absence from his life" (44)].28 Written between 1920s and 1942—the year of Musil's death—but set in the year before World War I, Musil's novel offers the reader a glimpse into what one critic calls "a society caught between the tantalizing possibility of what could have been and the ineluctable reality of what we know will happen" (Gualtieri 156). Indeed, the Vienna of 1913 is stuck in a moment that simultaneously looks back at the disappointing decline and the failed potential of the Habsburg Empire and at the imminently impending Great War. The narrative itself is also stuck in this ominous year as Musil died before he could finish his epic work. Considering the length of the text and the fact that it lacks closure, I agree with Elena Gualtieri that Musil's novel endlessly "amplifi[es] […] the one-year interval that separates 1913 from 1914," (160) so much so that the text itself becomes the embodiment of that interval.

In every society, the arrival of modernity is experienced in a particular way. The particularity of the modern experience in any given society depends in part to the unique conglomeration of the myriad phenomena modernity brings along with it—industrialization, emergence of individualism, rationalization, fragmentation, and secularism among others. There are as many ways of being modern as the many facets of modernity. Hence, each modernist writer articulates his experience of modernity in his own unique way in order to elucidate this constantly shifting, elusive phenomenon. Let us now revisit the concept of Erfahrung and take a closer look at how it is employed in these three novels in conjunction with the idea of the interval. Many of the metaphoric constructions and structural/formal elements in these texts have at their basis a concern

28 The German word "Urlaub" can also be translated as "break."
with the nature and the representability of the modern experience. The title of each novel is a direct allusion to the central metaphor of each text. And each one of these central metaphors in turn constitutes each author's treatment of and experience with modernity in his respective cultural setting.

Musil (1880-1942) and Tanpinar (1901-1962) are representatives of post-empire societies, having lived through the decline and ultimate dissolution of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires respectively. In the rubble of these two great empires were left people stuck in a fragmented modern world without roots and without traditions. Hence, both novelists are heavily concerned with the ideas of wholeness, unity, and continuity which they felt were violently shattered with the fall of the dynastic rule, and share the belief that the modern world is devoid of an inner unity. We have already seen that Tanpinar laments the loss of stability and unity in a post-empire, modern Istanbul. In his novel, clocks become symbols of a quantifiable, divided, modern time—which in turn causes a fragmented consciousness—and are placed in stark contrast to the concept of unified, heterogeneous time and continuous flow of consciousness that belong to an earlier era characterized by historical, social, and cultural continuity. Having similar concerns as Tanpinar, Musil chooses Vienna as his setting and his descriptions of this once imperial city and its dwellers become a testament both to his concern with the loss of unity in the modern world, and to the transition from Erfahrung to Erlebnis.

We have said that Erfahrung is experience that is cumulative, cognitive, and one that involves a process. According to this definition, Erfahrung is closely related to historical continuity, to an uninterrupted flow of consciousness, and to heterogeneous time experienced as flux. Conversely, Erlebnis denotes experience without cognition and
one that breaks the flow of consciousness, creating isolated and superficial experiential instances. The title of Musil's novel, *The Man Without Qualities*, hints at the distinction between two kinds of experience as it signifies the condition of post-empire Vienna. It is quite telling that in the novel Ulrich's house and his father are introduced to the reader before Ulrich, the man without qualities, is. The passages describing Ulrich's house and his father set the point of reference for what Malcolm Spencer calls "Eigenschaftlosigkeit" [the condition of being without qualities], a condition, according to Spencer, which "Musil considers central to modern existence" (67). The title of his novel delineates this condition as it draws a distinction between "being with qualities" and "being without qualities," two metaphorical categories that stand for Erfahrung and Erlebnis respectively.

Ulrich's chateau-like house is depicted in great detail in the following passage:

"[ein] Garten aus dem achtzehnten oder gar aus dem siebzehnten Jahrhundert, und wenn man an seinem schmiedeeisernen Gitter vorbeikam […] etwas wie ein kurzflügeliges Schlößchen, ein Jagd- oder Liebesschlößchen vergangener Zeiten. […] Genau gesagt, seine Traggewölbe waren aus dem siebzehnten Jahrhundert, der Park und der Oberstock trugen das Ansehen des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts, die Fassade war im neunzehnten Jahrhundert erneuert und etwas verdorben worden, das Ganze hatte also etwas verwackelten Sinn, so wie übereinander photographierte Bilder; aber es war so, daß man unfehlbar stehen blieb und "Ah!" sagte. (12)"

[[…] an old garden, still retaining some of its eighteenth- or even seventeenth-century character, with wrought-iron railings […], a sort of little château with short wings, a hunting lodge, or rococo love nest of times past. […] it was basically seventeenth-century, while the park and the upper story showed an eighteenth-century influence and the façade had been restored and somewhat spoiled in the nineteenth century, so that the whole had something blurred about

---

29 His house is described in detail in chapter two, "House and Home of the Man Without Qualities" [Haus und Wohnung des Mannes ohne Eigenschaften], his father is introduced in chapter three, "Even a Man Without Qualities Has a Father With Qualities" [Auch ein Mann ohne Eigenschaften hat einen Vater mit Eigenschaften], and finally the reader gets to learn about the details of Ulrich's earlier life in chapter five, which is entitled "Ulrich."
it, like a double-exposed photograph. But the general effect was such that people invariably stopped and said: "Oh!" (6)].

I read this particular passage depicting the house where the man without qualities lives as a metaphor for the historical continuity and the unity that characterized the Habsburg years before the twentieth century. The architectural specifications of the house and the garden surrounding it are listed with reference to their temporal origins. That the features of Ulrich's dwelling exhibit characteristics spanning the period between seventeenth and nineteenth centuries highlights the historico-temporal continuity of the qualities that make up the house. The twentieth century is not represented among these qualities as the timeline of the stylistic constituents of the edifice comes to a halt with the preceding century. "[T]he whole had something blurred about it" writes Musil, referring to the myriad architectural elements of the house that are blended together to create an image that reminds one of a jittery, out-of-focus photograph. In other words, features, or "qualities" belonging to earlier centuries flow into one another and create a whole—Ulrich's house—which looks as if it is in constant movement. Reactions which this blurry entity elicits from onlookers are most telling. The harmonious melding of traditions belonging to an earlier era and the sense of fluency this heterogeneous image creates is received with awe and perhaps also with an underlying nostalgia. As such, the image of Ulrich's house—and the qualities that make up this image—can be read as a metaphor for experience that is cumulative and fluid (Erfahrung) which explains the interjections imbued with a sense of wonder and longing. The inhabitants of Vienna now live in a modern city where their experiences are superficial and interrupted (Erlebnis), denying them a sense of wholeness and continuity.

30 The word "longing" brings to mind the title of Nergis Ertürk's above-mentioned article, "Modernity and its Fallen Languages: Tanpınar's Hasret [Longing], Benjamin's Melancholy." See footnote no. 24.
Ulrich's father is a man of the previous generation and he, unlike his son, is a man with qualities. Even though Musil uses a subtly ironic tone in the passages describing Ulrich's father, the qualities that he attributes to him—however socially constructed they may be—still point at the cultural and social changes that have taken place since the fall of the Empire. In these passages the reader learns that Ulrich's father “wurde nicht nur Professor, Mitglied von Akademien und vielen wissenschaftlichen und staatlichen Ausschüssen, sondern auch Ritter, Komtur, ja sogar Großkreuz hoher Orden, Se. Majestät erhob ihn schließlich in den erblichen Adelsstand (15)” [“became not only a professor and a member of academies and many learned and official committees but was also made a Knight, and then a Commander, the recipient of the Grand Cross of various high orders. His majesty finally raised him to the hereditary nobility (9)”]. The cumulative nature of Ulrich's father's qualities—he starts out as professor from the middle class and gradually achieves the status of nobility—stands in sharp contrast to Ulrich's failed career attempts and his lack of qualities. Ulrich starts out in life with the dream of becoming a military hero like Napoleon and enlists in the army. When he realizes that he can never be a hero, he quits the army and pursues a career in civil engineering, only to quit that as well. Finally, Ulrich decides to become a mathematician because mathematics “ist die neue Denklehre selbst, […] liegen die Quellen der Zeit und der Ursprung einer ungeheuerlichen Umgestaltung (39)” [“is the new method of thought itself, […] the very wellspring of the times and the primal source of an incredible transformation (35)”]. In the ensuing passage Musil tells his reader that mathematics is also responsible for “[d]ie innere Dürre, die ungeheuerliche Mischung von Schärfe im Einzelnen und Gleichgültigkeit im Ganzen (40)” [“[t]he inner drought, the dreadful blend of acuity in
matters of detail and indifference toward the whole (36)” which is an exact summary of Musil's main concern regarding modernity.

Both the qualities of Ulrich's house and those of his father are listed in such a way as to convey a sense of continuation and process, whereas the description of Ulrich's qualities consist of interrupted instances. His final career choice is emblematic of the defining characteristics of his time and can also be read as a metaphor for Erlebnis. Experience in a modern urban setting is interrupted, isolated and hence "indifferen[t] toward the whole." As Musil writes in the below passage, the man without qualities is the epitome of modern urban existence:

“Könnte man die Sprünge der Aufmerksamkeit messen, die Leistungen der Augenmuskeln, die Pendelbewegungen der Seele und alle die Anstrengung, die ein Mensch vollbringen muß, um sich im Fluß einer Straße aufrecht zu halten, es käme vermutlich [...] eine Größe heraus, mit der verglichen die Kraft, die Atlas braucht, um die Welt zu stemmen, gering ist, und man könnte ermessen, welche ungeheure Leistung heute schon ein Mensch vollbringt, der gar nichts tut. Denn der Mann ohne Eigenschaften war augenblicklich ein solcher Mensch (12).”

[If all those leaps of attention, flexing of the eye muscles, fluctuations of the psyche, if all the effort it takes for a man just to hold himself upright within the flow of traffic on a busy street could be measured [...] the grand total would surely dwarf the energy needed by Atlas to hold up the world, and one could then estimate the enormous undertaking it is nowadays merely to be a person who does nothing at all. At the moment, the man without qualities was just such a person (7)].

The title of Musil's novel, then, underlines the condition of being without qualities, which is a defining feature of modernity according to Musil. In the novel, as we have seen, the existence of or lack of qualities becomes representative of Habsburg years (the past) and the present day (modernity), respectively, distinguishing between two kinds of experience, Erfahrung and Erlebnis. In post-empire Vienna, experience and consciousness are no longer continuous, but they are fragmented. Tanpinar has the same
concerns about post-empire (and modern) Istanbul in his novel *The Time Regulation Institute*, whose title—as well as the Institute itself—functions as a metaphor for the modern condition in Istanbul as Tanpınar sees it. I have already discussed Tanpınar's views on the concept of Bergsonian time and have argued that the Turkish novelist is in search of a new temporal consciousness which will bring with it a sense of unified time. This, Tanpınar believes, is the remedy for the post-empire condition Turkish people have been suffering from, namely, a discontinued, ruptured history, and a fragmented memory and consciousness.

By definition, the Time Regulation Institute regulates time by making sure that first, time is divided into equal, quantifiable parts, and second, that each one of these parts—or intervals—is experienced at the exact same time throughout Istanbul. The purpose of the Institute, then, is quite paradoxical. On the one hand, it perpetuates the fragmentariness of modern urban experience—as well as the transition from Erfahrung to Erlebnis—and, on the other hand, it attempts at creating a pseudo-unity by way of regulating and unifying time across the city (and later in the novel, across the country). Indeed, the Time Regulation Institute is in many ways a mirror image of the Parallel Campaign [Parallelaktion] which is one of the central actions in the first book of Musil's novel. I will discuss both enterprises in detail within the context of irony in the next chapter; however, at this point I would like to point out that both the Time Regulation Institute and the Parallel Campaign are projects aimed at an artificial unity. They are attempts by the characters in both novels to impose some sort of unity and order on their fragmented worlds. The Institute tries to achieve order through regulating time, and the Campaign aims at uniting Austrians around a patriotic project that will remind every
citizen of the glorious past of the Habsburg Empire. It is the Institute; however, that has two conflicting and symbolic functions in the novel, namely, division and unification.

Halit Ayarcı, the founder of the Time Regulation Institute, is proud that thanks to the hard work of the Institute "insanlarımız sık sık saate bakmağa ve vakti ölçmeye alıştılar (347)" [“our people have become accustomed to referring frequently to their watches and measuring the time (308)”]. In other words, the Institute has become synonymous with measured/divided time and fragmented experience that characterizes modern urban existence of the twentieth century. Throughout the novel Halit Ayarcı repeatedly refers to the Institute as a "modern" establishment and argues for the necessity of establishing such an institute in Turkey in order to keep up with the times. Within the context of modernity, then, the Institute fulfills its mission by propagating fragmented consciousnesses and experiences in a symbolic manner where the division of time and measuring its exactitude become metaphors for isolated, interrupted experience.

That the Institute has another function, namely, to create a unified temporal experience throughout the country is indicative of a longing for the lost sense of wholeness and order, much like the nostalgic yearning of the people who pass by Ulrich's house. Aside from the "regulating" function of the institute, its structure also suggests an attempt at uniformity within a confused people living in a fragmented world. Hayri İrdal, the protagonist of the novel, comes up with the idea of creating uniforms for the young women and men working at the Watch-Setting Posts. When Halit Ayarcı asks him why they would need uniforms, Hayri answers, "[b]ütün o başıbozuk kalabalığı halk ne yapmış?" (248) [“The public would take no interest in a confused mass of people, would it? (227)’”]. Hayri also suggests that these young employees "[s]aatten, enstitüden hep
aynı kelimelerde [...] bahsederlerse" (249) ["refer to the hours, watches, clocks, and institute always in the same terms (227)"] creating a sense of unity among them. Hence, the Institute also generates a sense of (pseudo-)harmony which Tanpınar feels is in many ways lost in the Istanbul of the post-Ottoman era.

Perhaps the most interesting idea about the structure of the Institute comes from Halit Ayarcı himself when he shares his vision about the secretarial division of the Institute with Hayri: "Hem musıkîşinası da iş bulmuş oluruz. [...] Şu şef dorkestr olmak isteyen... Evet, yüz kılıçlı bir salon! Bütün daktilo genç kızlar makinalarının önünde! Karşılardında bir sedir üzerinde elinde değneği, bir şef dorkestr!.. Onun idaresiyle çalışıyorlar. Hep birden "A"lara "B"lere vuruyorlar, muntazam ve yekpare" (319). ["Thus we would have found a job for the musician as well. [...] I mean the fellow who wanted to be the maestro. Yes, an audience of one hundred people. All the typists in front of their machines, facing a conductor, baton in hand. Imagine them all typing under his guidance. They are all typing A's and B's keeping the same time all together (286)"]31 I have already discussed Tanpınar's love for music and his use of the word "orchestra" both in his essays and in his novels to connote a sense of unity and order.32 Therefore, it is significant that Halit Ayarcı uses the orchestra analogy to describe one of the structural divisions of the Institute. This analogy hints at the longing for the unity and order of past times that is inherent in even the most "modern" figure of the novel. Hence, while striving to modernize the nation, the Time Regulation Institute also wants to retain the senses of wholeness, harmony, and continuity that were characteristic of the Ottoman era.

31 The translator has translated the last words of the quote I have used, namely "muntazam" and "yekpare," as "keeping the same time together"; however, those words translate as "in order" and "in one piece," respectively. Hence, "in an orderly and unified fashion" would have been a better translation of that phrase.

32 See footnote no.11.
As we have seen, the titles of Musil's and Tanpinar's novels function as metaphorical constructs that convey some of the major concerns of their respective authors in regards to modernity. In much the same way, the title of Döblin's novel, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, as well as the central square that lends its name to the novel become the epitome of the modern urban setting where there can only be one kind of experience, namely, Erlebnis. In the novel, Alexanderplatz is under construction and the reader is constantly reminded of the loud noise generated by construction equipment and the crowds of people who hurriedly cross the square throughout the day. A place that changes so rapidly and that is so strongly marked by speed, chaos, noise, and traffic can in no way be suitable for an experience that is continuous, uninterrupted, and that has a cognitive aspect (Erfahrung). To borrow from Andrew Webber, Alexanderplatz is a site of constant "intersection and exchange rather than of stable topographical identity" (172). It is highly ironic, then, that Franz, whose only wish in life after being released from prison is to lead an orderly, respectable life, gets thrown into the heart of Alexanderplatz right at the beginning of the novel. The chaos of this place that is so central to the novel becomes the force that defines Franz's life after prison.

While in prison, Franz's life was highly structured and stable. Experiencing life in Berlin stands in sharp contrast to the life Franz led during the past four years. That he will not be able to adapt to the pace and the changed quality of life after being released is foreshadowed in the chapter entitled "Franz Biberkopf Enters Berlin" [Franz Biberkopf betritt Berlin]. This chapter starts with the description of Adam and Eve in Paradise followed by a detailed description of the streets of Berlin, creating the anticipation that Franz will fail at establishing the orderly and respectable life that he is after. Indeed, all
three attempts that Franz makes to start life anew in Berlin end in failure until he finally becomes capable of surviving within the chaos of Berlin. In other words, the novel becomes an account of Franz's struggle to transition into modernity and the new kind of experience it brings with it to Berlin, namely, Erlebnis.

Unlike *The Man Without Qualities* and *The Time Regulation Institute*, Döblin's novel does not give the reader any clues as to the position of its author in the face of the modern condition. Döblin simply describes Berlin and its central square, Alexanderplatz, with utmost vividness and offers his reader a glimpse into the life of Franz Biberkopf. The montage technique that he uses enables him to report his protagonist's actions, as well as all the action that happens around Alexanderplatz with objectivity and without judgment. Therefore, his novel is not a mouthpiece through which Döblin expresses his concerns about modernity, rather it functions as a lens through which we can look into the manifestations of modernity in Berlin and its effect on the urban dweller. In other words, while the modern experience poses a challenge for the individual, that Franz can seemingly find a way to live peacefully in Berlin shows that *Berlin Alexanderplatz* may not be critical of modernity and all the changes it brings along.

In this chapter I have looked at the impact Bergson's philosophy of time has had on the works of Musil, Tanpınar, and Döblin, as well as how these authors have tried to reconcile Bergson's ideas with the experience of modernity by placing such concepts as fragmented versus unified time and Erfahrung versus Erlebnis within the narrative and metaphoric construction of their novels. The next chapter will explore another facet of modernity, namely, irony, and look at how the three authors use irony to comment on the process of modernization underway in their respective cultures.
Chapter II—The Ironic City: Modernity and Its Ironies

The subjective experience of time and the nature of subjective experience itself go through a radical shift at the turn of the century. I have explored the manifestations of these shifts and their significance within the modernist discourse in the previous chapter. All discursive and pragmatic shifts, including those of temporality and experience, inevitably create cultural, socio-political, and historical fissures within a given society. In this chapter, I will focus on the disjunctive nature of modernity and look closely at the fissures that are an inherent part of the modern condition. As we shall see, a close-up image of these fissures will reveal that the spaces in between, which are created by a disjunctive modernity and its thwarted expectations, are filled with irony.

The general topic of this chapter will be the use and function of irony in Robert Musil’s *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930, 1932, 1943) [*The Man Without Qualities* (1953, 1955, 1960)], Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar’s *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (1954, 1961) [*The Time Regulation Institute* (2001)] and Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) [*Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1931)]. More specifically, I will be focusing on three institutional phenomena that are central to these novels, namely, the Parallel Campaign, the Time Regulation Institute, and Alexanderplatz, and treat them as both symptoms of and metaphors for the authors’ ironic rendering of the historical realities of their respective cultures.

Throughout the chapter, my aim will be to identify the origins, purpose, and characteristics of the ironic approach in each novel, and subsequently to explicate the relationship between modernity and the ancient literary device in question. My analyses
and readings of irony as each author employs it will be framed by several vital questions: Why have Musil, Döblin, and Tanpinar chosen to adopt an ironic approach with regard to their subject matter? Is there a pedagogical motive behind their choice of literary topos? How does the use of irony render these three novels allegories of modernity and instantiations of modernist paradigms? The first step on the roadmap to answering these questions will be to look into the concept of irony and to delineate its defining linguistic, semantic, and contextual elements as they will be used in this chapter. After irony—as an extended narrative mode—has been placed within the framework of the biographical and literary particularities of the three novelists at hand, I will proceed to a close reading of the novels at both the diegetic and the extradiegetic levels.

In his seminal work on irony, *Irony and the Discourse of Modernity*, German philosopher Ernst Behler (1928-1997) offers a detailed overview of the uses and definitions of irony throughout the ages. By doing so, he lays out the groundwork for one of the central arguments of his book, namely, that it was Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) who expressed “the new feature of irony for the first time” (73) in a fragment he composed in 1797 and “attempted to […] integrate [irony] with the modern style of self-reflection and self-consciousness as the decisive mark of literary modernity” (82). Behler does not apply irony to his theoretical and discursive explications of modernity, rather, he comments on the nature of modernity and argues that “[i]rony is inseparable from the evolution of the modern consciousness,” (73) thereby identifying the discourse of modernity itself as essentially ironic. According to Behler’s contention, the new turn

---

33 The level of extradiegesis varies among the novels. In Musil’s novel the narrator is omniscient and detached from the novel’s characters, while in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* the narrator is still omniscient, but often addresses the protagonist, Franz, directly and has been characterized by many critics as the city itself. In Tanpinar’s novel the narrator is the protagonist, Hayri, who is writing his story in flashback fashion.
Schlegel bestows on irony plays a decisive and central role in the development of philosophical and critical reflection which starts in late eighteenth century and is prevalent through post-modernism.

In order to underscore Schlegel’s momentous contribution to the history of philosophical reflection—“a radical type of reflective thinking” is how Behler defines irony as laid out by Schlegel—and, by extension, to the discourse on modernity, Behler first takes the reader to Ancient Greece and traces the origins of the concept of irony. Having established “Socratic irony as the first manifestation of the ironic mood in the West” (74), Behler categorizes the use of classical irony only as a type of literary device until the late eighteenth century, and separates it from its (later) modern philosophical usage.

The turn which Schlegel has given to the definition of classical irony beyond mere literary device is founded on his re-reading of Socratic irony. In his words, “Socratic irony is the only involuntary and yet completely deliberate dissimulation. […] In this sort of irony everything should be playful and serious, guilelessly open and deeply hidden. It originates in the union of savoir vivre [to know to live] and scientific spirit, in the conjunction of a perfectly instinctive and a perfectly conscious philosophy” (Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde 155-156). As such, Schlegel takes irony out of the rhetorical and strictly literary category it had been placed under and re-defines it as a pervasive and multi-layered philosophical mode. In other words, according to Schlegel, irony is not simply the act of meaning the opposite of what one says or writes, or feigning ignorance, or Aristotelian self-deprecation (eiron) all of which are achieved using an
occasional verbal irony within a given text.\textsuperscript{34} As such, it cannot be confined to a speech act. In his essay “On Incomprehensibility” Schlegel lists the types of ironies that have been identified and used throughout the ages and laments the existence of so many various definitions of rhetorical and literary irony. Ultimately, he argues, “[t]he only solution is to find an irony that might be able to swallow up all these big and little ironies and leave no trace at all” (Friedrich Schlegel’s Lucinde 267). This type of irony that is all-inclusive and pervasive should at the same time be “an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts” (176). In this regard, the paradoxical characteristics of irony transform it from an innocent and relatively flat literary trope into a simultaneously anarchic, subversive, and constructive mode of philosophico-critical self-reflection.

The Schlegelian definition of irony, then, can be equated with modernity and with its aesthetic manifestation, Modernism. For Modernism, too, is a discourse that perpetuates itself by constant self-negation and self-reassertion. It is defined by contradictions, and like irony, is a perpetual exchange between self-destruction and self-creation. Given the strong discursive and conceptual affinity between irony and Modernism, irony becomes “one of the primary parameters of literary modernism,” as well as the single most important “key to modernism’s openness and subversiveness” (Martens 93). As we shall see in more detail, one finds a similar language of simultaneous and perpetual creation and destruction in de Certeau’s descriptions of the modern urban space. “The city,” writes de Certeau, “repeatedly produces effects contrary

\textsuperscript{34} In their \textit{A Glossary of Literary Terms} Abrams and Harpham define verbal irony as “a statement in which the meaning that a speaker employs is sharply different from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed. The ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation” (165).
to those at which it aims: the profit system generates a loss which, in the multiple forms of wretchedness and poverty outside the system and of waste inside it, constantly turns production into ‘expenditure;’ [...] it is simultaneously the machinery and the hero of modernity” (95). de Certeau is one of many critics who define the modern city in terms of its inherent contradictions; as we have seen, irony and modernity have similarly been identified with cohabitant paradoxes. As such, it comes as no surprise that Musil, Tanpinar, and Döblin, three great modernists of the twentieth century, have conflated these three concepts—irony, modernity, the city—and created out of this trinity the novels under discussion, which are not only allegories of modernity, but also sites of ironic self-reflection.

Allegory\textsuperscript{35} and irony, in fact, are more closely related than a superficial examination reveals, especially when we turn to Schlegel’s famous definition of irony as “a permanent parabasis” (\textit{Friedrich Schlegel: Kritische Ausgabe} qtd. in Behler 84). An allegory is summarily defined as an extended metaphor; it is a literary device, along with simile, that is generally associated with authorial intervention. Hence, an allegory is also an extended intervention, a sustained disruption of a narrative by the author. This disruption, in turn, creates the space for ironic self-reflection and criticism, which, in the cases of Musil, Tanpinar, and Döblin, is targeted at the manifestations of and the reactions toward modernity within their respective cultural milieux.

\textsuperscript{35}In Abrams and Harpham’s glossary allegory is defined as “a narrative […] in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the ‘literal,’ or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to communicate a second, correlated order of signification” (7). The allegory of ideas, which is the type of allegory that emerges in the novels under discussion, is a narrative “in which the literal characters represent concepts and the plot allegorizes an abstract doctrine or thesis. […] In the […] sustained allegory of ideas the central device is the \textit{personification} of abstract entities such as virtues, vices, states of mind, modes of life, and types of character” (7).
In *The Man Without Qualities* and *The Time Regulation Institute* irony is historico-temporal, in that, the authors re-create now obsolete historical institutions and ideals, and situate them within the social and cultural framework of modernity in Vienna and Istanbul, respectively. Both narratives then delineate and comment on the re-appropriation of these institutions and on their reception by the characters in the novel who consciously try to bring a piece of the past back into the present. The process of historical re-appropriation—and its necessary accomplice, re-valuation—and its socio-political consequences become the source and site of extended narrative irony in both works. When we turn to *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, we find similar cultural and political concerns on the part of the author. Döblin’s ironic rendering of modernity in Berlin is founded on the transformation and re-appropriation of space, namely, Alexanderplatz, which has a central role both within the history of Berlin, as well as within the context of the novel. Hence, it is no coincidence that Döblin has chosen this palimpsestic locus to portray and reflect on the processes of historical change symptomatic of advances of modernity. It is from between the historical layers of this space that Döblin’s ironic mode appears.

Musil, Döblin, and Tanpinar are driven by the same motive, namely, to argue that the indeterminacy and the perpetual cycle of self-disruption and self-creation which define modernity and Modernism create an openness to possibility which all three cultures fail to grasp. The novels under discussion are the symptomatic prosopopoeia and dramatic, self-conscious enactment of the thwarted expectations of modernity, its unexpected and ironic outcomes, and the de-centering of societal norms and values. Put
succinctly, they are allegories of a disjunctive slippage as a natural consequence and inevitable attribute of modernity.

The relationship between this slippage in modern societies and the irony that it breeds is more readily available in Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities* than it is in the other two novels. This is primarily due to the high volume of written material Musil has left us. When he died of a stroke on April 15, 1942, Musil left an unfinished novel along with numerous volumes of journals which he kept from 1899 until his death, and hundreds of pages of extant manuscripts containing unpublished chapters and notes. All this posthumous material not only provides insight into Musil’s literary methods and thinking, but more importantly, it helps us better comprehend the philosophical and ideological discourses underlying his novel and determine with great precision his purpose in writing *The Man Without Qualities*.

In the words of Burton Pike, the translator and editor of Musil’s posthumous papers in English, in his unfinished masterpiece Musil “had set out to explore possibilities for the right life in a culture that had lost both its center and its bearings but could not tear itself away from its outworn forms and habits of thought, even while they were dissolving” (“From the Posthumous Papers” xii). In other words, Musil strived to show pre-WWI Vienna and the decaying Austro-Hungarian Empire as a fertile cultural and political ground for possibilities other than the war. That from a position of hindsight—Musil started to write the novel in 1921—he created characters who

---

36 The first two books of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften [The Man Without Qualities]* were published in 1930. The unfinished third of the planned four books was published posthumously by Musil’s wife Martha Musil in 1942. His *Tagebücher [Diaries]* were published in Germany in 1955 followed by the publication of Musil’s collected works in Germany in 1978. This 1978 edition includes numerous unpublished draft versions of chapters Musil planned to include in Book Three of his novel, as well as hundreds of pages of character sketches and notes.
desperately try to re-center the already irrevocably de-centered empire only underscores the ironic nature of his novel. Amidst all the possibilities available to them, the Viennese bourgeois society of 1913 chose to turn a blind eye to the shifting realities and systems of the world and instead got foolishly fixated on creating “pseudorealities” in order to bring back the glorious days of the empire which were already long gone.

In one of his notes, Musil identifies war as the overall problem within the historical and narrative context of the novel. “Pseudorealities lead to war,” he writes, “[t]he Parallel Campaign leads to war!” (“From the Posthumous Papers” 1755). In the Second (and longest) Book of the novel entitled “Seinesgleichen geschiet”[“Pseudoreality Prevails”] the narrative plot is centered around the invention and attempted execution of the Parallel Campaign, a socio-political campaign to commemorate the seventieth year of Franz Josef’s accession to the throne that is planned to take place in the year 1918. The inventor of this idea is Count Leinsdorf in whose mind “die Völker Europas trieben […] alle im Strudel einer materialistischen Demokratie dahin […]. Es war ihm klar, daß etwas geschehenmüsse, was Österreich allen voranstellen sollte, damit diese ‘glanzvolle Lebenskundgebung Österreichs’ für die ganze Welt ‘ein Markstein’ sei, somit ihr diene, ihr eigenes wahres Wesen wiederzufinden, und daß dies alles mit dem Besitz eines 88jährigen Friedenskaisers verknüpft war” (88) [“the nations of Europe were helplessly adrift in the whirlpool of materialistic democracy. […] something had to be done to put Austria in the vanguard, so that this ‘splendorous rally of the Austrian spirit’ would prove a ‘milestone’ for the whole world and enable it to find its own true being again; and all of this was connected with the possession of an 88-year-old Emperor of Peace” (89)]. The irony of this passage is hard to miss, and it is this same
irony that permeates the entire novel. While the “whirlpool” which Europe was caught up in at the beginning of the twentieth century destroyed old value systems, traditions, and ideologies, it simultaneously created a space for innovation, creation, and for new possibilities of human existence. By holding on to crumbling systems doomed for obsolescence, for which the eight-eight-year-old emperor is a symbol, the pre-war Viennese society—itself a synecdoche for the Empire at large—fails miserably at grasping the true nature of modernity.

Portraying the failure of Viennese society under such an ironic light is undoubtedly a pedagogical tool which Musil uses with great acuity. In his notes, during one of his musings about his choice of narrative temporality, Musil asks himself why he has chosen to write a novel about 1913 when he is writing in 1921, and what the novel has to do with the people of his day (“From the Posthumous Papers” 1722). Then, within the same note, he provides the answer, “I dedicate this novel to German youth. Not the youth of today—intellectual vacuum after the war—quite amusing frauds—but the youth that will come after a time and that will have to begin exactly where we stopped before the war. On this […] rests my justification for writing a prewar novel today!” (1722)

Frederik Tygstrup argues that according to Musil, the pre-war period in the Austro-Hungarian Empire “formed an era of extreme tension embracing a great many tendencies in culture and politics, on the one hand preparing the catastrophe, […] but on the other hand also embracing the hopes and enthusiasm for the new century, the imaginary twentieth century that was (intellectually) prepared but never realized” (265). As such, he interprets Musil’s justification for writing a pre-war novel as “a historical will” to preserve “historical possibilities,” and to pass “on to prosperity […] the unsolved
problems, the potential insights, the forgotten sensibilities, the question for which no answer was ever given, the image of an era that never realized its potential” (265). I agree with Tygstrup that Musil’s intention was partly to provide a cautionary tale for the upcoming generations in the hopes of preventing them from repeating the mistakes his characters commit in the novel, and partly to capture the picture of an era that was bursting with unfulfilled possibilities. In this regard, the feigned ignorance of his narrator about the imminently impending war as he observes and reports the frantic activities surrounding what Musil’s novel dramatizes as the Parallel Campaign can only be likened to a Socratic ignorance, one whose sole purpose is to teach.37 In the case of Musil’s novel, it is the youth of next generations who are the targets of this pedagogical strategy. Perhaps the most poignant testament to the ironic mode in the novel comes from Musil himself when he playfully remarks that “[t]he story of this novel amounts to this, that the story that ought to be told in it is not told” (“From the Posthumous Papers” 1760).

Throughout his notes on the novel, Musil reminds himself that the fundamental idea is to “[k]eep putting depiction of the time up front” because “Ulrich’s problems and those of the secondary figures are problems of the time” and “[a]ll the problems, like search for order and conviction […] are also problems of the time and are to be regularly presented as such,” especially, he adds, “the Parallel Campaign is to be presented this way” (“From the Posthumous Papers” 1747-48). Indeed, the first two books of the novel

37 The Parallel Campaign is not an actual historical event. It is rather the manifestation of Musil’s parodic representation of a period in Austro-Hungarian history. In the novel, when, in 1913, the Austro-Hungarian Empire learns that Germany is planning a grand festival in honor of their emperor Wilhelm II who will celebrate the thirtieth year of his reign in 1918, they decide to plan a similar event in commemoration of the Austro-Hungarian emperor Franz Josef I who will celebrate the seventieth year of his reign in the same year. Viennese society sees this collateral coincidence as an opportunity to demonstrate Austria’s historical, cultural, and political supremacy to the rest of the world. To that end, the Parallel Campaign is born and the Viennese elite start discussing ideas to best realize their patriotic agenda within the next five years. The fact that these years (1913-1918) mark the decline and ultimate dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is the historical basis for Musil’s parodic and ironic representation of this period.
re-create the pre-war Viennese society with all of its different characters and mentalities. There is, for instance, the old conservative Count Leinsdorf, General Stumm von Bordwehr who represents the single-track mentality and inflexibility of the military, the wannabe philosophical muse and the Parallel Campaign’s salon mistress Diotima (whose real name is Ermelinda Tuzzi), the Prussian Count Arnheim who, in an ironic twist, becomes one of the leading intellectual figures of the Parallel Campaign, a campaign that is aimed at overshadowing that of the Germans’, the Jewish banker Leo Fischel, diplomat Tuzzi representing the Foreign Ministry, Walter and Clarisse who belong to the upper classes of Viennese society and who get hopelessly tangled up in their existential, philosophical crises, the murderer-rapist Moosbrugger, and many others. “By assembling these characters,” argues Stefan Jonsson, “Musil’s novel delineates a geo-political scenario. The Paralleled Campaign […] is a device for mapping the ideological terrain of the era. Musil mobilizes the entire political spectrum: feudalism and capitalism, socialism and imperialism, nationalism and federalism, monarchy and republicanism, militarism and pacifism, racism and cosmopolitanism” (229). As we shall see, it is out of this chaotic and fragmented historical context that the man without qualities will emerge almost like “eine Märchenfigur” (Musil, Tagebücher 226) [“a figure from a fairy tale” (Musil, Diaries 208)].

What brings these people together and keeps them around one idea is the Parallel Campaign and its hard sought-after “Great Idea.” This crowning idea of the Parallel Campaign should, in Diotima’s words “create[e] something with the resources of an empire and before the attentive eyes of the world, an embodiment of culture at its greatest or, more modestly circumscribed, perhaps something that would reveal the innermost
being of Austrian culture” (109). As the novel progresses, the idea of the “innermost being of Austrian culture” proves to be increasingly elusive and thus places the entire endeavour of planning the Parallel Campaign under utter futility, absurdity, and irony. 

Even though the inventor of this campaign, Count Leinsdorf pretends to be convinced that “diese Fest von den dankbaren Völkern Österreichs in einer Weise begangen werden wird, die der Welt nicht nur unsere tiefe Liebe zeigen soll, sondern auch, daß die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie fest wie ein Felsen um ihren Herrscher geschart steht” (169) [“this occasion will be celebrated by the grateful people of Austria in a manner to show the world not only our deep love for [Franz Josef], but also that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy stands together, grouped firm as a rock around its Sovereign” (180)], it is the subsequent passages in the novel which stand as a powerful testimony to the true condition and nature of pre-war Austrian culture. Right after Count Leinsdorf makes the above impassioned announcement, the omniscient narrator takes us into the Count’s burdened mind and reveals his real sentiments:

[Hier schwankte Graf Leinsdorf, ob er etwas von den Zerfallserscheinungen erwähnen solle, denen dieser Fels selbst bei einer gemeinsamen Feier des Kaisers und Königs ausgesetzt war; denn man mußte dabei mit den Widerstande Ungarns rechnen, das nur einen König anerkennte. Se. Erlaucht hatte darum ursprünglich von zwei Felsen sprechen wollen, die fest geschart standen. […] Dieses österreichisch-ungarische Staatsgefühl […] bestand nicht etwa aus einem österreichischen und einem ungarischen Teil, die sich, wie man dann galuben könnte, ergänzten, sondern es bestand aus einem Ganzen und einem Teil, nämlich, aus einem ungarischen und einem österreich-ungarischen Staatsgefühl, und dieses zweite war in Österreich zu Hause, wodurch das österreichische Staatsgefühl eigentlich vaterlandslos war. […] Viele nannten sie deshalb einfach einen Tschechen, Polen, Slowenen oder Deutschen, und damit begann jener weitere Zerfall (170).]

[At this point Count Leinsdorf wavered, wondering whether to mention anything about the signs of decay to which this rock, even at a unified celebration of its Emperor and King, exposed; resistance by Hungary, which recognized only a King, had to be reckoned with. This was why His Grace had originally meant to
speak of two firm rocks. [...] This sense of the Austro-Hungarian state [...] did not consist of an Austrian part and a Hungarian part that, as one might expect, complemented each other, but of a whole and a part; that is, of a Hungarian and an Austro-Hungarian sense of statehood, the latter to be found in Austria, which in a sense left the Austrian sense of statehood with no country of its own. [...] This led many people to simply call themselves Czechs, Poles, Slovenes, or Germans, and this was the beginning of that further decay (180).

What furthers the decay even faster is the persistence of Viennese society in ignoring the political, ideological, social, and cultural dissipation of the empire. The military, the Foreign Ministry, the intellectual circles, financers, even the civilians fail to recognize and acknowledge the reality of their situation—the decentering and loss of power and authority in the empire. Instead, they create a pseudoreality whose emblem is the Parallel Campaign.

The first two books of the novel are abundant with passages that “depict the time.” This is primarily because the historical context within which the narrative rests is key to understanding, on the one hand, the actions and thoughts of the characters and, on the other, the nature and motive behind Musil’s irony. The one chapter in the novel which is perhaps the most explicitly historically based and the most ironic is the one entitled “Kakanien” [Kakania] where the narrator gives an overview of the Austro-Hungarian Empire of 1913. Having derived its name from the official abbreviation of the empire in German—“k. und k.” which stands for “kaiserlich und königlich” [imperial (Austria) and royal (Hungary)]—the chapter “Kakanien” places all that was wrong with the political and social systems of the empire in the ironic light of this scatologically cacophonous designation. That the narrator speaks of this political entity as “versunken” (33) [“vanished” (29)] throughout the chapter highlights his hindsighted perspective and contributes to Musil’s overall ironic tone.
The narrator tells us that this “versunkene[s] Kakanien” [“vanished Kakania”]:

nannte sich schriftlich Österreichisch-Ungarische Monarchie und ließ sich mündlich Österreich rufen; mit einem Namen also, den es mit feierlichen Staatsschwur abgelegt hatte, aber in allen Gefühlsangelegenheiten beibehielt, zum Zeichen, daß […] Vorschriften nicht den wirklichen Lebensernst bedeuten. Es war nach seiner Verfassung liberal, aber es wurde klerikal regiert. Es wurde klerikal regiert, aber man lebte freisinnig. Vor dem gesetzt waren alle Bürger gleich, aber nicht alle waren eben Bürger (33).

[on paper [...] was called the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but in conversation it was called Austria, a name solemnly abjured officially while stubbornly retained emotionally, just to show that [...] regulations are one thing but real life is something else entirely. Liberal in its constitution, it was administered clerically. The government was clerical, but everyday life was liberal. All citizens were equal before the law, but not everyone was a citizen (29)].

The narrator goes on to observe that “[m]an handelte in diesem Land—und mitunter bis zu den höchsten Gradn der Leidenschaft und ihren Folgen—immer anders, als man dachte, oder dachte anders, als man handelte” (34) [“[i]n this country one acted—sometimes to the highest degree of passion and its consequences—differently from the way one thought, or one thought differently from the way one acted” (30)]. The discrepancy—slippage—between what the empire was on paper and what it was in reality is the cause of its eventual dissolution. This slippage is reflected in the psyches of the empire’s subjects who are stuck in an in-between space and find the remedy to their crises in holding on to a hollowed-out idea of wholeness and unity. As one critic claims, “[t]he notion of identity crisis is […] as relevant to modernism as a whole is of particular importance to Viennese fin de siècle culture” (Ribeiro 565). By founding the Parallel Campaign on traditional ideals and values of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which are fast disintegrating, Viennese society portrayed in the novel tries to cope with the shifting realities around them. The problem is that, in the process of attempting to unite the Dual Monarchy—one that is already hopelessly fragmented—and to invest “Kakanien” with a
historical mission which it has long lost, the elites of the empire fail to perceive the emergence of existential and philosophical possibilities born out of this slippage. It is the entire modern world that experiences a slippage, and not just the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Musil reminds us in a journal entry from 1920 that “dieses groteske Österreich ist nichts anderes als ein besonders deutlicher Fall der modernen Welt” (Tagebücher 226) [“this grotesque Austria is nothing but a particularly clear-cut case of the modern world” (Diaries 209)].

There is one character in the novel who distinguishes himself from the rest of Viennese society. Ulrich, the man without qualities, recognizes that something is amiss with the world he lives in and “statt sich um die Ordnung des Ganzen zu bemühen” (27) [“instead of working to restore order in the whole scheme of things” (23)], chooses to revel in the waves of uncertainty and change surrounding him. His philosophical reflections on his time and his unyielding skepticism, when combined with his refusal to “nach veraltenden Grundsätzen ein guter Mensch zu sein” (27-80) [“merely being a good person in accordance with obsolescent moral principles” (23)] separates him from the circles of Viennese society which he treads. “Mittendrin vielleicht irgendein Utopist,” writes Musil about his protagonist in a diary entry, “der vielleicht doch das Rezept hätte” (Tagebücher 226) [“Perhaps, in the midst of all this, a utopian figure of some kind who might after all have the prescription” (Diaries 208)]. The repetition of the word “vielleicht” [perhaps] in the German text suggests Musil’s ambivalent hesitation concerning his protagonist’s capabilities; however, it is within this ambivalence that Musil also reveals his (and Ulrich’s) experimental and inquisitive nature. Both are open to possibilities and not looking for fixed solutions. Perhaps the hundreds of pages of
drafts, revisions, and alternate copies of unpublished chapters Musil left behind attest to this fact.

Despite giving him an enigmatic title, Musil offers ample insight into his protagonist’s psyche. Aside from chapter titles that refer to Ulrich as the man without qualities, it is Walter, Ulrich’s childhood friend, who uses the phrase for the first time during a heated discussion with his wife, Clarisse. “Er ist ein Mann ohne Eigenschaften” (64) [He is a man without qualities! (62)] he cries out, and offers one of the most comprehensive descriptions that we find of his friend—the novel’s protagonist:


[His appearance gives no clue to what his profession might be, and yet he doesn’t look like a man without a profession, either. […] He can box. He is gifted, strong-willed, open-minded, fearless, tenacious, dashing, circumspect […] , suppose we grant him all those qualities—yet he has none of them! […] When he is angry, something in him laughs. When he is sad, he is up to something. When something

---

38 The German word “Eigenschaft” is translated as “quality” in the English translations of the novel. While it does give a sense of what the German word might mean, “quality” does not quite capture the philosophical reasoning behind Musil’s word choice. “Eigenschaft” can also be translated as “property,” “feature,” “characteristic,” or “virtue.” The word “quality” has a positive connotation in English, whereas “Eigenschaft” is a strictly objective concept in German. Therefore, perhaps “property” would have been a better choice to reflect what it is that Ulrich is lacking because as we will see, in the novel the condition of being without qualities is not portrayed as a negative one. In fact, André Gide (1869-1951) suggested the title “L’homme disponible” for the French translation of Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. The definition of “disponible” is “free, available; receptive, open-minded,” and some of the connotations of the word are “one who is open to being engaged in various intellectual and emotional endeavors, one who hosts the most diverse ideas, one who welcomes and entertains different opinions” (Larousse; Dendien). In the end; however, the French translation came out with the title L’Homme sans qualités.
moves him, he turns against it. He’ll always see a good side to every bad action. What he thinks of anything will always depend on some possible context—nothing is, to him, what it is; everything is subject to change, in flux, part of a whole, of an infinite number of wholes […] (63-64))

A juxtaposition of the passages that describe Ulrich’s father with those passages that describe Ulrich underscores not only Musil’s irony, but also the true nature of the word “Eigenschaften” [qualities] as it is used in the novel. In the chapter entitled “Auch ein Mann ohne Eigenschaften hat einen Vater mit Eigenschaften” [Even a Man Without Qualities Has a Father with Qualities], the description of Ulrich’s father is full of titles and honors which were bestowed on him by a variety of established and closed systems. These systems include the academy, the military, and the nobility. Ulrich’s father first became a professor, then he was made a knight, and subsequently a commander, he received the “Großkruz hoher Orden” [Grand Cross of various high orders], became a member of the House of Lords, and was finally raised “in den erblichen Adelsstand” [to the hereditary nobility] by the emperor-king (15, 9). All of the “qualities” of Ulrich’s father are dependent on the existence of fixed, immutable, and absolute value systems, whereas the fact that for Ulrich “nothing is […] what it is,” and “everything is subject to change” marks him as the man without any qualities in the eyes of the people who know him. According to Elizabeth Goodstein, in Musil’s novel, being without qualities is “a metaphor for a Nietzschean state of flux in which the meaning of anything can only be deciphered by reference to its historical significance as a symbol of other possible realities” (385). In this regard, being without qualities enables Ulrich to seek and

---

39 This particular passage has a striking resemblance to the following note Musil wrote concerning his novel in his posthumous papers: “I can’t give a satisfactory account of myself. I take the matter neither from all sides […] nor from one side, but from various congruent sides. […] I expound my subject even though I know it is only a part of the truth, and I would expound it in just the same way if I knew it was false, because certain errors are way stations of the truth” (“From the Posthumous Papers” 1760).
experiment with “other possible realities,” realities which the other characters in the novel—those who are with qualities—are incapable of grasping.

That Ulrich stands out from all the other characters in the novel in this manner only underscores the peculiar irony with which Musil handles his protagonist. Even though the prepositional component of the title suggests otherwise, for Musil, being without qualities does not necessarily convey a negative meaning. As matter of fact, it is the characters with qualities (those qualities that belong to fixed cultural, political, ideological systems) who are portrayed with subtle, yet powerful ridicule. To put it in conjunction with the Parallel Campaign, the majority of the Austro-Hungarian elite are persistently clinging on to the bygone “qualities” of the empire while Ulrich observes it all from a skeptical and dispassionate distance. Hence, the level of irony in the novel is heightened when Ulrich gets sucked into the whirlwind of the Parallel Campaign and becomes its General Secretary.

Before I reflect on Ulrich’s involvement in the Parallel Campaign, I would like to review the philosophical context for the novel in general, and for the character of Ulrich in particular. Walter A. Strauss writes that “Musil’s quest is a quest for possibilities of experience, of existence: everything could be other than what it is, and the analyst of possibilities must be a man open to all possibilities, namely a man without particularities—Ulrich” (17). It is no coincidence that Strauss uses a Nietzschean language to delineate the philosophical framework of Musil’s novel. His love for

---

40 In the earlier versions and drafts of the novel Musil calls his protagonist “Anders,” which literally means “Other.” Later, he changes the name to Ulrich, which ironically enough, is derived from the Germanic word *uodal* meaning “heritage,” “home,” or “nobility,” and the Germanic suffix *ric* meaning “rich” or “powerful.”
possibilities and experimentation brings Musil close to Nietzsche’s philosophy. His diaries and posthumous papers serve as a testament to the influence of Nietzschean philosophy on Musil’s life and work. In a diary entry dated May 15th, 1902 we learn that “[er] Nietzsche gerade mit achtzehn Jahren zum ersten male in die Hand bekam. Gerade nach [s]einem Austritt vom Militär. Gerade im soundsovielten Entwicklungsjahr” (Tagebücher 37) “[he] was only eighteen years of age when [he] first read Nietzsche. Just at the point when [he] left the military. Just in that particular year of [his] development” (Diaries 15). In another entry dated a week before, twenty-two-year-old Musil writes, “[h]eute zwei große Bände Nietysche aus dem Franzensmuseum entliehen. Unwillkürlich heilige Stimmung, denn wie las ich einst! Wir wird er wohl diesmal auf mich wirken?! Jedenfalls bedeutet er Sammlung, Selbstprüfung und alles mögliche Gute. Die Vorrede zur fröhlichen Wissenschaft las ich bereits. Sie ist von jener einräumenden Art” (Tagebücher 36) “[t]oday I borrowed two large volumes of Nietzsche from the Franzensmuseum. A mood of sanctity took hold of me; how much reading his work once meant to me! What kind of effect will he have on me this time?! At any rate he means to me: recollection, self-examination, all kinds of positive things. I’ve already read the preface to The Gay Science. It’s a work that helps to put things in their place” (Diaries 15).

It is evident from the direct references he makes in his diaries that in addition to The Gay Science, Musil also read Nietzsche’s Beyond Good and Evil (40, 20)²², Human, ²¹ His admiration for (and deftness in) the essay genre is an extension of Musil’s fascination with experimentation and its potential outcomes. Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften is often identified by scholars as an essayistic novel—both in the structural and in the contextual sense.
²² When there is only one page number provided in parentheses, that number refers to the German version of Musil’s diaries and essay (Tagebücher). If there are two page numbers in parentheses, the first one refers to the original German text (Tagebücher), and the second one refers to the English translation of the diaries (Diaries).
All Too Human (466, 99), Ecce Homo (145, 142), Untimely Meditations (566), The Case of Wagner (726), Twilight of the Idols (881), and On the Geneology of Morality (40, 20).

When we read the entries on Nietzsche and his works in Musil’s diaries, we see that Musil’s opinion of the German philosopher has evolved and matured throughout the years. In an entry from May 1902, after Musil read the two volumes of Nietzsche’s work which he had borrowed from a museum, he summarizes and comments on the philosopher’s ideas as follows:

Kurz: er spricht von lauter Möglichkeiten, lauter Kombinationen, ohne eine einzige uns wirklich ausgeführt zu zeigen. […] Es ist nichts Lebendiges in dieser Art—das Gehirn phantasiert. […] [Nietzsche] zeigt uns alle Wege, auf denen unser Gehirn arbetien kann, aber er betritt keinen. […] Vielleicht was dies schon ein sehr großes Verdienst und erscheint mir bloß heute nicht mehr als solches, weil es mir bereits gemein und alltäglich vorkommt (Tagebücher 36).

[In short: he speaks of nothing but possibilities, nothing but combinations without showing us how even a single one of them could be worked out in reality. […] This way of thinking is bereft of life—the brain is pursuing flights of fancy. […] [Nietzsche] points out to us all the paths along which our brain can proceed but he doesn’t actually set out along any of them. […] Perhaps this was a major contribution but it fails to impress me as such today because it already seems such a common, everyday matter (Diaries 15)].

Later, in 1923, in an addendum to this specific entry Musil writes, “Wie drollig man als junger Mensch ist! Nietzsche gerade gut genug, um einem Lausbuben als Stufe zu dienen! Wie man nur das sieht, was man unter sich sieht! Wie fern der Gedanke liegt, auf den Totalgedanken Nietzsche einzugehn (Tagebücher 37)” [“How droll one is when young! Nietzsche as someone who is barely good enough to serve as a step for a young rascal! How one tends to see only what is beneath one! How remote is the idea of entering Nietzsche’s thought as a whole” (Diaries 15)]. Finally, in the mid-1930s (the exact date of this entry is not known), Musil attests to the influence Nietzsche has had on his work when he writes, “Nietzsche: Habe ich in meiner Jugend auch nur 1/3 von ihm
aufgenommen? Und doch entscheidender Einfluß.” (Tagebücher 401) [“Nietzsche: Did I absorb, in my youth, even as much as a third of him? Despite this, a decisive influence” (Diaries 433)].

In one of numerous key references to Nietzsche in his diaries and essays⁴³, Musil writes, “[m]ir kommt er vor wie jemand, der hundert neue Möglichkeiten erschlossen hat und keine ausgeführt. Daher lieben ihn die Leute, denen neue Möglichkeiten Bedürfnis sind, und nennen ihn jene unphilosophisch, die das mathematisch berechnete Resultat nicht missen können” (Tagebücher 42-43) [“h]e appears to me as someone who has found access to a hundred new possibilities but who has not executed any. For this reason he is liked by those who have a need for new possibilities while those who cannot forgo a mathematically verifiable result call him unphilosophical” (Diaries 39-40)]. Musil’s hero is made to embody such tenets of Nietzsche’s thought and works. Both Nietzsche and Musil seek to realize their own possibilities through their works. They both give their reader a possibility of human existence and portray the individual as having infinite potentialities, Nietzsche through his philosophical discourse, Musil by way of representation of such possibilities through his protagonist.

For the purposes of this chapter I will be looking at Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morality (1887) in order to situate Musil’s novel and his protagonist within a philosophical framework. By doing so, I hope to illuminate the ironic nature of not only the novel’s title, but also its narrative content at large.

A lot of Nietzsche’s thinking revolves around the assumption that the individual is able to transcend himself/herself. To do so, one needs a vision and a sense of direction

⁴³ There are a total of fifty-four citations of Nietzsche in Musil’s diaries and posthumous papers, which is more than the number of citations of any other philosopher.
which empirical science, as a system of fixed values, cannot provide. What empirical
science cannot provide, argues Nietzsche, philosophy can. Hence, he exalts the lonely
thinker/philosopher whose existence is shaped by the awareness of the possibilities of
one’s self-transcendence. It is only the philosopher who can think about values with an
open mind not confined by pre-determined and finite definitions. Nietzsche writes that,
“[a]ll sciences must, from now on, prepare the way for the future work of the
philosopher: this work being understood to mean that the philosopher has to solve the
problem of values and that he has to decide on the hierarchy of values” (37).44

In The Man Without Qualities, Ulrich becomes the prosopopoeia of the
contradistinction between the nature of the philosopher—which de Certeau defines as
one who is skeptical and asks questions, and Nietzsche as one who holds the secret to
self-transcendence—and the nature of the expert scientist. For evidence, we need only to
look at Ulrich’s three failed attempts “ein bedeutender Mann zu werden” (35) [“to
become a great man” (31)] at the start of the novel. The first of his goals towards
becoming a man of importance is to become like Napoleon, and to that end he joins the
cavalry as an ensign.45 When, however, following an innocent misunderstanding that

---

44 In a similar vein, in The Practice of Everyday Life Michel de Certeau examines the distinction between
what he calls the Expert and the Philosopher. While they “[b]oth have the task of mediating between
society and a body of knowledge,” de Certeau argues that in the Expert competence becomes “transmuted
into social authority” (6-7). “Since [the Expert] cannot limit himself to talking about what he knows,” de
Certeau claims, “he inscribes himself and is inscribed in a common order where specialization [is] the rule
and the hierarchically ordering practice,” and it has “the value of initiation” (8). Through the function and
status he gains as a result of this initiation, the Expert “pronounce[s] with authority a discourse which is no
longer a function of knowledge, but rather a function of socio-economic [and, I would add, socio-political]
order” (8). Hence, the definitions and hierarchies of knowledge and values established by the expert—one
who is endowed with status and authority as a result of his socially accepted specialization—are the
products of an “artificial language” (10). de Certeau’s views on the production of socio-economic and
socio-political value systems run parallel to Nietzsche’s claim that “ideals are fabricated on this earth” (29).

45 Given the influence of Nietzsche over Musil, it is not surprising that in On the Genealogy of Morality we
find the following passage: “[…] Napoleon appeared as a man more unique and late-born for his times than
ever a man had been before, and in him, the problem of the noble ideal itself was made flesh—just think
what a problem that is: Napoleon, this synthesis of monster (Unmensch) and Übermensch…” (36). Ulrich
turns into a confrontation with a noted financier, he was made aware of “der Unterschied zwischen einem Erzherzog und einem einfachen Offizier” (36) [“the difference between an archduke and a simple army officer” (32)], “freut ihn der Beruf des Kriegers nicht mehr” (36) [“the profession of warrior lost its charm for him” (32)]. To interpret Ulrich’s first attempt in Nietzschean terms, Ulrich aspired to become a “noble” man representative of the “master morality” (versus the man of “ressentiment” representative of the “slave morality” who, out of fear of the strong noble man, creates values and imposes them universally). To his disappointment, Ulrich realized that, in fact, the military did not create noble men, instead it merely created people driven by a herd-mentality who live by artificial hierarchical qualities and values which they have created. These qualities and values are fixed, they are held to be universal, and bestow unquestionable social authority upon the person who possesses them. Nietzsche argues that the man of “ressentiment” is deceptive and hides in his own closed system. When challenged with a confrontation (as in Ulrich’s case), the noble man lets go, moves on, forgets, but the man of “ressentiment” lets it simmer and resents. This difference in reaction is caused by the fact that the noble man is keen on change whereas the man of the “slave mentality” strives to keep its identity (Nietzsche 24-27). When, with the hopes of becoming a noble man among other noble men, Ulrich finds himself among a herd driven by artificial social values and qualities, he quits the army.

Ulrich’s second attempt at becoming a great man also comes to a quick end. This time, he tries to study engineering in an effort to become a civil engineer, but starts having second thoughts when he observes the reign a slide rule has over an engineer’s

---

himself is the embodiment of the union of “Unmensch” and “Übermensch”; the first symbolized by his fascination and self-identification with the murderer-rapist Moosbrugger, and the second by his philosophical, self-reflective nature that strives for transcendence.
life. He observes that “wenn man einen Rechenschieber besitzt, und jemand kommt mit großen Behauptungen oder großen Gefühlen, so sagt man: Bitte einen Augenblick, wir wollen vorerst die Fehlergrenzen und den wahrscheinlichsten Wert von alledem berechnen!” (37) [“if you own a slide rule and someone comes along with big statements or great emotions, you say: ‘Just a moment, please—let’s first work out the margin for error and the most probable values’” (34)]. Similar to his first attempt here, too, Ulrich finds himself among expert men driven by the slave mentality who are set on absolute ideals and values. Furthermore, Ulrich notes that civil engineers are incapable of using their feelings and their intellect and therefore not capable of critical self-reflection. Ultimately, he decides to leave this profession, too because “[i]hr Gefühl hat noch nicht gelernt, sich ihres Verstandes zu bedienen” (37) [“[t]heir feelings have not yet learned to make use of their intellect” (33)], but more importantly because “[s]ie zeigten sich als Männer, die mit ihren Reißbrettern fest verbunden waren, ihren Beruf liebten und in ihm eine bewundernswerte Tüchtigkeit besaßen; aber den Vorschlag, die Kühnheit ihrer Gedanken statt auf ihre Maschinen auf sich selbst anzuwenden, würden sie ähnlich empfunden haben wie die Zumutung, von einem Hammer den widernatürlichen Gebrauch eines Mörders zu machen” (38) [“[t]hey all turned out to be men firmly tied to their drawing boards, who loved their profession and were wonderfully efficient at it. But any suggestion that they might apply their daring ideas to themselves instead of to their machines would have taken them aback, much as if they had been asked to use a hammer for the unnatural purpose of killing a man” (34-35)].

Both Nietzsche and Musil argue that the ideal condition for the individual is a fusion of intellect and feeling. Hence, Ulrich’s third attempt at becoming a man of
importance is deemed “Der wichtigste Versuch” (38) [“The most important attempt of all” (35)]. In this final attempt, Ulrich surrounds himself with mathematicians because he considers mathematics as a new mode of thought—one that has the potential to combine scientific thinking with philosophical thinking—and a source of continuous supply for modernity. What excites him the most about this field is that it has the power to generate great transformation. Soon enough, however, Ulrich is dismayed that even mathematicians, the masters of this new thought, fail to grasp and utilize the world of possibilities lying ahead of them. He laments that people “wissen [...] bloß nicht, sie haben keine Ahnung, wie man schon denken kann wenn man sie neu denken lehren könnte, würden sie auch anders leben” (41) [“simply don’t realize [...], they have no idea how much thinking that can be done already; if they could be taught to think a new way, they would change their lives” (37)]. When the mathematicians, with their narrow-mindedness, disappoint him, Ulrich gives up on his final attempt to become a great man.46

At the age of thirty-two, Ulrich has already been an officer, a civil engineer, and a mathematician without being able to identify himself with any of these professions. The narrator tells us that “[i]n wundervoller Schärfe sah er, mit Ausnahme des Geldverdienens, das er nicht nötig hatte, alle von seiner Zeit begünstigten Fähigkeiten und Eigenschaften in sich, aber die Möglichkeit ihrer Anwendung war ihm abhandengekommen” (47) [“w]ith wonderful clarity he saw in himself all the abilities

46 In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau makes an analogy between the life and philosophy of the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and Ulrich. Wittgenstein’s career path has a striking resemblance to that of Ulrich; he first started studying mechanical engineering, then became interested in mathematics, and ultimately immersed himself in philosophy. de Certeau points out that both Wittgenstein and Ulrich progress from the status of the Expert into that of the Philosopher when they witness the disintegration and artificiality of the systems around them (8-14).
and qualities favored by his time—except for the ability to earn his living, which was not necessary—but he had lost the capacity to apply them” (44)]. In all three of his attempts, Ulrich is essentially seeking a useful tool to aid him in self-reflection in modernity; however, the epistemic and value systems created by the military and the sciences do not provide him with an adequate vocabulary with which to tackle the vicissitudes of his time. In this regard, Elizabeth Goodstein argues that Ulrich is “in search of a new way of thinking about thinking that transcends the limitations of both modern and inherited idioms of self-reflection,” and thereby “embodies the dilemma of the modern ‘enlightened’ subject faced with the disenchanted world” (340, 349). In the end, Ulrich resolves to take a year’s leave of absence in order to find a suitable application for his abilities and qualities.

In juxtaposition to Ulrich, the members of Viennese society who live in the “disenchanted world” of pre-WWI Europe are the embodiments of “slave mentality,” to use the Nietzschean term. Nietzsche writes:

[w]hereas all noble morality grows out of a triumphant saying ‘yes’ to itself, slave morality says ‘no’ on principle to everything that is ‘outside,’ ‘other,’ ‘non-self’ […] . This reversal of the evaluating glance—this inevitable orientation to the outside instead of back onto itself—is a feature of ressentiment: in order to come about, slave morality first has to have an opposing, external world, it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all,—its action is basically a reaction (21).

In other words, the shifting realities of the modern world create increasingly more slave-minded people who shy away from philosophico-critical self-reflection and operate on sustaining established systems, resisting anything that is “other” and “outside.” Furthermore, they resent anyone who does not follow in their footsteps. Musil reveals to his readers at the start of his novel that Ulrich is the “other” because he does not feel
comfortable within set epistemologies and systems. The fourth chapter of the novel, entitled “Wenn es Wirklichkeitssinn gibt, muß es auch Möglichkeitsinn geben” [“If there’s a sense of reality, there must also be a sense of possibility”] comes immediately after the chapter where the narrator introduces Ulrich’s father as “the man with qualities” and places him in contradistinction to his son, the man without qualities. The same distinction continues into Chapter Four, where Ulrich’s father is portrayed as the representative of the “sense of reality” and Ulrich as the “sense of possibility” because unlike his father, when Ulrich:

von irgend etwas erklärt, daß es so sei, wie es sei, dann denkt er: Nun, es könnte wahrscheinlich auch anders sein. So ließe sich der Möglichkeitsinn geradezu als die Fähigkeit definieren, alles, was ebenso gut sein könnte, zu denken und das, was ist, nicht wichtiger zu nehmen als das, was nicht ist. Man sieht, daß die Folgen solcher schöpferischen Anlage bemerkenswert sein können, und bedauerlicherweise lassen sie nicht selten das, was die Menschen bewundern, falsch erscheinen und das, was sie verbieten, als erlaubt oder wohl auch beides als gleichgültig. Solche Möglichkeitsmännchen leben, wie man sagt, in einem feineren Gespinst, in einem Gespinst von Dunst, Einbildung, Träumerei und Konjunktiven […] (16).

[is told that something is the way it is, he will think: Well, it could probably just as well be otherwise. So the sense of possibility could be defined outright as the ability to conceive of everything there might be just as well, and the attach no more importance to what is than what is not. The consequences of so creative a disposition can be remarkable, and may, regrettably, often make what people admire seem wrong, and what is taboo permissible, or, also, make both a matter of indifference. Such possibilists are said to inhabit a more delicate medium, a hazy medium of mist, fantasy, daydreams, and the subjunctive mood […] (11)].

It is clear from this passage that Ulrich is placed outside of the circle of realists which, within the narrative of the novel, comprises the people involved in the Parallel Campaign. These are the people who are incapable of seeing that “[…] even the partial reduction in usefulness, decay and degeneration, loss of meaning and functional purpose,

---

47 It should be noted that Ulrich’s father urges his son to be part of the Parallel Campaign and makes all the necessary arrangements to introduce him to the people holding the appropriate offices so that he can finally make something of himself and become a man with qualities.
in short death, make up the conditions of true progressus” (Nietzsche 56). When faced with the decay of the empire—and within a larger context, the decay of traditional values and ideologies in Europe at the turn of the nineteenth century—they instinctually strive to bring back its days of glory and make it whole again. Ulrich, however, is a “creative spirit” who refuses to perpetuate established systems and looks for other possibilities instead. Nietzsche writes, that “the creative spirit who is pushed out of any position ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ by his surging strength again and again, whose solitude will be misunderstood by the people as though it were flight from reality—:whereas it is just his way of being absorbed, buried and immersed in reality […]” (71). What the realists consider “reality” is actually a “pseudoreality,” an appearance of a long gone reality that they try to keep up. It is the reality of the possibilist which reflects the true condition of the time. The true reality is that pre-war Vienna has the conditions and the potential for true progress and transcendence. It is only Ulrich who can see this. As Goodstein writes, “Musil’s novel presents the process of depersonalization that characterizes modern life as opening up the possibility of a new, experimental attitude toward one’s own existence that affirms the ineluctable transformations of modernization. Like Nietzsche, [Musil] holds it necessary to embrace the disenchantment that is inseparable from the progress of spirit” (352). While Ulrich strives to “embrace the disenchantment,” Viennese society chooses to deny it, and even attempts to reverse its effects on Austrian culture and politics.

48 In a diary entry from 1920, Musil attributes the following “qualities” to what he calls “Uncreative People:” “determined, true, just, […] metaphysically stable, included, […] real, Sunday-ideals, Illusions: realities.” Conversely, “Creative People” are, according to the same entry: “undetermined, trans-truth, trans-just, […] metaphysically unstable, excluded, […] despising reality, anti-ideals, anti-illusion” (Diaries 211). Ulrich has all the “qualities” of a creative person, but these are unfortunately “non-qualities” in the eyes of the realists. Hence, the other characters in the novel treat him as the man without qualities.
That the man without qualities is actually the man *with* the proper qualities to make the best of the conditions surrounding pre-war Vienna is the gist of Musil’s irony. Musil brings the two mentalities—the realists versus the possibilist—side by side under the Parallel Campaign. When Count Leinsdorf, who is described by the narrator to be blessed with a “vollkommene Abwesenheit von Zweifeln” (89) [“total absence of doubts” (90)], and Diotima decide to turn to the people of the empire to come up with a unifying “Great Idea” for the Parallel Campaign, they appoint Ulrich as the General Secretary of this organization. Ulrich’s task, then, is to coordinate and organize the incoming proposals from the people on how to make the Austro-Hungarian Empire the powerful empire it used to be. In other words, the Nietzschean “possible man,” Ulrich, becomes overtaken by a history he thought he had left behind. Having set up his Nietzschean protagonist in this manner, Musil creates a kind of irony which he himself defines as a “constructive irony.” Constructive irony, Musil writes in a note, is not merely “ridicule and jeering” like most people take it to be, instead “[i]t is the connection among things, a connection from which it emerges naked,” and, he adds, “it is fairly unknown in Germany” at the time (“From the Posthumous Papers” 1764). According to this description, it is not hard to categorize the extended narrative irony in *The Man Without Qualities* as a constructive irony, precisely because it emerges from the relationships and tensions among diverse paradigms and phenomena—the Parallel Campaign, the history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, its past, its present and its future, the two mentalities which modernity brings face to face—which are situated side by side in the novel.

Musil’s irony, then, is an instance of engaging the trope historically, and thereby becomes a mode of critique. He is not simply criticizing the “serio-comic search” of his
characters “for a unifying ‘great idea’” while the reader already knows of the “silently approaching debacle,” but beyond that, Musil “attempts to awaken a sense that something else could have happened, that the cultural foment of the prewar era had multiple possibilities,” and he achieves this critique “not by directly representing a possible alternative but rather by the indirect method of depicting the unsuccessful struggles of a modern man without qualities to find a meaningful way of living” (Goodstein 354-356). Indeed, we find that in one of his notes, Musil defines his novel as “the tragedy of the failed person (more properly: the person who in questions of emotion and understanding is always aware of a further possibility. For he is not simply a failure) who is always alone, in contradiction with everything, and cannot change anything” (“From the Posthuminous Papers” 1722).

The following two descriptive critical analyses on Musil’s work reflect the nature of his constructive irony quite succinctly. According to Elizabeth Goodstein, “[f]or Musil, irony is a method for developing sympathetic comprehension of the spiritual crisis that led to the First World War” (355). Along complementary lines, Walter Moser defines irony as “an agent in a critique of discourse which is used to question established discursive behavior, attitudes, positions and beliefs, and to open them up to the possibility of new formations of discourse,” and asserts that "Musil's favorite way of performing irony operates by means of de- and re-contextualization of discursively fixed elements" (414).

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s ironic perspective in *The Time Regulation Institute* operates in much the same way as Musil’s constructive irony. Even though Tanpınar’s post-humous corpus is not nearly as extensive as Musil’s, we still find structural and
contextual similarities between the novels of the two authors. Tanpinar’s novel, in much the same vein as *The Man Without Qualities*, delineates the historical, social, and political context of Turkey from the time of Ottoman sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) until approximately the beginning of World War II. The times are told through the life and experiences of the novel’s protagonist, Hayri, who, similar to Ulrich, is a Nietzschean man of possibilities, although throughout the narrative his character remains relatively more ambivalent than that of Ulrich’s. It is through Hayri that the audience gets a strong and clear sense of the malaise permeating both the pre- and post-WWI—which also marks the first decades of the Republic—Turkey. Hayri becomes the personification of this social and political malaise, but he also emerges as the “other” with his skepticism and unwillingness to give in to “regulated,” set systems. Within this context, the Time Regulation Institute functions in many ways like the Parallel Campaign—a futile and absurd organization which the man of possibilities gets sucked into.

Both the Parallel Campaign and the Time Regulation Institute are symbolic of the historical decentering of their respective cultural milieu. Whereas the Parallel Campaign is a desperate and futile effort to bring the crumbling Austro-Hungarian Empire back to its glorious days in the midst of a politically unstable and chaotic Europe—a Europe that is also on the threshold of momentous transformations—the Time Regulation Institute is founded during the chaotic first years of the Turkish Republic which saw tremendous cultural, political, and social change, as well as the identity crises and cultural fragmentation that came with these changes. Similar to the campaign of the Viennese elite, the institute in Istanbul strives to bring social unity to Turkey. It is highly significant that Tanpinar’s novel, like Musil’s, is written after the fact, that is, Hayri is
writing his autobiography in the later stages of his life when the Time Regulation Institute has long been abolished. As such, his descriptions and thoughts on the now nonexistent institute are steeped in an irony that is partly the result of feigned ignorance on Hayri’s—and, of course, Tanpinar’s—part. It is most telling that right at the start of the novel Hayri refers to the Institute as “[a]srımızın belki en büyük, en faydalı müessesesi” (11) [“the most important and the most useful of our present institutions” (30)], a statement that is conspicuously exaggerated and imbued with irony. Furthermore, the ambivalent character of the protagonist and the equivocal title of the novel’s last section—“Her Mevsimin Bir Sonu Vardır” [“Every Season Has an End”] bring it closer to Musil’s novel in terms of its open-endedness and potential to yield numerous congruous and incongruous interpretations. The ambivalence that is thus prevalent in the novel only serves to underscore the irony. As one Turkish critic writes, all novels that are ironic are “[s]iyah ve beyazın olmadığı, belirsizlik ve olasılık üzerine kurulmuş metinlerdir” [Sağlık 95; texts where there is no black and white, and that are founded on ambivalence and possibility]. It is also in ironic narratives where “[a]bes’ ya da ‘absürd’ uygulamalar anlatılır; [...] gerçeklerle dalga geçilir” [Sağlık 98; ‘stupid’ or ‘absurd’ endeavors are narrated; realities are made fun of]. By these definitions, The Time Regulation Institute embodies the ironic mode.

In order to better understand the significance of the Time Regulation Institute and its centrality to Tanpinar’s ironic perspective we need to look at the historical precedent of the institute which Tanpinar takes as a model. The eponymous institute is based on the “muvakkithane” [clock room] of the Ottoman period. In her bilingual book İstanbul

49 Even though the word “end” may have a negative connotation, it is not quite clear in the narrative if Tanpinar wants his characters (and his readers) to be sad that a season has come to an end, or relieved that now a new and better season can begin.
Muvakkithaneleri. The Clok [sic] Rooms of İstanbul, Server Dayioğlu gives an overview of the origins and socio-cultural significance of the clock rooms, the first of which was built towards the end of the fifteenth century in Istanbul:

In Islam the prayers are performed at pre-determined hours, five times a day; these times are based on the movements of the sun. This situation created a system of timekeeping in Muslim countries and made timekeeping an important establishment. [...] In the Ottoman Empire [...] clock rooms were constructed as establishments where *ilm-i heyet* (astronomy) and *ilm-i nücum* (astrology) were studied, where the calendars and astronomical tables of the state were prepared and where the times of the prayers were calculated [...] (19-20).

A “muvakkit” [time keeper] was appointed to each clock room where he did the necessary astronomical calculations and astrological measurements to establish the prayer times with accuracy. The clock rooms were always constructed as addendums to existing mosques (and new mosques between the end of the fifteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century were built with adjacent clock rooms). Dayioğlu tells us that within more than four centuries sixty-eight clock rooms were built in Istanbul alone; out of the sixty-eight, thirty-eight have burnt down, were demolished, or closed, and the thirty that remain to this day are leased to various organizations or used by mosque employees for purposes other than time keeping (21). With the advent of new technologies, clock rooms began to lose their importance “particularly in the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid (1839-1861), when clocks started to be erected in the town squares and mechanical clocks became more common” (Dayioğlu 23). The institution of the time keeper was abolished in 1952, and subsequently the clock rooms were put to different uses.

The character Muvakkit Nuri Efendi (Nuri the Timekeeper/Clockmaker) in Tanpinar’s novel is representative of the lost institute of the time keeper. Although he is not a court appointed official time keeper, in his little shop he repairs and sets watches
and clocks, prepares calendars with the appropriate prayer information on them. He is
also—along with Hayri’s son Ahmet—one of the two characters in the novel whom
Tanpinar treats with obvious sympathy and respect. Throughout the novel, Hayri admits
that Nuri Efendi’s philosophy of time has been the most influential both on his life, and,
more importantly, on the founding principles of the Time Regulation Institute. That the
founder of the institute, Halit Ayarci, transforms Nuri Efendi’s philosophy of time (and
of existential experience in general) into hollowed-out ideologies and socio-cultural
paradigms within the historical context of modernity constitutes the main issue of the
novel. As such, the slippage between the Ottoman clock room and the “modern” Time
Regulation Institute opens up a space which Tanpinar fills with ironic self-reflection and
historical critique.

Similar to Ulrich, Hayri finds himself in a dilemma when he is made the
coordinator of the Institute. He tries to fight the idiosyncrasies and the absurdities around
him by trying to analyze and understand them; however, at the end of the novel, the
results of his efforts are not revealed in a clear fashion to the reader. Since the novel itself
is essentially Hayri’s autobiography, it is important to look at the signification of the
genre and at its contribution to the overall irony of the narrative.

The role of autobiography in The Time Regulation Institute has given rise to many
a critical debate among scholars and critics. In his “Time, Memory and Autobiography in
The Clock-Setting Institute of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar,” Walter Feldman argues that the
disagreement among critics revolves as much around the role of autobiography in
Tanpinar’s novel, as the personality of the narrator, who is also the protagonist of the
novel. This, he claims, is a crucial difference among the interpretations of the novel as the reader views the entire story of *The Time Regulation Institute* through the eyes of Hayri.

At the beginning of the novel Hayri apologetically tells the reader that he is not attempting to write an autobiography because that would be hubristic—there already is a written grand narrative, fate—but rather he is writing a record of the words and deeds of his master, Halit Ayarçı, and the story of the Time Regulation Institute. Feldman points out the postscript that Tanpınar initially wrote for his novel, which he never published. In this postscript he portrays Hayri as a man suffering from paranoia who had died while undergoing treatment at Doctor Ramiz’s clinic. Many critics, including Feldman himself, believe that Tanpınar wrote the postscript out of fear that his social satire would be too harsh for the political climate of his time. Perhaps because Tanpınar’s addendum renders most, if not all, interpretations of the novel implausible, most critics still prefer not to include it in their work.

Halit Ayarçı founded the Time Regulation Institute to ensure that every individual in Turkey perceives time in the same way. Feldman makes a distinction between an “emically perceived” time and modern time where every citizen of a nation “counts the passage of time in the same way” (44). In his view, Ayarçı sees the implementation of modern time as the only way for Turkey to enter modernity. The methods he uses to realize his project and ensure the acceptance of his institution among the people are worth mentioning as they open up interesting questions about the nature of modernity in general. To introduce modernity through the Institute into the social milieu of the nascent republic Ayarçı uses “American-style advertising and public relations,” “punitive fines,” and “falsification of public memory” (Feldman 44).
As Feldman claims, the changes in the concept of time that occurred during the Ottoman period can be traced back to the Tanzimat Era, namely the latter half of the nineteenth century. Hayri, for instance, is the product of the mystical concept of time because he was trained by a Sufi clock maker, Nuri Efendi. What makes Hayri a complicated and ambivalent character, though, is the fact that he later becomes the right-hand man of Ayarci, who, represents a modern, secular concept of time. Hayri is perpetually stuck between the two philosophies and concepts of time as represented by Nuri Efendi and Halit Ayarci.

Feldman’s main goal in this article is to treat Hayri’s life story as the foregrounding narrative and explore the significance of this narrator as a character in the novel. Since the story is told from a first-person perspective it becomes important to look into the narrator’s character, his story-telling style and the motives behind his story. After all, we, as readers, have to trust Hayri’s memory, but as Feldman observes, it is only in Book One of the novel that Hayri gives us a specific timeline of events. We know that he was born in 1892 and that he joined the army during World War I, but aside from these facts, very little temporal information is given in the narrative. Another interesting observation Feldman makes is that even though at the beginning of the novel Hayri claims that his sole reason for writing this story is to record the deeds and words of his master, Halit Ayarci, we find Hayri himself at the center of his narrative. So much so that even such important events as the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922) and the creation of the modern Turkish Republic (1923) are missing from Hayri’s story. As Feldman notes, the rare references Hayri makes to politics are steeped in cynicism and irony (50).
As many critics have noted, Hayri is a character who is stuck between his traditions (as represented by his training by Nuri Efendi) and modernity (represented by Halit Ayarcı). He is never a devoted follower of either of his masters; he is the amalgamation of both Nuri’s and Halit Ayarcı’s teachings. Hayri is the embodiment of the collision of tradition and modernity and as a unique specimen he has his own unique language to tell his story. Hayri is ultimately confused due to contradictory teachings he has received, and this, as Feldman points out, is the reason for the inaccurate timeline of his narrative. Feldman notes that Hayri’s language is often elusive and vague and that he often tries to negotiate his own memory and desires with the expectations of his interlocutors (43). Thus, he often manipulates his private memories as he tells his story.

In the public sphere, he appears as a conservative man who is not necessarily against the aggressive modernization program, but who is definitely overwhelmed by it. When he meets Halit Ayarcı and is employed by him at the Institute, he feels like he has found himself a safe place where he can express his skills and his cultural heritage. Halit Ayarcı has big plans for Hayri; through him he wants to bring together tradition and modernity, old generations with the new. He adapts the philosophy of Sufism Hayri learned from his master Nuri Efendi to his own ideas of work and time and tries to market it as the philosophy behind the Time Regulation Institute.

Perhaps in one of the most interesting narrative twists in the novel, after long discussions and much convincing by Halit Ayarcı, Hayri agrees to write a book on the non-existent, and ironically named Ahmet Zamani Efendi (his name could be translated as Timely Ahmet Efendi, or Ahmet Efendi of the Times) to promote and legitimate Nuri Efendi’s and the Institute’s ideas on time and work. In Feldman’s words, Halit Ayarcı
“views societal memory as material to be manipulated for the creation of a market” (54). Hayri ultimately gives in to Halit Ayarcı and writes the aforementioned book despite initially protesting it, thereby betraying his own sense of public memory. Despite his initial negative opinions of Halit Ayarcı and of some of the agenda he pursues within the Institute, Hayri praises Ayarcı on numerous occasions throughout the novel and tells his reader that he owes his prosperity and peace of mind to this man who changed his life for the better. Yet, it is evident in Hayri’s constant negative and resentful portrayal of Doctor Ramiz, who Feldman notes “expresses the same ideas as Halit, but in the language of psychoanalysis rather than of economics,” (55) that Hayri either never really understands or internalizes the ideological basis for Halit Ayarcı’s actions, that is, the ideological implications of modernizing reforms, or, he assimilates Halit’s ideas and their implications through the conditioning lens and by the light of his other Master, the Sufi Nuri Efendi. In this sense, Feldman believes that Hayri’s rather ignorant and grudging conformity to modernity is “an allegory of the attitude of the Turkish Everyman […] to the demands of the modernizing élite” (55). This allegory is further complicated by the way the “modernizing élite” is portrayed in the novel. Similar to the Viennese elite in Musil’s novel, Tanpınar’s modernizing elite engages in futile endeavors in an effort to cope with the shifting realities of the time.

Even though the insincerity and the ineptitude of the elite is clear from Tanpınar’s portrayals of these characters—Halit Ayarcı and Doctor Ramiz are two of the main representatives of this class—oftentimes, Hayri’s sincerity comes under the shadow of doubt, as well. At the very beginning of the novel Hayri speaks openly about how he wrote a book about a non-existent Ottoman philosopher and shows no remorse about it.
In fact, he barely mentions the fact that Ahmet Zamani never existed and that he was an invention of Halit Ayarcı. Instead, he presents Zamani as a discovery of Halit Ayarcı. It is only in the course of the novel that he reveals Ahmet Zamani to be an imaginary figure and this, according to Feldman, goes against Hayri’s initial claims to sincerity (55). Feldman writes, “[Hayri] fails to predetermine how much he wants to reveal and then is forced to deny part of what he has said at the beginning” (56). This constant self-negation, along with Hayri’s feigned ignorance at the start of the novel, is one of the constitutive elements of Tanpinar’s ironic handling of his subject matter.

The invention of Ahmet Zamani by Halit Ayarcı is a testimony to Ayarcı’s acute understanding of market demand, which drives most, if not all, of his actions. On a larger scale, Feldman argues that Ahmet Zamani can be read as “a metaphor for the type of historical discourse” which he claims has been popular in Turkey since Tanpinar’s death (56). He notes the gap between the intellectual developments in the Ottoman Empire and contemporaneous Europe, and argues that this gap has been systematically deemphasized and denied by the intellectuals of the new Turkish Republic (57). One way of doing this was drawing parallels between European Renaissance or Enlightenment figures and Ottoman intellectuals. In this vein, Feldman reads Halit Ayarcı’s invention of an imaginary Ottoman philosopher as a response to the “intellectual need for some indigenous precursor” (59) for his own modernization project. This, then, is another slippage that breeds irony.

Because the nature and purpose of Musil’s and Tanpinar’s ironies are similar, it is possible to look at certain passages from Tanpinar’s novel and read them under a Nietzschean light. Even though the following passage shows Halit Ayarcı as a realist who
is criticizing Hayri for being an idealist, as we shall see, Tanpınar does not allow us the comfort of such a definite classification and soon enough shows Halit under a much different light. During a heated argument where Hayri, once again, complains to Halit that he does not see any purpose or use to the Time Regulation Institute and does not understand what the Institute stands for, Halit gives him the following answer:


[You’ve no sense of enterprise. You’re an idealist. You’re blind to reality. In a word, you’re old-fashioned. […] If only you had some realism in you, just a bit of it, everything would be so different. […] To be a realist is not to see reality in its true color. It’s perhaps to determine our relation with it in the most fruitful way. Assuming that you’ve seen reality, what good would you derive from it […]? You’d be a pessimist and at a loss for what to do, you’d be crushed underneath. To see reality as it is… You’d be a disturber of peace… […] The realism of the new man is quite different. What can I do with the stuff I have in hand, knowing its qualifications? That’s the question to ask (202-203)].

In this passage, a realist, as Halit defines him, seems to be a mixture of the Nietzschean possibilist and the Nietzschean realist. At first, the term realist is placed against the word idealist when Halit chides Hayri for being an idealist and expresses his love for a realist approach to life. If we take an idealist as someone who does not want to be confined with the hard realities of a given condition, but who wants to go beyond them and to put them to the best use possible, then Halit’s definition of a realist seems quite close to an idealist.

An idealist, as Halit refers to him in an earlier passage, is someone like Hayri, who wants everything to be as it is supposed to be, true to its own qualities and
properties. Hayri complains, for instance, that one of his sisters-in-law has a terrible voice, but she still insists on singing the most difficult tunes in traditional Ottoman music and aspires to become a professional singer. The solution Halit gives to Hayri’s problem shows us how he defines an idealist. “O halde elimde iki rakam var” [“Then I have two factors in hand”] says Halit to the desperate Hayri, “[b] aldızım ve musıkî. Birincisini değiştiremeyeceğime göre, istemez ikincisi hakkında fikirlerim değişeceğ” (220) [“[m]y sister-in-law and music. Since I cannot change the first factor, I will necessarily have to change my ideas about the second factor” (203)]. In other words, Halit advises Hayri to change the values he attaches to music, as well as what he expects from him. This “transvaluation,” to use another Nietzschean term, is for Halit a necessary survival tool to adapt to the changing cultural and social realities around them. As such, according to Halit, a realist is one who can see what the times demand and change accordingly, whereas an idealist wants to cling on to established value systems. These definitions suggest that a realist might also be a possibilist because a realist does not feel bound by fixed social systems and is open to experimentation and to anything that is new. In this regard Halit seems closer to Ulrich than Hayri is; however, as the novel progresses it becomes clear that Halit’s philosophy of the new and the possible is characterized more by a striving for the new merely for the sake of the new—that is, almost a fetishization and objectification of the new—whereas Ulrich is striving to find a solution to his crisis of subjectivity and other existential possibilities. Halit’s true motivation shines through when he defends Hayri’s sister-in-law in her insistence to become a famous singer by telling Hayri that “[ç]irkin, diyorsunuz, binaenaleyh bugünün telâkkilerine göre sempatik demektir. Sesi kötü diyorsunuz, şu halde dokunaklı ve bazı havalara elverişli demektir.
Kabiliyetsiz diyorsunuz, o hâlde muhakkak orijinaldir. Yarın baldızınızla meşgul olurum... Yarından itibaren baldızınız sahnededir, meşhurdur, gazetelerde ismi sık sık geçer…” (221) [“[y]ou say that she is ugly, that means in terms of present-day concepts, she’s sympathetic. You say that her voice is bad, that means it is touching and favorable for certain airs. You say she’s untalented, that means she is original. I’ll take care of her tomorrow. You’ll see that as of tomorrow your sister-in-law will be on the stage, and it won’t be long before her name will be heard and often mentioned in the papers” (204)]. Surprisingly enough, Hayri’s sister-in-law does become a huge nation-wide success.

What Halit does is change the values attributed to certain qualities. “Ugly,” for instance, becomes “sympathetic.” The lack of talent becomes the equivalent of originality. The apparent discrepancy and incongruity between the old and the “renewed” value is not only a source of humor in the text, but it is also representative of Tanpınar’s irony throughout the narrative. A historical and political level is added to this irony when we look at the words Tanpınar uses to designate the renewed values. The majority of the words Tanpınar uses in the above passage are of Arabic or Persian origin: “çirkin” [ugly], “binaenaleyh” [therefore], “telâkki” [concept], “muhakkak” [definitely], “sahne” [stage], “meşhur” [famous]. Such words of Arabic and Persian origin constituted a big portion of the Ottoman Turkish lexicon and were purged from use in the modern Republic. The words placed in juxtaposition to those in the previously cited passage—such as “sempatik” [sympathetic], “orijinal” [original], “gazete” [newspaper]—which delineate the transvaluation of old, established qualities and values, are those of English and French origin. On a figurative level, Halit is replacing established Ottoman Turkish
values with those imported from the West just as he attempts to re-create the Ottoman
clock room in the shape of the Time Regulation Institute.

In an article on Turkish literature, Talat Halman writes that the “extensive break
with Oriental and Ottoman norms and values, a departure from elements and influences
previously acquired, and a disarray of identity, reality, and language” causes
“disorientation” within the Turkish cultural and socio-political psyche (4). What he calls
“disorientation” or the inevitable incongruities—slippages—between “what used to be”
and “what is” created by modernity become personified in Hayri, who feels hopelessly
stuck between the Turkey he grew up in (represented by Nuri Efendi and his teachings),
and the Turkey he finds himself in during the first decades of the new Republic
(represented by Halit Ayarçı and his seemingly possibilist entrepreneurship). It is out of
these incongruities and the Istanbulite elite’s inability to discern them that Tanpınar’s
narrative irony emerges.

Tanpınar’s novel, like Musil’s, is essentially a cautionary tale. Through his
characters and the Institute which is central to the novel, Tanpınar is showing his readers
how not to be modern, and the wrong ways of dealing with the shifting paradigms of
modernity. As Mustafa Kutlu argues, "Tanpınar kendi medeniyet ve hayat telâkkimizin
asli unsurlarından neşet edecek, geçmişte olduğu gibi günümüze de 'devamlılık ve
bütünlik' gösterecek, bunla beraber modern zamanın dışına düşmeyecek yeni hayat
şekilleri peşindedir. Bu tavır manalı olan hayatın koptuğu yerden, yeniden ve fakat kendi
şartları ile kurulmasını öngörecektir" [7; Tanpınar is after new life forms which originate
from the fundamental principles of our own concepts of civilization and life, which will
show continuation and unity in today’s world just like they did in the past, yet which will
not fall out of modern times. This attitude anticipates establishing—*anew*, but *with its own conditions*—the meaningful life from where it was ruptured (italics mine)]. For Tanpinar, the new life forms brought about by modernity may resemble those of the past in terms of their inherent meaningfulness and unity; however, they should not be repetitions or copies of the past.

The ironic narratives of historical times out of place by Musil and Tanpinar have their functional analogue in the no-less-ironic modernism of Alfred Döblin and his dramatization of a place in counter-time that is Alexanderplatz. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* unfolds as ironic *contretemps* of a national agora that slips in and out of historical consciousness, now as center at the margin, now as marginality at the central heart of a metropolis.

As we have seen, both Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities* and Tanpinar’s *Time Regulation Institute* deal with the historical decentering of societal harmony and the cultural slippage that ensues from it. While the Parallel Campaign in Musil’s novel and the Time Regulation Institute in Tanpinar’s novel function as metaphors for and narrative dramatizations of this slippage, these novels should be read as allegories of modernity. It is, after all, due to the shifting historical realities and value systems brought about by modernity that Viennese and Istanbulite societies—as metonymies for the Austro-Hungarian Empire and of a transitional epoch between the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, respectively—experience a decentering of cultural and socio-political harmony which is the main concern of both novels.

In *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, Alfred Döblin raises similar questions concerning cultural and social transformations and their impact on the modern subject. However, as
stated earlier, instead of focusing on institutions whose existence is characterized by temporality (Musil’s Parallel Campaign seeks to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the emperor’s accession to the throne which will take place five years later, thereby trying to bring back the glorious days of the empire, and Tanpinar’s Time Regulation Institute, an institute which is modeled after an historic institution, by definition, strives for a regulated and unified time), the central focus of Döblin’s novel is urban space. Specifically, the novel looks at Alexanderplatz as an emblematic site of public sphere where transformations in public life due to modernization and modernity are most vividly visible, and it portrays the eponymous square as the locus of social and cultural metamorphoses. Within the novel’s narrative frame, the protagonist, Franz Biberkopf, appears as the modern individual subjected to this slippage, and through his experiences in the city the reader observes not only the effects of modernity on the city dweller, but also—reminiscent of Musil’s and Tanpinar’s novels—the effects of nationwide socio-political crises.

The events in Döblin’s novel take place between the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1929, a period that is generally considered the golden age of the Weimar Republic. Historically, in 1929 the Weimar Republic, like Musil’s Austro-Hungarian Empire and Tanpinar’s Ottoman Empire, began to decline. The years 1929-1933 saw great political instability, hyperinflation, and cultural and social fragmentation. In his book *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider*, Peter Gay writes: “[b]eginning in 1929, the Republic suffered a series of traumatic blows from which neither it nor its culture was ever to recover. […] By 1930, indeed even before 1930, political divisions had deepened,

50 The Weimar period refers to the parliamentary republic that was established in 1919 to replace the German Empire; it lasted until 1933, the year that marks the rise of the Third Reich.
and debate had grown ugly, scurrilous, often issuing in real violence” (136-137). In other words, much like the socio-political environment in *The Man Without Qualities*—Vienna on the eve of World War I—and in *The Time Regulation Institute*—Istanbul in the aftermath of World War I—the narrative setting in *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is historically characterized by both recent and imminent social and political change. As such, Alexanderplatz is more than just a location in the novel; it becomes identified with and symptomatic of the transformations Germany—as well as Europe—has already experienced, as well as those that are about to happen. As Martin Jesinghausen asserts, “the square is the symbol of city life as the theatre of modernist mass individuals. The life of Franz Biberkopf, a representative common man, is set on Alexanderplatz. […] The square is the locus of paradigmatic city space, extending beyond this city, the national situation and even the real, taking us into the metaphysics of twentieth century history” (83).

The Parallel Campaign and the Time Regulation Institute are endeavors that Ulrich and Hayri, respectively, get sucked into. Neither of them becomes a part of these institutions voluntarily. Ulrich is forced to become a part of the Parallel Campaign when his father urges him to do so, and remains intellectually and emotionally distant to it throughout the novel. Hayri joins the Institute out of desperation—poverty and unemployment have left him no other choice—and, similar to his Austrian counterpart remains doubtful of the Institute’s purpose and usefulness until its dissolution. In a similar vein, Döblin’s protagonist Franz gets pushed into Berlin, and more specifically, into the heart of Alexanderplatz, with terrified resistance on his part. Just like the Parallel Campaign and the Time Regulation Institute, Alexanderplatz is a complex metaphor for
historical change and its ironic outcomes. In this regard, the novel itself should be read as an allegory of modernity.

It is in fact by way of a “metaphor” that Franz first finds himself in Alexanderplatz. “In modern Athens,” writes de Certeau, “the vehicles of mass transportation are called metaphorai. To go to work or come home, one takes a ‘metaphor’—a bus or a train” (115). He goes on to establish an analogy between narrative structures and spatial syntaxes, thereby claiming that “[s]tories […] are spatial trajectories,” and “with […] subtle complexity [they], whether everyday or literary, serve us as a means of mass transportation, as metaphorai” (115). By de Certeau’s definition, too, Berlin Alexanderplatz is an extended metaphor—an allegorical one—that transfers the true nature and meaning of modernity and modernism from a paradigmatic realm into a pragmatic one through its readers. Alexanderplatz is the central stop on this transit route. As one critic argues, “the work implores [Döblin’s readers] to think critically and come to their own conclusions” (Jelavich 35) in terms of the cultural and socio-political vicissitudes of modernity as they are portrayed in the novel.

At the start of the novel Franz is released from Tegel prison outside of Berlin, but instead of reveling in his freedom, he is terrified that now he will have to go back to Berlin, right into the city center. The first few minutes of his freedom are described in the following passage:

Er ließ Elektrische auf Elektrische vorbeifahren, drückte den Rücken an die rote Mauer und ging nicht. Der Aufseher am Tor spazierte einige Male an ihm vorbei, ziegte ihm seine Bahn, er ging nicht. Der schreckliche Augenblick war gekommen […], die vier Jahre waren um. Die schwarzen eisernen Torflügel […] waren hinter ihm geschlossen. Man setzte ihn wieder aus. […] Die Strafe beginnt. Er schüttelte sich, schluckte. Er trat sich auf den Fuß. Dann nahm er einen Anlauf and saß in der Elektrischen. […] Das war zuerst, als wenn man beim Zahnarzt sitzt, der eine Wurzel mit der Zange gepackt hat und zieht, der Schmerz wächst,
der Kopf will platzen. […] Er konnte nicht zurück, er war mit dem Elektrischen so weit hierher gehafren, er war aus dem Gefängnis entlassen und mußte hier hinein, noch tiefer hinein. […] Ich geh auch rin, aber ich möchte nicht, mein Gott, ich kann nicht (15-16).

[He let one street-car after another go by, pressed his back against the red wall, and did not move. The gateman walked past him several times, showed him his car-line; he did not move. The terrible moment had come […], the four years were over. The black iron gates […] were shut behind him. They had let him out again. […] The punishment begins. He shook himself and gulped. He stepped on his own foot. Then, with a run, took a seat in the car. […] At first it was like being at the dentist’s, when he has grabbed a root with a pair of forceps, and pulls; the pain grows, your head threatens to burst. […] He could not turn back, he had come this far on the car, he had been discharged from prison and had to go into this thing, deeper and deeper into it. […] I’ll go into it, too, but I’d rather not, my God, I can’t do it (3-4)].

It is with great ambivalence and fear that Franz jumps on the street-car that will take him to the center of Berlin, the major tram stop at Alexanderplatz. In other words, he resists being thrown into the vortex of modernity, into the heart of the city which is a “mighty, and often threatening force” (Barta 312). He perceives it as a “punishment,” and dreads it like one would dread having a tooth pulled out. The repetition of the sibilant fricative consonant “z” in the original German text while the narrator likens Franz’s experience to that of going to the dentist—“zuerst” [at first], “Zahnarzt” [dentist], “sitzt” [sits], “Wurzel” [root], “Zange” [forceps], “zieht” [pulls], “Schmerz” [pain], “platzen” [burst]—seems to attest to the difficulty of this moment for Franz. Even though as the narrative progresses he gradually overcomes his fear and tries to build himself a respectable life around Alexanderplatz, in the end the force of the city proves too powerful and justifies Franz’s initial panic.

51 In German the letter “z” is pronounced as “ts,” a sound that is produced by creating a turbulent airflow through a narrow air channel—between the tongue and the edge of the upper front teeth. Hence, it is produced by relative force and difficulty on the part of the involved organs, and is a perfect way to convey Franz’s fear and resistance in this passage.
In order to better comprehend the nature of Alexanderplatz and the forces that make it such a formidable site and an Archemedean point for Döblin’s narrative, we need to look at its history and the transformations it has undergone throughout the centuries. Doubtless, Döblin himself was well aware of the historical changes Alexanderplatz went through when he situated the square at the center of his narrative, or constructed his narrative around this central locus. The discrepancies, as well as the parallels, between the past and the present condition of Alexanderplatz create the space for Döblin’s ironic approach to modernity in Berlin, and by extension, in Germany. Especially for Döblin’s post-World War II readers, the level of irony is heightened because they know exactly where Germany is headed. Moreover, they know the extent of destruction which Alexanderplatz will witness, and consequently the constructions around the square that are so central to the novel take on a very different meaning.

Alexanderplatz has seen numerous changes, demolitions, and constructions throughout the centuries. When the Seven Years’ War which ended in 1763 left Berlin greatly damaged, Friedrich the Great, then emperor of the German Empire, “embarked on a massive new construction programme to repair the war damage and resumed his plans for the city’s aggrandizement” (Read and Fisher 47). At that time, Alexanderplatz remained outside Berlin’s perimeter; the fortification (a wall and a moat) which left Alexanderplatz on the periphery of the city had been constructed after the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648). Peter Jelavich writes that in the seventeenth century a part of what is now Alexanderplatz was a place where “the barns and woodsheds [were] erected after a seventeenth-century decree prohibited such fire hazards from remaining within the city walls” (6). “Königstor” [royal gate] and “Königsbrücke” [royal bridge] “that spanned the
encircling moat were the major point of entry into the city” (Jelavich 2). In the space beyond Königsbrücke—the space which was to become Alexanderplatz—there used to be a Paradeplatz (a square used for military exercises), a poorhouse (which was a soup kitchen and a debtor’s prison at the same time), the offices of the empire’s judicial bureaucracy, textile manufacturers who made clothing for both court officials and for the army, and an open-air livestock market.

Friedrich the Great’s construction project lasted fifteen years, and in 1778 the space beyond Königstor and Königsbrücke was re-built and the damages of the war were repaired. In 1805 the space holding all the above listed institutions beyond the royal bridge was officially named Alexanderplatz to commemorate a visit by the Russian czar, Alexander I. In the nineteenth century Berlin grew rapidly, mostly due to industrialization, and working class suburbs began to emerge in the north and east of the city, which was now Alexanderplatz. As these suburbs grew larger and became increasingly more populous, Alexanderplatz acquired the form and function of an urban square; “it was no longer in the periphery” (Jelavich 2).

During the last half of the nineteenth century “Alexanderplatz maintained some of its earlier functions, though now updated to serve the needs of a booming metropolis” (Jelavich 3). For instance, the poorhouse was replaced with the brick-clad police headquarters, the numerous open-air markets were carried to a covered central market hall, the former ox-market was turned into the main livestock market of Berlin, manufacturing industries were replaced with department stores, a big hotel was built, as well as numerous restaurants and the city’s first upscale movie theater, “the transportation system was updated continually to accommodate the growing masses of
employees and consumers attracted to the area,” “the moat surrounding the city was filled and covered with the tracks of the commuter rail system which opened a station on the Alexanderplatz in 1882” (Jelavich 3-5; see also Jochheim 68-116). Jelavich writes that “[a]lready in the nineteenth century, the neighborhood acquired a dubious reputation as an area where prostitutes and criminals congregated. Toward the end of that century, it became home to hundreds of impoverished Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia […]. At the turn of the century the city undertook a major project to ‘clean up’ the neighborhood. Numerous ramshackle buildings were torn down to make way for new structures […]” (60).

The brief overview of Berlin’s central square testifies to the fact that Alexanderplatz has always been a site of transformation, of destruction and reconstruction. Döblin knew the area around Alexanderplatz personally: “He lived and worked [as a doctor] in the seedy Frankfurter Allee. It was his experiences in the slums which inspired his portrayal of Franz Biberkopf, the tragic figure who struggles to remain honest after his release from prison, but ends up corrupted and broken by Berlin” (Richie 345). According to Döblin, “this protean neighborhood was emblematic of the forces with which he and his fellow citizens had to cope” (Jelavich 1). Therefore, the novel is replete with detailed descriptions of Alexanderplatz which indeed delineate this important site as more than just a physical space and portray it as emblematic of historical and urban transformations and transition into modernity.

One of the images that keep emerging in the novel is the giant steam pile-driver that is used to build a new railway. Döblin complements the visual description of this

52 For detailed historical information on Alexanderplatz complete with pictures see Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern and Jemmer.
construction equipment with sound, and scatters it throughout his narrative. “Rumm rumm haut die Dampframme auf dem Alexanderplatz” (165) [“Boom, boom, the steam pile-driver batters away on the Alex” (128)] as one “Herr Adolf Kraun, Hausdiener, sieht zu, das Umkippen der wagen efsselh ihn enorm […]. Er lauert immer gespannt, wie die Lore mit Sand auf der einen Seite hochgeht […]” (169) [“Herr Adolf Kraun, house-servant, looks on, the tipping over of the wagon fairly fascinates him […]. He watches excitedly how the sand truck is always tilting up on one side […]” (132)]. This image becomes the symbol of perpetual transformation on Alexanderplatz. Döblin describes both the changes taking place in the square during late 1920s, and also the impact these changes have on the people living in that neighborhood. Because of the speed with which the buildings and the streets around the square change, as well as due to the speed of economic change, Franz finds himself in a whirlwind of activity that he finds difficult to comprehend or control. The following passages from the novel highlight the magnitude of architectural and social changes that are taking place around Alexanderplatz:


[Everything is covered with planks. The Berolina statue once stood in front of Tietz’s, […] now they have dragged her away. Maybe they’ll melt her and make medals out of her. […] Across the street they are tearing down everything, all the houses along the city railroad, wonder where they get the money from, the city of Berlin is rich, and we pay the taxes. They have torn down Loeser and Wolff with their mosaic sign, 20 yards further on they built it up again. […] The highly interesting Magazine, instead of 1 mark, now only 20 pfennigs. […] Try your
weight, 5 pfennigs. […] Hahn’s department store still stands, emptied, evacuated, and eviscerated […] (128-130)].

The significance of this passage is twofold; on the one hand, it describes the perpetual cycle of demolition and re-building that has become characteristic of Alexanderplatz, on the other hand it emphasizes the grip that money economy has on the city. The narrator’s description of the city is constantly interrupted by either thoughts on money, or by street peddlers shouting out the prices for their merchandise or services. As one critic writes, “[b]ecause the power of the money economy had a free reign in the metropolis […], its implications were most clearly visible there, urban modernity […] quickly gained the reputation of being an objectified environment, indifferent to values,” furthermore, the domination of the city by the money economy “eventually [led] to the undermining of all value systems, a kind of institutionalised anomie” (Keunen 273). As such, throughout the narrative Alexanderplatz is portrayed as a modern urban space emblematic of modernity with all of its facets. That it is predominantly inhabited by criminals and prostitutes marks it as the representative of “institutionalised anomie” in the novel. Franz’s relationship with Reinhold who, towards the end of the novel, rapes and brutally murders Franz’s girlfriend Mieze, is another testament to the crumbling value systems that fall prey to the dominant money economy in Berlin.

As we have seen in the brief history of Alexanderplatz, and in the above passage describing the ongoing construction work around the square, Alexanderplatz is a site of constant production and destruction. It thereby becomes a paradoxical site that, in de Certeau’s words, “repeatedly produces effects contrary to those at which it aims: the profit system generates a loss which, in the multiple forms of wretchedness and poverty outside the system and of waste inside it, constantly turns production into
‘expenditure’”(95). The city, continues de Certeau, is “a place of transformations and appropriations, the object of various kinds of interference but also a subject that is constantly enriched by new attributes, it is simultaneously the machinery and the hero of modernity” (95). As the heart and soul of Berlin, Alexanderplatz assumes precisely this role in Döblin’s novel; its paradoxical nature makes it both the site of, and the metaphor for modernity.

What renders *Berlin Alexanderplatz* ironic is the slippage it points to between what Alexanderplatz used to be, and what it has become as a modern urban space in the twentieth century. When one looks at the history of the square carefully, it becomes obvious that despite all the cosmetic changes, Alexanderplatz has been functionally the exact same place for centuries. Regardless of having become the center of the city, and regardless of the technological and economic advances it has seen, Alexanderplatz is still a cattle market where people, instead of animals, are being sold and treated like animals, where still the unwanted goods are stocked away—it was the woodsheds that were thrown out of the city for being fire hazards in the seventeenth century—in the twentieth century it is the criminals, the prostitutes, the working classes, and the immigrants that are not wanted in other parts of the city who settle around Alexanderplatz. In other words, despite its spatial disposition from the periphery to the center, the true nature of Alexanderplatz does not change, it becomes even more amplified.

When we read the history of Alexanderplatz the most significant change seems to be its transformation from the periphery to the center of the city. However, this seemingly obvious and straightforward change is, in fact, quite ironic due to the equivocal nature of the words “periphery” and “center.” Even though Alexanderplatz technically used to be
outside the city walls—hence peripheral—the economic, military, and judicial activities it hosted made it essentially central to the organizational functioning of the city proper. It used to be the center at the margin. After the city walls were pulled down and Alexanderplatz became not only the transportation hub of the city, but also its cultural, economic, and judicial center (in the second half of the nineteenth century the city’s first upscale movie theater was built on the square, as well as many department stores and the city’s police headquarters). In reality, however, Alexanderplatz gradually turned into the periphery at the center as it became a home to the homeless, the immigrants, the criminals, and the poor. The people living at the margins of Berlin and Berliner society moved to the center and settled around Alexanderplatz, making it both peripheral and central at the same time. Hence, despite the seemingly progressive transformations Alexanderplatz goes through, it still remains as the locus of corruption, poverty, and inherent contradictions, all of which make it a most suitable metaphor and setting for Döblin’s ironic staging of modernity.

As we have seen in this chapter, a disjunctive modernity creates spaces for irony, which in turns becomes an indispensible part of modernity itself. Musil, Döblin, and Tanpinar have dramatized this irony within their narratives through three institutions—the Parallel Campaign, the Time Regulation Institute, and Alexanderplatz. The next chapter will explore yet another phenomenon that becomes dysfunctional within the confines of the modern city, namely, religion/spirituality.
Chapter III—The City of God: A Modernist Contretemps

The previous chapter looked at how a disjunctive modernity and its thwarted expectations bred ironic symptoms and conditions in three historically, socially, and culturally ruptured societies. I have argued that the blind adamance of the characters in Musil’s and Tanpinar’s novels to perpetuate historically obsolete or non-functioning institutions—the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman clock room, respectively—in the midst of violent and radical historical change prepared the ground for the authors’ ironic approaches to their subject matter. Döblin’s irony rests on his portrayal of the historic central Alexanderplatz in Berlin, a square characterized by much change and urban renewal, yet one that in many ways remains intrinsically the same. The concept of historical change and continuity, then, is one of the major elements in *The Man Without Qualities*, *The Time Regulation Institute*, and *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

As modernist authors, Musil, Tanpinar, and Döblin deny their readers the comfort of arriving at easy categorizations and fixed, singular interpretations of their novels. In Chapter One ("The Chronic City: Time as Experience and Experienced Time") I argued that Musil, Tanpinar, and Döblin explore the fragmentariness of modern experience caused by a rupture (discontinuity) of history, and show their protagonists struggling to survive against a divided and discontinuous experience of time. Chapter Two ("The Ironic City: Modernity and Its Ironies") focused on the authors’ ironic portrayal and critique of historical continuity in certain key institutions in the Viennese, Istanbulite, and Berliner societies of the early twentieth century. Even though at first sight the premises of

---

53 My discussion in this chapter deliberately invokes Saint Augustine’s *The City of God* in the ironic terms of modernist discourse. As we will see, the “godliness” of the city is treated ironically (and imbued with futility) by the novelists of the city as a modern phenomenon.
these two chapters appear to be contradictory—how can it be that Musil, Tanpinar, and Döblin are critical of both historical discontinuity and historical continuity?—this chapter explores the type of historical continuity the authors are writing against and discusses the alternative types of continuity and wholeness they narrate in their novels.

I argue here that time—historico-temporal continuity—within the diegeses of The Man Without Qualities, The Time Regulation Institute, and Berlin Alexanderplatz is depicted as chronic and pathological, and the characters in these novels symptomatically embody what could best be called a temporal epidemic. It is the pathological sense of historical continuity personified through these characters that is the target of criticism of these novels. I shall also argue that each writer explores possibilities for alternative, non-pathological and healing experiences with time and with modern existence. These explorations are embodied by the “vocation” and fate of a particular character in each of these novels—Nuri Efendi the Clockmaker and his teachings in Sufism in Tanpinar’s novel, the protagonist Ulrich and his experimentation with mysticism in Musil’s work, and the pursuit of salvation by the tormented protagonist Franz and his “transcendental” experience with Death at the end of Döblin’s novel.

Even though it will at first seem like these modernist authors are holding up religion and spirituality as the panacea to the ills of modernity and as a way of salvation for the modern subject, it will become evident in the intricacies of their respective narratives, and/or in some of their essays that each of them explores, in his own way, the dilemmas of modern existence and strives to find an adequate vocabulary to explicate the role of spirituality and religion in modernity. The modern city is the setting of choice for each author for exploring this problematic relationship.
The problematic relationship between religion and modern life is not confined to the narratives of Döblin’s and Musil’s novels under discussion in this chapter, but it has an important role in the authors’ personal lives, as well. In his introduction to the English translation of Döblin’s *Schicksalsreise* [*Destiny’s Journey*], which was first published in Germany in 1949 and which consists of personal essays Döblin wrote during his exile in France and the U.S.A. in the early 1940s, Peter Demetz writes of the German author’s “life-long, stubborn, and contradictory thirst for a metaphysical view of the world and himself” (xii). Demetz adds that “[t]his was always strongly present in the sensibilities of an intellectual whom most of his contemporaries considered to be an atheist, a radical, and with some justification”(xii). In the light of this information, it comes as no surprise that in 1912, at the age of thirty-four, Döblin officially left the Jewish community. However, the fact that he converted to Catholicism in exile during the final years of his life only attests to his own problematic and contradictory relationship with religion. Perhaps it is the subconscious makings of this unexpected turn towards spirituality and institutionalized religion towards the end of his life that contribute to the equivocal ending of his novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.54

Musil’s corpus is also marked by inquisitive explorations on the nature of religion and its relation to modernity. Some of Musil’s essays which were compiled by Burton Pike and David S. Luft under the title *Precision and Soul* attest to Musil’s ambiguous relationship with religion and spirituality. In the essay “The Religious Spirit, Modernism, and Metaphysics,” originally written in 1912, Musil criticizes representatives of the Catholic church for the superficial and futile revisions they make in an attempt to keep up with modern society. He writes:

---

54 Döblin composed *Berlin Alexanderplatz* more than a decade before his conversion to Catholicism.

[there is nothing more deplorable than those skeptics and reformers, liberal priests and humanistically oriented scholars, who moan about ‘soullessness,’ ‘barren materialism,’ […] and the ‘cold play of atoms,’ and renounce intellectual precision […]. Then, with the help of some alleged ‘emotional knowledge’ to satisfy the feelings, and with the ‘necessary’ harmony and rounding-out of the world picture, all they invent is some universal spirit: a world-soul, or a God […] (“The Religious Spirit” 23)].

As we shall see, Musil sets out to achieve a similar task in his novel *The Man Without Qualities* when he tries to reconcile the “precision” of modernity with the “soul” of mysticism and spiritual experience. What he claims “liberal priests” call “universal spirit,” becomes “the other condition” in Musil’s novel. It is through the mystical (and incestuous) union of the protagonist Ulrich and his sister Agathe that Musil experiments with creating an “other condition” within the realities of modern Vienna. His search for an alternative spiritual consciousness within modernity was perhaps also prompted, as Mark Mirsky argues, by Musil’s awareness of “his father’s repressed religious tendencies” (xlvii) which turned religion into a complex riddle for the author.

Whereas both Döblin’s and Musil’s essays yield sufficient insight into the authors’ personal and intellectual relationship with religion and spirituality, the same does not apply to Tanpınar. There is a conspicuous absence of religious references and themes in the diaries and essays of Tanpınar, which makes it safe to assume that he was not religious. However, the fact that Tanpınar’s father was a cadi—a judge in a Muslim community—gives an interesting twist to the role of religion in Tanpınar’s life. Even
though he does not refer to institutionalized religion per se, as we shall see later in this chapter, Tanpinar does often refer to a personal, mystical experience of the world in his essays.

The first part of Tanpinar’s *The Time Regulation Institute*, entitled “Büyük Ümitler” [Great Expectations] spans the period from the protagonist Hayri İrdal’s birth in 1893 until the start of World War I in 1914. Unlike Charles Dickens’ bildungsroman, however, this part of Tanpinar’s novel depicts the early years of its protagonist who is stuck in a chronically static world, and who, ironically—and most poignantly—finally finds relief in the eruption of the war. The war, says Hayri, “[b]eni bu acayip dünyadan yorgunluğunu bir türlü anlayılgım bu kargaşaltından […] kurtardı” (74) [“saved [him] from this strange world, from this incomprehensibly tiring chaos” (84)]. The world he lived in was marked by the lingering effects of the Tanzimat era reforms (1839-1876) that sought a complete reconstruction of public and political life in an attempt to modernize the Ottoman Empire. The modernization reforms aimed to reverse the empire’s military and economic decline, in good measure as a response to Europe’s technological, intellectual, and economic advances.

Among the most crucial reforms the Tanzimat initiative sought to realize were “to build up a legal system to guarantee the freedom and equality of the people, to create a modern state machinery, […] to facilitate economic progress, […] to encourage the development of modern cultural institutions” (Berkes 137). The reforms also included the

---

55 Tanpinar’s lecture notes on nineteenth-century Turkish literature, as well as his numerous essays and articles, contain many references to Charles Dickens. He was clearly familiar with Dickens’ work, and most likely with his *Great Expectations*. Hence, it is safe to assume an attempt at an irony on Tanpinar’s part, when he titled the first part of his novel after the British author’s famous work depicting the personal development and growth of its protagonist. Conversely, Tanpinar’s protagonist Hayri is far from achieving personal development in this part of the novel. Hayri is instead stuck in a pathological chronicity that leaves him stifled in a world of anachronisms. For a list of references to Western authors in Tanpinar’s works see Emil and Akün.
establishment of secular civil and criminal codes (modeled chiefly after those of France), as well as the establishment of a provisional Ottoman parliament which was to become the first of its kind in the history of the Ottoman Empire. As this list of reforms suggests, modernization and secularization in both the public and the political realms were the defining features of the Tanzimat era. However noble, brave, or forward-thinking these reforms might sound, in reality, gross errors were committed in their execution. As the capital of the empire, it was in Istanbul where the socio-cultural repercussions of these mistakes were most heavily felt. The Istanbul Tanpinar’s protagonist grew up in is, as he says, the “incomprehensibly tiring chaos (84)” of these errors.

Trying to secularize and modernize a 500-year-old Islamic empire proved anything but unproblematic. The implemented reforms—which, as we shall see, remained superficial for the most part—created a crucial bifurcation within Ottoman society. As Turkish historian İlber Ortaylı points out, the typical Tanzimat official was the product of a combination of conservatism and the spirit of pragmatic reformation (226). He was representative of the typical nineteenth-century Ottoman individual who, despite the intended reforms, persisted in his old life style and traditional Islamic worldview (Ortaylı 226). Perhaps one of the most telling testaments to the incongruities of the Tanzimat reforms comes from the prominent German-Austrian politician and diplomat Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859). Addressing the Ottoman officials of the Tanzimat era in his memoir, which was edited and prepared for publication by his son, Richard von Metternich (1829-1895), Klemens von Metternich writes:

Build your own government upon the basis of adherence to the religious institutions which are the essentials of your very existence... Do not destroy your ancient system in order to build a regime that would not fit your customs and way of life... Do not borrow from European civilization institutions that do not agree
with your institutions, because Western institutions are based on principles that are different from those forming the bases of your Empire. The bases of the West are Christian laws (von Metternich qtd. in Berkes 148-149).

Despite such warnings, however, the Ottoman statesmen of the Tanzimat era failed to bestow a national character on the reforms. As a result, most of these reforms remained artificially imported values, worldviews, and systems which had originated out of the peculiar needs of Europe and which had no basis in the history and culture of the Ottoman Empire. Born in the aftermath of the Tanzimat era, Hayri, Tanpınar’s protagonist, is stuck in a time and place that are defined by the chaotic effects of the reforms. The Istanbul he is born into is neither entirely new, nor entirely old; neither entirely Western, nor entirely Eastern; neither secular, nor religious. In this sense, Hayri resembles Tanpınar’s other characters in *The Time Regulation Institute* and in his other novels. “In their searches and reflections, [these characters] confront a certain social-historical domain and its effects. They find themselves in a confusing in-betweenness. On the one hand, they want and need to change both themselves and their social-historical domain; on the other hand, they feel a sense of belonging and sympathy for familiar cultural features” (Ertuğrul, “A Reading of the Turkish Novel” 636). As we shall see, the incongruities, discordances, and dichotomies of this “in-betweenness” that characterize the Istanbul of the nineteenth century find their dramatization in Tanpınar’s novel as the anachronisms and the pathological chronicities which define the early years of the protagonist Hayri’s life.

Many, if not all, the strange elements in Hayri’s early life have their basis in Tanpınar’s critique of the Tanzimat era, and reflect his views on certain aspects of Western and Eastern cultures. His critical reception of the Tanzimat reforms also shed
light on the use and function of such concepts as chronicity, anachronicity, and pathological time explored in this chapter.

Tanpınar’s essay “Şark ve Garp” [East and West], published originally in 1934, delineates the differences he observes between Eastern and Western cultures. According to him, the most defining characteristic of the East is the fact that it is founded on the quest for personal happiness, and the quest for personal happiness is only a secondary concern for the West. Instead, writes Tanpınar, “[g]arp zihniyetinin esası insan kelimesine verilen yüksek mâna ve onun şerafeti üzerinde döner” [32; the foundation of western mentality revolves around the deep meaning attributed to the word human and around its nobility]. He goes on to argue that Christianity, whose aim is to bring into existence the moral individual, has disciplined the West mentally and psychicly, to the point of rejecting personal happiness. The West, Tanpınar observes, owes every victory and progress it has achieved to having embraced this mentality and to having respected humanity at large (34). Finally, he commends Western civilization for its ability to bring forth new ideas and change, and most importantly, for being dynamic by nature (36). He cites the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen adopted in France as one of hundreds of outcomes of this dynamism.

In contradistinction to the dynamism and humanitarian respect that are the pillars of Western civilization, Tanpınar identifies stasis and self-importance as two of the defining characteristics of the East. The East, he claims, “hayatin gayesi olarak ferdî saadeti alır. […] Bu saadet endişesi uğruna bizzat insanı tahrip etmekten çekinmez. […] Yalnızca saadeti istihdaf ettiği için ki elinden geldiği kadar statiktir. Hiçbir değişmenin bu saadeti ihlal etmesine taraftar olmaz. Oluşun önüne geçer ve bütün cesaretleri, fikrin
tehlikeli oyunlarını ilka eder” [33; accepts personal happiness as the purpose of life. […] It does not refrain from destroying man in the name of pursuit of happiness. […] Because its only aim is happiness, it is as static as can be. It does not want any change to disturb this happiness. It hinders “becoming” and throws away all bravery, all the dangerous games of the mind]. According to Tanpınar, respect for one’s fellow human beings—the chief characteristic of Western civilization—can only be found within the framework of religion in the East. In other words, it does not extend into the public or the political realm. As a final remark on the differences between the two cultures, Tanpınar writes that the people of the East never had to pay the bitter price of being born of original sin, and implicitly attributes some of the differences between Eastern and Western value systems to this vital aspect of the Christian credo (37).

Having enumerated what he sees as certain key disparities between the East and the West, Tanpınar arrives at the conclusion that “bu iki zihniyet, esaslarını teşkil eden hayat telakkilerine irca edildiği takdirde hattâ birbiriyile mukayese bile edilemezler” [34; these two mentalities, when one goes back to the ideas that make up their foundations, cannot even be comparable]. What the Tanzimat reforms strived to do was not only to compare, but to unite these two civilizations, and, according to Tanpınar, “Tanzimat’ın asıl hatası bu iki ayrı âlemi birleştirmek istemesindendir” [34; the major mistake of the Tanzimat era was its desire to unite these two disparate worlds]. His critique of the Tanzimat program continues with an attack on the Ottoman author and journalist Şinasi (1826-1871), a prominent advocate of the reforms. He criticizes Şinasi’s desire to bring together “Avrupa’nın bâkir fikriyle Asya’nın akl-ı pirânesi” [34; the virgin
mind of Europe and the old wisdom of Asia], the young dynamism of the West, and the static wisdom of the East.\textsuperscript{56}

The following passage from Tanpınar’s essay reveals quite succinctly his understanding of the fundamental differences between the two cultures and the reason for the failure of the Tanzimat reforms:

[A ship is admittedly more perfect than a sailboat, a factory is more organized and operates faster than a workbench, military pants are just another variety of the (religious) robe and the (Oriental) chemise. But, there was the sailboat before the ship, and the workbench before the factory, and they functioned just as well. Behind all these innovations and changes were an explorer spirit, a life that does not contend with existing needs, or one that likes to be static, a mind which is not scared of challenges, and a mind that persists at the door of every opportunity, and finally a man who is not familiar with the expression “living a day of dissipation.”\textsuperscript{57} [The advocates of the Tanzimat reforms] failed to see this.\textsuperscript{58}

Tanpınar’s acute analyses of the distinct natures of Eastern and Western civilizations, as well as his diagnoses of the failed Tanzimat program, find their novelistic dramatization in \textit{The Time Regulation Institute} and in the absurdly anachronistic world of his protagonist Hayri. Right from birth—or rather, as we shall see, even before his

\textsuperscript{56} In this quote from \textit{Şınasi}, Europe is given female attributes, and Asia is described as a wise, old man. The word “pir” in Ottoman Turkish means “old man,” and its derivative, “pirâne,” when used alone, denotes senility. The expression “akl-ı pirâne,” however, means the wisdom of old age.

\textsuperscript{57} The popular Turkish expression “felekten bir gün çalmak” indeed does not find its equivalent in English. The expression literally means “to steal one day from fate,” and connotes spending a day of self-indulgence. Tanpınar is making a point that the West is not familiar with the concepts of self-indulgence and dissipation because it is focused on change, innovation, and production.

\textsuperscript{58} Towards the end of the essay, Tanpınar makes an implicit distinction between the Tanzimat reforms of the nineteenth century and the Atatürk reforms of the twentieth century, favoring the latter over the first. For the purposes of this part of the chapter—the discussion on Hayri’s early years—I have expanded upon Tanpınar’s views on the Tanzimat reforms only.
birth—Hayri’s life becomes pre-determined and ruled by a time machine, namely, the
grandfather clock standing majestically in the living room of Hayri’s childhood home.
The grandfather clock, whose name “Mübarek” means “blessed” or “sacred,” and which
had been passed down from his great-grandfather, is a time machine in both senses of the
expression—it is literally a device for keeping time, but it also keeps Hayri and his family
from moving forward in time, detaining them in the past, while the world around them is
characterized by social and political change, the Tanzimat era. Hayri himself attests to the
(symbolically) magical powers of Mübarek when he writes that his entire childhood had
been spent in “ayaklı bir saatin adeta bir büyü gibi zaptettiği bir evde (29)” [“a house
under the spell of a pendulum clock” (46)].

The story of Mübarek dates back approximately a century (its origins go back
three generations). When Hayri’s great-grandfather made his escape from a life-
threatening situation, he vowed to build a mosque one day, as a show of his faith and
gratitude. As soon as he had the means, he bought the land where the mosque was to be
built, but out of fear of losing his funds before the completion of the mosque, he invested
a part of the remainder of his money in a big mansion—whose annexed building for the
servants and the stable was to become the home of Hayri’s family—and a few more
pieces of real estate. “Paranın geri kalan kısmıyla da,” [“With what remained in hand,”]
writes Hayri, “caminin hasırlarını, kilimlerini, kapıya koyacağı büyük saati,
duvarlara asacağı yazı levhalarını, kandillerini tedarik etmişti (26)” [“[he] had bought for
the contemplated mosque, mats, rugs, the big clock he intended to place by the entrance,
the calligraphic panels he would have liked to hang on the walls, and the candles” (44)].
Before Hayri’s great-grandfather could initiate the construction of the mosque, however,
he was fired, lost all his money, died before he could fulfill his promise to build the mosque, and left it to his son to see his promise fulfilled.

Hayri’s great-grandfather’s will thus gets passed on from generation to generation, leaving each son poorer than the first in a desperate attempt to gather the financial means to fulfill their ancestor’s will. By the time Hayri is born, all that is left of the mosque project are the mansion’s annexed small building—Hayri’s grandfather has to sell the main mansion building to create funds for the mosque—and the mosque furniture Hayri’s great-grandfather had purchased, which includes the big grandfather clock. When Hayri’s grandfather dies and passes the inheritance on to Hayri’s father, Hayri laments that “[e]vkafta oldukça iyi bir memurlukla işe başlayan ve ardı arası kesilmeyen talihsizlikler yüzünden küçük bir cami kayyumuğuna kadar inen babamın hayatını da dedesinin bu vasiyeti âdeta zehirlemişti (27)” [“[m]y father’s life was embittered59 by his grandfather’s will. My poor father, who had started in the Department of the Administration of Pious Foundations at a fairly good position, was demoted as a consequence of successive misfortunes to being caretaker of a small mosque” (44)].

Hayri’s father blames Mübarek, which now stands in the middle of their humble home as a monument to the passage of time. More importantly, it stands as testament to the failure of past generations and for every misfortune that has befallen him and his family.

Hayri uses two very powerful words to describe the grip the old grandfather clock Mübarek has had on the fate of his family. The words “spell” and “poison” are as powerful as the one Tristram in Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1769) uses to describe his father’s obsession with exactness. In Sterne’s intentionally anachronic novel,

59 The word in the original text reads “zehirlemişti” which more literally translates as “poisoned” rather than “embittered.”
Tristram tells the reader that his father was a “slave” to exactness, and as the most singularly telling example of his father’s condition, he cites his father’s habit of “wind[ing] up a large house-clock which [they] had standing upon the back-stairs head,” “on the first Sunday night of every month throughout the whole year (8).” The house-clock in Tristram’s house, then, becomes symbolic of his father’s slavery to exactness, and of his chronic obsessive behavior, in much the same vein as Mübärek in Tanpinar’s novel becomes the personification of a generational chronic obsession.

Sterne’s and Tanpinar’s grandfather clocks not only have their owners under their spell, but also their families, and most importantly the respective protagonists of the novels, Tristram and Hayri. Tristram claims that his fate was determined partially by an event that occurred during his conception. When his mother interrupted Tristram’s father with her question “Pray, my dear, […] have you not forgot to wind up the clock? (5)” Tristram’s proper placement in his mother’s womb was disturbed because her “very unseasonable question […] scattered and dispersed the animal spirits, whose business it was to have escorted and gone hand-in-hand with the homunculus, and conducted him safe to the place destined for his reception (5).” Having thus disturbed the vital balance of Tristram’s humors, this event—and the grandfather clock responsible for the occurrence of this disturbance—is considered by Tristram and his father to be one of the main reasons for small, yet numerous, misfortunes that befall Tristram throughout his life.

The first part of Tanpinar’s novel relates the life Hayri spent in his father’s home, under the spell of Mübärek. Hayri grew up surrounded by the mosque furniture which Hayri’s great-grandfather had bought, but could never place in the mosque he had vowed to build. In other words, Hayri’s most formative years are spent in a house that is stuck in
the previous century; a house frozen under the curse of an unfulfilled promise. This
historical curse is so powerful and all-encompassing that it even defines the way people
treat Hayri and his family. As Hayri reminisces about his tenth birthday, he notes that his
uncle (his mother’s brother) gave him a “mukavvadan iki şerefeli minare—kendi
cocuklarına başka türlü, isterseniz bugünkü tabirleriyle modern ve lâik hediyeler seçen
dayım, [...] bana bu cins hediyeler verirdi (23)” [“double-galleried minaret carved from
cardboard […] [he] used to select for his own children gifts of a different sort, namely
modern and secular ones, while for me his choice was limited to such presents of a sacred
character” (41)]. While outside the realm of Hayri’s cursed home, Istanbul—and the rest
of the Empire—was going through important social and political changes in an attempt to
become modern and catch up with the West, Hayri and his family got stuck in the past
century, hence becoming the epitome of anachronism in a forward-moving society.

Ironically, the anachronism that characterizes Hayri’s early life and, to a great
extent, defines the rest of his life, is the consequence of a chronicity that turned
pathological. The clock Mübarek, as the symbol of this anachronism, on a different level
also perpetuates an ancestral (non)-estate and its chronic ills, namely, the repeatedly
failed attempts to build a mosque, and a lineage that gets gradually poorer. Mübarek is
one of the last standing monuments to Hayri’s great-grandfather’s unrealized promise,
and to the long lineage of repeated failures and losses which have become chronic in
Hayri’s family.

Even though the temporal incongruities and pathologies find their most powerful
symbolic manifestation in Hayri’s family history and home in the novel, they are not
specific solely to Tanpınar’s protagonist. Some of the characters who live in the same
neighborhood as Hayri, and who have decisive influences on Hayri’s life, are also
affected by the undesired, yet inevitable repercussions of the Tanzimat reforms in their
own peculiar ways. The three characters who leave their impressions on the young Hayri
are, “bir yokuşun üzerinde harap bir medresede—âdeta bir baykuş gibi—oturan Deli
Seyit Lütfullah, […] aşı boyalı, cephesi bitmek tükenmek bilmeyen bir konakta atlı
arabalı muhteşem bir hayat süren Tunusluzâde Abdüsselâm Bey, […] bir eczane işleten
ve bu çok Müslüman semtin nadir Hristiyan ileri gelenlerinden olan Eczacı Aristidi
Efendi […] (37) [“Seyit Lütfullah the Mad who lived like an owl in a ruined madrassa on
a slope, […] Tunusluzade Abdüsselâm Bey who led an ostentatious life with a rich
equipage in a mansion with a vast façade painted in ochre, […] Aristidi the Apothecary,
one of the rare Christian notables of this orthodox Muslim district who ran a pharmacy
[…]” (52-53)]. Abdüsselâm Bey, Seyit Lütfullah, and Aristidi Efendi—in addition to
Hayri and his family—are representatives of the turn-of-the-century Istanbulite society
which consists of people who are unable to keep up with the modern world, and who
struggle to find a way to live in the face of a rapidly changing reality.

Hayri meets all three characters through Nuri the Clockmaker’s workshop. During
his apprenticeship with the Sufi clockmaker, Hayri notes that Abdüsselâm Bey, Seyit
Lütfullah, and Aristidi Efendi are among the most frequent visitors of the shop. As he
grows older and looks back on his childhood and young adulthood, Hayri becomes aware
of the powerful influence all four characters—including his master, Nuri the
Clockmaker—have had on him. He writes, “[b]en yıllarca bu adamların arasında, onların
rüyaları için yaşadım. Zaman zaman onların kılıklarına girdim, mizaçlarını benimsedim.
Hiç farkında olmadan bazen Nuri Efendi, bazen Lütfullah veya Abdüsselâm Bey oldum.
[...] Hâlâ bile bazen aynaya bak.viewModel zamanı kendi çehremde onlardan birini tanır gibi olyorum (51)” [“I lived with those men for years, and contributed to the realization of their dreams. There were times when I put on their clothes and adopted their idiosyncrasies. Quite unwittingly I became, respectively, Nuri Efendi, Lütfullah, and Abdüüsselam Bey. [...] Even now I seem to catch sight of one of them when I see myself in the mirror” (65)].

As one critic writes, a lot of Tanpınar’s characters are in the throes of having been severed from a unified sense of time, and therefore live uneasy lives, stuck in between clashing worldviews, customs, and values (Balcı 11).60 They “[h]ep bir firar kapı ararlar ve unutmak, huzura kavuşturmak, parçalanmayı bütünüğe dönüştürmek için geçmişe, hatırlaları; bunları çağrıştırıcı kitaplara, mekânlara, saatlere, ilaçlara sığınırlar. Ama hiçbir şey sizlerini dindirmeye yetmez” [Balcı 11; are in constant search of an escape; in order to forget, to find peace, and to make their fragmented worlds whole again, they turn to books, places, clocks, drugs because they remind them of the past and of their memories]. When they do turn to their memories and make them indispensable and vital parts of their present, they, similar to what the grandfather clock Müberek stands for in Hayri’s family, create for themselves anachronistic worlds that chronically, obsessively repeat the past.

Abdüüsselam Bey is one of those characters who refuse to let go of the past and keep up with the times. He lives in a huge mansion with an entire clan of immediate and extended family. Hayri tells the reader that “[e]vinin hususiyeti bir girenin yahut içinde bir kere doğmak gafletini gösterenin bir daha dışarı çıkamamasıydı” (37) “[o]ne of the characteristics of his mansion was that once a person inadvertently entered it or had the

---

60 See Chapter 1, “The Chronic City: Time as Experience and Experienced Time,” for the definition and function of the concept of “unified time” in Tanpınar’s work.
misfortune to be born in it, he was sure to remain there forever” (53)]. In other words, Abdüsselam Bey’s mansion, much like Hayri’s Mübarek, casts a spell on his inhabitants, grips them, freezes them in history, and refuses to let them move on. The old man’s pathological obsession with continuity and chronicity turns his mansion into an anachronism in post-Tanzimat Istanbul. Scared that he will be left alone, Abdüsselam Bey encourages relatives from all corners of the empire to come live with him and revels in witnessing, under his own roof, the progeny of his ancestry. During the İkinci Meşrutiyet (Second Constitutional) Era of 1908-1914, many of the younger members of the family begin to leave the mansion and head back to their native lands (territories like Bosnia, Bulgaria, and North Africa which the Ottoman Empire lost during this period). Around 1912, only thirty-seven people remain in the mansion, most of whom are very distant relatives.

Having lost most of his family members in this way, all the distant relatives who do remain “Abdüsselam Bey’e, ara yerdeki esas cümleler silinmiş, bu yüzden mânası bir türlü çıkmayan bir metin gibi geliyor, onu şaşırtıyor[du] (40)” [“seemed to [Abdüsselam Bey] like a text of which the meaning could not be unriddled because of the deleted main clauses he came across every now and then, […] he felt himself at a loss” (55)]. When the continuity and unity he held on to so obstinately start to disintegrate, the anachronistic microcosm he had created in his mansion loses its coherence and meaning for Abdüsselam Bey. Yet, instead of forcing him to face reality and embrace the change, the disintegration exacerbates his pathological grip on the past and intensifies his need to maintain the status quo.
The most poignant manifestation of his pathological chronicity occurs when he is forced to move to a smaller house due to his dwindling fortune. Having lost all of his relatives to the changing times, Abdüsselam Bey invites Hayri, his wife, and daughter to live with him after Hayri returns to Istanbul from World War I. The most vivid memory Hayri has of his years living with the old man revolves around Abdüsselam Bey’s ritualistic behavior during the religious holidays:

[Ş]eker bayramı eve hiçbir akraba uğramadı. Fakat her kandil ve bayramda olduğu gibi damat, gelin, torun, yaşayan, belki de yaşamayan bütün akrabalar için, hepsinin yaşına ve mertebesine göre yine hediyeler alındı. […] Bu bayram günlerinde yine eskisi gibi bütün akrabayı doyurabileceği bollukta ve gelmeyeceklerine emin olduğumuz bu insanların zevklerine göre yemekler pişiyor, sofra bir lahzada kurulmaya hazır duruyordu (84).

[He received no visit from any relative on the Şeker Bayramı of next year. Nevertheless, as for all other sacred days and public holidays, presents, according to the respective ages and standings of those receiving them, were bought for the son-in-law, the daughter-in-law, grandsons, and perhaps also for relatives that were no more. […] During these holidays, as of old, the table was ready to be laid on the spur of the moment and enough meals to fill the stomach of every single member of the large family were cooked to tickle the palate of each of the visitors, who, we were sure, would never come (91-92)].

That a few times a year Abdüsselam Bey buys presents for each of his family members who have long forgotten him is a testimony to his inability to move forward in time and his unwillingness to accept the changes happening around him. The fate of the unclaimed presents is further proof of his pathological struggle with time. At the end of each holiday, all unclaimed presents are taken to what Abdüsselam Bey calls “the children’s room,” a storage room in his house, where “[o]n bir çocuk beşiği, bir yığın manasız hayat artığı, […] birkaç karyola, konsollar, aynalar, eski oyuncaklar, sandıklar […] birbirinin üstüne yığımış beklerdi (84-85)” “[e]ven cradles, heaps of senseless

61 There are two religious holidays celebrated in Turkey, and during these holidays it is a tradition to pay visits to the family elders.
62 The religious holiday celebrated at the end of the month of Ramadan.
vestiges from buried lives, a few bedsteads […], chests of drawers, console mirrors, old toys, and chests […] remained buried under dust” (92)]. Nobody ever enters this room except to deposit more unopened presents into its “zaman dışılık” (85) [“out-of-timeness” (92)]. Like the Titan god Kronos, the ironically named “children’s room”—along with the cursed grandfather clock Müberek, and Abdüsselam Bey’s old mansion which drew everybody in, but did not let them leave—devours everyone who comes near it, preventing them from moving forward in time.

Towards the end of his life, Abdüsselam Bey’s pathological obsession with temporal continuity reaches its zenith when he names Hayri’s newborn daughter after his own mother—Zehra—starts calling her “mother,” and teaches her to call him “my son” when she turns three. With this incident, Hayri’s firstborn becomes the personification of the anachronism which had been a part of Hayri’s life even before his birth.

In addition to Abdüsselam Bey, the two other characters who are portrayed as being and living “out-of-time” are Seyit Lütfullah the mad and Aristidi Efendi the apothecary. Hayri tells his readers that Seyit Lütfullah used to be a fanatic Muslim who used to preach about strict Islamic rules in mosques. He left Istanbul after his wife died, and when he returned ten years later in 1906, he was physically deformed and was suffering from minor seizures which he attributed to being involved with the occult. Everyone else, however, suspected that his seizures were caused by his use of opium, which he claimed was a “hakikate ermek için bir yol (43)” [“way [to] holy order”63 (58)]. As such, Seyit Lütfullah is one of those characters who, as critic Yunus Balçı argues

---

63 The correct translation here should be “a way to reality” or “a way to truth.” The Turkish word “hakikat” has no connotations of “holy order.”
above, turn to drugs in an attempt to escape the incongruities and the confusion of their disintegrating worlds.

The most interesting aspect of Seyit Lütfullah’s life is his claim that he has a separate second life in the world of spirits. He claims that in this occult life he is healthy and handsome, has a beautiful girlfriend, and is very rich. He also claims that the spirits living in that world will help him find the buried treasures of Emperor Andronikos and he will start living a life of wealth in the world of humans. Seyit Lütfullah’s dream of finding the hidden treasure and becoming rich is shared by Abdüsselam Bey, Aristidi Efendi and Hayri, as well. They all question Seyit Lütfullah’s sanity, but also cannot refrain from believing his fantastic stories about beautiful jinnis and buried treasures. Nevertheless, they also have a safety net in case Seyit Lütfullah fails to attain the treasure which is supposed to make them all rich. In case of failure to locate the treasure, they place their hopes in Aristidi Efendi’s attempts at alchemy. They are all convinced that he will, one day, succeed in transforming mercury into gold, which, alas, never happens. As Hayri later acknowledges, “[h]akikatte bütün bu insanlar hakikat denen duvarın ötesine geçmek için birer delik bulmuş yaşiyorlardı (42)” (“[i]n point of fact, all these people, so as to be able to go beyond the wall called reality, had dug themselves holes to live in” (57)). Critic Mustafa Kutlu reads the neighborhood Hayri grew up in as the manifestation of a fantastic world of lies (3). He further argues that the characters from Hayri’s childhood "maddi ve manevi dayanaklarını—gerçeklerini—yitirmiş devletin bir remzi gibi, içine sığındakiş hayat aleminde yaşarlar” [3; stand for the empire which has lost its

---

64 It is not clear in the novel which Emperor Andronikos Seyit Lütfullah refers to. There are numerous Andronikos’ in history, several of whom were emperors of the Byzantine Empire. Seyit Lütfullah believes that one of these emperors has a hidden treasure buried somewhere in Istanbul. Stories about hidden treasures of emperors and sultans past are among the most common myths in Turkey.
material and spiritual foundations—realities—and they live in the fantasy world where they take refuge].

Abdüsselam Bey, Seyit Lütfullah, and Aristidi Efendi are the representatives of a people whose ties with tradition, historical continuity, and, consequently, reality have been severed with the introduction of the modernizing Tanzimat reforms into Ottoman society. It is Halit Ayarçı, Hayri’s beneficiary and the founder of the Time Regulation Institute, who tries to bridge the gap between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, and to bring people around him to wake up to the changing realities around them. After spending many years among delusional and pathologically static people, Hayri admits that “Halit Ayarçı’nın hayatı [n]a girdiği andan itibaren […] büs bütün başka bir insan [oldu]. Realitenin içinde yaşamağa, onunla mücadele [a]lışt” (51) [“there [is] the following undeniable fact: my metamorphosis upon the entrance into my life of Halit the Regulator. Thanks to him, I started to live in reality and learned to struggle with it” (65)].

Ironically, however, the Time Regulation Institute does not go any further than creating a pseudo-reality, to borrow the term from Robert Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities*.⁶⁵ In essence, Halit Ayarçı’s entrepreneurial endeavor is an attempt at modernization for the sake of modernization, bereft of cultural, political, and national foundations. As such, the Time Regulation Institute was not born out of the needs of Turkish society, it was rather the product of an obsession with the “new,” however useless or dysfunctional the “new” may prove to be. In the end, the same reasons that

---

⁶⁵ The second chapter of this dissertation, “The Cautionary Tale: Modernity and Irony,” discusses the two institutional phenomena in Tanpinar’s and Musil’s novels, namely the Time Regulation Institute and the Parallel Campaign, respectively, as instances of pseudo-realities.
caused the Tanzimat reforms to fail—as discussed above—cause the eventual dissolution of the Time Regulation Institute.

As I have already discussed in Chapter Two, the Time Regulation Institute finds its historical antecedent in the “muvakkithane” [clock room] of the Ottoman Empire. Clock rooms, and the “muvakkit” [time keeper] appointed to each clock room, were used to observe the movements of the sun and to calculate—and regulate—daily prayer times for the Muslim public. The first clock room of the Ottoman Empire was built in the fifteenth century, and this institution was abolished in 1952, after numerous reforms enforced drastic changes into public life and into the political realm, following the founding of the modern Turkish Republic by Atatürk in 1923. With the new advances in technology, there was no longer a need to maintain a standalone government institute for time keeping.

Halit Ayarcı tries to re-create this historic institution rendered obsolete by new technologies. He does not invest in this enterprise in an effort to preserve or revive traditional customs and elements of the Ottoman past, rather, he packages the historic institution as a Western marketing strategy and gives it a new and modern purpose—regulating Western time (objective, fragmented) instead of regulating Islamic time (subjective, whole, in tune with the universe/nature). His singular most important objective in creating the institute revolves around bringing something “new” into Turkish culture. Tanpınar uses Halit Ayarcı’s Time Regulation Institute for two purposes, namely, to criticize a fetishization with the “new” that characterizes the post-Tanzimat era, and to a greater extent, post-Republic era, and to delineate the crucial difference between Western/modern and non-Western/pre-modern experiences with temporality. I have

66 See Chapter II, pp. 94-95.
already explored the differences between experiencing and living in time that is disrupted and broken (Western), as opposed to whole and unified (non-Western). The following passage by Kürşad Ertuğrul provides an overview of these two temporalities:

Modernity’s objective, “empty,” and progressing time and singular existence in multiplicity are “alien” to [Turkish] culture. Western modernity abstracts time from social and cultural practices and imposes on it a quantifiable “concreteness” on a horizontal axis. The idea of progress is crystallized through and in this fiction of time. However, in a social and cultural area in which existence is understood as “being a part of the whole” and through a vertical condensation in the unification in being, this modern fiction of time and the social and cultural development it represents lead to dissonances and existential problems (“A Reading of the Turkish Novel” 646).

Tanpınar’s novels create microcosms in which his characters become the embodiments of such “dissonances and existential problems” created by a civilizational shift. In The Time Regulation Institute, the titular institute is both the symptom and the manifestation of this civilizational shift.

Halit Ayarcı first comes up with the idea of the Institute one evening during a tour around Istanbul. Hayri points out to him that the clocks located in various squares are not showing the exact same time. “[Biri üç buçukta durmuştu; öbürü belki dün gecenin on birinden rötarlı bir tren gibi bugünün akşamına yetişmeye çalışıyordu (192)]” (“One had stopped at half past three, the other tried to catch up with the time it had lost on the way like a delayed train” (180)), complains Hayri, and in a few days’ time, Halit Ayarcı turns Hayri’s trivial complaint into the raison d’être of one of the most bureaucratically complex—yet utterly redundant—institutions of the country.67

67 In an interview originally published on 19 June 1954 (the day before The Time Regulation Institute made its debut in the Turkish newspaper Yeni İstanbul [New Istanbul] as a serialized novel), Tanpınar is asked how he came up with the idea for the novel and its protagonist, Hayri Irdal. Tanpınar answers: “[Hayri’yı] bulmadım, kendi geldi. Şehir saatlerinin birbirini tutmaması yüzünden vapuru kaçırdım bir günde Kadıköy iskelesinin saatin altında birdenbire onuna karşılaştım ve bir daha beni terk etmedi. Ondan kurtulmak için bu hikâyeye başladım” [Nur 234; I didn’t find [Hayri], he came to me himself. On a day when I missed the ferry because the clocks around the city were not showing the same time, I suddenly ran
The initial stages of establishing the Institute as a social and economic enterprise constitute a series of comical and absurd undertakings by Halit Ayarç. Instead of first working on the financial and bureaucratic foundations for the institute, and then focusing on such logistical issues as the location of the offices, office furniture, and office supplies, the first deed Halit Ayarç does is to rent a two-room office, and buy curtains and typewriters before he even fills out any paperwork to apply for a permit, or work out the internal structure of the institute. Even though he calls his method “very modern” (233), the way Halit Ayarç approaches his business enterprise is similar to the way Tanzimat reformers brought new and modern public and political systems to an empire that was not ready for them, or did not have the proper social and cultural foundations to accommodate them. In other words, he is “looking for the ‘Turkish modern’ in a new social and cultural space—deformed and destabilized but at the same time opened up by the radicalization of Turkish modernization” (Ertuğrul, “A Reading of the Turkish Novel” 636).

It is important to note that Halit Ayarç relies on the wisdom of Hayri’s master Nuri Efendi when establishing the maxims of the Institute. One month after he buys the curtains and the typewriters, Halit Ayarç asks Hayri to compile close to one hundred of Nuri Efendi’s sayings on the philosophy of time, turns each saying into a poster, and asks Hayri to hang them all around the city. As such, his project seeks to transform the sense of whole and unified time—represented by the Sufi character and teachings of Nuri Efendi—into modern, divided time which the Time Regulation Institute stands for. Everything Ayarç does, however, remains superficial and serves no purpose other than

into him under the clock at the Kadıköy ferry station, and he never left me alone after that. I started writing this story in order to get rid of him].
being new and modern in and of itself without addressing a need in society, whose
historical and socio-cultural roots are ignored.

Halit Ayarçı’s obsession with the new is a reflection of a general tendency in the
wider socio-cultural milieu of the time. The decades following the Tanzimat era are
marked by a fetishization of the “new” and this attitude is partly what Tanpınar criticizes
in his novel. Throughout the text, Halit Ayarçı exalts everything that has an element of
newness or modernness to it, without any attention to its social, cultural, or political
relevance. While trying to come up with new projects for the Institute, he tells Hayri
impassionedly, that “asıl mühim mesele herkesi şaşırtacak bir şey yapmamızdır. […]
Yeni, çok yeni bir şey. […] Bizim gibi müesseseler bir lahza bile aktüalite olmaktan
vazgeçemezler (299)” [“the most important thing is our inventing something which
would be puzzling for everybody. […] Something unheard of.” Establishments like ours
are bound to be on the agenda of the day” (269)]. Perhaps, his most memorable statement
is that “[y]eninin bulunduğu yerde başka meziyete lüzum yoktur (218)” [“[w]here there is
new there’s no need for any other merit” (202)].

The workings of Halit Ayarçı’s character in the novel prove that Tanpınar is not
against change and modernization; he is critical of change that has no cultural and social
foundations or historical roots, and especially change that does not have a productive and
useful purpose for the society at large. As one critic puts it, “[Tanpınar] hayatın kendi
şeklini yaratmasını arzu [ediyor] ve fakat bunun Halit Ayarçı’nın Saatleri Ayarlama
Enstitüsü’ndeki gibi gülünç olmamasını, muasır zamanı yaşamak diye sahtekârlığa,
şarlatanlığa dönüşmemesini istediği anlaşıyor” [Kutlu 4; Tanpınar wants life to create

---

68 The original text reads “Yeni, çok yeni bir şey” which more literally translates as “Something new, very
new” instead of “Something unheard of.” The repetition of the word “new” in the original text is crucial to
support the arguments made in the discussion at hand.
its own form but does not want it to be farcical as in the case of Halit Ayarçı’s Time Regulation Institute, and does not want being modern to turn into trickery or charlatanism].

Tanpınar’s protagonist Hayri Irdal remains quite doubtful of the purpose of the institute from the beginning, and he never fully shares, nor understands, Halit Ayarçı’s enthusiasm about being new and modern. He often remarks that he cannot comprehend what it is that the institute does and admits that “[i]nsanlarla, hayatla hiçbir alâkasını [bulamiyordu]. […] Bu, birkaç kelimenin etrafında doğmuş bir şeydi. Daha ziyade bir masala benziyordu. […] Böyle i̇ş olur muydu? Hayatta yeri neydi bunun? (225)” [“it had no connection either with human beings or with life itself. […] Here everything was born out of a few words. It all seemed unreal.69 […] Could this be possible? What role did this occupy in life?” (207-208)].

Hayri can make no sense of the institute because it lacks the necessary socio-cultural relevance in order to find its proper function and medium in the current condition of society. Hence, along with everything else that is new and Western, the Institute, too, does not fit, seamlessly or otherwise, within the realities of Ottoman-Turkishness. The introduction of modernity into the Turkish socio-cultural, economic, and political arenas creates ruptures and crises within the national psyche and leaves the society wrapped up in the throes of alienation and confusion. Hayri’s poignant description of how he feels in the midst of all the changes around him—his role in the founding of the Time Regulation Institute being the biggest change in his life—is the perfect embodiment of how the

69 The original text uses the word “masal” here, which translates as “a fairytale.” The subtlety in the translation is especially important here because it establishes a continuity between Hayri’s life before the Institute—when he partook in the dreams and fantasies of characters like Abdüsselam Bey, Seyit Lütfullah the mad, and Aristidi Efendi the apothecary—and his life with the Institute where he continues to do the same even though he had originally claimed that Halit Ayarçı finally introduced him to reality.
society at large feels in the face of modernity. After the mayor of Istanbul visits the
Institute’s offices and commends both Halit Ayarcı and Hayri for having created such a
useful and impressively modern establishment, Hayri is surprised at the mayor’s reaction
at what seemed to him as nonsensical, and writes, “bana hep iki elimin üstünde ve
ayaklarımız havada yürüyorum gibi geliyordu. Etrafımda her şey öyle ters ve tanımaz bir
mantık içinde idi (240)” “[i]t always seemed to me that I was walking head down upon
my two hands, as everything around me was in such a paradoxical and unrecognizable
state of logic” (219-220)].

Tanpınar makes it very clear to his reader that Hayri is aware of the absurdity and
the redundancy of the Institute. At one point, during a heated discussion with Halit
Ayarcı, Hayri exclaims “[h]erkes rast geldiği dükkânın kapısından başını şöyle bir uzatıp
saatini düzeltir (247)” “[p]eople can easily peer through the window of any shop they
come across and with a simple glance reset their watches” (226)]. Yet, Hayri never leaves
the Institute and remains at the side of Halit Ayarcı until, one day, a foreign committee
that inspects the Institute determines that it is indeed useless, and the Time Regulation
Institute is dissolved. Critic Abdullah Uçman argues that “[m]odernleşme süreci içindeki
toplumumuzda artık bir anlamı kalmayan ve bir kısmı hurafelerden meydana gelen
geleneksel kültürün bir nevi prototipi olarak canlandırılan Hayri İrdal, önündeki ‘eşik’i
bir türlü aşamamış, inanmadığı şeyler yapan ‘arada’ kalmış Türk ayağını temsil
etmektedir” (“Değişen Değerler” 502; Hayri Irdal, who is portrayed as a prototype of the
culture which consists partly of superstitions, and which no longer has any
meaning in our society in the process of modernization, represents the Turkish
intelligentsia who has been unable to cross the threshold in front of him, and who does
things he does not believe in. He is therefore stuck in between. Although I do not agree with Uçman that Hayri “represents the Turkish intelligentsia,” I do agree that he is the embodiment of “in-betweenness.”

Tanpınar creates characters that are stuck in between in an effort to expose the failure of the Turkish modernization project. He seeks to find alternative paths to modernization which do not ignore or try to replace the social and cultural foundations, customs, and value systems of the people. According to him, Turkey should create its own tools for modernization instead of borrowing a ready-made Western product. In the following passage, Kürşad Ertuğrul comments on the nature of modernization in the Western understanding of the term, reveals one of its many inherent contradictions, and deems it unfit for Turkey.

This idea of progress has characterized the Turkish experience, emulating the ever-new present of Western modernity so as to move Turkish society toward its own future. Yet it presents a contradiction in terms. If modernity designates a temporality that not only is chronologically “new” but also depends on a claim for qualitative newness (the claim that modernity constantly renews itself qualitatively), modernization is bound to imply an ever-same dependence, an insurmountable time gap. Therefore, it is a self-contradiction to expect that Turkey would catch up with modernity through modernization (“A Reading of the Turkish Novel 636).

What Tanpınar critiques in not only The Time Regulation Institute, but also in his other novels and essays, is precisely the misconception that there is only one path to becoming modern—through adopting the modernization project of the West. As we shall see, in the novel the character Nuri Efendi is portrayed as an alternative to—or perhaps as the necessary missing ingredient for—the modernization process Tanpınar criticizes.

The two most influential people in Hayri’s life—his master, Nuri Efendi the Clockmaker and his beneficiary, Halit Ayarçı—are the personifications of the two
worldviews and temporalities between which Hayri is trapped. I have already argued in Chapter One that while Nuri Efendi stands for unified time, Halit Ayarcı is the embodiment of ruptured and fragmented time of modernity. I have also argued that Nuri Efendi and Hayri’s son Ahmet are the only two characters who are conspicuously spared Tanpınar’s pervasive ironic and critical tone in the novel. Before I move on to a discussion of Nuri Efendi and place his Sufism-infused teachings within Tanpınar’s writings on the unity and continuity of time, I would like to briefly comment on the minor, yet significant role Hayri’s son Ahmet plays in the novel.

Passages on Ahmet are indeed quite few in number; however, they give the reader sufficient insight into his personality to place him at a very strategic spot within the crucial discussion of pathological chronicity. I have already commented in detail on Hayri’s great-grandfather and the events following his failure to build the mosque he had promised. As his unfulfilled promise becomes his cursed legacy and grips his descendants under its spell in the instrumental embodiment of Mübarek the grandfather clock, Hayri and his family become wrapped up in a pathological chronicity that they cannot get out of. At this point, it is crucial to point out that the name of Hayri’s infamous great-grandfather is none other than Ahmet. As such, when Hayri names his only son after the original source of his (and his family’s) pathological relationship with time and historical continuity, it seems as if the young Ahmet is nothing other than another personification of this pathological continuity. However, Tanpinar is very careful to show his reader that Ahmet is not a typical descendant of his namesake.

Unlike the other members of Hayri’s family, as well as unlike Hayri himself, Ahmet has a sense of reality and an acute perception of the true nature of changes taking
place around him. He never believes in the Time Regulation Institute, or in Halit Ayarçılı, and in order to distance himself from the absurdities and pseudo-realities that govern his family’s life, he leaves home and stays in the dormitory of the medical school he attends. Ahmet even goes as far as changing his last name when he hears of his father’s plans to write his memoir because he does not want to be associated with such an absurd and failed enterprise as the Time Regulation Institute. Hayri writes of his son that “[b]ana benzemediğini, bütün düşüncesinde beni inkâr ettiği için ona kızıyordum. Hiç dargınlığım yoktu. Biliyordum ki bana benzememesi tek kurtuluş çaresidir. [...] Hatta bundan memnundum bile (355)” “[he] was not upset at all by [Ahmet’s] dissimilarity to [his father] and his denial of [his father] in his thoughts. [He] was not angry at him. [He] knew that the only way for salvation for [Ahmet] would be his dissimilarity to [his father] [...] [He] was even glad about it” (315)). It is young Ahmet who finally breaks the curse of Mübarez, the grandfather clock, and puts an end to the congenital pathology of his ancestry. Even though by virtue of his name he was programmed to propagate the family obsession with stasis and continuity, he is able to break free of the spell and create his own path in life. As such, he exemplifies what Tanpınar wants Turkey to do, namely, not to follow blindly in the footsteps of the West, but to find its own path to becoming modern.

Nuri Efendi and Sufi aspects of his philosophy, so resonant in Tanpınar’s work, have their analogue in Döblin’s novel Berlin Alexanderplatz and in Franz’s transcendental experience with Death at the end of that novel. As we shall see, Tanpınar’s essay “Bursa’da Zaman” [Time in Bursa]—which, I argue, is helpful in analyzing the
character and teachings of Nuri Efendi—can be read in conjunction with Döblin’s numerous essays on Nature.

In Tanpınar’s own words, the permeating emotion in his book-length essay Beş Şehir [Five Cities]—of which his “Bursa’da Zaman” [Time in Bursa] is one segment—is “hayatımızda kaybolan şeylerin ardından duyulan üzüntü ile yeniye karşı beslenen istiyaktır” [7; the sadness that we feel for those things that have disappeared from our lives, and the longing we feel for the new]. As the first sentence of Tanpınar’s forward to his book, this statement succinctly summarizes the underlying dilemma of all of Tanpınar’s works, including—and especially—of The Time Regulation Institute. The second sentence in his forward reveals the solution Tanpınar offers to alleviate the existential crises of the Turkish national psyche, as well as to resolve the discordances born of an unfounded civilizational shift. He suggests that “[i]lk bakışta birbirileyle çatışır görünen bu iki duyguyu sevgi kelimesinde birleştiribiliriz” [7; we can reconcile these two seemingly contradictory emotions with the word ‘love’]. “Love,” as defined by Tanpınar here, has the power to unite and to bring together, in peace and harmony, disparate phenomena. In this sense, Tanpınar’s definition of love, and the importance he places on it echo the Sufi mystics’ teachings on this concept.

The Sufi teacher and psychologist Robert Frager writes, “[f]or the great Sufi teacher and poet Rumi, love is the only force that can transcend the bounds of reason, the distinctions of knowledge, and the isolation of normal consciousness,” and notes that “[t]he love [Rumi] experienced […] might be more fully described as love for all things, for creation itself” (14). Another Sufi scholar refers to Sufism as “an art of rebirth, a process of regaining one’s naturalness, a way out of automation, […] a vehicle for
creative vision, [...] the harmonization with true nature,” and “the process of awareness of the world of multireality and the perception of single reality” (Arasteh 94). The parallels between these underlying principles and definitions of Sufism and Tanpinar’s ideas on creating one’s own unique modernity through the harmonious union of old, traditional values with the new realities of the times are hard to miss. Tanpinar uses the words “process,” “naturalness,” “creative,” and “harmonization” frequently in both his novels and in his essays to delineate a possible path out of the discordant reality brought on by the flawed modernization project underway in Turkey.

Another vital principle of Sufism—in conjunction with its definition of love—is the emphasis it places on being one with the universe. A Sufi’s love is directed at everything that has been created, and does not make a distinction among animate, inanimate, or spiritual phenomena. Sufism unites and harmonizes.70 In his essay “Bursa’da Zaman” [Time in Bursa], Tanpinar admires the city of Bursa—the first imperial capital of the Ottoman Empire—for the historical and cultural harmony it exudes.71 He designates this city as the epitome of harmonious historical continuity (as opposed to rupture and ensuing fragmentation) when he writes of the architectural masterpieces adorning the city, as he uses a language that strongly resonates with Sufism. Tanpinar writes that “Cetlerimiz inşa etmiyorlar, ibadet ediyorlardı. Maddeye geçmesini ısrarla istedikleri bir ruh ve imanları vardı. Taş, ellerinde canlanıyor, bir ruh parçası kesiliyordu. Duvar, kubbe, kemer, mihrap, çini, hepsi Yeşil’de dua eder, Muradiye’de düşünür ve Yıldırım’dan harekete hazır, göklerin derinliğine susmuş bir kartal hamlesiyle

70 It is important to note here that “unity,” harmony,” and “wholeness” are words that have been used earlier to describe the sense of time in pre-modern Turkey—in contradistinction to “divided,” “fragmented” sense of time characteristic of modernity.
71 Bursa, a city in northwestern Turkey, served as the Empire’s capital between 1335-1365 after it was captured from the Byzantines in 1326.
Our ancestors did not build, they worshipped. They had a kind of faith and spirit which they wanted to transfer unto the material. A piece of stone came to life in their hands, and turned into spirit. The wall, the dome, the arch, the mihrab\(^{72}\), the (enameled) tile, they all pray in the Green Mosque\(^{73}\), ponder in the Muradiye Mosque\(^{74}\), and hover above the plains in Yıldırım\(^{75}\), awaiting, like the movement of an eagle hungry for the depth of the skies. A single spirit sings in all of them. In this poetic overview of some of the distinctive architectural and geographical components of Bursa, Tanpinar brings the animate, the inanimate, and the spiritual to life and creates a harmonious cosmos.

In addition to the time in which we “live” and “work”—characterized by modern, fragmented, regulated time—Tanpinar writes that there is a second time in Bursa, one that is “çok derin, takvimle, saatle alâkası olmayan” [94; very deep, with no relation to the calendar or the clock], and he calls this second sense of time “yekpare zaman” [94; unified, single time]. This unified time extends back to the past, makes itself felt in the present, and expands into the future. There is a strong connection between what Tanpinar calls “unified time” and historical continuity. Bursa, Tanpinar tells us, has been marked with the “stamp of history” which permeates this city, and this history appears in the shape of “bir cami, bir han, bir mezar taşı, burada eski bir çınar, ötede bir çeşme olur ve […] sizi yakalar, [s]ohbetinize ve işinizin arasına girer, hulyalarınızı istikamet verir” [94; a mosque, a caravansary, a gravestone, an old maple tree here, a fountain there and […] grabs you, interrupts your conversation and your work, gives direction to your dreams].

\(^{72}\) “Mihrab” is a niche in the wall of a mosque that designates the direction of Makka, which is where practicing Muslims must turn to when they are praying.
\(^{73}\) Built in 1420, the Green Mosque is one of the most important architectural gems in the city of Bursa.
\(^{74}\) A mosque built in 1426.
\(^{75}\) A district in Bursa.
In other words, Tanpınar describes an ideal amalgamation of “unified time,” and modern time which has been earlier associated with life and work. In Tanpınar’s ideal world, “unified time” and modern time can coexist harmoniously, they each have their separate place and purpose, and do not fight for dominance. Once again, the idea of a peaceful harmony among all things—animate, inanimate, spiritual—aligns Tanpınar’s worldview with that of the Sufis.

Tanpınar’s intellectual affinity with Sufism finds its embodiment in the character of the Sufi master Nuri Efendi in The Time Regulation Institute. Robert Graves posits that in Sufism, “[e]nlightenment comes with love—love in the poetic sense of perfect devotion to a Muse” (ix). Nuri Efendi’s Muses are clocks and watches. Hayri tells his reader that Nuri Efendi has worked in the same clockroom—filled to the brim with all kinds of clocks and watches—for thirty-five years, and that even though he has had almost no formal education, people who know him consider him to be a great man of science, and others take him to be part saint. To this, Nuri Efendi responds, “Beni adam eden saatlerdir! (31)” [“I’ve become what I am thanks to clocks and watches” (48)]. Even though there are no explicit references to Sufism in the novel, Tanpınar’s depiction of Nuri Efendi—through the eyes and memories of Hayri—carries sufficient Sufi characteristics to place him among some of the prominent Sufi scholars in the tradition. His name alone, typical of “enlightened” Sufi teachers, derives from the Turkish word for “light” (“nur”) and makes him a typical Sufi master.

Tanpınar is very generous with his compliments when he describes Nuri Efendi through Hayri. Given the overall ironic tone of the novel, the seemingly genuine positive language Tanpınar uses to depict Nuri Efendi seems to place the master clockmaker on a
separate philosophical plane from the rest of the characters; however, Nuri Efendi, too, like most of Tanpınar’s characters—with the exception of the protagonist Hayri’s son Ahmet—is not without flaws.

Hayri describes Nuri Efendi as a man who is physically fit and fifty-five to sixty years old. He tells his reader that his master claims to have never suffered from any illness in his life, not even a toothache. We find out that his physical health is a reflection of his well-disciplined and calm inner, spiritual life when Hayri recalls that “[m]uvakkithaneye yerleştirilen beri otuz beş sene geçtiği hâlde bir kere hiddet ettiği, bir kere bağırığı görmüş olmamıştı. […] Birisine kızğıdı veya canı pek sıklığı zaman camiin avlusunda kim bilir hangi zamanından kalmış kocaman bir taşı kucaklar, şuraya buraya taşırıdı (30-31)” “[s]houting or flying into a temper was not his habit, and he had never been seen in such a state in the course of the thirty-five years since he had taken his abode at the [clockroom]. […] When he got angry with someone or was in low spirits, he lifted the huge rock which stood in the courtyard of the mosque—dating from God knows which restoration period—and carried it back and forth” (47-48)]. Tanpınar thus portrays a character who is the epitome of harmony and wholeness—both physically and spiritually—within the cosmos of the novel which, as I have argued, is described as simultaneously anachronic and pathologically chronic. As such, it seems as if Nuri Efendi’s philosophy of Sufism and harmonious continuity are what Tanpınar offers as a counterpoint to the discordant and disruptive modernity prevalent in the Turkey of his time.

Yet, Tanpınar is careful not to imply such a crystal clear solution to the dichotomy between religion/spirituality and modernity. Despite the almost saint-like
descriptions of Nuri Efendi, we find out that he, too, suffers from the pathological obsession with continuity which afflicts almost all the other characters in the novel. In fact, his obsession with temporal unity and continuity is so severe that he, similar to Abdüsselam Bey, creates a harmonious microcosm in his clockroom and never sets foot outside on the streets of Istanbul. Hayri tells us of his Sufi master that “Meşrutiyet’ten sonra bilhassa şehir saatleri çoğalıncaya ‘ayarsız saat göreceğim’ korkusu ile muvakkithaneden çıkmaz olmuştu (34)” “[w]ith the advent of the Constitutional Era, when the number of clock towers in the city increased, he stayed in the Time Regulation Center most of the time, lest he should come across ‘unadjusted clocks’” (50-51)]. Hence, it becomes clear that Nuri Efendi, who is the epitome of spirituality and religion in the narrative, cannot function in the modern setting of the city. The “unadjusted” and fragmented time of modernity render him dysfunctional.

The Spiritualists Association where Hayri works briefly before he meets Halit Ayarçılı, the founder of the Time Regulation Institute, is another instantiation of the discordance between religion and the modern city. The members of the Association meet regularly in downtown Istanbul in a modern apartment building, and claim to communicate with otherworldly spirits. Hayri tells us that in the Association, “[h]emen her üç günde bir yukarı âlemden gelen tebligler yayınlanır, onlar tefsir edilir, çok âlimane fikirler söylenirdi (150)” “[c]ommuniqués were published every three days from the world above. These were interpreted and erudite opinions were expressed” (147)]. Even

---

76 This should not be confused with the Time Regulation Institute. A more accurate translation of the Turkish word “muvakkithane” here would be “clockroom.”
77 The original Turkish text reads “çıkmaq olmuştu” which translates as “never left.” “Most of the time” implies that there were times when he did leave his clockroom; however, the original Turkish text has no trace of this implication as it very explicitly states that Nuri Efendi stopped setting foot out of his clockroom with the advent of modernization.
though he works as the treasurer and the secretary of this association, he admits that
“[b]öyle cemiyetler, daha ziyade beraberce yalan söleyip, beraberce aldandıp hoşça vakit
geçirmek isteyen insanların işidir (150)” [“such associations are usually formed by
members who jointly lie and pass the time in the pleasant experiences of collective
hallucinations” (147)]. In other words, Tanpinar seems to imply that religion and
spirituality are relegated to a pastime activity within the realm of modernity, but they are
far from being harmless. The members of the Spiritualists Association each have their
own peculiar idiosyncrasies which make them unable to adapt to the realities of the world
they live in. Each member believes that spirits and ghosts live side by side with them and
that they interfere with their lives. Hence, almost every member suffers from
sleeplessness, headaches, paranoia, or anxiety, and one of the members ends up
committing suicide. Spirituality and religion, then, are not portrayed as solutions to the
ills caused by rapid modernization. On the contrary, they, as institutions, cease to
function when confronted with modernity. As Tanpinar dramatizes in his novel, however,
people keep turning to religion, even—or, especially—when faced with modernity, either
genuinely and devotedly like Nuri Efendi, or as merely a pastime activity like the
members of the Spiritualists Association. In both cases, the relationship between religion
and modernity is dramatized as a discordant one.

In much the same way as Tanpinar explores the mystical and harmonious unity of
all things animate, inanimate, and spiritual in a modern world of violent change and
discontinuity, Döblin argues that the modern individual should be “aware […] of the
cosmological ramifications of human existence” (Fries 45) in order to live in unity with
the world around him/her. The full title of his novel, Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die
establishes a juxtaposition between the individual and the city. Critics disagree on the relationship between Franz (the individual) and the city (the collective) as it plays out in the novel. While some critics argue that the novel is the story of Franz’s battle against the city, and that the end of the novel suggests the victory of the collective over the individual, thereby interpreting their relationship as antagonistic, others posit that Döblin writes about the interplay between the individual and the collective in an objective manner, without taking sides. In Döblin’s novel, Alexanderplatz is portrayed not only as the metonymic microcosm of the city of Berlin, but of modern life in general. Marilyn S. Fries comments on the semiotic relationship between Franz and Alexanderplatz, and situates this relationship within the framework of a cosmic harmony:

For Döblin, and particularly in reference to his main character, Franz Biberkopf, Alexanderplatz represents a microcosm of the world, of life. Döblin’s microcosm is always in flux, never stable or static, and therefore uncontrollable. […] The individual Franz Biberkopf is contained within the larger whole of Alexanderplatz. As a singular entity, he functions as one aspect of the greater organism comprised of numerous ‘Biberkopfs’ and is seen […] as a figure molded by the larger force and its extreme contradictions (43-44).

Döblin has written two book-length treatises that situate discursively the foundations of the metaphysical elements found in his novels. In these books, Unser Dasein [Our Being] and Das Ich über die Natur [The I Above Nature], Döblin argues that the material world as we know it has its evolutionary origins in what he calls a universal “Ur-Ich” [Ur-I]. He further posits that a part of this “Ur-Ich” is found in every individual, thus establishing an inevitable and ineradicable continuity and connection between the individual and nature. In other words, Döblin’s metaphysical theory rests on the premise

---

78 For an article arguing an antagonistic relationship between Franz and Berlin, see the chapter on Alfred Döblin in Ziolkowski. For a different reading of this relationship see Klotz.
that the individual is an indispensable component of a cosmos. It is only when the modern subject becomes aware of his/her ties with this cosmos that s/he can live a harmonious and peaceful life. The following passage is a summary of Döblin’s writings on the subject:


[The person is part of nature and its counterpart. [...] I is an 'and' to the thousand forms of nature. It is certainly not a mere addition that comes second to it, the forms are there, and the I, the experience is there: instead, the forms of nature and the experience [of the I] are a real unity, the real reality, and cannot be separated. This is a basic fact in the world that [I] have touched upon. [...] So, these two, the world and I, belong together.]

Similar to Tanpinar’s intellectual and metaphysical view of the world, Döblin’s world is founded on the vital necessity of unity, wholeness, and continuity that resembles Sufi mysticism.

In Berlin Alexanderplatz, Franz’s two entries into Alexanderplatz play an important role, as they represent the individual who is not aware of the connection between the I and the cosmos, and the individual who has become aware of this semiotic relationship, respectively. The first time Franz comes to Alexanderplatz after having served his term in prison, his only desire is to live the life of a respectable man. However, after suffering a few blows of fate, he finds himself tangled up in a criminal gang, loses his right arm, and finally his girlfriend gets murdered by one of his friends. This last incident pushes Franz over the edge. He now finds himself stuck in a catatonic stupor in an insane asylum. It is during his stay at the insane asylum that Franz has a
transcendental experience with Death which changes him completely. As he walks into Alexanderplatz for the second time, Franz is a new man who has made peace with the world and with his fate.

In the prologue to the novel, the narrator tells us that Franz “in einen regelrechten Kampf verwickelt mit etwas, das von außen kommt, das unberechenbar ist und wie ein Schicksal aussieht (11)” [“gets involved in a regular combat with something that comes from the outside, with something unaccountable, that looks like fate” (1)]. The force against which Franz fights until the end of the novel can be read as fate, life or as cosmos, all of which are represented by Alexanderplatz. Right from the beginning of the novel, Franz resists this force, as he reluctantly and fearfully gets on the tram that will take him to the heart of Berlin, to the eponymous square. Once he is in Alexanderplatz and starts to rebuild his life, the tricks, deceptions, and betrayals that rain down on him from people whom he once trusted turn him into a bitter man. It is at this point in the novel that Franz begins to wage war against the force around him. That he turns against life in this way, and disrupts the semiotic relationship between the individual and the cosmos, ultimately causes his catatonic stupor and transcendental experience with Death at the end of the novel.

Book Four of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, often cited by critics, is the chapter where the narrator gives a very detailed description of the slaughter-house in Berlin, as well as descriptions of the cattle market and a butcher shop in Alexanderplatz. Placed right in the middle of the chapter, these passages are highly metaphorical and foreshadow further catastrophes that will befall Franz in the novel. Another important aspect of this particular chapter is the references it makes to Job. As we will see, when combined with
the vivid descriptions of the slaughter-house and the butcher shop, the helplessness of the Biblical figure against his fate resonates quite powerfully with the story of Franz Biberkopf and his rebellious struggle against life.

It is also in Book Four that we find one of the most poignant dialogues in the novel. In conversation with an unnamed speaker—whom I read as life or cosmos—Franz expresses his frustration and anger with words that reek of rebellion and hubris:


[F: You want to stop me on my way and throw me down. But I have a hand that can strangle you, and you are impotent against me. […] Your teeth cannot penetrate my armor […] . I do not know who gave you the power to assail me. But I can resist you surely. S: Go on talking. […] You are still without eyes for me. […] you will listen to me some day. F: To whom? Who is speaking? S: I will not say. You shall see. You shall feel it. Gird up your heart, then I will speak to you. Then will you see me. F: You can go on talking like that for a hundred years. I only laugh at it. S: Don’t laugh. […] F: […] Because you do not know who I am. Who Franz Biberkopf is. He’s not afraid of anything. I have my fists! (127)].

The unnamed speaker indeed reveals itself to Franz at the end of the novel while Franz lies in the insane asylum, in a state of paralysis, between life and death. At this point Franz has had enough catastrophes and blows in life to literally knock him unconscious. This time, the mysterious speaker calls himself Death—one of the driving forces of the cosmos, hence also representing life—and chastises Frank for having been blind to the
realities of life. He tells him\textsuperscript{80}, “Ich sag, du hast die Augen nicht aufgemacht, du krummer Hund! Schimpfst über Gauner und Gaunerei und kuckst dir die Menschen nich an und fragst nich, warum und wieso. Was bistu fürn Richter über die Menschen und hast keene Oogen. Blind bist du gewesen und frech dazu, hochnäsig […] (433)” (“You didn’t open your eyes, your poor fool! You curse and you swear about crooks and their doin’s, but you never look at people, and you don’t ask about the how and why. What a fine judge o’ men you are, where are your eyes? You’ve been blind, and pretty cocky at that, turning your nose up at the world” (359)). At the end of this conversation Franz realizes the mistakes he had made, admits to being guilty, and assumes responsibility for the ills that have befallen him since his return to Alexanderplatz. Upon his repentance, the old Franz dies, and a new Franz is reborn. The new Franz has “einen stillen, dunklen, suchenden Blick (448)” [“a dark, silent, searching expression” (372)] in his eyes, which was not there before. He has finally given in to life and let himself be absorbed by its harmonious and uncontrollable continuity.

Critic Leon Titche also reads Franz’s initial attitude in Alexanderplatz as hubristic and posits that Franz’s “struggle against injustices is meaningless and futile; in fact, to struggle against fate itself is a deadly game. The frequent and ominous quotations from Job[…], together with the reference to the slaughterhouse, are to impress this upon the reader, although they are hidden from the view of Franz Biberkopf” (129). Döblin, too, in an essay, affirms that Franz, “mit seinen Ansprüchen an das Leben läßt sich bis zu seinem Tod nicht brechen. Aber er sollte gebrochen werden, er mußte sich aufgeben, nicht bloß äußerlich” [Döblin, “Epilog” 391; with his demands on life, could not be

\textsuperscript{80} Here, the figure of Death speaks with a distinct Berliner dialect which reinforces Berlin’s—and its central square, Alexanderplatz’s—metonymic role in the novel as a microcosm representing life and cosmos at large.
broken until his death. But he had to be broken, he had to surrender himself, and not just externally]. It is in the same essay that Döblin reveals the overarching theme of his novel: “das Opfer” [391; the victim]. As such, images of slaughtered animals and references to Biblical and mythological figures that fall victim to the vicissitudes of life and fate that permeate the novel constitute the thematic structure of Berlin Alexanderplatz.

The victim in the novel is Franz Biberkopf. He is the victim of his own ignorance and his inability to perceive the reality of Berlin, as well as his inability to accept that he is one with the world and should not fight it. It is only after his—literally—eye-opening conversation with Death that he realizes his shortcomings. The last thing the narrator tells us about Franz is that he is now, at the end of the novel, “ein kleiner Arbeiter (454)” [“a humble workman” (378)]. Ultimately, he had to “gain recognition through spiritual catharsis and the external influence of nature, whereupon he [was] thoroughly fused with the larger organism” (Fries 45). After going through a painful cycle of “struggle, destruction, and regeneration,”(Midgley 102) the new Franz “now feels far more at home in the city” (Rees 51).

Both Tanpınar and Döblin have chosen sites of violent renewal and transformation as the settings for their novels. Their characters get caught up in the changing realities around them, and lacking the correct attitude or the historical and existential consciousness to cope with them, they commit severe errors or exhibit extreme shortcomings. Robert Musil’s The Man Without Qualities also deals with a character who is at a loss in the world; however, instead of focusing on his protagonist’s shortcomings and mistakes, Musil focuses his narrative on the various explorations and
experimentations Ulrich engages in, in an effort to find a way to live a harmonious and meaningful life.

According to Genese Grill, in his unfinished—and perhaps, unfinishable—novel, Musil is searching for a condition of mystical enlightenment which he calls “der andere Zustand” [the other condition] in a world—early twentieth century Europe—where the ideal of unity and harmony was long under suspicion, and where “[i]deological and aesthetic constructs that recognized the fragmented and alienated nature of diverse contemporary truths, realities, and consciousness were, rather, the intellectual order of the day” (333).

After his three failed attempts at becoming a man of importance like his father, Ulrich decides to take a year’s absence from life in an attempt to find the kind of life which he would find meaningful and purposeful. During the first half of this year-long hiatus, Ulrich, however reluctantly, becomes involved with the Parallel Campaign whose aim is to organize the celebrations for the Austro-Hungarian Emperor’s seventieth year of accession to the throne. This futile and absurd enterprise, and the discussions Ulrich has with the people he meets through it, do not help him find the meaningful life which he is after.

The second volume of the novel describes the second half of Ulrich’s year-long “leave of absence” from life, during which time Ulrich gets re-united with his long-lost sister Agathe at their father’s funeral in their hometown outside of Vienna. “The second half of the book counterbalances the satire and the irony of the first half (the ‘Parallel Campaign’) by a utopian mystique that is centered around [sic] a virtual merger of brother and sister, the emergence of a sibling androgyny” (Strauss 11). In the course of
Ulrich’s visit Ulrich and Agathe become involved in numerous discussions on the nature of morality and on mysticism, which eventually turn into their incestuous relationship, or rather, in mystical terms, their attempt at a harmonious union. In his posthumous papers—which consist of hundreds of pages of unpublished chapters of, and notes on the novel—Musil writes that “Abd’dul Hasan Summun und der Sufismus. Als eine Geschichte über ihn erzählt, wäre die Geschichte von Agathe und Ulrich eindrucksvoller geworden (Tagebücher 1609-1610)” [Abdul Hasan Summun and Sufism. The story of Agathe and Ulrich would have been more impressive told as a story about him! (“From the Posthumous Papers” 1770)]. It is clear that Musil was well-read in the philosophies of various Sufis, and intended Agathe and Ulrich’s search for “the other condition” to be a search for Sufi enlightenment and union with the universe.

The mystical nature of the siblings’ philosophical and existential experiment is foreshadowed at the beginning of Volume II of The Man Without Qualities in a passage where Ulrich reminisces about the last time he had seen his sister. He remembers that it was at her sister’s second wedding five years earlier and he had spent a few days with Agathe. He recalls that “diese Tage wie ein Riesenrand aus lauter Weißzeug waren, das sich unablässig drehte (673)” [“all he remembered was a ceaseless whirl, like a giant wheel of white cambric and lace” (731)]. Needless to say, the words “Riesenrand” [“giant wheel”], “Weißzeug” [“white cambric and lace”], “unablässig” [“ceaseless”], and, most importantly “drehen” [“to whirl”] evoke the vivid image of a whirling Sufi dervish.

---

81 Burton Pike, the translator and editor of Musil’s Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften, argues that “Musil had difficulty finishing all his works, and suffered from an often anguished writer’s block that seemed predicated on the notion that committing something to print was, in essence, to give something that was provisional a final form and thus close it off from the possibility of further change” (Pike,”Der Mann” 360).

82 No records on Abdul Hasan Summun are available. Presumably, he was a Sufi master, or a figment of Musil’s imagination.
In tandem with Sufi philosophy as discussed above, the defining element of the experiment Agathe and Ulrich pursue is their attempt at a union with a mystical consciousness of the world, and their search for harmony both within and without. At one point in the narrative, Agathe expresses a wish to “wohl einmal ganz eins und einverstanden mit [ihr selbst] sein und auch…: nun eben, irgendwie so leben! (724-725)” [“be entirely at one and at peace with [her]self, and also… well, somehow be able to live accordingly” (787)]. When she asks Ulrich if that is what he also wants, her question remains unanswered; however, the ensuing conversations on mysticism and their ultimate erotic union affirms that Ulrich, too, is seeking a path that would make him feel “at one and at peace” with himself. As he later tells Agathe, “es gibt einen Kreis von Fragen, der einen großen Umfang und keinen Mittelpunkt hat: und diese Fragen heißen alle: ‘wie soll ich leben?’ (895)” [“there’s a whole circle of questions […], which has a large circumference and no center, and all these questions are: ‘How should I live?’” (972)]. Exploring spirituality and religion, then, is part of Ulrich’s experimentation with various kinds of knowledge and truth that make up the modern world with the aim to reach at a meaningful life.

At this juncture, it is important to note the striking physical resemblance between the siblings. One evening, Ulrich notices “die Ähnlichkeit des Gesichts. Es war ihm zumute, er wäre es selbst, der da zur Tür eingetreten sei und auf ihn zuschreite: nur schöner als er und in einen Glanz versenkt, in dem er sich niemals sah. Zum erstenmal erfaßte ihn da der Gedanke, daß seine Schwester eine traumhafte Wiederholung und Veränderung seiner selbts sei; aber da dieser Eindruck nur einen Augen blick dauerte, vergaß er ihn wieder (694)” [“how alike their faces were. He felt as if it were his own self
that had entered through the door and was coming to meet him, though it was a more beautiful self, with an aura in which he never saw himself. For the first time it flashed on him that his sister was a dreamlike repetition and variant of himself, but as the impression lasted only a moment he forgot it again” (754). On a different evening, both Ulrich and Agathe emerge from their respective rooms only to realize that they had put on the exact same outfit, upon which Agathe remarks jokingly, “Ich habe nicht gewußt, daß wir Zwillinge sind! (676)” [“I had no idea we were twins!” (734)].

The fact that Ulrich and Agathe are portrayed as the two identical parts of a whole underscores the mystic implications of their erotic union. Just like the Sufi mystic who yearns to attain union and harmony with God and with everything that has been created—because, as Döblin also argues, everything has originated from one singular source and every individual carries a part of that source in him/her—Ulrich and Agathe long for their lost unity. As one critic claims, Ulrich and Agathe’s spiritual union is “modeled on the union of mortal and God which they find in their mystical reading” (Grill 340). Ulrich and Agathe are only fragments of the original source, and want to reclaim their wholeness through their mystically imbued incestuous relationship. To that end, Ulrich proposes the following to Agathe:

Wir haben schon so viel von jener Liebe gesprochen, die nicht wie ein Bach zu einem Ziel fließt, sondern wie das Meer einen Zustand bildet! […] mußt du dir jetzt vorstellen, daß dieses Meer eine Reglosigkeit und Abgeschiedenheit ist, die von immerwährenden kristallisch reinen Begebenheiten erfüllt wird. […] Und so werden wir leben! […] demnach wird sich unser Sinn öffnen, auflösen gegen Mensch und Tier und so in einer Weise erschließen, daß wir gar nicht mehr wir bleiben können und uns nur in alle Welt verflochten aufrecht erhalten werden!

(801-802)

[We have talked so much about the love that isn’t a stream flowing toward its goal but a state of being like the ocean. […] you must now imagine this ocean as a state of motionlessness and detachment, filled with everlasting, crystal-clear
events. [...] That’s how we’ll live now! [...] Our spirit will open up, dissolving boundaries toward man and beast, spreading open in such a way that we can no longer remain ‘us’ but will maintain our identities only by merging with all the world! (870-871)].

Once again, the resonances with Sufi mysticism are hard to miss in Ulrich’s proposed experiment. Ulrich and Agathe never get to fully embark on their explorations of a mystical life, in the published version of the novel, because soon after the speech cited above, Ulrich returns to Vienna and finds himself once again in the midst of the Parallel Campaign and the various people involved with it. It is in the posthumous papers where Musil devotes numerous pages to the incestuous relationship between the siblings and their search for a meaningful and harmonious life through mysticism.83

It is also in the posthumous papers that Musil explores an alternative sense of time, in many ways resembling what Tanpınar delineates as a second, “unified time” in his essay segment “Bursa’da Zaman” [Time in Bursa]. Musil’s alternative time also has strong connotations of continuity. It is evident from the structure of The Man Without Qualities that the novel engages in an ambivalent and exploratory relationship with the concept of time. The text starts with references to the movement of the planets, astronomical yearbooks, and makes a very specific temporal statement: “Es war ein schöner Augusttag des Jahres 1913 (9)” [“It was a fine day in August 1913” (3)].

Furthermore, the first time Ulrich is introduced in the text, the reader finds him sitting at the window with a stopwatch in his hands, counting the passing vehicles and pedestrians on the street. Within a few short chapters, the narrative sets a timeline for the upcoming events in the novel and the reader learns that Ulrich has decided to take a year’s leave and

83 Pike remarks that Musil’s originally unpublished chapter drafts “are not drafts in the ordinary sense but for the most part polished, complete units that could be placed almost anywhere in the text, which, dependent as it is not on plot but on the endlessly-deferred timeline of its infinitely expandable single year, holds everything in suspension” (“Der Mann” 365).
explore various possibilities leading to a meaningful life during this time. Hence, at the beginning of the novel, the diegetic timeframe is given as one year. As we know, however, the timeframe of the narrative is infinitely expanded and the apocalyptic year of 1914 never arrives.

The two originally published volumes of the novel, then, become representative of two separate experiences with time. While the first volume is governed by modern, objective, chronological, and fragmented time, the second volume—as well as a large portion of the posthumous papers—rests on subjective, unified, and continuous time. Burton Pike calls the mystical sense of time in the second volume of the novel “essential time,” and notes that “[f]or Musil, essential time—the succession of moments of feeling—is primary, not chronological time, the time of linear narrative action. In its extreme form essential time is the hallmark of mysticism, a state of intense feeling in atemporal suspension (“Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften: Unfinished or without End?” 356).

Ulrich and Agathe experience this “atemporal suspension” at one point in the narrative, when they realize, looking at a ribbon, that since they have started to explore “the other condition” their sense of time has changed. The narrator tells us that in the minds of Ulrich and Agathe “dieses fließende Band, die rollende Treppe mit ihrer unheimlichen Nebenbeziehung zum Tod schien in manchen Augenblick stillzustehen, und in manchen floß sie ohne Verbindung dahin. Während eines einzigen äußeren Augenblicks konnte sie innen verschwunden sein, ohne eine Spur davon, ob sie eine Stunde oder eine Minute ausgesetzt habe (1094)” [“that flowing ribbon, the rolling staircase with its uncanny incidental association with death, seemed at many moments to
stand still and at many others to flow on without any associations at all. In the space of one single outward instant it might have disappeared into itself, without a trace of whether it had stopped for an hour or a minute” (1190)]. What the narrator describes here are two separate senses and feelings of time, namely, objective-chronological time (the staircase that “stand[s] still,” the ribbon that flows) and subjective-continuous-unified-mystical time (the staircase that flows and “disappear[s] into itself, the ribbon that “stand[s] still”). In other words, Musil, like Tanpinar, creates a harmonious fusion of the two senses of time which coexist in the minds of Ulrich and Agathe and in their mystical perception of the world. To this end, Gerhart Baumann argues that Musil’s characters “vermögen an verschiedene Epochen anzuknüpfen, stets mit dem Vorbehalt, sich an keine endgültig zu binden” [55; are able to establish connections with various eras, always with the condition that they never get tied down permanently]. In other words, Musil’s characters—Ulrich and Agathe among them—have both a chronological sense of time that enables them to keep up with the age they live in, and also a sense of “essential,” and endless time that makes them an inseparable part of cosmos where they partake in a continuous flow of time.

Musil’s dramatization of the disconnect between religion/spirituality and modernity—represented by unified/endless time and divided/chronological time, respectively—starts with the protagonist Ulrich’s visit to his hometown for his father’s funeral at the beginning of Volume II of The Man Without Qualities. It is here, in an unnamed rural town outside of Vienna that Ulrich embarks on his journey through mysticism with his sister Agathe. This journey never culminates in an ultimate destination, not only because Musil left his novel unfinished and therefore open-ended,
but also because Ulrich’s and Agathe’s conversations about and experiences with religion and spirituality—both in the published version of the novel, and in the posthumous chapters—remain equivocal at best, and contradictory at worst, culminating in futility.

It is most telling that two of the key components of modernity, namely, contradiction and futility, as they manifest themselves in the conversations between Ulrich and Agathe, first emerge not in Ulrich’s rural hometown, but in the urban setting of Vienna. In sharp contradistinction to their later philosophical conversations in Vienna, which will be discussed below, the sibling’s initial conversations on mysticism in their provincial hometown are marked by genuine curiosity and a desire to delve into the true nature of “the other condition” built around a mystical experience of the world. They set out on their experimental explorations of religion and spirituality with the aim to find alternative possibilities of meaning in the modern world and are drawn to mysticism for its belief in the harmonious unity of the cosmos.

What prompts their discussions on mysticism can best be summarized as those symptoms of modernity that are most heavily felt in the modern city. Once outside of Vienna and looking in, Ulrich notes that “etwas stimmt nicht; an dieser Grenze zwischen dem, was in uns vorgeht, und dem, was außen vorgeht, fehlt heute irgendeine Vermittlung (742)” “[t]here’s something wrong […] on this frontier between what goes on inside us and what goes on outside, some kind of communication is missing these days” (806-7)]. A few pages later in the text, Ulrich’s and Agathe’s feelings of “unruhe (752)” “[restlessness” (817) is juxtaposed with the “übernatürliche Annehmlichkeit (752)” “[supernatural contentment” (816)] of the saints. As I have discussed in Chapter One, the dichotomy between subjective experience and objective experience becomes
painfully pronounced in modernity and the modern urban setting becomes the locus of this dichotomy, as well as the locus of the unease it causes in the psyche. Hence, it is only when Ulrich leaves Vienna that he becomes aware of the disconnect between “what goes on inside us and what goes on outside” as he looks for a way out of this disconnect in a provincial setting.

In fact, when Agathe asks Ulrich about the book he has been reading since his arrival, he answers that “[er] unterrichtet sich über die Wege des heiligen Lebens (750)” “[he’s] instructing himself about the ways of the holy life” (815)]. His own answer takes him by surprise due to its “völlig ironielosen Ton (750)” “total absence of irony in its tone” (815)], and he adds that “[er] ist nicht fromm; [er] sieht sich den heiligen Weg mit der Frage an, ob man wohl auch mit einem Kraftwagen auf ihm fahren könnte! (751)” “[he’s] not religious; [he’s] studying the road to holiness to see if it might also be possible to drive a car on it!” (813)]. Ulrich’s playful, yet earnest, response implicitly conveys the defining purpose of his experimentation with mysticism, namely, to test the feasibility of creating a functioning and harmonious union between religion and modernity.

Ulrich’s metaphorical allusion to cars in the above passage is neither haphazard nor surprising. In the first pages of Volume I of *The Man Without Qualities*, where the Vienna of 1913 is depicted, Musil’s descriptions of the modern cityscape are replete with images of speeding cars. The second paragraph of the novel begins with the image of “Autos [die] […] aus schmalen, tiefen Straßen in die Seichtigkeit heller Plätze [schießen] (9)” “[a]utomobiles [shooting] out of deep, narrow streets into the shallows of bright squares” (3)] and continues with the narration of an accident caused by a speeding truck.
Furthermore, when the reader first meets Ulrich a few pages later, he is standing at his window, looking down on the street, and counting the vehicles that are whirling past. In a manner similar to Marinetti’s in his 1909 “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” Musil establishes a strong connection among speeding cars, urban space, and modernity. Hence my contention that Ulrich’s wish to see if he can drive a car on “the road to holiness,” is Musil’s way of experimenting, through his characters, with finding a place for religion within the discursive realm of modernity.

The co-existence of religion and the modern city is put to the test in the novel when Agathe goes to Vienna to visit Ulrich. After Ulrich left his hometown and returned to the city, he had once again found himself immersed in the events and people surrounding the Parallel Campaign. In the eleven chapters that span the few weeks between Ulrich’s return to Vienna and Agathe’s visit, there is no mention of or reference to Ulrich’s and Agathe’s recent encounter with mysticism. Upon Agathe’s arrival in Vienna, however, the sibling’s explorations of spirituality and religion resume, but this time within a different framework. Now, Ulrich, the urbanite, is cast as the representative of modern discourse, and Agathe, the ruralist, becomes the personification of religion.

Soon after Agathe settles in at Ulrich’s house in Vienna, their philosophical and spiritual inquiries into the nature of modern life continue from where they had been left off in the rural setting of the siblings’ childhood home. To Agathe’s dismay, she makes the following observation:

Aber so wie in der ersten Nacht ihres Wiedersehns oder früher sprachen sie niemals mehr. Das war verschwunden wie Wolkenburgen: wenn sie statt über dem einsamen Land über den lebenerfüllten Straßen einer Stadt stehen, glaubt man nicht recht an sie. Die Ursache war vielleicht nur darin zu suchen, daß Ulrich nicht wußte, welchen Grad von Festigkeit er den Erlebnissen zuschreiben dürfe, die ihn bewegten; aber Agathe glaubte oft, er sähe nur noch eine phantastische
Ausschreitung in ihnen. Und sie konnte ihm nicht beweisen, daß es anders sei
(945)

[But they never again talked as they had on the first night of their reunion, or
before. That was gone, like castles in the clouds, which, when they hover over
city streets teeming with life instead of over the deserted countryside, are hard to
believe in. Perhaps the cause of this was only that Ulrich did not know what
degree of substantiality he should ascribe to the experiences that moved him,
while Agathe often thought that he regarded them solely as excesses of fantasy.
And she could not prove to him that it was not so (1025)].

By using the image of “castles in the clouds” as a defining element in her juxtaposition
between the “city streets” and the “deserted countryside”—which is the metaphor she
uses to point out how the nature of her conversations on mysticism with Ulrich has
changed—Agathe delineates the respective proper loci of modernity and religion.
Religion, portrayed as fantasy in the above passage, cannot exist in the modern city. The
elements that make up this institution dissipate and become dysfunctional when
confronted with the realities of modernity. In fact, Ulrich’s opinions on religion and
spirituality have changed so much since his return to Vienna, that he now likens religion
to “manche Hustenmittel” [“many cough remedies”] that “beseitigen nicht den Katarrh,
aber sie lindern seinen Reiz, und dann heilt er oft von selbst aus! (1058)” [“don’t get rid
of the sore throat but soothe its irritation, and then it often heals by itself!” (1150)]. In
other words, set against the backdrop of the modern city, religion now seems to Ulrich
like a useless and futile institution that has lost its relevance and power within the
realities of modernity.

The conviction that religion becomes futile and dysfunctional when set against
modernity is further portrayed in the character of Agathe, who, as I have posited above,
becomes the personification of religion after her arrival in Vienna, and is cast in
juxtaposition to Ulrich’s modernist intellectual and philosophical musings. Certain
characteristics attributed to her by the other characters in the novel, as well as her encounter with a mysterious man on the outskirts of Vienna help establish her role as the embodiment of religion and spirituality in the novel.

That Ulrich calls Agathe “[m]ein Engel” [“[m]y angel”] and “[d]u Himmlische (942)” [“[h]eavenly creature” (1022)], as well as the assertions of her estranged husband that her personality “nie und nirgends de Problemen des Lebens tatkräftig und neuschaffend entgegentrete, wie es ‘heutige Zeit’ von ‘ihren Menschen’ verlange, sondern ‘durch eine Glasscheibe vin der Wirklichkeit getrennt’ (953)” [“never permitted her to grapple vigorously and creatively with life’s problems, as ‘our era’ demands of ‘its people,’ but ‘shielded her instead from reality behind a pane of glass’” (1033)] place Agathe outside the realm of objective reality of modernity, and within the world of religion and spirituality. As her husband claims, her mind “[ist] den Energien der Gegenwart nicht gewachsen […] und [ausweicht] ihren Forderungen (953)” [“is not equipped to cope with the energies of our time, and evades its demands” (1033)]. When the narrator reports that a few weeks into her stay in Vienna Agathe “hatte […] angefangen […] wieder an Gott zu glauben (966)” [“had […] begun to believe in God again” (1047)], her association with religion within the narrative of the novel is intensified.

It is precisely this association that renders her incapable of living in Vienna. In fact, she feels so confused and disillusioned—part of her disillusionment is caused by Ulrich’s skepticism and outright denial of the relevance of spirituality in modernity—that she decides to walk away from Ulrich and from Vienna, and to commit suicide. The intensity of her longing for “Wiesen und Wald (962)” [“green fields and woods” (1041)]
makes her get on a streetcar and ride it until “die Häuser zu seiten des Wegs anfingen niedriger und ländlich zu werden (963)” [“the buildings along the way grew lower and more rural” (1045)]. Having left the city with the intent to commit suicide, the rural landscape around her moves her to “ihren Kummer vergessen und versenkte sie in eine angenehme und gedankenlose Verbundenheit mit der Welt (964)” [“forget her misery and plunged her into a pleasant, unthinking oneness with the world” (1045)]. In other words, within the narrative of the novel, the rural outskirts of modern Vienna are associated with cosmic unity and harmony—a sense of spirituality that cannot function in the city.

At a critical juncture in their respective writing careers, then, Tanpinar, Döblin, and Musil turn to mystical and metaphysical explorations of life in the midst of their respective cultural milieux which are crumbling under rapidly transforming historical and social realities of modernity. Neither rejecting the past, nor turning solely towards the future, all three authors explore the possibilities of a consciousness that would embrace the past, the present, and the future simultaneously, thereby becoming receptive to the multiple realities that surround them in a modern urban setting.

And yet, the manner in which they narrate their explorations of religious and spiritual possibilities within modernity is imbued with skepticism and ambivalence. In the novels under discussion, rather than holding up religion as the panacea for the ills and contradictions of modernity, Tanpinar, Döblin, and Musil dramatize it as yet another discordant institutional legacy whose powerful influence becomes an indispensible, albeit dysfunctional, part of the modern urban setting. It is the peculiar relationship of religion (both personal and institutionalized) with modernity and the disconnect between religion and the modern city that these authors narrate.
Musil’s intricate prosopopoeia for this problematic religiosity is the character of Agathe, the unfading, unwithering bloom, as her Greek name literally implies. Agathe’s encounter with a mysterious man takes place toward the end of the narrative, and becomes emblematic of this disjunctive complexity. A tall man, dressed in black, appears from nowhere while Agathe is contemplating suicide in a rural setting outside of Vienna, and this man starts talking to her about God and religion. He exudes such religiosity and spirituality that Agathe cannot help but ask him whether he is a priest. The man’s answer is ‘no;’ he tells her that he is a professor at the university, and starts lecturing her about modernity and spirituality. He tells Agathe that “[d]ie ganze moderne Nervosität mit allen ihren Ausschreitungen kommt nur von einer schlaffen inneren Atmosphäre, in der der Wille fehlt, denn ohne eine besondere Anstrengung seines Willens gewinnt niemand jene Einheit und Stetigkeit, die ihn über den dunklen Wirrwarr des Organismus hinaushebt (969)” “[o]ur entire modern neurosis, with all its excesses, arises solely from a flabby inner state in which the will is lacking, for without a special effort of will no one can achieve the integrity84 and stability that lifts a person above the obscure confusion of the organism” (1051)]. After her conversation with this man, Agathe decides not to commit suicide, and returns to Vienna as the narrator reports that “der Mann hatte ihr wohlgetan (973)” “[the man had done her good”’ (1055)].

That Agathe’s encounter with the allegorical figure of Religion is set against a rural backdrop outside of Vienna is a statement on the problematic relationship between religion and the modern city. Even though her salvation comes at the hands of Religion—she is saved from committing suicide—her return to Vienna and the ensuing erotic relationship with her brother Ulrich further complicate the role of religion within

84 The word in the original German text is “Einheit” which more literally means “unity, oneness.”
modernity. Agathe, as the personification of religion and spirituality, does indeed remain in Vienna; however, her relationship with the modern city and with modernity—both represented by Ulrich in the novel—is both dysfunctional and futile. Needless to say, the siblings’ union can be neither productive nor reproductive; and if it is, then the offsprings are nothing but mutants. Their union, then, becomes the embodiment of the discordance between religion and modernity. Religion does not disappear when faced with modernity, just as Agathe does not leave Vienna behind and ends up returning to the city; however, religion cannot govern or function within modernity, either, just like Agathe’s and Ulrich’s dysfunctional union. Musil’s novel dramatizes precisely this discordance and “mirror[s] the spiritual dilemma of its time” (Goodstein 361).

When Agathe is in the outskirts of Vienna, contemplating suicide in her confused state of mind, the narrator tells the reader that she is startled out of an “unendliche Erstarrung (966)” [“endless stupor” (1048)] by the sudden appearance of the mystery man whom I have read as an allegorical figure of Religion. This particular episode and Agathe’s ensuing conversation with this man in Musil’s novel has its resonance in the episode between Franz and the allegorical figure of Death at the end of Döblin’s Berlin Alexanderplatz. Franz, too, is saved from his “katatoner Stupor (427)” [“catatonic stupor” (353)] after he comes to terms with his lack of self will and his arrogance, following his conversation with Death at the insane asylum outside of Berlin. Franz then returns to Alexanderplatz as a new man. Similar to Musil’s novel, Döblin’s novel, too, dramatizes the relationship between religion and modernity, and chooses the city to stage this dramatization.
Döblin’s novel is replete with Biblical references that are used to foreshadow the fate of Franz Bieberkopf at the end of the text. The fact that the frequency of their appearance in the text gradually increases toward the end prepares the stage for Döblin’s statement on the role of religion in modernity in the final pages of the novel. After Franz’s return to Berlin from the insane asylum as a new man, the narrator reports that this is all he has to tell about the life of Franz Bieberkopf. The narrator’s final (allegorical) summary of Franz’s story has strong implications of religious solidarity which constitutes an important, albeit not unequivocal, part of Döblin’s explorations of the role of religion in modernity. The narrator remarks the following:

Wir sind eine dunkle Allee gegangen keine Laterne brannte zuerst, man wußte nur, hier geht es lang, allmählich wird es heller und heller, zuletzt hängt da die Laterne, und dann liest man endlich unter ihr das Straßenschild. Es war ein Enthüllungsprozeß besonderer Art. Franz Bieberkopf ging nicht die Straße wie wir. Er rannte drauflos, diese dunkle Straße, er stieß sich an Bäume […]. Wie er hinfiel, machte er die Augen auf. Da brannte die Laterne hell über ihm, und das Schild war zu lesen (453).

[We have walked along a dark road, at first there was no street-lamp burning, we only knew it was the right road, but gradually it grew bright and brighter, till at last we reached the light and under its rays were able to make out the name of the street. It was a process of revelation of a special kind. Franz Bieberkopf did not walk along the streets the way we do. He rushed blindly through this dark street, knocking against trees […]. As he fell down, he opened his eyes. Then the street-lamp shone bright above him, and he was able to read the sign (376)].

The narrator further reports that Franz is “nicht mehr allein am Alexanderplatz (453)” [“no longer alone on Alexanderplatz” (377)] and that it is “schöner und besser, mit andern zu sein (453)” [“nicer and better to be with others” (377)]. In other words, at this point in the narrative, it seems like Franz’s salvation has come through his acceptance of fate and of a power greater than himself. This acceptance also makes him a part of Berliner society. However, it is a society whose complicity and solidarity crescendo into
the cries of war as the novel ends with the words, “rechts und links und rechts und links, marschieren, marschieren, wir ziehen in den Krieg […] widebum widebum, […] der andere fällt um, […] der andere liegt stumm, widebum, widebum (455)” [“right and left and right and left, marching: marching on, we tramp to war […] drrum, brrum, […] another’s killed, […] another’s voice is stilled, drrum, brrumm, drrumm!” (378)].

The almost Marxian “opium effect” of religion manifests itself in these final words of Döblin’s novel. Franz’s role; however, remains ambiguous. It is repeated five times in the course of two pages at the end of the novel, that Franz is now “ein kleiner Arbeiter” [a humble workman] working as an “Hilfsportier in einer mittleren Fabrik (452-454)” [“assistant door-man in a medium-sized factory” (376-378)] and that he “nimmt die Nummern ab, kontrolliert Wagen, sieht, wer rein- und rauskommt (454)” [“takes numbers, checks cars, sees who comes in and goes out” (378)]. The mechanized nature of his job, as well as the above report of the novel’s narrator that Franz is now a part of Berliner society suggest Franz’s deindividuation which is caused by both religion and modernization. However, despite his newfound solidarity with society and his acceptance of his fate, Franz continues to remain an outsider. As he watches the hordes of marching people from his window, the narrator tells us that Franz “bleibt noch lange ruhig zu Haus” [“will not join the parade any more”]85 and Franz thinks to himself that “[w]enn [er] marschieren soll, muß [er] das nachher mit dem Kopf bezahlen, was andere sich ausgedacht haben (454)” [“[i]f [he] march[es] along, [he] shall have to pay for it later on with [his] head, pay for the schemes of others” (377)].

The ambiguity of the ending of Döblin’s novel is obvious, and renders the novel open to multiple interpretations. What can be argued with certainty, however, is that in

85 The original German text translates more literally as “stayed quietly at home.”
Berlin Alexanderplatz Döblin engages in an exploration of the complex and powerful influence of both religion and modernity on the individual. He also seems to be setting his protagonist up when he punishes him for his rebellion against the larger organism of which he is a part—the city of Berlin, Berliner society, and fate are the larger external forces against which Franz fights in the narrative—and yet when Franz ultimately repents and gives in to the forces around him, these exact forces are portrayed as the harbingers of war and destruction. At the end, despite his re-birth as a “humble workman” and a man of society, Franz refuses to join in with the marching people of his city. As one critic writes, “[t]he tension between individual and collective, central to so much of Döblin’s writing, remains once more unresolved at the end of Berlin Alexanderplatz, reflecting his belief that any eventual solution of the problem must lie in a far distant future” (Rees 52). I would argue that it is not only “the tension between individual and collective,” but also the tension between religion and modernity that remains unresolved at the end of the novel.

In this regard, the ambivalence surrounding Franz and his “transcendental” experience with Death is mirrored by the problematic, mystically-imbued relationship between Ulrich and Agathe in Musil’s narrative, and the Sufi clockmaker Nuri Efendi’s perplexing role in Tanpinar’s novel. As we have seen, Tanpinar rests much of his essayistic and critical corpus on the concepts of temporal and cosmic unity and harmony resonant of the teachings of Sufi masters—the traces of which are also found in The Time Regulation Institute—yet, by portraying his Sufi character Nuri Efendi (the clockmaker) as another anachronistic and pathologically chronic figure in the modern setting of his
novel, the Turkish author deliberately complicates the question of religion’s compatibility with and functionality within modernity.

In fact, as we have seen, all three authors dramatize the challenges of giving meaning to and situating religion within modernity and modernity’s most signal setting: the city and its confines. And each author shrouds his exploration of this challenge in contradiction and ambivalence as is most befitting modernist discourse and its endemic paradoxes. The singular certainty revealed by the novels under discussion here is Tanpınar’s, Musil’s, and Döblin’s preoccupation with the ideas of historical rupture, historical (dis-)continuity, and the repercussions of the disjunction between the past and the present as it manifests itself in the modern city. Rather than offering religion as a tool to cope with the anomalies and anachronicities which modernity breeds, these authors foreground religion only to expose it as yet another paradoxically dysfunctional institution whose futility finds its most poignant dramatization as a problematic but inalienable part of the modern city.
Conclusion

I began this dissertation by arguing for a shift towards the study of multiple and/or alternative modernities and a move away from Eurocentric, singular definitions of modernity. In this light, I have engaged in textual and critical readings of three modernist novels, namely, Austrian writer Robert Musil’s *The Man Without Qualities*, German author Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and Turkish novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar’s *The Time Regulation Institute* in an attempt to identify the ways in which these three modernist authors have dramatized the manifestations of their respective modernities against the backdrop of three imperial, *fin de siècle* cities—Vienna, Berlin, and Istanbul. As such, this study views the modern city as the proper locus of modernity and underscores its rampancy, as well as critically and comparatively delineating its effects on the urban dweller through the protagonists and characters in each of these novels. Ultimately, I read the narratives under discussion as fine specimens of Modernism and as novelistic expressions of modernity’s urban vicissitudes.

The first chapter of this study explored the effects of the historical temporal ruptures caused by the onset of modernity in turn-of-the-century Vienna, Berlin, and Istanbul, and looked at how the effects of the ruptures—which irrevocably changed the perception of time in the modern city—are dramatized in Musil’s, Döblin’s, and Tanpinar’s novels. Through a comparative close reading of some of the key metaphorical components of each novel, I conclude that Musil, Döblin, and Tanpinar share a concern with the historical, temporal, and cultural discontinuities that result from modernity—the fall of the dynastic rules of their respective cultures being only one of many symptoms and causes of these discontinuities. In conjunction with their critical dramatization of
historical and cultural discontinuities in their novels, I have also posited that the lack of
wholeness, unity, and continuity within the fragmented temporality of Vienna, Berlin,
and Istanbul renders their protagonists incapable of functioning in the modern city or
elsewhere.

The break in temporal and cultural unity and continuity, as we have seen in the
second chapter, inevitably caused the historical decentering of societal harmony in these
imperial cities. This decentering, in turn, created not only cultural slippage, but also sites
of irony which found their narrative dramatizations in Musil’s Parallel Campaign,
Tanpinar’s Time Regulation Institute, and Döblin’s Alexanderplatz. This second chapter
demonstrates that whereas Musil and Tanpinar narrate the ironic renderings of the
cultural and social transformations that their respective cultural milieux experience
through two inherently temporal institutions—both the Parallel Campaign and the Time
Regulation Institute strive to revive and preserve the lost unity and continuity of
Viennese and Istanbulite societies, respectively—Döblin, for his part, situates his ironic
exploration of modernity’s thwarted expectations and socio-cultural slippage in the
central square of Berlin. Ultimately, then, all three authors were aware of the ironic
outcomes of modernity’s violent historical, temporal, and cultural ruptures, and portrayed
their protagonists’ struggles to survive within the highly ironic space of the modern city.

The final chapter of this study starts with the question as to why Musil, Döblin,
and Tanpinar seem to write against both the discontinuity of time and the disappearance
of socio-cultural unity, on the one hand, and yet, on the other hand, subject those
characters in their novels who strive for the preservation of continuity and unity to harsh
criticism cloaked as irony. This chapter then explores the type of historical and cultural
continuity which the authors critique, and identifies it as a pathological obsession with
time personified in the protagonists (as well as several other characters) in the novels. All
of these characters are read as being at a loss in a world that has been fragmented;
however, as we have seen, instead of portraying the flaws and shortcomings of his
protagonist the way in which Döblin and Tanpunar portray theirs, Musil centers his
narrative on the experimentations of his protagonist, who strives to find a way of living
harmoniously in the face of modernity’s inescapable paradoxes and disjunctions.

Having witnessed the pathological obsession with time and continuity from which
the characters of these modernist authors suffer, we have come to see the perplexing
relationship between religion/spirituality and modernity as it is dramatized in the novels.
We can conclude that instead of representing religion as a harmonious and healing
alternative to the discordances of modernity, Musil, Döblin, and Tanpunar expose it as yet
another institution which becomes dysfunctional and futile in the context of the modern
city. Yet, it is important to note that each author’s dramatization and representation of the
dysfunctionality and futility of religion/spirituality in Vienna, Berlin, and Istanbul is
marked by a compelling ambivalence that is most characteristic of modernist narratives.

As a whole, this study brings together three modernist authors, three modern
cities, and three modernities that have hitherto not been read side by side. My hope is that
the comparative study of these modernist novels will have contributed to the critical
study of modernity in general, and to the study of multiple, alternative modernities and
Modernisms in particular. The productive connections among the divergent (and at many
instances, convergent) paths of Austrian, German, and Turkish manifestations of
modernity that we have witnessed point to the historical, social, political, and cultural
reverberations still in play in the destinies of these three cultures that are now more interconnected than ever. The findings of this study can also point toward a project which examines the ways in which the transportability and perpetuity of modernity and the comparative dynamics of multiple, alternative modernities are relevant in the current search for “harmonization” of Turkish institutions with those of the European Union.
Bibliography


Akün, Ömer Faruk. “Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar.” *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 12


Balcı, Yunus. “Bir Sanatkârın Bilim Adamı Olarak Portresi: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar.”


Barta, Peter I. “The Treatment of the Fourth Dimension in the Modernist City Novel.”
*Proceedings of the XIIth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association/Actes du XIIe congres de l'Association Internationale de Littérature*


Fassbinder, Rainer Werner, dir. *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Bavaria Film, 2007. DVD.


Honold, Alexander. "Endings and Beginnings: Musil's Invention of Austrian History."


Huysssen, Andreas and David Bathrick. "Modernism and the Experience of Modernity."


--- Beş Şehir. İstanbul: Dergâh, 2006.


Vita  
İpek Kismet Bell

Education  
Ph.D., Comparative Literature with a Minor in Social Thought, 2011  
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA  
M.A., English, 2003  
Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA  
B.A., English, 2001  
Boğaziçi University, İstanbul

Book Review  

Conference Presentations  
“Hypertrophic Metropolis, Atrophic Urbanite: Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and Robert Musil’s *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften.*” German Studies Association, 2009  
“The City Talks: Colloquies, Soliloquies, Silences in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar's *A Mind at Peace* and Alfred Döblin’s *Berlin Alexanderplatz.*” American Comparative Literature Association, 2009  
“Modernism and the City.” American Comparative Literature Association, 2008  
“Reverberation of Images in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India: A Quest for Hope, or a Revelation of Futility?*” Haliç University, 2004

Teaching Experience  
**Lecturer**, Department of Comparative Literature, The Pennsylvania State University  
Development of Literary Humor, Spring 2010  
Introduction to Western Literature II, Spring 2007  
The Hero in World Literature, Fall 2006  
Introduction to Comparative Literature, Fall 2005 and Spring 2006  
**Lecturer**, Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, The Pennsylvania State University  
Elementary German I, Spring 2009 and Elementary German II, Spring 2008, Fall 2008, Fall 2010  
**Lecturer**, Department of American Literature and Culture, Haliç University, Istanbul  
Academic Writing I, Fall 2003 and Academic Writing II, Spring 2004  
American History and Culture I, Fall 2003 and American History and Culture II, Spring 2004  
**Lecturer**, Department of English, Boston College  
First-Year Writing Seminar, 2002-2003

Awards  
Edwin Erle Sparks Fellowship, Department of Comparative Literature, The Pennsylvania State University, Fall 2004  
Teaching Fellowship, Department of English, Boston College, 2002-2003