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MLN, Volume 130, Number 5, December 2015 (Comparative Literature Issue),
pp. 1150-1178 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2015.0074>

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Chronometrics in the Modern Metropolis: the City, the Past and Collective Memory in A.H.Tanpınar

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1. Introduction: Memory Politics of the Little Square

In the opening to the entry “Streets of Paris” in *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin locates “little squares” outside the ordinary temporal relations common to historians:

The timeless little squares that suddenly are there, and to which no name attaches. They have not been the object of careful planning, like the Place Vendôme or the Place des Grèves, and do not enjoy the patronage of world history, but owe their existence to houses that have slowly, sleepily, belatedly assembled in response to the summons of the century. In such squares, the trees hold sway; even the smallest afford thick shade.¹

Although the covered shopping arcades were Benjamin’s central image for his understanding of nineteenth-century Paris, “little squares,” like street names, are sites that are unassimilable to urban-industrial culture. The monumental squares of Haussmann’s Paris create an illusion of permanence and novelty, tied to the historical time of the nation and to urban renovation. Benjamin’s nameless little squares, however, suggest spontaneity, quiescence, and a reluctant and tardy

¹Benjamin P1, 2. Rather than attaching page numbers to each entry, I use the technical annotation of the entries.

responsiveness to the call of progress. A.H. Tanpınar, in *Beş Şehir* (*Five Cities*), describes small squares in Istanbul in strikingly similar terms:²

There are very few things in the city as attractive and delightful as the little squares. These are compositions of a variety of beliefs, traditions, pleasures that turned into instincts, and they owe their existence to a great deal of coincidence and even to centuries of oblivion. There is no waste or pretension in them, other than the generosity of nature that makes thrive roses, cypress and sycamore trees. In time they came into being drop by drop.³

Little squares are not candidates for historical meaning: they are the forgotten corners of the city and only belatedly respond to the demands of urban transformation. Both thinkers perceive something natural in these squares: they are not “carefully planned” but have grown up accidentally and effortlessly. They are slow but active, alive in an organic sense, unlike those monumental urban objects that assert a permanence behind which exists a relentless pursuit of novelty. Even nature itself, its trees and roses, can “afford” a thick shade, going unnoticed by urban “renewal.” The temporal order in which they exist is fundamentally different from modern temporality, conceived in Benjamin’s terms as a “phantasmagoria” of progress. These squares assert synchronicity and an alternative temporality: they do not exist in the same “now” as the Place Vendôme or Taksim Square.

The small squares make up one of those sites where an alternative history attempts to break through the oppressive surface of the myth of progressive history. They have no connection to the great men and celebrated events of traditional historiography, epitomizing instead the “refuse” and “detritus” of history. In Benjamin’s terms, the past confronts us in these neglected squares as “freely associated” and “long-forgotten images.” Tanpınar, in at times disparate methods from the German critic, pursues an alternative temporality or historical time that uncovers, “in a flash,” not what was experienced in the past, not even what is remembered in the present but what has been forgotten. The small squares to which both writers refer, among other urban sites, objects of time and “relics,” have the potential to awaken the collective from the recent past, the nineteenth century, to what has been forgotten, neglected, left in oblivion.

²Tanpınar himself lived in such a small historical square, Narmanlı Han. Today, the buildings surrounding the square are in ruins but it is recognized as a witness to a milestone in Turkish literature.

³Tanpınar, *Beş Şehir* 177. Unless otherwise indicated translations of Tanpınar are my own.

The movement and agitation created by enforced urban transformation, the predominant vision of the eternally changing present, events created and destroyed by an accelerated, sequential scheme of time—all these play a role in these thinkers' search for sites of recognition where past and present lose their familiar contours. The city offers an "archive" of historical phenomena, i.e. urban spaces, architectural forms, commodities, that suggest alternative histories and novel forms of connecting with the past. The city also connects the crisis of time with socio-historical and political questions. Paris, for instance, carrying traces of different epochs, despite devastating urban transformation in the nineteenth century, resisted the rupture between the Second Empire and the Third Republic. Similarly, Istanbul bore the imprints of both cosmopolitan imperial capital and republican metropolis and underwent urban reformation symbolically charged with an imposed cultural duality. The modern city, for both thinkers, is read as the expression of a civilization profoundly informed by the logic of destruction and nostalgia.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–1962), poet, novelist, essayist, literary critic and teacher, author of the novels *Huzur* (A Mind at Peace) and *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* (The Time Regulation Institute), which have recently appeared in English translation, is a strong influence on many Turkish writers. Born in 1901, he bore witness to a series of momentous historical events including the two World Wars, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the British occupation of Istanbul, the Independence War, the replacement of the Sultan by the Turkish Republic, as well as a series of radical reforms in every aspect of life. His first poems appeared in *Dergah*, a literary magazine published by the prominent poet and Tanpınar's mentor Yahya Kemal. The political and philosophical debates of the time centered on the cultural aspects of modernity and how to reconcile the then-recent material and cultural changes with a Turkish and Islamic heritage. For Tanpınar, there was no easy answer; he was aware of the obscurity of in-betweenness and he accepted it as the primary condition of his existence. This condition of constant wavering between two worlds became the central motif in his works without giving way to a dogmatic singularity or relapsing into facile and untroubled syntheses. After graduating from Istanbul University Faculty of Letters, he taught at high schools in Erzurum, Konya and Ankara, "the period in which he wrote *Beş Şehir*." He was later appointed as professor of modern Turkish literature at Istanbul University. A true comparatist, he taught French surrealism and British modernism along with classical Ottoman and Turkish literature. His

History of Nineteenth-Century Literature remains the most comprehensive work on the period.

Published in 1946, only six years after Benjamin left the manuscript of the *Arcades* behind, Tanpınar's collection of essays on five historical capitals, particularly the Istanbul segment, maps a cultural history of modernity within urban landscape and material objects. Both authors figured the city as a 'shocking' site of rupture despite the disparate histories of these two cities. Istanbul, on the one hand, exhausted with grand histories of multiple conquests and emperors, and Paris, on the other, imagined as the locus of national pride—offer for both authors "shocking" sites of rupture from historical continuity. Using Benjamin's method of bringing the past into constellation with the present as a point of departure,⁴ this essay explores Tanpınar's direct or unintentional questioning of modern illusions, cultural myths of progress, historical causality, a sanctified tradition, and of a dead past. It revamps Tanpınar studies in light of a discussion on "the ruins of modernity," inspired by the rediscovery of Benjamin in the field of literary theory in the post twenty years.⁵

It is particularly important to revisit these texts on urban memory at a time when public and urban space are being redefined in terms of their political meaning. The last few years have seen the emergence of public square movements such as the Gezi Park resistance in Istanbul, Occupy Wall Street in New York's Zuccotti Park, Los Indignados' call to "Take the Square" (*Toma la plaza*) in Madrid, Cairo's Tahrir Square occupation during the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and so on. These movements, as well as their authoritarian repression by the state,⁶ have called for a new understanding of the urban space and the politics of everyday life. Tanpınar's alternative urban history and Benjamin's

⁴Several critics recently argued for the urgency of bringing Benjamin and Tanpınar together as critics and writers of the "melancholy of modernism's fallen languages. (Ertürk, "Modernity" 41)" This study supplements the recent work on "crucial differences and the remote continuities" between these two authors, which might eventually help us figure new modes of comparison outside hierarchical and monolithic comparative categories. Although it is hard not to give in to safe genealogies of modernism, even to invert them in a comparison between two literatures overdetermined by cultural hierarchies, the work of Tanpınar and Benjamin cannot be reduced to such uneven relations. This study does not revisit such genealogies or hierarchies between the two modernisms. See Ertürk; Gürbilek and Dellaloğlu.

⁵For a compelling discussion of the revival on ruin scholarship in anthropology, see Dawdy. On Benjamin's reception in the field of literary theory, see Osborne xxvii.

⁶One such example of the authoritarian reaction to claim on public space is France's most recent declaration of state of emergency. Following the tragic attacks of 13 November in Paris, France has practically suspended any form of open public space, where citizens can no longer manifest freely their presence and interact with each other in the capital.

method of recovering the recent past, distilled here in their depiction of the little squares, could offer such renewed perspectives. Tanpınar's account of Istanbul is more relevant than ever, as the metropolis has been reshaped by global, regional and local capital and has now become a new model of the global city. Istanbul's transformation under the authoritarian AKP regime, committed to neo-liberal policies, inequality-inducing economic growth and 'progress', showcases a contrived and spurious embrace of Ottoman heritage, the basis of which is consumerism, global capitalism and, neo-conservative and populist policies. The shrinking and suffocating open space, like the little squares, has gradually turned into condos, shopping malls and hotels, ruining the urban fabric. The Gezi Park movement called for environmental sensitivity and denunciation of capitalism in face of extreme urban development in the past ten years. The collective reaction to urban remodeling projects has revealed alternative histories staged in these parks and squares. Tanpınar's rewriting of the urban history of the historically charged capital undergoing devastating transformation almost seventy years ago bears striking parallels to the collective resistance to contemporary urban policies. The temporality of the little square, not "carefully planned" but slow and spontaneous, with traces of the forgotten past gathered "drop by drop," is part of the critical consciousness that occupied Taksim square to protect the historical urban fabric of Istanbul. Tanpınar's writings on Istanbul, contrary to the established reception of the author in Turkey until recently, calls for a collective remembering, not of an imagined monumental Ottoman past, but of a forgotten past tucked away in the politics of little squares. Such a remembering can take place in Gezi Park, rather than the government's alternative plan, which involved the reconstruction of an Ottoman Artillery Barracks into a shopping mall.

2. Tanpınar's Urban Dream, Benjamin's Fairytale

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar has significantly shaped our understanding of Turkish literary modernity. He approaches modernity as a crisis of time, and suggests that the greatest dilemma of his era is where and in what way we are to connect to the past. "We are all children of a crisis of consciousness [*şuur*] and identity [*benlik*]," he argues, "being pulled between being and not being more painful than that of Hamlet" (*Beş Şehir* 235). Although Tanpınar often frames his concern with "connecting to the past" as an anxiety to bridge the cultural

rupture between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey,⁷ the author's approach to national origins is thoroughly complex and, at times, ambiguous. Therefore, it would be a mistake to reduce his writing to the "*buhran*" (crisis) of a national culture. His work points to essential anxieties and problematics of modernity, questioning any possibility of a genuine connection to the past. The thing that attracts us to the past, he argues, is the very void it leaves behind. "Regardless of any trace the past may have left, we are looking for the thing we think we lost in our inner conflict" (235). The past is not only an idealized past, now believed to be lost, but also a past that has been truly forgotten, leaving no trace in cultural history or memory. In *Bes Şehir*, book-length essays on the cultural history of five cities, Tanpınar attempts to "settle accounts" (*hesaplaşmak*) and to come to a "mutual understanding" (*anlaşmak*) with the past (25).⁸ What the author eventually recaptures is an incoherent archive of urban histories, and of objects, texts, and images. We do not connect with the past, but rather, the past confronts us in the void it has left, in neglected areas, such as small squares, sleepy, belated and outside the patronage of national histories.

Tanpınar is not alone in his concern for the crisis of time. When Walter Benjamin first set out to write the history of the Parisian arcades in 1928, he embarked on a similar attempt to connect with the Paris of the nineteenth century, a Paris that is now visible only in ruins. Benjamin observes a transformation in the understanding of time, which he calls "the Copernican revolution in historical perception" (K1, 2). For Benjamin, we no longer have access to "what is closest, tritest, most obvious," and only through a revolutionary form of remembering, which he calls awakening, can we access a not-yet-conscious knowledge of what has been. Modernity, for Benjamin, is in part about the devastating transformations of social form and its corresponding urban phenomena: the crowd, the transfigured urban scenery, the alienating impact of industry and machine culture, the catastrophic changes in the name of history—wars, demolitions, ruins—they were all fossilized in the relics of everyday city life.⁹ What is equally signifi-

⁷For an example of criticism that treats Tanpınar's work as a symptom of Ottoman imperial loss and anxiety about future-oriented national secularism, see Gökner. This article argues that the author's work needs to be recontextualized within the temporal and memory crisis of modernity.

⁸Yahya Kemal, Tanpınar's mentor, was committed to the idea of connecting with the Ottoman past. Tanpınar dedicates the collection to Kemal and suggests that he has written it within the intellectual tradition Kemal had started. See "Antalyalı Genc Kıza Mektup." The divergences of Tanpınar's work from Yahya Kemal's tradition has been demonstrated in Demiralp.

⁹For a analysis of the idea of ruin and fossil in Benjamin, see Chapter 3 "Natural History: Fossil" in Buck-Morss 58–77.

cant for Benjamin is the way these realities are manifested through technologies of representation and through narratives, historical accounts of the city that organize its space and time. The *Arcades* is a big collection of quotations, suggesting the plurality and complexity of city life. It introduces new, and sometimes incommensurable ways of knowing the city.

Proust's remembering "in merely an isolated, scattered, and pathological way" is, Benjamin argues, a symptom of an age "that had lost all bodily and natural aids to remembrance" (K1,1).¹⁰ Modernity for Benjamin, in its constant call for novelty and the endless recurrence of the new, has cut a generation off its connection to the past. In a symptomatic attempt similar to that of Proust, Benjamin tries to recover those aids in the *Arcades* by creating an extensive, encyclopedic "literary montage" on nineteenth-century Paris, with archival material and urban objects. Benjamin's, however, is not a Proustian endeavor of an individual remembering, but a collective one. He is concerned with the new forms of behavior and the economic and technological creations that emerged in the nineteenth century, and with the way these find echoes in the collective unconscious. As opposed to "isolated, scattered, and pathological" forms of remembering, Benjamin reformulates the question of "lost time" for the collective, looking for the way in which it would connect with its past, or, in Benjamin's words, awaken from its forgetfulness. It is not some past experience, or the experience of a past, that is to be recovered, but the connection between "then" and "now" that is lost (or, following the Marxist trend in Benjamin's thought, systematically obscured) in everyday life. The decayed arcades have a relation to the past distinct from the Proustian *madeleine*: as opposed to establishing a connection to the past through repetition of a past experience, the arcade, in its ruined state, not only carries marks of time past, but also calls for the establishment of a relation between its former novelty and present obsolescence. This reveals Benjamin's socio-historical concern with the question of the time of the modern.¹¹ While individual remembrance prioritizes private experience, alienated from its historical contingencies, the urban object, in its ruined state, "flashes" the old within the new.

¹⁰The translator notes that Benjamin uses the word *eingedenk* coined from the verb *gedenken* ("remember"), which has a more active sense than *Erinnerung* ("memory"). Benjamin here focuses on an active, rather than a passive, mode of remembering that underlines a conscious and interpretive act of remembering.

¹¹Benjamin's thinking of "the modern" [*die Moderne*] was frequently mistranslated as "modernism" or "modernity," although Benjamin tended to retain Baudelaire's term, *la modernité*. *Die Moderne* designates both a formal temporal structure and the diverse range of its historical instances—past and present. See Osborne and Charles.

Benjamin and Tanpınar explore the way in which the collective imagination connects with the past. This question, with its aesthetic, social, cultural and philosophical reverberations, plagued early twentieth-century thinkers. The concern with connection to the past is a symptomatic anxiety of the age. The two thinkers share a similar approach to the question, analyzing the small pieces of historical experience of the collective. Tanpınar's attention to *davüssıla* (homesickness), the "second time," *artık* (residue), *hüzün* (melancholy), *hasret* (nostalgia) and urban decay resonate with a range of Benjamin's notions, such as wish images, collective awakening, the flash of recognition and the use of theological concepts. For Benjamin, the "sensation of the newest and the most modern" is a problem of a certain "perception of time" that fetishizes progress. The decayed arcades, on the other hand, reveal the fusion of the old within the new. Similarly, Tanpınar argues that in the old parts of Istanbul, even the newest in essence seems utterly obsolete (*hakiki manasında yeni olan bile tam manasıyla yaşamış görünür*, 211).

It is important to note that it would be a mistake to push the comparison too far, as there are certain elements in Benjamin's method that differ significantly from Tanpınar's approach. After 1934, Benjamin decided to ground the project in Marxist terms, bringing the fetish character of commodities into focus. Hence, the initial title of the project "Parisian arcade—a Dialectical fairyland" (*Pariser Passage—eine dialektische Feerie*) was "impermissibly poetic."¹² The idea of collective awakening, for Benjamin, corresponds to revolutionary class-consciousness. The discarded and forgotten urban objects thus have a politically explosive potential: behind them lies the ideal of a classless society, stored in the unconscious of the collective. Tanpınar's focus, however, is not so much on the ideal of a classless society as on the harmonious existence with nature and with the past. He nurtures a belief in traditional models, mysticism being a significant presence in his writing. One aspect that brings the two thinkers together even in this methodological and ideological difference is that a controversy pursues their legacy for having conflicting tendencies, paradoxes and reversals in their work, particularly concerning mysticism. Benjamin's conflicting position between celebrating and mourning the destruction of traditional culture has been associated with cultural conservatism, a characterization Tanpınar has been subjected to more often than is justified.

¹²See Buck-Morss 49.

3. Five Cities

Tanpınar's pioneering essays on Turkish capitals were first published in 1941. They appeared in segments in the journal *Ülkü*, with "Bursa'da Zaman ve Hülya Saatleri" (Time and Hours of Dream in Bursa), and continued to appear in various journals and newspapers. Some of these essays, with the addition of the "Konya" piece, were published in the collection *Beş Şehir* in 1946. The collection drew remarkable public and critical interest, and was republished in 1960, two years before the author's death. Their historical and geographic scope, cultural insight, and distinctive genre have placed Tanpınar's essays among the most influential works of literature in Turkey, a position they continue to occupy to this day.¹³ Combining travel writing, memoir, urban historiography, poetry, and fiction, Tanpınar attempts to capture the coexistence of past and present that is so particular to urban sites. Instead of composing a monograph on the city with a claim to objectivity, or offering his readers predominantly personal travel writing, Tanpınar skillfully combines personal experience with cultural history, and urban historiography with literary and fictional narratives, all in an innovative fashion. The story of his chance encounter with the writer Ahmet Rasim, followed by a social history of rituals and celebrations, and a discussion of Nerval and Gautier's writing on Istanbul, creates a composite and flexible narrative with competing voices.

In his preface to the second edition, Tanpınar describes the collection as a conversation born out of the need to "settle accounts with the past. (24)" This idea of reconciliation with the past has been commonly read as an essentially cultural question. Criticism in Turkey has focused, to a large extent, on notions of continuity and rupture as a point of departure for understanding the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, and has read Tanpınar through this cultural and temporal binary. Emphasizing Tanpınar's idea of *terkip* as a cultural synthesis, his critics have been tempted to reduce the author's work to such cultural paradigms, and their aesthetic conventions.¹⁴ Although Tanpınar's texts are not without such monolithic categories as "East" and "West," this article investigates the question of the past, and the idea of duration along the axis of conceptions and ideologies of time. The author's notion of "settling accounts with the past" is not simply a historico-political question,

¹³The essays have enjoyed a recent revival partly due to Nobel Laureate Pamuk's acknowledgement of his debt to them, and recent critical works that do not treat the text as a monograph of national history: see Demiralp, Gürbilek and Ertürk.

¹⁴See Gökner, Demiralp, Kahraman, and Moran in Uçman and İnci.

presumably specific to Turkey, generally regarded as a country that suffers from the incommensurability of the imperial past with the secular present—a view eagerly promoted by Orhan Pamuk recently.¹⁵ The sense of duty and debt to the past in Tanpınar is ultimately a modern question, inhabiting both the personal and the collective. He turns to past cultural configurations as a response to the alienation and fragmentation of modernity, putting into doubt the temporal ideology of contemporary civilization.

The past that Tanpınar traces has a complex and contradictory nature. The Turkish modernist often yields to a unified construction of the past, a prominent impulse in his writing, equally present in *Beş Şehir*. Occasionally, he gives in to the metaphysical promise of an authentic Turkish identity by invoking Ottoman, cosmopolitan, and Islamic origins. However, the author's accounts of great men along with their mosques and monuments, gets interrupted by segments and sites of alternative history that cannot be assimilated into a narrative of restored cultural origins. Unlike Benjamin, Tanpınar does not begin his account of Istanbul with the rejects and detritus of the city; rather they find their way into his complex narrative, such as the cries of street vendors and abandoned factories. "It might have been better to limit the question of the past to an objective discussion of identity," explains Tanpınar, "but I have come across these questions within the flow of my life. I am concerned as much with these questions themselves as with the way they have come to me, and with their continuity with my inner states" (*Beş Şehir* 24). The personal and the collective, the everyday and the philosophical, as well as the artistic endeavor thereby come into a productive dialogue, resulting in a hybrid form in the essays in *Beş Şehir*. He does not sever the questions of cultural history from the quotidian—on the contrary, he distills an aesthetic experience out of this unity. This aspect also highlights an essential component of his oeuvre that has been conveniently overlooked by many Turkish critics. Tanpınar is concerned with something more than creating a unified vision of cultural identity in Turkey. His work reflects neither an entirely cultural concern, nor an obsession with the self, but a holistic understanding, which eventually demystifies such idealizations of past cultural configurations.

¹⁵See Orhan Pamuk's article "Tanpınar Uzerine" in Uçman and İnci; also his novels, particularly *Kara Kitap* (*The Black Book*) and *Kar* (*Snow*.)

4. Istanbul: Transformation and *daiüssıla*

Tanpınar claims that Istanbul changed in a more rapid and thorough way than Paris: between 1908 and 1923, a period of only fifteen years, “it completely lost its identity” (154). However, the urban transformation accelerated after the Tanzimat era (1839) and the imperial capital had been undergoing urban redesign from the second half of the nineteenth century on. The “old Istanbul” that Tanpınar associates with myths and fairytales was in fact an introverted and multi-centered city (153). The decentralized nature of the traditional Ottoman system, especially in the realms of public health, education, and bureaucracy, was also manifest in its urban structure. The city consisted of smaller units called *mahalleler* (quarters), without any central hub connecting the units to the center. The public spaces for meetings were mosques, churches and other sanctuaries, along with their courtyards. As Turkey integrated into global capitalist modernity in the middle of the nineteenth century,¹⁶ this traditional fabric in Istanbul was gradually replaced with Western urban patterns.¹⁷ The decentralized character of the imperial capital, a city where the cul-de-sac, a private place, was the typical urban element,¹⁸ was disrupted by arteries, squares, and parks. In fact, the idea of a public square was so alien to the Ottomans that when architect Vedat Bey, had been educated in Paris, created a public space in front of the post office he designed in 1909, he was investigated by the Ottoman authorities (cited in Ardaman 129).

Istanbul under urban reforms, like Paris, lost its characteristic conglomeration of small towns or quarters (*mahalleler*) with their distinctive ways of life and a strong sense of collective identity. Tanpınar finds unity in the urban and social fabric of these quarters, collectives that “live attached to one another like organs of a body” (*her uzvu ile birbirine bağlı yaşayan topluluk*). Today *mahalle*, Tanpınar notes with resentment, exists only as a territorial administrative unit (161). Part of the mandate of the centralization projects was to contain discrete formations and organic self-developments of partly isolated quarters in a totalitarian fashion, connecting them to the center with a traffic hub. This created an artificial city that alienated its dwellers. Benjamin traces this sense of alienation in *The Arcades*: “small towns where one was born and where one died, where one never dreamed of leaving home, where nature and history had collaborated to realize variety in unity.”¹⁹

¹⁶See Keyder; Ortaylı and Koçal.

¹⁷See Çelik, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*; and Dumont, *Villes ottomanes à la fin de l'Empire*.

¹⁸See Yerasimos in Dumont (ed.) *Villes ottomanes*.

¹⁹Benjamin cites Dubech and D'Espezel, *Histoire de paris 1926*. Cited in E3a, 6.

The centralization created a city, in which inhabitants no longer feel at home, living in a perpetual state of homelessness (*daüssıla*). Living connections to the place where a generation was born and died were severed, while a uniform structure was imposed on the urban fabric. This emphasis on impromptu urban development, its variety and its collective nature, as opposed to calculated landscapes, homogenous sites and alienated subjects, brings the two thinkers together in the face of modern urbanism.

Istanbul did not suffer the Haussmanian surgical operation and gentrification effect as Paris did: it was gradually transformed from a multi-centered, introverted, labyrinthine urban landscape into a patchwork of traditional and modern urban fabrics. Urban reforms in Istanbul coincided with the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876), which sought to centralize and rationalize Ottoman rule, reorganizing the central and provincial bureaucracy and building infrastructure.²⁰ This period is usually associated with projects of modernization and westernization in the empire, which continued until and beyond the declaration of the republic in 1923. Tanpınar argues that the Tanzimat period introduced the idea—now a cliché—that Istanbul was a city where two civilizations would meet and unite in a synthesis (150). Urban redevelopment during this period, like that of many other capitals of Europe and its peripheries, was to a large extent inspired by and derived from Paris. Two chief architects of Paris, Haussmann and Bouvard, looked for opportunities to commission Western design projects in Istanbul with the help of the Ottoman administration. Following his encounter with the Sultan in Paris during the 1867 World Exhibition, Baron Haussmann himself came to Istanbul in 1873 and looked for jobs (Osterhammel 72). Although he had a couple of interviews with the Grand Vizier, his projects were rejected because of concerns for the preservation of monuments (Ardaman 112). Bouvard, on the other hand, offered grandiose and unrealizable projects, without paying attention to the topography of the city (Çelik 92). The idealization of Istanbul as the city where “the East meets the West” thus proved to be an impossible, almost ludicrous task. The city eventually became a patchwork—rather than a site of synthesis—of different civilizations. Therefore, the struggle and co-existence of the old and the new in Istanbul manifests a more complex pattern than it does in other European capitals, and is symptomatically read as a conflict of civilizations.

²⁰See Zurcher.

In his writings on Istanbul, Tanpınar tries to portray the transformation the city went through in the last years of the Empire, exploring its grounds, its consequences and its impact on the psyches of its inhabitants. He starts his narrative by comparing the city to Paris and quotes Baudelaire's "Le Cygne," a poem to which Walter Benjamin also pays particular attention in *The Arcades*²¹: "*Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville / Change plus vite, hélas! que le cœur d'un mortel)*." Baudelaire's traumatic experience of remembering the old city parallels a sense of longing and nostalgia for the old Istanbul, and the feeling of homelessness the new city overwhelmingly incites. The old Istanbul is "gone" and it changes with an unsettling lack of permanence, like "the changing heart of any mortal." The new Istanbul induces overwhelming feelings of homelessness (*daüssıla*) and nostalgia (*hasret*)²². Tanpınar reads the new Istanbul in light of these two notions, and contends that it is the feeling of homesickness that reveals the true nature of Istanbul in us (*Beş Şehir* 151).

These notions, however, do not appeal to a straightforward nostalgia for the past, nor do they demonstrate a hopeless effort of retrieval. Rather than mourning and longing for an idealized past that is home (*sıla*), they contain a complex and contradictory form of reconciliation with the present: "*Hasret* is not a feeling that belongs only to the past and that inevitably conflicts with our reason. This complex feeling penetrates into our everyday lives" (151). The irrepressible desire to return to the imperial capital manifests itself in the feelings of homesickness, anxiety, and displacement, a desire the author relates to that of Baudelaire. Against this aspiration is also the recognition of its futility and also of reconciliation of the past with the present.

5. Tanpınar's *İkinci Zaman*

Tanpınar recognizes that the perception of time is a battlefield in cultural conflicts. In nineteenth-century Istanbul, new clock towers, symbolizing modern and secular lifestyles were implemented by Sultan Abdulhamit II who was known for his interest in clock-making. The clock towers competed with the skyline of minarets and their "*muvaakkithane*," (rooms providing prayer time to public)—just as they did in early modern Europe with its church towers and

²¹For Benjamin, the poem goes back and forth between modernity and antiquity, while remembrance links the two (J72, 5).

²²For the analysis of the concept "*hasret*" in Tanpınar, in the context of the Republican language reforms, see Ertürk.

bells.²³ This urban display of clock towers in the carries has an unmistakable symbolic significance: metronomization of production and numerous other processes in everyday life. The clock has become a symbol and an agent of modernization.²⁴ The symbolic competition for the skyline between the mosque and the clock tower epitomized the conflict between the Ottoman imperial past and the westernizing cultural revolution²⁵ of the present city—a transition the author himself lived through. Tanpınar's particular attention to the emerging clock towers and their socio-political, cultural and symbolic weight led him to write a seminal novel on clocks: *The Time Regulation Institute*. In *Beş Şehir*, the narrator introduces the idea of a "second time" much different from the everyday life, "a time a lot deeper, one that has no relation to the calendar and the clock." (*Beş Şehir* 121) This dualism—or rather pluralism—of times is prevalent throughout his oeuvre, taking on different meanings and tropes. The conflict between clock tower and "muvaakkithane" parallels the cultural duality experienced by Tanpınar's generation—a generation that knew how to read and write in both Ottoman script and Modern Turkish, which operated in both legal and educational systems, and wore both "oriental" and modern clothes. "Our lives stand in front of us like a tangled skein" (*Yaşadığım Gibi* 43), observes Tanpınar, inviting us to see the complex and confused nature of this modern condition, standing between the traditional and the modern, albeit within a culturally charged perspective.²⁶

Living simultaneously in more than one temporal order is a central trope for Tanpınar, and nothing more clearly lays it out than the urban landscape. In the city, Tanpınar finds the "other time" which he depicts in Bergsonian fashion as rich (*velud*²⁷) and whole (*yekpare*). "Clocks

²³See Landes for an influential history of time-keeping practices over centuries.

²⁴For a recent analysis of Ottoman temporal culture, see Wishnitzer.

²⁵The cultural revolution, which is traced back to the Tanzimat Charter in 1839, aimed to secularize and westernize society, isolating it from Ottoman Islamic practices in state institutions and practices of everyday life, such as the change of alphabet, reforms in the legal and educational systems, reorganization of the urban fabric, and the "modernization" of clothes.

²⁶It is important to stress that this condition of being "tangled" in a cultural (and eventually psychic) division is inherently modern experience, in order to avoid binary simplifications between East / West or South / North. The dispersing of clock towers and ubiquity of personal clocks were agents of modernization in the so-called origins of modernity. England and France, in particular, became what Osterhammel calls "clock societies," where the clock became a "weapon of modernization" (71). Similar cultural reforms followed this process, creating the commonly known duality between the traditional and the modern. On this point, see also Thompson.

²⁷The translation does not do justice to the Ottoman word *velut*. The adjective is used for female fertility and for prolific authors. Hence, the second time here for Tanpınar is a time that gives birth—creates, and a time that writes, both referring to its power of reproduction.

do not measure this time,” the author remarks, “it belongs to things that look outdated from the outside, and to the emotions and beauties that we think are no longer useful in our lives. It pulses through the city, which like an ancient beauty, lives only in her memories” (*Beş Şehir* 121). The past is a second time that runs independently of the time of the clock, dissociated from everyday life and visible only in the outdated. The author’s attention to the old and the obsolete as agents of a different temporal order can be compared to Benjamin’s contention that the outmoded signifies a resistance to the oppressive artifice of the present with its constant call for the new. The fragments of the past, outdated—even antiquated—interrupt the time of the calendar and the clock.

Tanpınar’s conception of “second time,” again similar to Benjamin’s understanding of nature,²⁸ draws a distinction not only between the modern and the outdated, but also between the time of nature and the time of history.²⁹ Organic productivity stands in contrast to the mechanical productivity of industrial production. The metaphor of the past as a living body, fertile and prolific, whose pulse carries a rhythm different from that of a modern city, reveals in Tanpınar’s thought a prevalent ideal of an essential connection to—or unity with—cyclical temporalities of ecology. The advent of modernity has not only suppressed the past in order to catch up with the eternal call for the new, but it also systematically cut off the organic connection to cycles of nature. The trope of longing for the past is analogous to a sense of lost connection with the cyclical time of nature, a time the clock does not and cannot count. This idea of the “second time” entails not just the connection of man to nature but also of man to man, imagining a collective form of living:

Thinking that ‘The Teshreen months are here, the bluefish season starts soon’ or ‘It’s April. Redbuds should be in bloom on the hills of Bosphorus’ is enough to turn the present moment into a myth. The old Istanbulites used to live in this tale and live with it only. For them, the calendar was like Hesiod’s *Theogony*. They saw the seasons and days as a dream, whose smells and colors are shaped by the neighborhoods of the city in which they live.

‘Teşrinler geldi, lüfer mevsimi başlayacak’ yahut ‘Nisandayız. Boğaz sırtlarında erguvanlar açmıştır’ diyerek düşünmek, yaşadığımız anı efsaneleştirmeye yetişir. Eski

²⁸For the examination of Benjamin’s philosophico-political understanding of modern culture, revolving around the polar concepts of modernity and antiquity, organic nature and the new nature produced by industry, see Chapter 5 in Buck-Morss,

²⁹Nature in recent discourse has been a problematized term, particularly in debates around the anthropocene in geological time. Tanpınar’s particular usage of the term needs to be distinguished from the typical construct of city as an organic unity.

Istanbullular bu masalın içinde ve sadece onunla yaşarlardı. Takvim onlar için Heziod'un Tanrılar Kitabı gibi bir şeydi. Mevsimleri ve günleri, renk ve kokusunu yaşadığı şehrin semtlerinden alan bir yığın hayal halinde görürdü (153).

The rhythm of natural phenomena, the moment when one season shades into another, and a sense of constant flux mark the time of nature and establish a sense of unity with one's environment. The old city here is imagined to inhabit a temporal order characterized by unceasing communion with nature.

Although this idea of harmony and unity, here borrowed from nature, lies at the heart of Tanpınar's understanding of time, it remains an "imkansız" (impossible / unattainable) ideal. Tanpınar occasionally borrows stability from similar ideals, which he lacks within himself. Ideals of the past expressed in metaphors of seasons, water (sea, spring, fountain, pool etc.), and mirrors, eventually prove illusory. Nurdan Gürbilek calls this trend in his writing an "aesthetics of loss" (131). For Tanpınar, the past attracts us because of the feelings its absence arouses in us. Hence, the ideal of communion with the time of nature appears in his writing only in images of myth, tale and dream.

In the old Istanbul, time was marked not only by nature but by urban rituals, and street vendors were one of those markers. Tanpınar devotes a whole section to the cries of street vendors in *Beş Şehir*, and he repeatedly alludes to them in his other essays on Istanbul.³⁰ They are the central figure in Tanpınar's imagining of the "second time," not only because they are part of the urban tradition of the imperial capital, but because vendors' cries establish various temporal rhythms in the city. "They are a clock in their own right," the author notes, "in a strange way, they create an exchange between our memory and our recollections" (*Yaşadığım Gibi* 145). These various cries or chants of vendors, hawking their goods through the streets of Istanbul, do not simply establish a procession of seasons. Dissemination of sounds throughout the city occupies significant capacities in collective memory. They do more than announcing seasons associated, for example, with certain products, or signaling a certain time of the day, such as a *boza* seller who roams the city after dinnertime. They create an acoustic disruption, like a moment of "flash," locating the collective's memory within cycles of remembering and anticipation.

Paying explicit attention to mobility and sound in the city, exemplified in the image of street vendor, allows Tanpınar to explore a composite variety of city practices. The street cries radiate throughout

³⁰In Section III of the "Istanbul" segment in *Beş Şehir*, and in "Istanbul'un Mevsimleri ve Sanatlarımız" (Seasons of Istanbul and our Art) in *Yaşadığım Gibi*.

the city, following the routes of walking vendors. The vendor, like a pedestrian, “weaves places together,” forming “real systems whose existence makes up the city” (de Certeau 97). Their mobility opens up directions and meanings that are otherwise obscured. Besides, they also do something beyond what de Certeau imagined: instead of marking any urban space by a particular memory or story, the sound of wandering vendors leaves its signature throughout the city, opened up by their cries:

In the old quarters of Istanbul, the vendors’ cries would regulate the day from beginning to the end, and paint its hours. Like a beautiful woman combing her hair in a cheap mirror, Istanbul quarters would lean to these cries, and with their expanding echoes, accept the stages of the day.³¹

Eski İstanbul mahallelerinde [satıcı sesleri] bir günü başta başa idare eder, saatlerin rengini verirdi. Tıpkı ucuz bir aynada saçlarını düzeltten güzel bir kadın gibi İstanbul mahalleleri bu seslere eğilir, onların yer yer genişleyişinde günün değişmez merhalelerini kabule hazırlanırdı (158).

Vendors connect city-dwellers in their experience and conception of sound. The street cry reflects back to ‘the collective’ their own image, which is possibly distorted and coupled with a sense of belonging. The custom of routinely announcing seasonal goods—yogurt from Silivri meant the end of winter, and *salep* sellers its arrival (159)— or everyday objects, such as lamps, table-clocks, coffee-cups among others mentioned in the text, create an ambience, a collective soundscape. It is a cultural force that reminds the city of its rituals, customs, and cycles, a “second temporal order” outside of the calendar.³²

Tanpınar, invites us to see the city as a map of sound. Instead of limiting his narration to landscapes and urban spaces, he includes aural phenomena within urban cultural history. His particular attention to aural topography, next to sights, tastes, and smells, shows his concern with the everyday. These everyday sounds, which survive only in faint echoes, are traces of past practices in the city. Eric Wilson, in his article on street vendors in early modern London, argues that soundscapes, repeatedly categorized as subcultural, have been banished from urban historiography (Wilson 39). The tuning out of aural fabrics of the city from its history is overturned by their re-inscription

³¹In the first edition published in 1946, Tanpınar uses the word “*ömür*” (lifetime), which he replaces with “*gün*” (day) in the second edition in 1960.

³²It is worth noting that Uwe Tellkamp’s 2008 novel on the DDR (German Democratic Republic) recounts a similar duality between the tolls that punctuates the everyday life and the timeless world outside the clock time (Tellkamp). Also see Frederic Jameson’s interpretation of the novel.

into urban memory. In contrast to the regime of “legible overview,” described by Certeau as a means of perceiving the city from the viewpoint of fixed and privileged authority, tracing mobilities and *sounds* of everyday life resists the totalizing *eye* of urban reforms. Rendering the city “legible,” for Certeau, “causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten” (97). Temporally contingent, the street cries are part of such being in the world. Taking Certeau’s analogy between urban walking and speech acts further, we can say that the cries of street vendors, as marked signs of Istanbul, give the city back its “symbolic order,” albeit ephemerally (106).

The dispersion of street chants in the city, in Tanpınar, is not the only trope that disrupts the legibility of the city imposed by centralizing and regulating impulses of the modern. The blurring of the legibility and visibility of time, locked in linear plot lines of the (Ottoman) past and the present as always new, shows reveals in Tanpınar’s use of the tropes of obscurity and dimness, particularly in the image of fog. Seeing through a misty glass (*buğulu cam*), a bell glass (*fanus*), or dark waters turn into common symbols in his writing for an alternative rhythm of life, and for duration, where the visible world becomes less definite and more fluid. Tanpınar, an enthusiast of impressionist art,³³ reconstructs the past in visual landscapes. Observing Istanbul on a foggy day, the author perceives other steps, paths, presences that seem to inhabit the realm of a lost time:

In the narrow and steep streets and avenues of their quarters, people came across one another as if they were long-forgotten memories. It seemed that everything appeared from a distance, through an immobilizing material and also partially buried in it. Fading photographs from antique albums of time suddenly came back to life, urging our memory to find their names and stories. This distance, this idea of reaching us through time—because that which slows life down to such extent could only be time—would turn you into the sole agent of a process whose limits were hard to determine.

*Semtinin dar, yokuşlu, inişli sokaklarında ve caddede insanlar birbirine çoktan unutulmuş hatıralar gibi rastlıyorlardı. Sanki her şey çok derin bir uzaklıktan, hareketi güçleştiren bir maddeyi yararak ve biraz da ona gömülü geliyordu. Yıllar boyunca zaman albümlerinde sararmış fotoğraflar birdenbire canlanmışlar ve hafızamızı kendilerine behemhal bir ad ve hayat hikayesi bulmaya zorluyorlar. Bu uzaklık, bu zaman içinden bize doğru gelme fikri—hayati bu kadar yavaşlatan şey, ancak yipilmiş zamanın kendisi olabilirdi—sizi ister istemez en kalabalık caddede bile, hududunu lâyikeyla tayin etmek güla olan bir ameliyenin tek işleyicisi yapıyordu*³⁴

³³From Tanpınar’s diaries, Tanpınar, *Günlüklerin Işığında Tanpınar’la Başbaşa* 57.

³⁴“Lodos, Sis ve Lufere Dair” in Tanpınar, *Yaşadığım Gibi*.

In this attempt to articulate the dead past in its ineffable and overwhelming form, he uses images of people and landscapes dimmed by clouds. Obscured by fog, the “planned and readable city” can no longer offer legibility and stability. The only visibility left is an impression of memory. A mass of time, in the form of fog, penetrates the material surface of the city, transfusing objects, dissolving life into lights and colors of memories. The past leaves impressions on the surface of the present; even people in the street, alive and mobile, become “long-forgotten memories.” Everything around them is obscured by fog, yet, at the same time, they are made aware of a “ghostly” realm, the “second time.” The dead past, condensed, permeates through the city, disorienting its inhabitants.

Under fog, the city is haunted by histories, caught up in a confrontation between the living and the dead, a struggle over an unresolved loss in the past that requires an intervention in the present. The past, in the form of old photographs coming back to life, demands its “names and stories.” Nergis Ertürk, looking at a similar passage in *Beş Şehir*, notes that the anthropomorphized historical past suggests “something of the fundamental ambiguity of relating to the past, juxtaposing the past’s proximity and natural familiarity with its irreducible distance.”³⁵ While traces of the past are discernable when the “other” time of the city emerges, it is nonetheless unreachable and ineffable. The call of the past, begging a “name and story,” signals another form of *daşıssıla*, or longing for home, which is irretrievably lost, and which exists only in fractured and hidden form. Surrounded by the call of the past and its faces, the narrator warns us that one might enter into an overwhelming relation of duty and labor that eventually proves elusive (with indeterminable limits). In the passage above, he moves from the collective signifier of the first person plural to the isolated form of the second person singular. The dead past surrounds “us” like a fog, as the urban collective, while it is an indeterminate singular “you” [*sen*] that responds to its call.³⁶ This partially quixotic response to the call of an unfulfilled past, where “you” becomes a sole warrior of decrypting and retrieving lost time, underscores the author’s ambivalence towards nostalgia. The sense of distinct longing for the past is balanced by an understanding of its self-contradictory nature. Although it is tempting to accept nostalgic readings of *Beş Şehir*, any

³⁵Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* 114. Ertürk reads this in the context of Turkish language reforms, and the rationalization and mechanization of writing.

³⁶In Turkish, second person singular [*sen*] is distinct from second person plural [*siz*], a distinction that gets lost in translation to English.

unified reconstruction of the past in Tanpınar's text eventually "dissipates" like the fog.

The author actively calls attention to his ambiguous approach to the past, and asks, "Why, then, did I talk about all things that are impossible to revive in my writing on the Bosphorus and on Istanbul?" "It is neither them, nor their time that I am looking for," he contemplates, but "the feeling their loss invokes in us" (*Beş Şehir* 233–4). The sense of duty for the past, which overwhelms the author in its difference and distance, also emerges as an aesthetic source. The past can be represented only in its irretrievably lost nature, through *davussıla*, an unquenchable longing for home. *Sıla* connotes home, and also a longing to go back to the beginning, to origins, to the place where one obtains a sense of being and identity. In this respect, it represents a "no time" or timelessness; it dwells in the moment before the order of the time, which neither looking for the dead past, nor a sense of duration, can fulfill.

6. Ruins / Residues

The violence of modern temporality is most visible in urban decay. The inexorable production of the new and destruction of the old is nowhere more evident and most fragile than in sites of ruin. Just as the importance of arcades for Benjamin lies in their dialectical development from a place of splendor to a place of decay, the centrality of "*harap semtler*"³⁷ (run-down quarters) in Tanpınar's Istanbul lies in such a dialectical process of glory and decay that it endures for centuries. Of such sites of decay, Tanpınar asks "how much time and how many events does it take for one quarter of the city to put on this face? How many victories and defeats, how many migrations, which destructions and constructions gave them their present appearance?" (*Yaşadığım Gibi* 211). The urban site in decay embodies years of dialectical stages—its current state displays simultaneously different layers of the past.³⁸ It confuses linear temporal order, where one epoch seamlessly succeeds into another without a trace. Unlike the short life span of arcades due

³⁷Tanpınar uses the terms *harap semtler* (quarters in decay) and *kenar mahalle* (suburban neighborhoods) interchangeably. *Kenar*, although it literally means border, does not necessarily refer to suburbs; there are *kenar* neighborhoods at the center of Istanbul, especially around the historical peninsula. Tanpınar is clearly referring to one of these neighborhoods right outside of the ancient city walls. These sites have a common characteristic of urban decay, with classic Ottoman style houses and working class inhabitants.

³⁸For a comparison with destruction and aesthetics of decay in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, see Cioran.

to their commodity character, these quarters embody different epochs and transformations all at once. “*İzbe* (run-down / dingy) quarters in their utterly neglected and ruined state,” the author explains, “give you all of history in layers. The old Empire, the Tanzimat, and the life of work—the new era that enters these quarters in its strongest form—live together arm in arm” (56).³⁹ Like the Bréguet-Sabin station Benjamin cites, where the name of a watchmaker and the name of a saint are joined together, things of different temporal orders are intertwined in these quarters, regardless of their historical, or any other, value. While the temporal delusions of the modern regulates time in a succession of epochs and periods, these quarters, precisely because they are neglected and left out of the logic of order, surrender their whole history to our gaze.

Tanpınar depicts these neighborhoods with attention to distinctive details of everyday life. With its wooden houses, a fountain with grapevines, laundry hanging under the sun, kids, cats and dogs, these modest urban sites, situated around the ruins of the city walls and mainly home to the working class, are the peripheries of the relatively controlled, orderly city center. Unlike the dome of the Süleymaniye mosque or the biographies of sultans, also depicted by the author in the Istanbul segment, these urban images are not candidates for traditional historical meaning. They are part of a common socio-historical past that resists incorporation into triumphant stories, be it modernity, or “*fetih*,” the conquest—of national and religious identity. Tanpınar acknowledges this distinction, and argues that “these squares constitute our true landscape, as the people of Istanbul assembled them for the duration of their lives” (*Beş Şehir* 178), creating an environment that would in turn shape them:

Within a time lived in layers, life in its totality, built and rebuilt so many times, even as its frame was getting smaller, incorporates the residue [*artık*] of previous ages into its composition, regardless of their nature or worth.

Üstüste yaşanmış bir zaman içinde, birçok defalar kurulmuş, bozulmuş, çerçevesi küçülmüş, fakat daima kendi kendisi kalmış ve her defasında bir evvelkinin bir yığın artığını, mahiyet ve değerine bakmadan terkinin içine almış bütün bir hayat. (212)

Here, Tanpınar seems to carry out Benjamin’s plan for the *Arcades*: “to discover the crystal of the total event in the analysis of the small,

³⁹Tanpınar describes the present time as “the life of work” (*iş hayatı*), without making any reference to the Republic or the modern per se. This vocabulary has different connotations than earlier references to the present: he describes the current state in Istanbul with respect to socio-economic practices (*Istanbul kendi parasını kazanan şehir*).

particular moments" (N 2, 6).⁴⁰ These anonymous, unclaimed collective spaces evoke layers of the past, *incorporating* distinct ages, without pretending to *represent* any of them. Without following any historical hierarchy, they convey various kinds of temporalities, "regardless of their nature or worth." The slow decay of ancient walls, catastrophic implosions like fires, or short-lived industrial sites like small, abandoned factories or warehouses—all find their way into Tanpınar's text. They carry no signature of historical break: grand avenues of modernity, or monumental buildings of national triumph stay out of their range. For Tanpınar, these neglected quarters in decay, layered with both historical fragments and new experiences, represent an embodiment of duration.

Discards and residues of the past, in visual, aural, or affective form, in peripheral neighborhoods, in ruins, empty streets, old, decrepit *konaks* (Ottoman mansions), trigger nostalgia for certain aspects of the past lost to modernity. The concept of *hüzün*, which is later borrowed and exhausted by Pamuk as Istanbul's collective melancholy, invokes such a sense of mourning the loss of expectations and of the common practices of the urban collective. This collective history, or in Benjamin's term, "the unconscious of the dreaming collective,"⁴¹ underscores Tanpınar's sense of *hüzün*: "oil lamps, dimly lit streets with gas lighting, sounds of beggars, batons of patrolmen, the fear of fire, sad whistles of boats, strange psychoses arising from an extreme religious way of life—they all contributed to this feeling, almost mathematically" (128). Tanpınar defines these peculiar pieces of experience as "things that connect us all." They reveal a secret world of affinities that only Istanbulites could grasp. They invoke a different and deeper dimension of collective temporality, which emerges only according to its own logic. The claim to immediacy inherent in them interrupts what has been constructed as present. Their ephemeral quality is charged with meaning. These images and sounds have the psychic force of memories of shared experience, not of an isolated individual, but of the collective—the people of Istanbul.

Hüzün in Tanpınar, however, is not the unifying and uniform experience that Pamuk has made it to be. Although Tanpınar himself was not without nostalgia for an idealized past, these peculiar urban fragments of "collective nostalgia" also evoke a past of violence and pain. The

⁴⁰All references to the Convolutes of *The Arcades Project* are given parenthetically, with each Convolute's letter.

⁴¹A trait Benjamin admired in the Surrealists and developed with his idea of the unconscious of the dreaming collective. See Buck-Morss 33.

past in Tanpınar is not always a positively evaluated world. His initial and truly nostalgic impulse to return to the past is undercut by its homogenous and equivocal fragments. In his seminal essay "Seasons of Istanbul and our Art," Tanpınar describes seasons in Istanbul as an allegory for the city's history, starting with the Spring of conquest and the decline of civilization in the Fall of modern times. In this, what may seem as a straightforward allegory of history as decline and fall, textual particularities reveal the impossibility of recovering a golden age of 'homefulness,' free from *daüssıla*. In his list of the "things that connect us all," echoing the *hüzün* segment in *Beş Şehir*, Tanpınar adds "the sound of a hand water-pump like the cries of a wounded animal" and "a young gypsy woman, who would always wander with her son, who had passed away three days ago, now, alone like an orphan (*yetim*), carrying the smile of modest autumn flowers in the basket" (154). This morbid description of the city's "connecting" experience is later coupled with another unsettling description of autumn in Istanbul, "full of colors like ripped-off silk from a pillaged caravan and hundreds of broken mirrors" (156). These images, bearing traces of violence, demolish the harmonious facade created by nostalgia.

The disruptive shock of these images parallels the narrator's shock of recognizing the difference of the past that resists any unified narration. The fragmented past unexpectedly surfaces in the text, here as part of the narrator's illustration of autumn, as a wounded animal, a dead child, a mother in mourning, broken mirrors and ripped silk, all of which are charged with symbolic resonance. Literary critic Nurdan Gürbilek traces such imagery of water and mirrors in Tanpınar, and argues that these are narcissistic tropes, associated with the past. In their reflection, the author expects to find a contained authentic self-image, both personal and societal. Following Gürbilek's reading, we can argue that the moaning water-pump signifies the difficulty of reaching this source of lost time, which would give the present its form as a continuation of the image of the past. Tanpınar shows us that the well is dry and the mirror is broken there is no past to reflect a unifying image. Istanbul is the gypsy woman who lost her son and her father,⁴² deprived of an authentic connection to both future and past.

The longing for home, *daüssıla*, in Tanpınar, sustained by the desire for the reappropriation of the self and of cultural identity, becomes an endless play of a sign that fails to signify anything beyond itself. As Ertürk suggests, Tanpınar's writing is crowded with empty vehicles,

⁴²The adjective *yetim* refers specifically to an orphan who lost her father and not her mother.

failed symbolizations, and failed comparisons with the imperial past (Ertürk 50). Representations of the “second time,” entwined and juxtaposed with the time of the modern—be it the dead or enchanted past, the time of nature, or the time of collective memory—always end with the sense of *daüssıla*. The irreversibility of time and the consequence of inexorable change and decay in his writing seem to be in conflict with the idea of the “second time” as rich (*velut*) and whole (*yekpare*) composition. This points to an essential conflict in Tanpınar’s thought. On the one hand, there is the ideal of duration understood as temporal oneness, associated with ideas of cohesion, synthesis and harmony. As we have seen, the mythic time in the old Istanbul and the simplicity, authenticity, and spontaneity of the time of nature, disclose the author’s dismay over the disappearance of “lifeworlds” characterized by this “second time.” On the other hand, there is the focus on the discarded past and its fragmentary nature: the run-down quarters, soundscapes, ghosts, and residues.

In order to throw light on this intricate aspect in Tanpınar’s thought, many critics turn to his conception of *terkip*, making it the emblem of his idea of duration and synthesis. While Gökna, with an overtly cultural perspective, interprets *terkip* as a grand synthesis of Ottoman Islam and Turkish secularism, which would resolve the pervasive crisis of this cultural dualism, Gürbilek, with a psychoanalytic approach, sees it as an expression of an “ideal of wholeness” (*tamlık hayali*). Carrying numerous significations, this notion is a recurring concept in Tanpınar’s essays and novels. In *Beş Şehir*, he defines Istanbul as “one grand *terkip*” emerging out of “elements small and large, significant and insignificant, traditional and modern, local and foreign, beautiful and ugly” (157). Thus, *terkip* refers to a unified composition of different aspects of life, evoking a sense of inner continuity between things that appears to be in conflict. It connotes a unity of being and a cosmic order, becoming the epitome of Tanpınar’s world of ideals. Particularly important in this concept is the idea of continuity between past, present and future, albeit relatively different from Bergson’s duration, as it entails a harmonious synthesis between conflicting forces.

Tanpınar, however, holds that it is *daüssıla*, instead of *terkip*, that determines our experience of time. If the latter connotes a temporal ideal that is truly habitable, the former marks the essential homelessness in the experience of the past in present. In his conclusion to the Istanbul segment, Tanpınar asserts that “*daüssıla* is a world of its own”, and it is the best way to understand the past: “in this silent

song of flute, the dead comes to live in faces that we are attached to, and precisely because of this, in their light, we can live in a present that is more insightful and more ours" (235). Time, for Tanpınar, is experienced through a sense of homesickness. The inexorable flow of time creates an incessant process of parting and alienation, which the author imagines as a void in need of light and sound.

Traces of the past are only partially legible; the past is more a haunting and shocking presence than a stabilizing of the historical moment. If the details quoted above show us how nostalgia is subverted and how traces of lost time are fragmented, Tanpınar's persistent and recurring theme of "*artık*" (residue) concomitantly displays just such a shocking and disruptive nature of the discarded past. In the conclusion of his essay on the run-down neighborhoods of Istanbul, the narrator cites his unexpected encounter with a group of children playing, equating them and their singing game as residues of a discarded and uncanny past that abruptly resurfaces:

"Wheat of Arabia—Lovers in love, —Beauties of Rumelia!...—Girl, I came to take you away..."

I was enchanted by this children's singing game, which suddenly reminded one, on this spring day, of the morbid festival of small almond trees in full bloom consuming their lives. It was as if suddenly I had awakened to a greater truth.

Who were these children? Which exodus, which dreadful disaster were they residues of? What hurricane of blood and death uprooted and threw them away to the edge of these city walls? I had already forgotten about this question. My mind delved into this children's game and its melancholy far from home. So many generations grew up playing it, as these little girls did, singing this song... And many more generations of girls (...) one day when they will hear it again, through experience of maturity, will they find themselves in the heaven of their childhood?

"Arabistan buğdayları —Severler sevgileri, —Rumeli dilberleri!... —Kız seni almaya geldim..."

İnsana ister istemez bu bahar gününde birdenbire sanki hayatımı sarfederek süslenmiş küçük bağdem ağaçlarının marazi şenliğini hatırlatan bu şarkı ve oyun beni büyülemişti. Birdenbire büyük bir hakikate uyanmış gibi oldum.

Kimdi bu çocuklar? Hangi hicretin, hangi korkunç felaketin artığı idiler? Hangi kan ve ölüm kasırgası onları yerinden söküüp bu surların dibine fırlatmıştı? Bu suali çoktan unutmuştum. Zihnim ta çocukluğumdan beri tanıdığım bu çocuk oyununa, onun garib, hüznü türküsüne dalmıştı. Kaç nesil onunla eğlenerek, bu küçük kızların yaptığı gibi, bu türküyü söyleyerek büyümüştü... Ve daha kaç kız nesli (...) olgun yaşın terbiyesi içinden, onu tekrar duyduğu zaman kendisini bir an çocukluğun cennetinde bulacaktı?(Yaşadığım Gibi 213)

What Tanpınar finds in the children's song, which carries both traces of collective memory and individual recollection, is precisely the residual meaning of the past in the present. Bearing marks and wounds of a violent history of exile and homelessness—and not without imperial nostalgia⁴³—the singing game, “a morbid festival,” records the collective experience of an epoch. The song, through generations of children who sang it, bears a sense of *daüssıla*, longing for a home that escapes definition. The idea of home, buried in the passage in images of exodus, uprooting and melancholy, does not simply refer to a location or to a way of life associated with imperial and Islamic traditions.⁴⁴ Home is the past that survives only partially, outside of teleological histories, recaptured only in fragments, in the residual meanings of a children's song.

Walter Benjamin regards children's games as an epoch's most extreme embodiment of itself.⁴⁵ Being an *artık*, a historical residue, it is unassimilable to narratives of historical development, of nostalgic return, or of synthetic harmony with the imperial past. This insignificant piece of collective history disrupts what is constituted as present, violently introducing a peculiar temporal dimension. Tanpınar describes this experience of “break” and “shock” as a moment of “awakening” to a “greater truth.” The distinctive temporality of awakening, which Benjamin theorizes as a methodological concept in the *Arcades*, and whose aesthetic potential is extensively explored by Proust, informs the moment of encounter for Tanpınar. It is a fleeting and ambiguous moment between the unconscious imagery a dream—or the past—evokes, and rational lucidity. It opens up a “second time,” a “greater truth” as Tanpınar describes it, where imagery of the past disrupts the repressive rationality of conscious memory.

⁴³Tanpınar here seems to refer to expulsions and migrations during the transition from empire to nation-state. The most significant in size and effect were the population exchanges with Greece and Bulgaria, i.e. Rumelia, in the 1920s uprooting people from both sides based on ethnic-national identities. It is safe to assume that these children are exiles from those regions, who were forced to live in the outskirts of Istanbul, beyond the city walls. The game in question is a member exchange game between two groups, a parallel that is not likely coincidental.

⁴⁴Tanpınar uses the term melancholy, instead of *hüzün* or *hasret*. It is important to note that, although melancholy and nostalgia are easily confused and often seen as synonyms, there are important differences between these two terms. A.D. Ritivoi, following Freud's description, states that melancholics sever themselves from their surroundings, they want to escape or take refuge away from a state in disarray. The nostalgics, on the other hand, have already been severed from their initial surroundings, and they keep wishing for a reattachment. Melancholy sends one away, but nostalgia calls one back. (Ritivoi 27–28.) Here I follow Tanpınar's vocabulary at the risk of overlooking a rich literature distinguishing these concepts.

⁴⁵In a letter to Scholem, cited in Buck-Morss 262.

This shock, however, does not resolve itself into an irreversible state of melancholy. These “things that connect us all,” of which the children’s song is a part, although significantly different in content, carry similarities to Benjamin’s idea of “dialectical images” that awaken us from history. Discarded pieces of history, like the children’s song, invoke shock of memory and refusal to return to the past. While the image of the encounter gives Tanpınar the shock of a recollection, there is a dialectical refusal to return to the time of that recollection. In the case of the passage above, although the song “awakens” the narrator to a “greater truth,” he quickly forgets about “these questions,” and turns it into a Proustian moment of personal recollections of childhood.

The experience of awakening upon hearing the children’s song in the streets of Istanbul reveals multiple, co-existing times, which are otherwise “uprooted” and “exiled.” “We recognize today’s life, today’s forms, in the life and in the apparently secondary, lost forms of [the past] epoch,” Benjamin explains (N1,11). In these lost forms of the past epoch, such as “the last fiacres,” “the Sunday of the poorer classes,” “the names of old streets,” “little squares” or “the stonework of the arcades” that has the effect of “crumbling papier-mâché,” Benjamin recognizes the potential to awaken the collective from the recent past, the nineteenth century, to what has been forgotten, neglected, left in oblivion¹. The past that has been oppressed, rejected and forgotten, is “a second time” that runs independently of the clock-time, dissociated from everyday life and visible only in the outdated. Hence what Jürgen Habermas has argued on Benjamin’s historiography rings true for Tanpınar’s line of thought: the anticipation of what is new in the future is realized only through remembering a past that has been suppressed (Habermas 11). In this conception shared by Tanpınar, ruins, abandoned urban sites and little forgotten squares acquire more intensely complex meanings as they age. Far from being empty and lifeless, these forgotten sites gradually become powerful semiotic vessels.

The way the city interacts with its past casts a light on the way it relates to its many temporal dimensions: a city’s relation to its past is inextricably connected to its way of imagining its future, because urban memory is subject to destructive mechanisms of linear-progressive historical time. This article has shown that despite their divergent methodologies and vocabularies, which developed around the same

¹Excerpts from the exhaustive list of fragments Benjamin has recorded in “Materials for the Arcades.” Benjamin and Tiedemann, *The Arcades Project*, 918-925.

time, the two thinkers illustrate the subversive force of memory traces in the urban topography of two imperial capitals in the nineteenth century. Against the commercialization and transformation of urban life, their experiments in the chronometrics of urban histories explore nameless squares and other obsolete urban forms that are not tied to the historical time of the nation and its urban renovation. This article also calls for reading Tanpınar and Benjamin's urban histories at a time when memory plays a key role in current urban politics and celebration of city's memory has become a global obsession.⁴⁶ Particularly Istanbul, currently undergoing a more devastating transformation than it did a century ago, witnesses a neo-Ottoman theater of memory, liberally re-enacting a marketable time of the history of the city. A.H.Tanpınar's reflections on the memory politics of little squares can tell us much about today's discarded past of the city and its subversive, if not revolutionary, potential.

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⁴⁶See Huyssen on the key role of memory in current urban politics. (16)

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