The City in Words across Time: A Corpus-Based Literary Approach Using Istanbul as a Case Study

Asmaa Ramil [iD]

Yildiz Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, İstanbul, Türkiye, asmaa.ramil@pm.me

Abstract: This paper examines how a combination of qualitative literary analysis and corpus methods (mainly, collocation analysis) can shed light on the changing representations of a city across different temporal and cultural contexts. Using Istanbul as a case study, it examines the portrayal of the city in three literary works spanning more than a century: Pierre Loti's Aziyadé (1879), Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's The Time Regulation Institute (1961) and Orhan Pamuk's Istanbul: Memories and the City (2003). The study explores how each author portrays the city through a distinct lens – Loti's Orientalist gaze, Tanpınar's modernist reflection, and Pamuk's postmodern engagement. It highlights how macro literary narratives and micro linguistic patterns (mainly, on the word level) interact to construct images of the city, reflecting socio-political dynamics and demonstrating the interplay among tradition, memory and change in shaping Istanbul's individual and collective cultural identities from the late 19th century to the early beginnings of the 21st. The paper considers the tensions between the past, the present and the in-between, highlighting how literature interacts with these tensions to construct and deconstruct the image of Istanbul across time. While the focus is on Istanbul, the methods and insights offered here provide a flexible framework for analysing representations of other cities.

Keywords: Istanbul, Representation, Time, Literature, Corpus Linguistics

1. Introduction

> I sit beside the fire and think
> Of people long ago
> And people that will see a world
> That I shall never know
>
> But all the while I sit and think
> Of times there were before
> I listen for returning feet
> And voices at the door
> (Tolkien, 1982, p. 292)

The first enchanting golden streaks of dawn are shimmering on the eastern bank of the Bosphorus. A new day is slowly breaking its way, ablaze with brilliance, through the dark night. A heavenly chorus of twittering birds, in alliance with a gentle whispering wind, is calling the world to life. Warm saffron sunlight is gently bathing, in a rosy glow, the domed roofscape and the tall, fluted, pen-shaped minarets embracing the majestic autumn sky. The sun shines anew on Istanbul, Islambul, Constantinople, Byzantium, a city at the convergence of different times and worlds.

Time is one of those most mysterious 'laws' that govern human's life in the universe. No one who passes through the gantry of time comes out the same; no place does. We all bear the marks of our past, and so do our cities. Places also have something akin to 'souls', a 'genius loci',[1] which is 'as real a thing as the

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[1] The Latin phrase *genius loci* (literally, the spirit of a place) derives originally from the Roman religion, where it referred to the spirit or deity associated with a particular place, as it was believed that every place had its own protective spirit or guardian deity, and the Romans would often make offerings to the *genius loci* of a particular location, especially when entering new

scent of a rose or the smell of the sea' (Crawford, 1894, p. 325). The past is an inherent part of that 'genius'. It is those 'returning feet' and those 'voices' we hear, sometimes distinctively, sometimes faintly, 'at the door'. Present-day Istanbul still carries in the cobblestone of its streets, the walls of its ancient buildings, the air of its hills and the water of its Bosphorus indelible traces of what it once was.

The genius of Istanbul has long been subject of study and contemplation in a plethora of literary works and academic analyses, drawing from different disciplines, including comparative literature, cultural studies and urban humanities. This paper demonstrates how the integration of literary analysis with corpus-based methods can illuminate the processes by which the individual and collective identities of a place are constructed and deconstructed in literature. Focusing on the interaction of time (historical changes), culture (including social and ideological changes) and language patterns (particularly lexical choices), the study provides a replicable framework for analysing urban identities. Istanbul – as represented in *Aziyadé* (1879) by Pierre Loti, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü (The Time Regulation Institute)* (1961) by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, and *İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir* (*Istanbul: Memories and the City*) (2003) by Orhan Pamuk – is used as a case study to illustrate this approach.

2. Literature Review

Comprehensive works on Istanbul's literary image have traced its evolution through different periods and genres. Among these, we find Uysal (2020), who examines five distinct literary representations of Istanbul during the Republican era, where Istanbul functions as a palimpsest – a text repeatedly written over – where each literary layer adds to or obscures previous representations. There is also Akyıldız's (2024) extensive study analyses the aesthetic and ideological transformation of Istanbul in Turkish poetry. Their collaborative work (Akyıldız & Uysal, 2020) further explores how writers imagine and reconstruct the city through literature. Similarly, Kara (2008) provides a valuable comparative perspective by examining Istanbul's portrayal alongside Paris through the works of Yahya Kemal Beyatlı and Charles Baudelaire, demonstrating how local and global literary traditions intersect in urban representation.

Scholarship on Istanbul's literary representations has been dominated by several key methodological approaches. Close reading has been foundational for examining thematic and symbolic representations in individual texts (Günay-Erkol, 2009; Karahan, 2013; Repenkova, 2019), using Orientalist frameworks (Almas, 2016; Bulamur, 2011; Ülkü & Börekci, 2020) and post-colonial perspectives. Historical and intertextual approaches have also been used (Kara, 2019; Kubicek, 2018; Mokbel, 2020), while other scholars have applied semiotic approaches, treating the city as a complex system of signs and symbols that communicate meaning beyond their literal representation, examining how literary texts use linguistic and cultural codes, narrative strategies and symbolic interpretations to reveal deeper cultural, historical and psychological dimensions of the city's image (Artemenko & Artemenko, 2018; Gürses Şanbay, 2021). Other works have studied the role of translation in rewriting Istanbul's image, presenting the translator as a covert co-author (Demirkol-Ertürk, 2013; Roditakis, 2012; Tuna & Çelik, 2021; Türkkan, 2012). While existing methodological approaches have provided rich insights into Istanbul's literary representation, the application of corpus linguistic methods, specifically collocation analysis, remain very rare.

3. Methodology

Several corpus methods are employed to analyse literary texts, including concordances, frequency lists, keyword lists, collocate lists and dispersion plots (McIntyre, 2013; Siepmann, 2015; Thi-Qar, 2015; Wijitsopon, 2013). These techniques enable the analysis of large amounts of literary data, providing a

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territories or founding new settlements. In its modern usage, it is often used figuratively to refer to 'the intangible quality of a material place, perceived both physically and spiritually'(Vecco, 2020). This second figurative use is the one intended here.

more rigorous interpretation, compared to traditional stylistic approaches (Hussein, 2020). However, it is crucial to understand the analytical limitations of corpus linguistics. Similar to, say, forensic linguistics, the results of corpus methods should not be viewed as definitive proof but as investigative tools. They provide valuable research directions and can illuminate textual particularities that might remain undetected through conventional literary-analysis methods.

The three literary works under study will be closely read to trace the 'genius' of Istanbul from three different perspectives, in three different – though successive – periods of time. While each one of them shows, in its own way, how time can be 'the longest distance between two places' (Williams, 1996, p. 75), they also demonstrate how time is the nexus of union which gives a being its 'continued identity' (Copleston, 1964, p. 99). Loti, a French naval officer, represents Istanbul from an Orientalist worldview during the 'terminal decline' of the Ottoman power, whereas Tanpınar delineates a picture of an Istanbul in an ideological, temporal and cultural limbo at the *fin de siècle*, as seen by a modernist Turkish native who is well acquainted with the West. Pamuk, however, writes at a new *fin de siècle*, a time of post-modern (dis)enchantment,[2] giving the reader the chance to make the tour of the mind, as well as the heart, of an *İstanbullu* in late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The three works were chosen based on historical coverage, thematic diversity, authorial perspectives, methodological suitability and literary significance. They span over a century, providing insights into Istanbul's representation during key historical moments: the late Ottoman period, the early Turkish republic, and contemporary Istanbul. This chronological range allows for an exploration of how literary portrayals of Istanbul have evolved alongside significant political, cultural and social changes. Additionally, the selected novels and memoir present a wide array of themes and offer a triangulation of perspectives. They also offer varied linguistic and narrative approaches that enable a nuanced corpus-based analysis. Finally, their prominence and critical reception make them representative of broader literary and cultural trends.

For the corpus analysis, I used cleaned-up epub/html versions of the works in their original languages (French and Turkish) to ensure textual accuracy. I used the GraphColl tool within LancsBox X 5.0.3 to analyse the collocates of the terms *Stamboul* (in Loti's work) and *İstanbul** (in Tanpinar's and Pamuk's works). I added a wildcard (*) to the Turkish word to account for its inflectional forms given that Turkish has grammatical cases – e.g. the genitive (*İstanbul'un*), dative (*İstanbul'a*) and locative (*İstanbul'da*).

The search parameters were set to identify collocates within a span of 5 words to the left (L5) and 5 words to the right (R5). The frequency threshold for collocates was set from 2 to infinity, capturing a wide range of meaningful associations (Freq. (collocation) ≥ 2 & Log Dice ≥ 6 (or NaN)). The search was case-insensitive (word in lowercase). To refine the results, I removed function words such as prepositions and articles, which carry less semantic weight for this study and could skew the data's interpretative value. Additionally, in one case, the KWIC (Key Word in Context) tool was used to analyse the contextual usage of a word.

4. Istanbul in an Orientalising Mirror

In *Aziyadé*, Istanbul is a representation of the Other in an Orientalised world. From the very first pages of Loti's 'hyper-romanticized […] Orientalist literary fantas[y] of penetrating the harem and achieving forbidden bliss' (Boone, 2015), the reader detects an underlying **hegemony** exercised by the first-

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[2] I am not using the word here in its Weberian sense. The American social scientist Jason Josephson-Storm published in 2017 an interesting book that challenges the narrative of what Max Weber labelled the 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung*, literally, de(*ent*)-magic(*Zauber*)-ing(*ung*)), which he, in turn, calls 'the myth of disenchantment' or 'the myth-of-the-end-of-myth'. He argues that secularisation and the 'birth of science', on the one hand, and disenchantment and the 'death of magic', on the other, did not have a cause-and-effect relationship. He notes that the belief in magic continued and continues throughout Europe. For the 19th century, he explains how 'scholars, spiritualists, and magicians not only moved in common social circles, but also shared an engagement with spirits, mysticism and "Oriental" mysteries' (Josephson-Storm, 2017, p. 19).

person narrator, 'indistinguishable from the author' (Hargreaves, 1981, p. 21). This hegemony and cultural dominance can be perceived in the narrative line of the story when linked to the author's real life as the line between the two is very blurry in *Aziyadé*.

As a Lieutenant in the British Navy, Loti – Arif in the novel – indulges, during his naval missions in countless romantic affaires. 'But neither the absolute devotion which his mistresses are said to feel for him nor the regard which he often claims to feel for them ever prevents him from leaving when it is time for his ship to sail' (Hargreaves, 1981, p. 68). In his real life, even the most devoted among his admirers found him to be an unfathomable **storehouse of contradictions**. His 'character [wa]s so tangled a mass of contradictions, disguises and pirouettes that his biographer ceases to analyse and can only record' (Blanch, 1983, p. 123). Additionally, his total commitment to his military career was not just a professional duty but an ideological doctrine in which he strongly believed.

Also, his 'Oriental transvestism', donning the local Turkish costume and settling in the Muslim part of Istanbul, was more a '**safety measure**' serving a practical purpose in an imperialist mission (Jullien, 2012) than a token of love, which is in perfect accordance with his worldview, as expressed by Arif in *Aziyadé*:

> *There is no God, there are no morals [...] [M]y rule of life – despite all moral principles and*
> *all social conventions – is to always do what pleases me. I believe in nothing and nobody;*
> *I love nobody and nothing; I possess neither faith nor hope' (Loti, 2019, p. 20).*

In the same vein, the reader can tangibly feel a moral and an intellectual negation of the 'Other'. The Istanbul characters Aziyadé, Samuel and Achmet are treated as **subordinate** 'dummies', who are more intellectual, psychological and financial slaves than they are independent human beings. Samuel's submission is easily secured by a little more than nothing. Money is 'one means whereby I could enlist the services of this beggarly youth,' says Loti. As for Aziyadé, she is bought with less than nothing: 'Dear little Aziyadé! she had used up all her arguments and all her tears to keep me in Stamboul' (Loti, 2019, p. 36).

There is also a sort of '**blurring of the Self/Other**' (Cecilia de Burgh-Woodman, 2014) more in the sense of domination than integration. Loti clearly describes this blurring when speaking of Samuel: 'as if his own personality has been absorbed into mine' (Loti, 2019, p. 7). Besides, Loti's text refers to something more than a master-servant relationship. He even animalises the inhabitants of Istanbul when describing a woman who had a 'high-pitched voice [... which he] associate[d] with negresses or monkeys' (Loti, 2019).

Moreover, Loti's novel is a striking example of how 'politics in the form of **imperialism** bears upon the production of **literature**, scholarship, social theory, and history writing' (Said, 2003, p. 14) so much so that it functions as an integral part of the imperialist 'Orientalising' process if we take into consideration that both purely imaginative Orientalist literature and the 'so-called truthful texts (histories, philological analyses, political treatises)' are constructed representations and are by no means '"natural" depictions of the Orient' (Said, 2003, pp. 21–40).

The **representations** Loti gives of Istanbul and its people are imposed as the sole and true image of the Orient both 'for the West and, *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient'. Istanbul is portrayed as typically 'irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal"' (Said, Orientalism , 2003, p. 40). Loti's *Aziyadé* is rife with examples of this irrationality and depravity of Istanbul (the heart of the Orient). For instance, the popular theatrical character Karagueuz, 'in plain view of everyone, [...] does things that would scandalise even a monkey. In Turkey, it's all quite acceptable and in order, and each evening one can see decent family folk, lantern in hand, taking troupes of young children to see Karagueuz' (Loti, 2019, p. 23).

Further, Orientalist literature is, par excellence, a **male territory** following the 'male-power fantasy', in which women are stupid creatures with unbridled sensuality and are 'above all […] willing' (Burney, 2012, p. 34). Accordingly, Aziyadé (as a representative of Turkish girls) is – in stark contrast to academically verifiable facts – 'not very sure, from what it says in the Koran, that women have a soul as men do', culminating her career in slavery with a sort of apotheosis of her Occidental lord and master: *'Benim djan [can] senin*, Loti. (My soul is yours, Loti.) You are my God, my brother, my friend, my lover; when you've gone, it will be the death of Aziyadé' (Loti, 1879, p. 121).

Furthermore, Pierre Loti delineates Istanbul as something one legally judges, scientifically dissects, authoritatively disciplines and zoologically illustrates (Said, Orientalism , 2003). His literary work, in parallel with his military enterprises, can therefore be deemed an active agent – within the colossal colonisation machine – for the decline which he foreshadows in his novel:

> [I]mages from the past come alive again, images of all that is shattered and gone, never to return. […] Every night Stamboul is illuminated and Bengal lights are strung along the Bosphorus – the last glow of an Orient that is disappearing, never to return. […] I was about to leave her, never to return. [...] The fate of Islam appeared to be already sealed. […] My thoughts are now turning away from the Orient; that dream is ended (Loti, 2019).

4.1. Statistical analysis

Building on this literary analysis of Loti's portrayal of Istanbul, we now turn to a more quantitative approach through corpus methods to see how specific word choices and patterns subtly align with and enhance the Orientalist portrayal embedded in Loti's narrative. Table 1 shows statistical information about the collocates of *Stamboul* (words that frequently occur in proximity to it) in Loti's novel, as analysed using LancsBox's GraphColl tool.

Table 1

Statistical Analysis of Collocates of Stamboul in Loti's Aziyadé

Collocate[3]	Freq. (Collocate)[4]	Freq. (Corpus)[5]	Log Dice[6]	MI[7]	Delta P1[8]	Delta P2[9]
vieux (old)	9	83	10.6	5.7	0.09	0.1
Ma (my (feminine))	4	168	8.9	3.5	0.04	0.02
Mon (my (masculine))	5	194	9.1	3.7	0.05	0.02
Mes (my (plural))	3	78	9.1	4.2	0.03	0.04
Grande (big/great (feminine))	4	70	9.6	4.8	0.04	0.06
Grandes (big/great (fem. pl.))	3	18	9.7	6.4	0.03	0.2
Saint (saint / holy)	3	5	9.8	8.2	0.03	0.6
Loin (far/distant)	3	51	9.3	4.9	0.03	0.06
Silhouette	3	6	9.8	7.9	0.03	0.5
Neige (snow)	3	12	9.8	6.9	0.03	0.2
Turcs (Turks/Turkish (pl.))	3	27	9.6	5.8	0.03	0.1

[3] **Collocation** refers to the co-occurrence of words within a short span of text. **Collocates** (e.g. *vieux*) are the words that frequently appear in proximity to the studied word/**the node** (e.g. *Stamboul*) throughout the whole **corpus**. These are terms that contribute to the overall meaning and connotations associated with *Stamboul* in the text.

[4] This represents the **frequency** of how many times the collocate appears near the node (*Stamboul*).

[5] This indicates the total number of occurrences of the collocate in the entire corpus being analysed.

[6] This is a statistical measure used to evaluate the strength of association between the collocate and the word under study. Higher values suggest stronger associations.

[7] **Mutual Information** is a symmetric bidirectional collocation measure that provides insight into the strength of the association between the node and its collocate. Higher MI values indicate that the two words co-occur more frequently (the maximum value is 14). It is more sensitive to low-frequency data than the Log Dice.

[8] **Delta P (ΔP)** is an asymmetric unidirectional collocation measure ranging between −1 and 1 (Schneider, 2018). 'When exploring directionality, we ask the question "to what extent is the attraction between the node and the collocate mutual?"' (Brezina, 2018, p. 70). **Delta P1 (forward-directed ΔP)** measures how likely **word X/event₁ (the node)** is to occur afterwards in the text if **word Y/event₂ (the collocate)** is mentioned. This means that a high Delta P1 means Y (collocate) is a good clue that X (node) will be mentioned **(Y→X).**

[9] **Delta P2 (backward-directed ΔP)** shows how likely word Y (collocate) is to occur if word X (node) is present. That is, a high Delta P2 means X (node) is a good clue that Y (collocate) will be mentioned **(Y←X).**

When we filter the 'noise' words[10] (articles, prepositions, auxiliaries, modal verbs, …), it becomes clear that the pronoun 'my' (in its different forms in French) is the most frequent as a collocate, appearing 12 times near *Stamboul* and 440 times in the whole novel. The next most frequent collocate is the adjective *vieux* (old), appearing 9 times near *Stamboul* and 83 times in the whole text. These two are followed by the adjective *grande(s)* (great/big), appearing 8 times near *Stamboul* and 88 times in the whole corpus.

When we look at the Log Dice and MI (Mutual Information), which measure the strength of association between *Stamboul* and its collocates, we find that the highest Log Dice scores are for *vieux* (10.6), *saint* (9.8), *silhouette* (9.8) and *neige* (9.8). This suggests that these words are strongly associated with *Stamboul* in the novel. The highest MI scores are for *saint* (8.2), *silhouette* (7.9) and *neige* (6.9). MI is particularly sensitive to rare words, which explains why these less frequent collocates have high scores. They reflect less frequent but semantically meaningful collocations, indicating that perhaps these terms do not appear randomly but are intentionally employed to build an imagery or theme around *Stamboul*.

As we move to the Delta P1 and Delta P2 measures, which show the directionality of the association, *vieux* appears to have the highest Delta P1 (0.09), indicating that when the adjective 'old' is mentioned, *Stamboul* is more likely to follow. *Saint* and *silhouette* have high Delta P2 values (0.6 and 0.5 respectively), suggesting that when *Stamboul* appears, those words are likely to follow.

4.2. Interpretation of the data

The frequent use of the **first personal possessive pronoun** (*ma/mon/mes*) in collocation with *Stamboul* corroborates a hallmark of Orientalist literature, where the foreign land becomes a space of personal fantasy and desire. It reflects the appropriation of the city, turning it into a site of Western self-projection rather than objective description. It could be seen as Loti metaphorically 'claiming' Istanbul, reflecting a colonialist mindset of ownership or entitlement to the culture and space of the city.

Additionally, the collocate **turcs** (Turks) further emphasises Loti's focus on identity and alterity, distinguishing between the local inhabitants and the European gaze. It is probably used to constantly remind the reader of the city's 'Otherness'. Similarly, the presence of **loin** (far) as a collocate underlines both physical and emotional distance, reinforcing the sense of Istanbul as a distant, alien space. It could represent the Orientalist tendency to view Eastern cultures from a distance, maintaining a sense of detachment and superiority.

Besides, **silhouette** reflects the visual exoticism often emphasised in Orientalist portrayals, reducing the city to romanticised shadows, while the collocate **saint** reinforces this exoticisation of the city through references to religious mysticism, a recurring Orientalist motif. Istanbul's Islamic identity is not depicted as a dynamic cultural element but as an ornamental, distant tradition. In the same vein, the appearance of **neige** (snow) among the collocates is particularly intriguing, as it evokes a sense of seasonal change that contrasts with the stereotypical image of a warm, bustling East. This may serve as a literary device to highlight the city's transience, conveying the image of a space caught between decay and fleeting moments of beauty.

Further, the duality between **vieux** (old) and **grande/grandes** (big/great/grand) in relation to *Stamboul* reveals a nuanced element of Loti's Orientalist portrayal. The statistical comparison reinforces this interpretation:

- *Vieux*: Freq. = 9, Log Dice = 10.6, MI = 5.7, Delta P1 = 0.09, Delta P2 = 0.1

- *Grande/Grandes* combined: Freq. = 7 (4+3), Log Dice ≈ 9.65 (average), MI ≈ 5.6 (average), Delta P1 ≈ 0.035 (average), Delta P2 ≈ 0.13 (average)

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[10] It is noteworthy that these words may be very valuable in other studies.

These statistics suggest that, while both words are associated with *Stamboul*, the emphasis on *vieux* is a little stronger, reinforcing a narrative of oldness over greatness. This emphasis on decline aligns with a familiar Orientalist trope that frames Eastern cities, especially those with imperial histories, as diminished remnants of a once-glorious past, portraying Istanbul as a city that has lost its grandeur. However, the closer balance between references to 'oldness' and 'grandeur' indicates a more complex Orientalist perspective, potentially creating an image of 'faded grandeur' rather than simple decline.

A contextual analysis of the adjective **vieille** (the feminine form of *vieux*) and its related forms using the KWIC[11] tool further supports this interpretation. *Vieille* appears 94 times in the novel. It reveals a complex and ambivalent perspective on the city of Istanbul, simultaneously expressing admiration for its historical grandeur and an emphasis on its perceived decline. In the phrase '*la porte fermée d'une vieille mosquée*' (the closed door of an old mosque), the use of *vieille* highlights the historical depth and cultural significance of the mosque, potentially suggesting that the mosque is not merely an architectural structure but a vessel of memory, which imbues the city with a certain dignity, yet it also implies a static quality, one that resists change. The 'closed door' of the mosque may symbolise a barrier to the vibrant life that once thrived there.

The imagery in '*ses minarets avaient l'air d'un tas de vieilles bougies, posées sur une ville sale et noire*' (its minarets looked like a pile of old candles placed on a black and dirty city) further emphasises this duality, juxtaposing symbols of former glory against a backdrop of urban decay and neglect. Likewise, phrases like '*des vieilleries redorées*' (regilded old things) and '*une vieille aubade d'autrefois, une mélodie gaie et orientale*' (an old aubade from the past, a cheerful and Oriental melody) evoke a nostalgic, idealised view of Istanbul's past. Nonetheless, descriptions such as '*une vieille négresse hideuse*' (a hideous old black woman) and reflections like '*Les vraies misères, ce sont les maladies, les laideurs et la vieillesse*' (The real miseries are diseases, ugliness and old age) associate aging with negative qualities, reflecting a distaste for aging both in individuals and in the city itself.

This tension between admiration and contempt, between the exotic allure of the ancient and the disgust at the present, positions Istanbul as a relic of a bygone era. Such a portrayal aligns with Orientalist tendencies to present Eastern cities as both fascinating and somehow out of step with modern (Western) times.

5. Istanbul in the Limbo

Just as Pierre Loti had foreshadowed, the Ottoman Empire collapsed, with WWI being the last straw that culminated long decades of political and social decline, and Istanbul became the capital of a new Turkish Republic. The huge global changes which ensued begged huge existential questions. Is it cultural and political change that engender technological and economic change? Or is it society's technological level that shapes its economic system, which in turn determines its cultural and political characteristics as Marxist economic determinism argues (Inglehart, 2001)? Turkey chose to follow the path of a radical and rapid modernisation, in which a 'dichotomy of "tradition" and "modernity" often figured prominently.' This dichotomy was a characteristic of most societies undergoing the historical process of modernisation at the time (Inglehart, 2001).

Far away from Loti's 'diplomatic art for art's sake' (Hartman, 1994, p. 57) Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar unveils a totally new picture of Istanbul. As literary genius goes, *The Time Regulation Institute* is far more superior to Loti's, not only in its masterful use of literary devices or its language, but also in its plot and the development of its unique characters, each one of whom appears like a *Commedia Dell'Arte* mask. Tanpınar brilliantly displays how 'history cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so that "we" might inscribe our own future there and impose our own forms of life for [the] lesser people to follow'

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[11] Key Word in Context

(Said, 2003, p. 6). His novel is a Menippean satire which portrays a Turkish society that is at a crossroads, torn between the past and the present. Although Turkey never underwent any direct colonisation, it was far from impervious to the Western impact of 'the mother country' (to use Fanon's terminology) (Fanon, 1963).

Time is the main gantry through which Tanpınar chose to pass his analysis of Istanbul and modernity. To better understand the depth of thought behind Tanpınar's choice, it is necessary to understand the significance of time in cultural change and its bearing on individual and collective identity.

5.1. Calendars

In his book *Time in Roman Religion,* Gary Forsythe demonstrates how calendars function as 'cultural artifacts' (Forsythe, 2012, p. xii) that have been historically used to instil religious practices (cults, rites and ceremonies) in society. As political powers usually (if not always) bank on a form of religion or ideology to legitimise their rule, political/religious revolutions usually stage temporal revolutions 'to gain social control by imposing a new rhythm of collective life' (Levine, 2006, p. 78), of which the French and the Russian revolutions are striking examples. In 1793, the Gregorian calendar was replaced by a revolutionary calendar with ten-day weeks, by force of which the 22nd September 1792 of the Christian era became year one of the republican era. A similar scenario was enacted in Russia in 1929 under the reign of Joseph Stalin, with a calendar of five-day weeks and six-week months. Nevertheless, in both cases, the Gregorian calendar was reinstated after about a decade of failed experimentation. The temporal, however, never ceased influencing the political.

Unlike Paris and Moscow, the experience of Istanbul with 'temporal revolutions' was unique inasmuch as it created a form of what Robert J. C. young (1995) calls cultural 'hybridity'. Instead of inventing a new calendar, the Turkish Republic adopted the Western solar Gregorian calendar, while the lunar Hegirian one, nevertheless, remained socially and culturally active in the background as Tanpınar shows.

5.2. Clocks

One of the main allegories on which Tanpınar's story revolves is the clock which Ahmet Efendi the Some-Timer, the protagonist's grandfather, bought for the mosque he vowed to build, a wish that was never fulfilled. Hayri, the protagonist, inherited the clock and a balustrade with it, both of which became a symbol for the legacy of the 'glorious' past. However, for the trivial pleasure of a transient moment, he sold the clock and the balustrade 'to an antique dealer for just thirty liras. At the time those liras filled [him] with the thrill [he] might once have felt on discovering Andronikos's glorious treasure [...] Yet the sadness in [him] endured. [He] had betrayed [his] past and, in particular, a childhood vow' (Tanpınar, 2013, pp. 64–65). Ironically, years would elapse and he 'would stumble upon that piece of balustrade' in an antique shop. 'The Jewish merchant' offered to sell it to him as a piece 'worthy of a museum' for 'nine hundred liras, [...] the square root of the sum' for which he had sold it. He paid the sum and bought it back (Tanpınar, 2013, pp. 65–66). He never could let go of the past.

After the Gregorian calendar became almost universal in Western countries,[12] the precision of the pendulum clock, invented in the 17th century, paved the way for a 'temporal revolution' of another level: the **standardisation of timekeeping**. Until the 19th century, each country had different time zones, none of which was synchronised. In the US, for instance, travellers had to adjust their watches each time they changed their location (Levine, 2006, p. 63).

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[12] Most of Catholic Europe had aligned its calendars with the Gregorian calendar by the beginning of the 17th century. Protestant England and Scotland followed in 1752.

Amid an international temporal confusion, the entrepreneurial spirit of an American named Samuel Langley would **make time a business**. In 1867, he recognised the potential of marketing **'time' as a product**, took control of an observatory and started selling 'the time in the form of observatory time signals, by telegraphic transmission to industries' (Levine, 2006, p. 65), in a fashion paralleled in Tanpınar's novel. This can be seen in the Time Regulation Institute's cash-punishment system or the Timely Banks offering 'watch-exchange plans':

> *Our system of fines specified the collection of five kurus for every clock or watch not synchronized with any other clock in view [...]. "There are today a million village children wearing toy watches that we ourselves sold them! What this means is that when they grow up, they'll all buy watches, with the help of the easy watch-exchange plans made possible by our Timely Banks (Tanpınar, 2013, pp. 29–326).*

Nonetheless, it was in London that a wide standardisation of timekeeping, commencing in 1840, was ushered in by the railroad industry, paving the way for the 'universal' adoption of the Greenwich Mean13 Time (Universal Time) in 1925.

> *It was with a supremely knowing gesture towards the future that in 1884, the division of the newly homogenized temporal world into East and West was placed not in Jerusalem or Constantinople but in a South London suburb. Stand to the left-hand side of the brass strip14 and you are in the Western hemisphere. But move a yard to your right, and [...] whoever you are, you have been translated from a European into an Oriental. Put one foot back to the left [...] and you become undecidably mixed with otherness: an Occidental and an Oriental at once (Young, 1995, p. 1).*

The cultural experience of Istanbul at the turn of the 20th century, as described by Tanpınar, is a vivid example of that 'undecidability'. For the Turkish people, 'the truly significant time markers in their lives, those upon which they depended for survival, continued to rest in the hands of nature' (Levine, 2006, p. 62), while the Western 'watches and clocks' were also there, 'as if waiting for their time to rule the world' (Tanpınar, 2013, p. 49). The Gregorian calendar became the official calendar and tower clocks were built in Istanbul and different parts of Türkiye, yet Hayri's memoirs reveal that social life (recording of birth dates, personal diets, religious events, …) was still run by the Islamic calendar. Tanpınar (2013, p. 42) describes the confusion engendered by this temporal, and consequently cultural, hybridity caused by the simultaneous use of the two-time reckoning systems:

> *[...] my father's pocket watch, a strange contraption equipped with a compass, a hand that showed the direction of Mecca, and a calendar of universal time that told both existent and nonexistent alaturca and alafranga time. It had but one flaw: that even a master watchmaker found it impossible to familiarize himself with its many functions.*

This **cultural 'miscegenation'** (Young, 1995, p. 8), bringing together the Western and the Eastern 'species', gave birth to a new cultural 'species' with a mentality and a lifestyle that are neither *alaturca* nor *alafranga*; an interesting amalgamation of the two. Other communities as well underwent a similar experience. Robert Levine, for example, describes in his *Temporal Misadventures* how he, as a Jew, lives by two sets of dates: one reigning supreme in everyday life and one prevailing in the 'local synagogue. Tellingly, he posits that the Sabbath is still the pinnacle of life', a 'palace in time', a 'temporal sanctuary' and 'God's gift of time'. Quoting the Jewish theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel, he postulates that 'time is the presence of God in the world' (Levine, 2006, p. 208).

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13 The Mean Solar Time is the time 'shown by the fictitious sun [...], measured in terms of any longitudinal meridian' (as opposed to the Apparent Solar Time which is 'the time indicated by the apparent sun [...] or true local time') (Douma, 2020).

14 The 'brass strip' is a physical line at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, England, marking the Prime Meridian. This line represents the point of 0 degrees longitude, dividing the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Straddling the line means having a mix of both Western and Eastern identities.

Likewise, the irony, the black humour and the sarcasm Tanpınar employs all along his novel show that while radical Westernisation might have enervated the old Oriental identity of Istanbul, it – anyhow – could not wipe it out. Just as the Sabbath did not become Saturday,[15] the 'temporal sanctuary' of the Turkish week (Friday) managed to remain the day of the gathering (*Cuma*). It somehow did not become the day of the goddess Frigg (as suggests the English Friday or the German *Freitag*) nor that of Venus (as imply the French *vendredi* and the Spanish *viernes*).

Incidentally, by having Hayri Irdal and Halıt Ayarcı establish an official institute with many stations all over the country to oversee the national synchronisation of clocks and watches, Ahmet Tanpınar aptly illustrates the concept of the 'institutionalisation of culture', combining what Althusser (2014) calls the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) with the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA).

5.3. A new century

Looking at Istanbul through a ***fin-de-siècle*** temporal lens, Tanpınar tackles the question of time from a universal outlook in line with which the whole world experienced similar changes. It is that 'temporal limbo', that time in betwixt and between at the turn of the 20th century, which accelerated radical intellectual, religious, social, scientific and economic changes both in the East and the West. It is 'the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion' (Bhabha, 2004, p. 2). It was '**the realm of the beyond**', where people are driven to 'move beyond; to turn the present into the "post"' (Bhabha, 2004, p. 26).

Hayri was torn between two facets of one world, the past and the present. He missed his old self (before knowing Halit Ayarcı and the establishment of the Institute), yet he could not be his old self. Halit depicts Hayri's internal struggles within the 'game' of modernity so felicitously:

> […] *'you're an octopus, with your eight arms wrapped around the world! And you can't release your hold on anything. How could you ever go back? […] Truth is either whole or not there at all. My good friend, these unassailable truths you're speaking of are there for one who is content to live with nothing but the shirt on his back and the odd piece of bread. They are not for someone like you, who wants it all and straightaway!' […] 'But I really don't want that much,' [Hayri] said. 'So now you're negotiating. […] At this table […] you might chance upon a win, but when you lose, you lose it all, and forever. Once you've entered the game, you have lost. Bargaining with virtue gets you nowhere' (Tanpınar, 2013, p. 319).*

Hayri is restless and disoriented, and lives in '**the unhomely world'** (Bhabha, 2004, p. 27). He is not '**homeless**' though. He does have a 'Home', a past, a culture, an identity, but he can no longer draw the line between his own identity and culture and that of the 'World'.

Additionally, Tanpınar criticises the effect of the *fin de siècle*'s modernity on aesthetics, collective and individual tastes, fashion and art, through a simple description of the earrings of Hayri's sister-in law:

> *She wore heavy steel earrings thick as horseshoes, and for a moment I regretted all the broken ones we'd thrown away in the army. What a fortune we could have made, pandering to today's fashions! (Tanpınar, 2013, p. 306)*

By the same token, ironically enough, Bhabha almost speaks Halit Ayrıca's mind when he says, 'As literary creatures and political animals we ought to concern ourselves with the understanding of human action and the social world as a moment when something is **beyond control**, but it is **not beyond accommodation**' (Bhabha, 2004, p. 18). When discussing how Hayri should deal with the 'uncontrollable modernity' of his sister-in-law, who – being without beauty, destitute of talent and most

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[15] A day of the god Saturn, as the day's name etymologically indicates.

ignorant of even the basics of music – was set upon becoming a singer, Halit criticises Hayri's 'lack of entrepreneurial spirit', 'lack of realism', 'pessimism', 'idealism', 'defeatism' and 'old-fashioned-ness', commanding him to concern himself with the present and make the most of every situation. Hayri cannot change or make sense of his sister-in-law's behaviour, but he should make an 'accommodation' for it:

> *My poor Hayri Bey, you are an unusual man indeed. […] So tell me, which singer does she aspire to be?" "Almost all the famous singers. But always with the same voice, the same makam, […]" "That means she is a true original! It's solved. Unique and new. […] For when it's a matter of the new, there's no need for any other talent. […] So I have two factors: my baldız [sister-in-law] and music. As the first factor cannot be changed, I have no choice but to change the second. […] Or will you stay forever in your cul-de-sac? Why of course not" (Tanpınar, 2013, pp. 211–212)*

Another important element in the story is the use of **theatre, cinema and the radio** to reflect the '**escapism**' that characterised the early period of modernisation. At a certain point, Hayri joined the theatre. Theatre was a sort of a virtual existence, in which Hayri escaped from a confused world that was neither completely 'traditional' nor fully modern.

> *[…] The important thing was that [his] name was no longer Hayri, and that [he] was able, for a time, to break free of reality's grip. In a word, it was an escape. [he] was living in an enchanted world of lies and illusion, and that was all [he] wanted (Tanpınar, 2013, pp. 82–83).*

Hayri married Pakize, the heart and core of whose life was the fictional world of Hollywood. She 'occasionally fanc[ied] herself as Jeanette MacDonald or Rosalind Russell [… and] also took [her husband] for Charles Boyer, Clark Gable, or William Powell. One day she even mistook one of [the] neighbor's daughters for Marta Eggerth' (Tanpınar, 2013, p. 149). The cinema represented the source of all her truths and all her moral standards. Besides her specialty in the realm of the illusional, she was also skilled in 'rewriting the past and embellishing it' (Tanpınar, 2013, p. 277). However, this immersion in illusion was not something limited to Hayri's household. It was a national phenomenon. It was 'the age of radio'. 'The radio ha[d] become the natural companion to rheumatism, the common cold, penury, the possibility of war, and the trials of just getting through the day' (Tanpınar, 2013, p. 210). The image Tanpınar depicts is one of an Istanbul that is being massively homogenised, a picture of a whole nation who is leading, with varying degrees, a double life amid the 'homogenising modernity' (Nash, 2009)**.**

When he looks at his life as a whole, Hayri seems to be living 'under the force of circumstances'. He does not seem to have any control over his own 'choices'. He wonders, 'Am I forever to be forced into situations not of my own making?' (Tanpınar, 2013, p. 315) The power and the speed of the winds of change are far greater than he can handle.

5.4. Statistical analysis

Table 2

Statistical Analysis of Collocates of İstanbul in the Time Regulation Institute

Collocate	Freq. (Coll.)	Freq. (Corp.)	Log Dice	MI	Delta P1	Delta P2
bu (this)	9	1,923	7.2	3.3	0.2	0.004
bütün (entire/whole)	7	388	9.1	5.2	0.2	0.02
sonra (later/afterwards)	4	517	7.9	4.0	0.09	0.007
zaman (time)	3	275	8.3	4.5	0.07	0.01
halkının (of the populace/of its people)	3	4	11.0	10.6	0.07	0.7
küçük (small/little)	2	130	8.6	5.0	0.04	0.01
terhis (military discharge)	2	2	10.5	11.0	0.05	1.0
enstitü (institute)	2	11	10.2	8.6	0.05	0.2
memnun (satisfied/content)	2	28	9.8	7.2	0.05	0.07
kibar (courteous/polite)	2	22	10.0	7.6	0.05	0.09
tanıdığı (known)	2	11	10.2	8.6	0.05	0.2

The statistical analysis of collocates associated with *İstanbul* in Tanpınar's work provides interesting insights into his portrayal of the city. After filtering the irrelevant words (mainly prepositions and articles), the frequency analysis shows a predominant use of the words *bu* (this) and *bütün* (all/whole) appearing 9 and 7 times respectively in proximity to *İstanbul*. These are followed by *sonra* (after) with 4 occurrences and *zaman* with 3 occurrences.

Less frequent words seem to have stronger associations with *İstanbul*. Notably, the highest Log Dice scores are for *halkının* (of its people) at 11.0, *terhis* (discharge [from the army]) at 10.5, and *enstitü* (institute) and *tanıdığı* (known) both at 10.2, indicating that these have strong and exclusive associations with *İstanbul*. In contrast, more general words such as *bu* (7.2) and *zaman* (8.3) show moderate association strength.

Similarly, *terhis* has the highest MI score of 11.0, closely followed by *halkının* at 10.6, while *enstitü* and *tanıdığı* both score 8.6, which indicates that these words co-occur with *İstanbul* more often than would be expected by chance. Meanwhile, collocates like *sonra* (4.0) and *bu* (3.3) have lower MI scores, indicating that these collocates do not appear together with *İstanbul* very often compared to how frequently each word appears on its own in the corpus.

However, the most frequent words *bu* and *bütün* have the highest Delta P1 values (both 0.2), followed by *sonra* (0.09). These scores suggest that these words are relatively strong predictors of *İstanbul* being mentioned. Although the words *sonra, bu* and *bütün* do not co-occur very frequently with *İstanbul* – having a lower MI –, when they show up in the text, it suggests that *İstanbul* will more likely follow as compared to other words in the novel. *Terhis* has the highest Delta P2 score of 1.0, followed by *halkının* at 0.7. This indicates that *terhis* is exclusively used in contexts where *İstanbul* is being discussed. When *İstanbul* is mentioned, there is also a high probability that *halkının* is to follow.

5.5. Interpretation

In Tanpınar's portrayal of Istanbul, the people of the city are a crucial element of how he frames its identity. The strong association between **halkının** (of its people) and *İstanbul* (as indicated by its strong

Log Dice, MI and Delta P2 values) is not random. It reflects the author's deliberate choice to express a conceptual link between the city and its inhabitants. Whenever Tanpınar discusses Istanbul, its people are also invoked, anchoring the identity of the city to them. Rather than depicting Istanbul as merely a backdrop or a collection of physical landmarks, Tanpınar emphasises the importance of lived experience, culture and community in shaping the city's identity.

This strong association between Istanbul and its people also reveals how Tanpınar views the city's residents as both bearers of cultural memory and agents of change, navigating the complex tensions between tradition and modernity, Ottoman heritage and republican reforms. Through this lens, the city emerges as a living organism whose identity is continuously shaped and reshaped by its community. His interest lies not in abstract modernisation but in how change was experienced, negotiated and sometimes resisted by the city's residents.

However, the strong association between **enstitü** (institute) and Istanbul, as show the high Log Dice and MI scores, sheds light on a central theme in the novel: the bureaucratic and institutional dimensions of modernisation. The novel itself revolves around the fictional Time Regulation Institute, which symbolises the absurdity and futility of some of the efforts of institutional modernisation. The institute's absurdity reflects Tanpınar's ambivalence toward modernisation. While modernisation promises progress, the way it is implemented highlights the dissonance between modern ideals and practical realities. The Institute reflects the quirks and inconsistencies of life in Istanbul, where tradition and modernity coexist in unexpected ways, creating both order and chaos.

Besides, the collocation of Istanbul with **terhis** (military discharge/demobilisation), as indicated by the high MI of 11.0, may suggest that Tanpınar deliberately connects Istanbul with the theme of military demobilisation, reflecting both historical circumstances and deeper metaphorical meanings. In the historical context of the early Turkish Republic, this association likely reflects the reality of Istanbul as a city dealing with the aftermath of multiple wars (the Balkan Wars, World War I,...), where many soldiers were being demobilised, reintegrating into civilian life.

Additionally, the association between Istanbul and *terhis* could metaphorically suggest a city in transition, getting out of its Ottoman past but not yet fully settled into its new republican identity. Just as soldiers are discharged into an uncertain civilian life, the residents of Istanbul are navigating the ambiguities of a rapidly changing world. The concept of *terhis* thus becomes a metaphor for broader themes of transition in Turkish society – from war to peace, from empire to republic, from traditional to modern.

The frequent use of **bu (this)** with Istanbul suggests that Istanbul is portrayed as a concrete, immediate space, closely tied to the here-and-now of the characters' experiences. The frequent pointing to 'this Istanbul' might also suggest an implicit contrast with other possible Istanbuls – perhaps the city of the past or idealised versions of the city.

Finally, the high frequency of **bütün (all/whole)** as a collocate is equally significant. While *bu* highlights the specific and possibly fragmented aspects of the city, *bütün* suggests an attempt to unify or comprehend the city as a whole. This interplay reflects the dual nature of Istanbul as both a series of discrete experiences and an interconnected entity that is part of an international 'whole' in its experience of modernity.

6. Istanbul (Dis)enchanted

Tanpınar's were days of novelty, discovery and blinding lights of global change and modernisation. They were days of a sort of enchantment. The world's peoples where partly dizzy with the pleasures of the modern life, partly under the effect of a post-traumatic shock after the tragedies of the two world wars and the dissolution of the old conventions and societal norms. It was a time of confusion. Nevertheless, time is ever a great revealer. Decades succeeded decades, a new *fin de siècle* came, and huge ideological,

cultural and social changes ensued. Time brought a sort of disenchantment with it. In his autobiographical book, *Istanbul*, Orhan Pamuk started from where Tanpınar left off, but from the perspective of a post-modern thinker, who sees the past from afar. He tries to combine between subjective impressions and objective descriptions of Istanbul.

Pamuk, as an *İstanbullu* member of the first generation of the 'new civilization' that replaced the Ottomans and the Byzantines (Pamuk, 2006, p. 223), depicts a post-modern Istanbul that is 'a city of ruins and of end-of-empire melancholy'. 'Behind the gaiety there [is] a mounting pile of unsettled scores and a sea of recriminations' (Pamuk, 2006, p. 29). 'The *hüzün* is so dense you can almost touch it, almost see it spread like a film over [Istanbul's] people and its landscapes' (Pamuk, 2006, p. 136).

For him, **hüzün** is a uniquely Turkish cultural concept. In its Arabic origins, *hüzün* conveyed a feeling of deep loss and grief. Then it evolved over centuries to embody two distinct interpretations. On the one hand, it reflects the sorrow one feels for being overly attached to worldly pleasures and material gains. On the other, *hüzün* is a 'spiritual anguish we feel because we cannot be close enough to Allah, […] because [we] have not suffered enough' (Pamuk, 2006, p. 125). This tradition even paradoxically suggests that the absence of *hüzün*, the failure to feel such spiritual longing, is itself a source of distress.

This latter meaning has endowed the feeling of *hüzün* with a garb of honour. It is no longer a burden but a sign of spiritual depth and commitment. It now brings comfort and solace by 'veiling reality.' This understanding has made *hüzün* dominant in the mood and symbolism of modern Turkish music and poetry. Unlike **Western melancholy**, associated with solitary reflection and personal sadness, Istanbul's *hüzün* is a collective melancholy that reigns over a whole city, a whole population.

In this portrayal, Istanbul becomes both the source and the reflection of *hüzün*. Through *hüzün*, the city reflects the lingering sadness of its residents, who navigate both personal and communal feelings of inadequacy, loss and change. It is 'as life-affirming as it is negating' (Pamuk, 2006, p. 126). The landscapes and old neighbourhoods of Istanbul are imbued with traces of history that evoke both pride and sadness, reinforcing the idea that *hüzün* is not just a feeling but a way of seeing and understanding life.

In this frame, Istanbul becomes a symbolic space where personal and collective memories converge, and its beauty lies in its ability to hold both **joy and sorrow in balance**. Istanbul's *hüzün* carries in it the positive meaning which the Romantics and Decadents bestow on the word melancholy. It is that picturesque aspect which only the privilege of old age and time can bestow on things and places. It transforms defeat and failure into something meaningful and poetic.

Pamuk also compares Istanbul's *hüzün* to the Western communal feeling of ***tristesse***. As described by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques*, *tristesse* reflects a Western gaze upon poverty-stricken tropical cities, a melancholic response that mixes guilt and pity for the misery observed. It is the sadness of an outsider. In contrast, *hüzün* belongs entirely to those who live in the city and experience its paradoxes first-hand. Unlike Western cities that proudly preserve and display their historical monuments, Istanbul's ruins are left to decay amid the messiness of daily life, serving as constant reminders of a grandeur that can no longer be reclaimed. This creates a unique form of melancholy that is both collective and deeply personal.

In the West, the glories of the past were preserved in museums. The past is reorganised, even rewritten, 'removed from the way' of the present. It is used as a glorified foundation for a prosperous present. In Istanbul, however, people live 'amid the ruins'. The past is the greatest weakness, a ramshackle foundation for a shaky present. While the Europeans are ever so proud of their cultural heritage, the *Istanbullus* are ashamed of it. Pamuk puts forward the example of giving directions in Geneva and Istanbul.

> *So proud were the Genevans of their historic city that, even when asked the simplest directions, they'd say things like "Walk straight down this street, sir, past that elegant, magnificent bronze fountain." If an Istanbul resident were to do likewise, he might find himself uttering such instructions as "Go past Ibrahim Pasha's hamam. Walk a little farther. On your right, looking out over the ruin you've just passed [the bath], you'll see a dilapidated house"' (Pamuk, 2006, p. 138).*

To escape the feelings of boredom, tedium and gloom that this *hüzün* engendered in him, Pamuk escaped in dreams. He created a double life, and sometimes lived in many fragments of a life. Many Western writers who have nothing to do with 'the East' describe a similar internal duel between the past and the present in their own cultures. It is a state of mind that has marked the *fin de siècle*. The francophone philosopher and playwright Eric-Emannuel Schmitt gives voice to this inward war in his play *Petits Crimes Conjugaux* (2003) in a dialogue between a wife and her husband: 'That's because I don't just have one mind. I have two. Two minds, Gilles! The modern and the archaic' (Schmitt, 2004).

Despite all the freedoms they have succeeded in gaining during the last century, people do not seem to be able to let go of the past. That bitter-sweet longing for what once was is sometimes what gives the present a special taste. As for Pamuk, 'part of [him] longed, like a radical Westernizer, for the city to become entirely European. [He] held the same hope for [him]self. But another part of [him] yearned to belong to the Istanbul [he] had grown to love, by instinct, by habit, and by memory' (Pamuk, 2006, p. 405).

6.1. Statistical analysis

Table 3

Statistical Analysis of Collocates of İstanbul in Istanbul: Menories and the City

Collocate	Freq. (Coll.)	Freq. (Corp.)	Log Dice	MI	Delta P1	Delta P2
bütün (all, whole)	50	326	10.6	4.0	0.07	0.1
sonra (after, later)	35	425	10.0	3.1	0.04	0.07
benim (my, mine)	32	215	10.1	4.0	0.04	0.1
bana (to me)	17	216	9.2	3.1	0.02	0.07
kendimi (myself)	14	77	9.2	4.3	0.02	0.2
beni (me)	9	170	8.4	2.5	0.01	0.04
ben (I)	7	115	8.1	2.7	0.008	0.05
büyük (big, great)	31	186	10.1	4.2	0.04	0.2
eski (old)	27	118	10.1	4.6	0.04	0.2
şehrin (of the city)	26	198	9.9	3.8	0.03	0.1
şehir (city)	15	98	9.2	4.0	0.02	0.1
şehirde (in the city)	8	34	8.5	4.7	0.01	0.2
şehri (the city)	7	41	8.3	4.2	0.009	0.2
istanbul	24	214	9.7	3.6	0.03	0.1
istanbul'da (in Istanbul)	7	83	8.2	3.2	0.009	0.08

Table 3 (Continued)

istanbul'u (Istanbul)	5	35	7.8	3.9	0.007	0.1
batılı (Western)	23	112	9.8	4.5	0.03	0.2
batı (West)	12	56	9.0	4.5	0.02	0.2
hüzünlü (melancholic, sorrowful)	18	59	9.6	5.0	0.02	0.3
hüzün (melancholy)	15	74	9.3	4.4	0.02	0.2
hüznü (its melancholy)	6	33	8.0	4.3	0.008	0.2
son (end, last)	15	83	9.3	4.3	0.02	0.2
siyah-beyaz (black-and-white)	14	56	9.2	4.7	0.02	0.2
yüz (face)	13	41	9.1	5.1	0.02	0.3
zaman (time)	13	196	8.9	2.8	0.02	0.06
zamanlar (times)	12	75	9.0	4.1	0.02	0.2
resim (image, painting)	12	122	8.9	3.4	0.02	0.09
imgesini (its image)	6	7	8.1	6.5	0.008	0.8
Kemal	11	33	8.9	5.2	0.02	0.3
Yahya	11	41	8.9	4.8	0.02	0.3
Tanpınar	10	39	8.8	4.8	0.01	0.2
Gautier	7	30	8.3	4.6	0.01	0.2
Gautier'nin (Gautier's)	5	17	7.8	5.0	0.007	0.3
Flaubert	6	23	8.1	4.8	0.008	0.3
ansiklopedisi (encyclopedia)	11	13	9.0	6.5	0.02	0.8
osmanlı (Ottoman)	11	103	8.8	3.5	0.01	0.1
zengin (rich, wealthy)	10	51	8.7	4.4	0.01	0.2
yüzyılın (of the century)	9	24	8.6	5.3	0.01	0.4
güzel (beautiful)	9	102	8.5	3.2	0.01	0.08
tuhaf (strange, odd)	8	70	8.4	3.6	0.01	0.1
yalnız (alone, lonely)	8	51	8.4	4.1	0.01	0.1
yoksul (poor)	7	38	8.3	4.3	0.009	0.2
yoksulluk (poverty)	7	21	8.3	5.2	0.01	0.3
fakir (poor/destitute)	5	22	7.8	4.6	0.007	0.2
kayıp (loss, lost)	5	31	7.8	4.1	0.007	0.2
egzotik (exotic)	5	19	7.8	4.8	0.007	0.3

Unlike the works of Loti (50K words in total) and Tanpınar (92K words), Pamuk's memoir (76K words) exhibits a significantly larger number of high-frequency collocates associated with Istanbul. Pamuk's

use of collocates is not only denser but also more varied. In the earlier narratives, collocates tended to be more limited and revolved around a few recurring motifs, whereas Pamuk's portrayal engages with a wider thematic and emotional spectrum. This reflects his intense focus on the city, exploring its myriad aspects; Istanbul seems to be both a subject and a character in Pamuk's narrative.

The most frequent collocates are *bütün* (50 occurrences), *sonra* (35), *benim* (32), *büyük* (31) and *eski* (30). However, if we combine *benim* (my, 32), *bana* (to me, 17), *beni* (me, 9), *kendimi* (myself, 14) and *ben* (I, 7), their frequency of 79 occurrences significantly outweighs any other collocate, underscoring the deeply personal nature of the narrative. Likewise, the combination of *şehrin* (of the city, 15), *şehir* (city, 8), *şehirde* (in the city, 8) and *şehri* (the city, 7) results in 38 occurrences. Istanbul variants have, when grouped, 36 occurrences.

The Log Dice score is highest for *bütün* (10.6), *benim* (10.1), *büyük* (10.1), *sonra* (10.0), *şehrin* (9.9), *batılı* (9.8) and *hüzünlü* (9.6). The MI score is highest for *imgesini* (its image) and *ansiklopedisi*, both at 6.5, followed by *yüzyılın* (of the century) at 5.3. If we group different forms of certain words – *İstanbul*, *batı* (West), *hüzün* (melancholy) and *yoksul* (poor) – and calculate the average mutual information (MI) and Log Dice values, we find that these groups of words have a generally strong association with *İstanbul*:

- Istanbul group: MI ≈ 3.57; Log Dice ≈ 8.57

- West group: Average MI ≈ 4.5; Log Dice ≈ 9.4

- Melancholy group: MI ≈ 4.57; Log Dice ≈ 8.97

- Poverty group: MI ≈ 4.7; Log Dice ≈ 8.13

6.2. Interpretation

Pamuk presents Istanbul as a living entity marked by contradictions, where beauty and decay, grandeur and poverty, are constantly in tension. The frequent occurrence of words like **büyük** (great) alongside **eski** (old) and **fakir** (poor/destitute) points to this duality. Yet this tension differs greatly from the one we saw in Loti's novel. Loti's Istanbul is a city trapped in decline; its former grandeur is a relic of a past glory that can no longer compete with the modernity of the West. For Pamuk, however, greatness and oldness coexist in the present as an inseparable part of the city's character and beauty.

Another striking difference between Pamuk and Loti lies in their use of first-person pronouns. In Pamuk's memoir, the high frequency and strong association of **personal pronouns** (*benim, bana, ben*) with Istanbul indicate a deeply subjective, autobiographical approach to the city. Pamuk's Istanbul is inextricably linked to his personal experiences, memories and reflections. It is not an object of observation but an extension of the self. This self-reflective approach contrasts sharply with Loti's desire to exercise dominance, to possess and control the city. Besides, Pamuk's frequent association of **batılı** (Western) with Istanbul indicates an exploration of the city's hybrid identity. This hybridity is presented as an integral part of Istanbul's character. Loti, conversely, emphasised the 'Oriental' aspects of Istanbul, exoticising differences to create a clear distinction between the East and the West.

The collocation of Istanbul with the **names of poets and writers** in Pamuk's *Istanbul* – such as Yahya Kemal, Tanpınar, Gautier and Flaubert – offers key insights into how the city is framed within a literary and cultural context. The presence of Turkish figures like Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar highlights Pamuk's engagement with local literary memory, suggesting that his understanding of the city is informed by those who documented its transformation from the Ottoman Empire to the modern Turkish Republic. The presence of both Turkish and Western writers reinforces Pamuk's theme of the city as a bridge between East and West. It suggests that understanding Istanbul requires engaging with both Eastern and Western literary traditions.

The strong collocation of ***resim*** (picture or painting) and ***imgesini*** (its image) with Istanbul in Pamuk's memoir highlights the visual and representational nature of the city's portrayal. He is the only one who uses photos of the city in his work. The strong presence of both concrete (*resim*) and abstract (*imgesini*) visual terms might indicate Pamuk's exploration of the tension between Istanbul's physical reality and its various representations or images. This suggests that Pamuk is not just describing the physical city but is deeply concerned with Istanbul's representational aspect – how it appears, how it is imagined, and how these images are constructed and perceived. This relates to the strong association between *İstanbul* (the node) and *İstanbul* (the collocate). It highlights the relationship of Istanbul with itself between the past and the present, the East and the West, the personal and the communal.

7. Conclusion

Eventually, the three books subject of study can be read as a trilogy of a city across times and perspectives. From Loti's Orientalist depiction of Istanbul as a decaying relic to Tanpınar's focus on social transformation, and finally to Pamuk's melancholic introspection, Istanbul appears as both a site and a symbol of cultural tension. Loti's imperialist gaze portrays Istanbul as a place fading into insignificance, while Tanpınar presents it as a living space shaped by people confronting change. Rather than viewing it through the binary lens of East versus West, Tanpınar emphasises the human experience of change, the role of institutions in modernisation and the continuous interplay between tradition and progress. Pamuk's Istanbul represents yet another evolution, combining elements from both previous perspectives while adding new layers of meaning. His portrayal acknowledges both the melancholic aspects that fascinated Loti and the social transformations that preoccupied Tanpınar, while introducing a more self-reflective and autobiographical dimension. His Istanbul is a city where personal and collective histories intersect, and where the tension between the East and the West has become an internalised aspect of its people's cultural identity.

While Loti tries to let his audience passively imbibe his ideology and worldview, by administering an intellectual sedative in the form of an amoral, hyper-romanticised sensuality, Tanpınar embarks with his readership on a highly intellectual journey, urging them, by means of comedy, irony, sarcasm and allegory, to critically question their own 'conscious choices' and try to have a panoramic look as to where those choices can lead them in the long run. Pamuk, however, takes his readers in an inward psychological/intellectual voyage. Using the first pronoun, he shares his own internal journey, making the readers relive the experiences he underwent, indirectly encouraging them to look inside themselves, understand what is going on in their own individual worlds. This analysis, combined with the corpus-linguistic analysis, highlights how language choices intertwine with historical and ideological contexts to construct Istanbul's image. By applying this method to other urban spaces, researchers could similarly uncover how lexical patterns reflect broader cultural narratives, providing a nuanced understanding of place identity.

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