



## The Multiple Modernities in Turkish Literature: A. H. Tanpınar's Liminality or Terkip\*

Türk Edebiyatında Çoklu Moderniteler: A. H. Tanpınar'ın Eşik yahut Terkip Fikri

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### Abstract

Traversing disciplinary boundaries between literary studies, cultural studies and sociology, this study aims to explore modernity and modernization discussions in relation to Turkey to understand whether Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's uneasiness arose from the idea of modernity itself, its dialogue with tradition, its application in Turkish society or from a combination of all of these. The study presents an outline of the central themes of Multiple Modernities; then it continues with a study of contemporary views of modernity and modernization in Turkey to be able to elaborate on how Tanpınar as a novelist and thinker approaches modernity and understands Turkish modernization project. Most importantly, the study aims to underscore and explore the relationship between Tanpınar's idea of modernity or terkip (co-existence of dichotomies) and the Multiple Modernities approach by referring to Henri Bergson's influence on Tanpınar's ideas and to the parallelisms between Walter Benjamin and Tanpınar.

**Keywords:** Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, multiple modernities, cultural studies, Turkish modernity, liminality.

### Öz

Edebî çalışmalar, kültür çalışmaları ve sosyoloji gibi bilim dallarının sınırlarını aşan bu inceleme yazısı, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın huzursuzluğunun; modernitenin kendisinden mi, onun gelenekle oluşturduğu diyalogundan mı, modernitenin Türk toplumunda uygulanışından mı yoksa bütün bunların bileşiminden mi kaynaklandığını anlamak amacıyla Türkiye özelinde modernite ve modernizasyon tartışmalarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma Çoklu Moderniteler fikrinin başlıca temalarına dikkat çektikten sonra, bir yazar ve düşünür olarak Tanpınar'ın moderniteye nasıl yaklaştığını ve Türk modernleşme sürecini nasıl anlamlandırdığını tahlil etmek amacıyla Türkiye'deki günümüz modernite ve modernizasyon tartışmalarını incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. En önemli olarak ise, Henri Bergson'un Tanpınar üzerindeki etkisinden ve Walter Benjamin ile Tanpınar arasındaki benzerliklerden bahsederek, bu çalışma bilhassa Tanpınar'ın modernite anlayışı – yahut terkip fikri (karşıtlıkların bir arada bulunuşu) ile Çoklu Moderniteler fikrinin benzerliklerini tetkik edip, bu benzerliklerin altını çizmeyi hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, çoklu moderniteler, kültür çalışmaları, Türk modernitesi, eşik.

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## Introduction

Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt explains that the idea of Multiple Modernities emerged as a reaction to or a critique of the discourse produced by the liberal tradition of modernity. The Multiple Modernities approach criticizes the hegemonic discourse of the liberal tradition of modernity; it is hegemonic because the liberal tradition of modernity assumes that “modernity developed in modern Europe” and that this was the only path of modernity that the non-Western parts of the world should follow. Therefore, the notion of Multiple Modernities holds a highly confrontational attitude to the hegemonizing and homogenizing arguments of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Also, Eisenstadt argues that “the reality after World War II” (2000, p. 1) proved the hegemonic and homogenizing assumptions wrong. By this “reality” he means the “actual developments taking place in modernizing societies,” (2000, p. 1) and in modernizing societies these development processes took place in different periods, and consequently “multiple institutional and ideological patterns” (2000, p. 2) emerged in these societies. “These patterns,” Eisenstadt contends, “all developed distinctively modern dynamics and modes of interpretation, for which the original Western project constituted the crucial (and usually ambivalent) reference point” (2000, p. 2). On the grounds of his last argument, the existence of “the crucial and ambivalent” relationship between “the original Western project of modernity” and the one developed in non-Western societies, we can point out the existence of a similar relationship between “the West” and Turkey.

As one can assert, Ottoman-Turkey regarded the West as a reference point, and due to this attitude, two opposite reactions emerged that are still prevalent in contemporary Turkey: the West is either regarded as an “object of desire” (a pro-Western view) or as “a point of animosity”/a challenge to Turkey’s authenticity (an anti-Western view). Both of these attitudes, though they are contradictory, are regarded as “modern patterns” in the notion of Multiple Modernities: “many of the movements that developed in non-Western societies articulated strong anti-Western or even antimodern themes, yet all were distinctively modern” (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 2). Hence, these two different and oppositional attitudes of contemporary Turkey’s relationship with the West and “the Western patterns of modernity,” as Eisenstadt indicates, consolidate the fallacy of the assumptions which claim that “modernity as it developed in modern Europe would ultimately take over in all modernizing and modern societies; with the expansion of modernity, [it] would prevail throughout the world” (2000, p. 1).

The most significant assertion introduced by the term “Multiple Modernities” is that “modernity and Westernization are not identical; [and] Western patterns of modernity are not the only ‘authentic’ modernities, though they enjoy historical precedence and continue to be a basic reference point for others” (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 3). Within a linear understanding of history, the “historical precedence” of the development of some societies is given great importance and credibility. It can even be argued that the West started to see itself as the center of modernity and the non-West occupied the periphery because “the civilization of modernity developed first in the West” (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 7). Yet, the Multiple Modernities approach aims to dismantle this linear understanding of history and it thus breaks the equation of modernity/modernization with Westernization, and it blurs the distinctions between concepts like center and periphery.

Eisenstadt claims that Western patterns of modernity reached the non-Western world through “military and economic imperialism and colonialism [...] economic, military, and communication technologies” (2000, p. 14). Later with “the recent intensification of forces of globalization,” (2000, p. 16) modernity as it developed in modern Europe did not take over although it “undermined the cultural premises and institutional cores of these ancient societies” (2000, p. 14). “Elites and intellectuals”, Eisenstadt adds, “incorporated some of the Western universalistic elements of modernity in the construction of their own new collective identities, without necessarily giving up specific components of their traditional identities (often couched [...] in universalistic, especially religious terms)” (2000, p. 15). In fact it can be maintained that because the concept of modernity moves to different settings and “new historical contexts,” (Eisenstadt 2000, p. 21) it is prone to transformation and appropriation. As Nilüfer Göle similarly notes, “one of the most important characteristics of modernity is simply its potential capacity for continual self-correction” (2000, p. 129). Because modernity bears the idea of transformation inherent in it, in different settings, it is adopted in reconstructed ways, foregrounding “‘subdued’ identities” such as “ethnic, local, regional, and

transnational” (Eisenstadt 2000, p. 18), and it is used to oppose the hegemony of older ideologies and programs. Within this logic, all these, formerly recognized as “peripheral” settings see themselves as multiple centers of modernity which “deny the Western monopoly on modernity, reject the Western cultural program as the epitome of modernity” (Eisenstadt 2000, p. 22) and “attempt to re-appropriate and redefine modernity on their own terms” (Eisenstadt, 2000, p. 19).

### **Contemporary Views of Modernity and Modernization in Turkey**

The contemporary views of modernity and modernization in Turkey in their plural forms are intertwined with a multiple set of interpretations. The debate concerning Multiple Modernities is carried through in the works of several scholars of various ideological and political orientations. Although some discourses of modernization in Turkey use the terms and ideas of modernization and Westernization interchangeably as before, today some others, like some intellectuals of the *Meşrutiyet* (or Constitutionalism; it refers to the period in the Ottoman Empire that denotes the constitutional monarchy in the Ottoman Empire. *Meşrutiyet* took place twice in the Ottoman history; the first in 1876 and the second in 1908) in the Ottoman Empire, do not see ‘the West’ as “some monolithic entity but one from which different and contradictory discourses [emanate]” (Kandiyoti, 1998, p. 274). Accordingly, the latter group of discourses has problematized Turkey’s modernization project to understand its hegemonizing and homogenizing nature. This group of scholars aims to discuss the nature of Western modernities and to talk about alternative models for Turkey’s engagement with modernity.

To read the present-day views of modernity and modernization in Turkey contributes to the Tanpınar discussion in that it helps clarify the conflicting ideas and critical studies on his literature. Although some scholars of modernity and modernization in Turkey are critical of the equation between modernization and Westernization, their departure points are radically different. The issue of the modernization project in Turkey has become a platform for severe oppositions and conflicts between thinkers and scholars. Their alternative readings of Turkish history, which are shaped according to their positions in relation to Islamism, secularism, and the contemporary political regime in Turkey, challenge Turkey’s official history in order to question and explain the multiple societal transformations of contemporary Turkey. Because there are different institutional and ideological patterns that constitute different forms of modernities and modernization in Turkey, various subjects such as traditionalism, conservatism, political Islam, ethnic identities, and secular nationalism are brought under scrutiny to explore their position and role in modernization in Turkey. By looking at their definitions of modernity one can identify ideological or political alliances and oppositions between these scholars. Scholars like Nilüfer Göle and E. Fuat Keyman write from an Islamist/conservative stance. Göle states that “an authoritarian modernism” re-shaped the foundation of “the public sphere” in the Turkish context of “voluntary modernization” (2002, p. 176). She criticizes that religious practices have been ignored by the modern public sphere. In addition, Keyman argues that “Islamic identity” does not pose a threat to the idea of the modern; it simply demands recognition within modernity. He also states that today there is a “change in the nature of Turkish modernity” (2007, p. 217) in which it is impossible to think of “Turkish secularism as uncontested,” (2007, p. 217) and it is also impossible to think of Turkish modernity without mentioning Islam.

Another group of scholars such as Çağlar Keyder, Sibel Bozdoğan, and Reşat Kasaba, whose ideas concerning the idea of modernity date back to the *Meşrutiyet*, have similarly explored Turkey’s engagement with modernity from the Multiple Modernities perspective. Their interpretation of modernity in Turkey entails the emergence of a society which is a combination of both traditional and modern ideas and practices. For these scholars, this type of society, in which both traditional and modern ideas and practices can co-exist, can develop an understanding of modernity and, at the same time, keep its own locality and singularity in a globalized world:

In Turkey and around the world today, we are witnessing the eclipse of the progressive and emancipatory discourse of modernity. [...] it has produced a remarkably lively and pluralist climate in which new voices are being heard and

deeply entrenched assumptions are being radically and, we believe, irreversibly challenged. ... Scholars in many disciplines are looking for new ways of critically engaging with the modern project and exploring options beyond it without falling back on an antimodern “return to tradition” or getting lost in the postmodern “global theme park”. [...] we did not want to reduce the debate to essentialized and mutually exclusive oppositions, especially between Kemalists and Islamists. Writers in Turkey should try not to align themselves according to their ideologies when they study the real histories of modernization in Turkey. (Bozdoğan and Kasaba, 1997, pp. 3-8)

As this quotation states, these scholars recommend Turkish writers not to limit the notion of Turkey’s engagement with modernity within the boundaries of their individual ideologies of Kemalism and Islamist politics. As a last point it can be claimed that what lies under the Multiple Modernities approach is an idea of globalization, yet – ironically – the idea of Multiple Modernities turns itself against the universalist claims of the “classical”/liberal approach to modernity and foregrounds instead the diversity of what can be called modern practices.

Tanpınar’s approach to Turkish literature reveals his ideas about how “a Turkish modernity” should be created and experienced: he supports the idea of a change which does not lose touch with the specificities of its culture. Nergis Ertürk argues that “[t]he problem presented by the idea of ‘Turkish modernism’ is not merely that of the recovery of an excluded object [the past]. Rather, it involves the very possibility of addressing the absence of an “authentic” Turkish modernism within national-critical discourse itself” (2012, p. 529). Tanpınar, although he was not familiar with the concept of Multiple Modernities, wished for an experience of a modernity with roots in Turkey, that is, a Turkish modernity that possesses “the unity of soul and mind” (Tanpınar 1998b, pp. 90-91) that was distinctively born in Turkey. By “the unity of soul and mind” Tanpınar refers to a new configuration of modernity which has both material (mind) qualities – economic, industrial, social developments – and extra-material (soul) qualities – aesthetic pleasure, creative excitement to struggle with despair associated with living in a disenchanted world. Particularly, his emphasis on “soul” as an indispensable element of his understanding of the modern entails an aesthetic dimension in the individual requiring intelligence and personal initiative.

“As an astute literary critic as well as a gifted poet and novelist, Tanpınar ... offer[ed] a culturally specific approach” (Seyhan, 2008, p. 16) to the modernization process in Turkey. It was an experience of Turkish modernity that Tanpınar longed for, not Turkish westernization. Therefore, he wanted to “explore his society in moments of its major transformations and recorded lived history in alternately journalistic and symbolic registers, as ... [he] tried to make sense of [his] people’s peculiar destiny” (Seyhan, 2008, p. 5). Tanpınar wanted to bring light to lost and indigenous cultural legacies in his land that should not be terminated at one point in history and, at the same time, could participate in and interact with other cultures and the present time.

Before continuing with Tanpınar’ ideas on time and history, we need to explore the effects of his comments on the past and try to understand why he has been called a conservative writer until recently. There is currently a struggle between “conservative” and “liberal” discourses in Turkey over Tanpınar as a writer. This is connected to a discussion about the political/ideological differences between the voices in contemporary Turkey that commonly criticize Eurocentric approaches to modernity and modernization. Tanpınar’s engagement with the social, cultural and political changes which were carried out as a part of Turkey’s modernization project and his depiction of these issues from a critical position have long attracted Turkish conservative thinkers’ and scholars’ attention, and they have taken Tanpınar and his writings as a reference point to support and justify their own conservative ideas. They have reinforced their argument by putting forward Tanpınar’s wish for “wholeness,” his idea of “continuity in change” and insistence on the past as indicators of his conservatism (Gürbilek, 2004, p. 121). He was regarded as a conservative writer also by some supporters of Turkey’s modernization/Westernization just because he cared for the past and people’s cultural heritage. Unlike the supporters of Turkey’s modernization/Westernization in the *Tanzimat* (or Reorganization; it refers to series of reforms promulgated in the Ottoman Empire between 1839 and

1876 under the reigns of the sultans Abdülmecid I and Abdülaziz) and in the early Republic, who insistently ignored the past and wanted to adopt “the new” without considering the in/compatibility of the new with the cultural wealth in Turkey, Tanpınar wanted to make the bond between the past and the present stronger; in other words, he was not a defender of the past for its own sake.

He was also claimed to be a literary and political conservative on the basis of the firm which published his work: some other intellectuals who have also been considered conservative wrote for “*Dergah*,” which literally means the dervish convent. “*Dergah*” is a Turkish publishing house which is claimed to have a conservative inclination. “*Dergah*” is also the name of the publishing house’s monthly literary journal. Also, all rights for publishing Tanpınar’s work belong to *Dergah*. However, between 2000 and 2003, when another publishing house, YKY, famous for its liberal status, published Tanpınar’s works, liberal and left-leaning readers in Turkey also read Tanpınar’s work. So, a change in the profile of Tanpınar’s readers has taken place. Today, Tanpınar is widely read by those people who do define themselves as liberal and “modern.”

The idea that Tanpınar is a conservative writer has been challenged by many critics in the last few decades. Some of these are Nurdan Gürbilek, Berna Moran, Besim Dellaloğlu, Mehmet Aydın, Oğuz Demiralp, M. Orhan Okay, Orhan Koçak, İnci Enginün, Zeynep Kerman, and Orhan Pamuk. Pamuk explains why he thinks Tanpınar cannot be reduced to the spokesperson of a single worldview, as follows:

[i]n fact, Tanpınar, who remained indecisive between two worlds [East and West] but transformed this indecisiveness into a writing style and determinately adopted it, behaved in a cleverer and more determinant way than all his contemporaries since he knew the possibilities in the geography he lived in and how to make use of them. Positioning himself between the two worlds, he was able to cherish these worlds by selecting things from them carefully. The key that makes us understand Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar is the distinctive style he used in order to bring these selections together in his work. (Pamuk, 1995, p. 23)

Tanpınar himself also emphasized his peculiar position: “The leftists are mysterious, stubborn and ignorant. The rightists, who believe they are nationalists, are all ignorant and arid. The ones in the middle are disheveled. Almost all are dull and hard to be tolerated. Those who have taste and understanding are jealous. Alas, how lonely I am” (Tanpınar, 2007, p. 203). His peculiarity or “loneliness” stems from his state of belonging nowhere and to no specific ideology. Tanpınar equated his ideological “loneliness” as a sign of being a true intellectual: “I’m an intellectual. I believe in love, life, human, and thought. But I do not think I have to understand these in any case according to some fashions. I am responsible to myself as much as I am responsible to the community” (Tanpınar, 2007, p. 260). Nurdan Gürbilek believes that before arriving at hasty and generalized conclusions about Tanpınar’s conservatism we should have a look at the symbolic language used in his work: those who take Tanpınar as a conservative writer miss the messages underlying the symbolic language (2004, pp. 129-131).

A waste land, a dry spring, a blurred mirror, a lost East or a dead mother. Tanpınar was well aware of a sense of loss and the impossibility of regaining what was lost, so he was not a conservative writer. What put a distance between Tanpınar and the idea of political conservatism or the dream of regaining the lost past was his confrontation with the loss ... He situated the loss in the reality of nation-building and he also situated the national reality in the center of his literature... Tanpınar is one of those writers who can clearly explain that magic which once influenced our lives is not effective any more, the old house is a ruin now, we are tenants in the new house ... finally the notion of “our own” is now an old fairy tale. Tanpınar’s power stems from both his wish for wholeness and his awareness of the impossibility of this wish. (Gürbilek, 2004, pp. 133-135)

### Early Intimations of Multiple Modernities or Tanpınar's *Terkip*:

Gürbilek does not regard Tanpınar as a writer who wrote under the influence of belatedness because Tanpınar had no problems with the notion of being belated, for two reasons: firstly, as Gürbilek and Azade Seyhan note, the novel as a genre is already belated in Turkey, especially when compared to the classical genres of epic, poetry and drama. Secondly, according to Gürbilek, Tanpınar unlike his predecessors or contemporaries, acknowledged the feelings of anxiety and belatedness and used these concepts as his themes (such as the loss of the empire, of the wholeness, or the dead "East" etc.) in his novels (Gürbilek, 2004, p. 14). Again according to Gürbilek, Tanpınar uses the term "past" to refer to two opposite meanings. It is first taken as a repertory for cultural heritage that can make the present richer, and it also connotes the ideas of "loss," "waste," and "death" that haunt the present. These last concepts are impossible to undo: what is lost, wasted and dead is gone; one cannot bring it back to life or the present time. This meaning of the past is always prevalent in Tanpınar's work. Those who regard Tanpınar as a conservative or nostalgic writer, Gürbilek claims, cannot understand this second dimension of his aesthetics; it is an aesthetics of loss. What renders Tanpınar difficult to categorize is perhaps his ambivalent approach to modernity/tradition, past/present and East/West. That is, as a writer who embraced belatedness he emphasized that his approach to modernity constitutes a conflict between an aspiration to and a disdain of modernity. That is to say, he approached modernity in terms of a combination of contempt and admiration, or repugnance and attraction. He had admiration for modernity accompanied by prickings of conscience. It is an experience or description of a kind of identity crisis that Tanpınar repeated several times in his discursive and literary writings (Tanpınar, 1998a, p. 103; Tanpınar, 1970b, p. 82; Tanpınar, 1970a, p. 22; Tanpınar, 1949, p. 153; Tanpınar, 2001, p. 165).

Berna Moran argues that "[u]nlike other Turkish literary figures such as Halide Edip Adivar and Peyami Safa, who thought that modernity was equal to degeneration" (1983, p. 290), and that the contrast between modernity and conservatism stood for a contrast between material and unworldly values, "for Tanpınar modernity is not something that is against traditionalism or something that lacks spiritual values ... the old, according to Tanpınar, should willy-nilly change and should be transcended" (Moran, 1983, p. 290). He saw modernity as a natural process born out of the past traditions in every culture. When Tanpınar lived and wrote his novels, Turkey was going through a modernization/Westernization process, and as a novelist experiencing this process, Tanpınar had a difficult task: he wanted to criticize Turkey's modernization/Westernization, but this task was risky since he could be regarded as a backward-looking writer. According to Besim Dellaloğlu, "Tanpınar was the first modernist in Turkey; a true modernist who understood what modernity meant in its plural form, when modernization/Westernization was the most accepted way of thinking in Turkey" (2012, p. 180). And Dellaloğlu also claims that it was only in the nineteen eighties that Tanpınar's way of thinking was started to be understood better without any prejudice (2012, p. 180). Since then Tanpınar has been accepted as a modernist novelist who, via his fiction, endeavored to create the idea of Turkish modernity in a society which adopted modernization/Westernization. Therefore today, with the idea of Multiple Modernities, we can make a better reading of Tanpınar in that by means of the Multiple Modernities theory, Tanpınar's insistence on tradition's, culture's and the past's place in the present can be understood better because this theory argues that

*diverse civilizational legacies* give rise to multiple forms of modernity and stresses the constitutive role of cultural orientations and structures of consciousness. And against all forms of cultural determinism, it insists on the autonomy of culture and the openness of cultural frameworks to reinterpretation in changing social and historical contexts. (Emphasis original, Ballantyne, 2010, p. 3)

One of the primary theories of the new approach is the capacity and function of non-Western traditions in the formulation of diverse forms of modernity. In other words, today it can be clearly seen that Tanpınar's efforts to criticize the modernization/Westernization process in Turkey had nothing to do with

being nostalgic, conservative or reactionary. On the contrary, when he criticized Turkish modernization/Westernization, he wanted to suggest that Turkey could be modernized by keeping its memory or by “settling accounts with the past” (Tanpınar, 2007, p. 301) with an all-inclusive attitude to all forms of contemporary experiences and possibilities. Today we can understand better that Tanpınar’s purpose was getting rid of the conflict/disharmony caused by binary oppositions (east-west, old-new, left-right, progressive-conservative etc.). His novels were literary registers in which he discussed his life-long intellectual question: is there a possibility of an expression of modernity born in Turkey?

This brings us to Tanpınar’s use of “time” and “the past” in his work. As mentioned before, the past, with its two dimensional and oppositional meanings, is quite significant in Tanpınar because it constitutes the necessary components that have evolved in time and that make groups of people a society. At the same time, he believed that the past is compatible with the idea of change: it is open to changes and interior/exterior influences. In fact, to Tanpınar, these changes and influences happening in the course of time make the past a significant notion. “The past is a totality of conversational dynamics and influences that make a society what it is in the present” (Tanpınar, 1998b, p. 92). So, the past is a notion which is open to changes imposed and carried out by the present. Also, he thinks that the present could be richer and stronger if it includes tradition. He knew how to interpret tradition according to the present. Therefore, he claimed that

[i]t is certain that the past time has always been in conflict with the understanding we created about it in our minds. We create our reality with the help of our own understanding of things, and in the same way, we create or shape the past [tradition] according to our own thoughts, feelings, and set of values and we change it according to these. (Tanpınar, 1987a, p. 100)

As this quotation clearly notes, “the past,” according to Tanpınar, is a narrative/construct which is created/written in “the present.” And what constitutes the past is the present. So, the present is the time period to which Tanpınar attaches a great deal of importance. Almost all of his works emphasize this philosophy: “[t]o change by continuing and to continue by changing” (Tanpınar, 1987a, p. 100). By this, Tanpınar emphasizes the importance of capturing and understanding the present moment as a product and a producer of one’s past. To change by continuing is a notion which brings Tanpınar closer to Walter Benjamin in terms of their parallel ideas on time, past and memory, particularly in his “Ninth Thesis on the Philosophy of History” (1940) in which he describes his emotions and opinions of history and progress, which are inspired by a Klee drawing.

Both Benjamin and Tanpınar used the past as a lost time period in the critique of the present. In this sense, neither of them supported the idea of revitalizing past time. The past, which is accepted as irretrievably lost, is set against the present in order to criticize the present time and the concept of historical progress. Both Tanpınar and Benjamin have the dream of rescuing and saving the “things old and lost” or things which seized to exist in the present. Before going deep into this discussion, we can talk about Henri Bergson’s influence on both Tanpınar and Benjamin in terms of shaping their ideas on continuity and change through the concepts of the qualitative multiplicity of duration or “pure time”/*durée* in *Time and Free Will* (1889) and remembrance and memory in his *Matter and Memory* (1896). Tanpınar in one of his writings emphasizes the Bergsonian influence on *Meşrutiyet*-period writers and on some early-Republican Turkish writers, like himself, as follows,

[w]ith some studies of Rıza Tevfik and especially Şekip in *Dergah* Bergson gained a significant deal of importance compared to that of Durkheim. [...] Once Yahya Kemal said to Şekip Bey, ‘Şekip, we are all followers of Bergson.’ [...] We read Bergson not only via those who studied his philosophy but also through those writers who have been influenced by him [referring to Proust]. (Tanpınar, 2002, p. 134-5)

After the 1920s, writers like Yahya Kemal and Tanpınar, by means of Bergsonism, wanted to formulate the idea of an eastern Renaissance which both relied on the past and was open to the modern. Influenced by Bergson, Tanpınar formulated a new sense of time which would enable the present to have a dialogue with the past. Tanpınar was influenced by Bergson's idea of the accumulation of time and the notion of *durée*, or duration, in his *Time and Free Will* (1889). Unlike physical-worldly time, *durée* is neither finite/divisible, nor does it flow or pass. Dellaloğlu claims that Bergson produced the concept of duration as opposed to the positivist idea of time, (2012, p. 76) which tends to define time spatially.

*Durée* is the basis and the most important argument of Bergson's philosophy which influenced Tanpınar's idea. In his *The Creative Mind*, Bergson states that there are two modes of time: "the mathematical and the pure time" (1934, p. 2) or *durée*. According to him, the mathematical time is divisible and is calculated by hours or days, but the pure time does not rely on "objectively measurable clock time" (1934, p. 169), so the flow of time as pure time, or *durée*, can be experienced with "intuition." Thus, this brings us to another major concept in Bergsonism: "intuition." Bergson regards intuition as "a mode of reflection" (1934, p. 88) or a method of "thinking in duration" (1934, p. 126) which foregrounds the fact of the constant change of reality and flow of time. As opposed to reason or intellect, which can help one obtain knowledge of scientific principles, Bergson argues, intuition can provide us with "knowledge of metaphysical principles" (1934, p. 159) by going beyond the limits of reality.

Tanpınar, who was motivated by Bergsonian ideas, started to explore the possibility of experiencing modernity by preserving the past and formulated his idea of "changing by continuing," or (*terkip*). Bergson disassociated *durée* from spatial definitions and in doing so inspired Tanpınar to consider past and future events without experiencing an internal separation from the present. To Tanpınar, Bergsonian descriptions of consciousness and memory were inspirational because they showed him how to consider overlapping moments as heterogeneous in his fiction.

Tanpınar shows a concern with recollecting things past. He states that "the past attracts us to itself exactly because it is past and because we cannot find the things in their places. Whether their trace exists there [in the past] or not; in the past we still look for our missing part which, we think, we lost in our inner quarrel" (1987b, p. 111). Also, he emphasizes this concern about recollecting things past with the last-glimpse image in his aestheticism, and he believes that recollection of the things past is only possible with art; therefore, he refers to the Orpheus myth to explain his point (Gürbilek, 2010, p. 102; 2004, p. 133). Like Orpheus, who led his dead wife, Eurydice, out of the world of the dead with his music, (but lost her forever as he should not have looked back during their ascent to the upper world) Tanpınar uses his art to "call back all cultural and aesthetic traditions from the past" (Tanpınar, 1969, p. 24). Therefore, he wants to grasp a sense of "whole" time or "monolithic large time" in which the boundaries between past, present and future are blurred or completely vanish, and this quest for a "whole" time is very much like Benjamin's angel of history who would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.

Time in Tanpınar's world is not linear; it does not "progress." On the contrary, his understanding of time is built on refusing to assume a categorical superiority of the future to the past; so, he takes time as a wide and infinite present which contains both past and future. To him, time has no "before" or "after," but it is an infinite and monolithic totality. One of the most striking depictions of his perception of time is illustrated in his poem "Neither Am I inside Time":

Neither am I inside time,  
Nor altogether without;  
In the unbroken flow of  
An instant singular and vast. (Tanpınar, 1961b/2010)

The poetic persona feels that s/he exists both within and without time. That is, s/he perceives and lives in both what Bergson calls "mathematical time" and "pure time" (1934, p. 2). Like Bergson, Tanpınar prioritizes pure time or *durée* over mathematical time. Therefore, the feeling of being alienated from the present time (mathematical time) is one of the major themes of his poems and novels. According to



Tanpınar, pure time or in his words, “fugitive time,” [*firari zaman*], “time devoid of state” [*halsiz zaman*] or “monolithic time in an unbroken flow” is a method and a style of his art (Tanpınar, 1988, p. 150).

Tanpınar’s engagement with the past has much to do with his attempt to understand the present cultural lives in Turkey as a part of his conceptualization of modernity and to connect them with the past and the future, which is a part of his idea of completeness or continuity. His understanding of the modern embraces the “traditional.” What he could not accept was the disharmony that resulted from intolerance and discontinuity between the past and the present: “[t]he modernization project in Turkey, for Tanpınar, did not respect other life styles” (Moran, 2001, p. 286). Moran maintains that “Tanpınar was constantly searching for harmony and tolerance both in life and literary works” (2001, p. 287). Thus, in his novels he depicted a sense of either discontent or anxiety and even sarcasm towards the modernization project in Turkey, starting with the *Tanzimat* and increasing after the foundation of the Republic. So, what he emphasized is a new outlook on modernity, which he called a new harmony or *terkip*, which favors evolution and preservation of the past traditions. Although the word *terkip* is translated into English as “synthesis,” (in the translation of *A Mind at Peace* 2008 by Erdağ Gökner) I believe Tanpınar meant by *terkip* was “harmony,” coexistence without merging of the parts into a single unity, or “a composition” in Seyhan’s term (2008, p. 141). Besim Dellaloğlu and Ali Yıldız also agree that by *terkip* Tanpınar did not mean a synthesis: what Tanpınar longed for was not a synthesis of East and West. He rather wanted to “be himself; being himself is definitely not a synthesis” (Dellaloğlu, 2012, p. 138). Yıldız holds that “synthesis means a combination of two different things to obtain something new. Yet, in Tanpınar’s synthesis, there are no two different things at the center of his idea. Tanpınar took the national and cultural life as the center of his thinking and idea of *terkip*, not the Eastern or Western civilizations” (1996, p. 424). Ideas, concepts and practices which can, in spite of their differences, harmoniously coexist in Turkey and which are genuinely adopted by the present national and cultural life constitute Tanpınar’s *terkip*.

## Conclusion

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar is a reluctant modernist writer who deeply feels the uneasiness about the modernization project in Turkey which he calls crisis or *buhran*, and expressed this discontent throughout his writing career to be able to cope with it. According to Tanpınar, the only solution for the problem of the Turkish modernization crisis is to create a Turkish version of modernity in which dualities and dichotomies can coexist or create a harmony/*terkip*; a modern life enhanced and enriched by multiple traditional and cultural values and practices. Tanpınar reflected on Turkey’s modernization project with caution and expressed it with the metaphor of a threshold in his poetry and fiction. His poem “Eşik” or “Threshold” (Tanpınar, 1961a) in fact conveys the main structure of his understanding:

And a woman white, calm and magical  
a rose of time bleeding in her bosom  
listens with gloomy glances in the depths  
on the thresholds of being or not being. (Tanpınar, 1961a)

Tanpınar’s notion of a threshold can be taken as an early suggestion or a precursor of contemporary narratives that emphasize the necessity to create an alternative mode of modernization in Turkey because the threshold refers to not giving up on traditions but to an urge to change, a state of in-between-ness, liminality or purgatory.

Tanpınar’s idea of *terkip* in his literary and non-literary work constitutes the heart of the discussion on Tanpınar’s perception of Turkish modernity or his state of in-between-ness or liminality. His search for a *terkip* is, in fact, related to the Multiple Modernities approach because he wanted to solve the problem of being stuck between the East and the West by introducing this idea. Tanpınar’s *terkip* informs, by and large, all his writings, and we could trace what he really meant by *terkip* by exploring his writings, including his major novels. “After 1932 I have lived in an ‘East’ which I interpreted for myself. I believe such a climate will be our own living climate. *Beş Şehir* or *Five Cities* (1946) and *A Mind at Peace* (1949) are two

preliminary research studies for such a [coexistence of the traditional and the modern]. And also, this is the nucleus of all the work I will write” (qtd. in Akün, 1962, p. 11), states Tanpınar. Sometimes *terkip* stands for nature, a life philosophy, a character, the whole society, sometimes it is a central theme represented by a symbol. He emphasizes the necessity of having a new outlook on life as the previous one collapsed with the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire. “Geography, culture and everything expect us to create a new [outlook on life or *terkip*], yet we are not aware of our responsibilities. We are living other nations’ experiences” (Tanpınar, 1949, p. 228). Moreover he argues that “I am devoted neither to East [or *şark*] nor the past [or *mazi*]; I am devoted to and occupied with the life of my native land” (1988, p. 108); and he repeats, “I am devoted neither to East nor West, or things like that; I am devoted to us, to life which has not died” (Tanpınar, 1988, p. 111). This is a very brief description of his idea of *terkip*. The close relationship Tanpınar sees between locality, the significance of the past ages and modernity is articulated by one of Tanpınar’s protagonists, Mümtaz, in *A Mind at Peace* as follows: “In order to leap forward or to reach new horizons, one still has to stand on some solid ground. A sense of identity is necessary... Every nation appropriates this identity from its golden age” (Tanpınar, 1949, p. 198). Again Mümtaz, speaking on behalf of his creator, states that the past is not an entity that should be adopted blindly today “I am not an aesthete of a collapse. Maybe I am looking for things alive in this debris. I value them” (Tanpınar, 1949, p. 156). All in all, Tanpınar’s idea of *terkip* hints the ideas of Multiple Modernities because it informs that the change/the modern does not have to be disconnected from the cultural/traditional/local realities of the people.

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