

Appropriating a Golden Age:
Models of Social Change in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *A Mind at Peace*

Undergraduate Research Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for graduation “with Honors Research
Distinction in English” in the undergraduate colleges of The Ohio State University

by

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April 2018

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Section I: Introduction

In 2009, former president Barack Obama visited Turkey and met with Deniz Baykal, the leader of Turkey's opposition party. During their meeting, Baykal gifted Obama two books, explaining, "So you just don't understand Turkey through your ties with the governing and opposition parties in parliament, I'm presenting you with these two works of literature. In these books you will find the nuances of our culture and identity" (Schuessler).

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *A Mind at Peace* was one of these two novels¹. In 1948, Tanpınar published *A Mind at Peace* in serial form in the newspaper, *Cumhuriyet*, and then as a book in 1949 (Göknaar 450). The novel grew in popularity after Tanpınar's death in 1962, and is now considered a milestone modernist novel of Turkish literature (Göknaar 486). English-speaking readers, however, could not access *A Mind at Peace* until 2008, when Erdag Göknaar translated the novel into English.

A Mind at Peace centers on a young man named Mümtaz and his struggles coping with his cousin İhsan's illness, the demise of his summer romance with an older woman, Nuran, and the suicide of his rival, Suad. In the novel, Mümtaz, an aspiring historical fiction writer, expresses his frustration with his own novel-in-progress. "Does a novel have to start at one point and end at another?" he asks. "Do characters have to move rigidly like locomotives on fixed rails? Maybe it's sufficient if the story line takes life itself as a framework, gathering it around a few characters" (213). According to Mümtaz, a novel only needs to adhere to a single condition: "The narrative should describe us and our contexts" (213).

Mümtaz's thoughts about his own work reflect the structure of *A Mind at Peace*. Tanpınar gathers the novel around four central characters, each serving as the title of one of the

¹ Sait Faik Abasıyanık wrote the second novel Baykal presented to President Obama (Schuessler).

book's four parts. Although all four parts include flashbacks to past events, the narrative proper of the first and final parts, "İhsan" and "Mümtaz," is told over the span of twenty-four hours, as Mümtaz walks through Istanbul on the eve of the Second World War. The middle parts, "Nuran" and "Suad," span a single summer, recounting the story of Mümtaz's romance with Nuran, from their first meeting to their eventual separation.

By exploring the characters' personal lives, *A Mind at Peace*'s highlights the Turkish experience. Throughout the novel, characters reflect on life in Istanbul—the streets, the culture, and the political upheaval that characterized the 1920s and 1930s. No character appears satisfied with the current state of affairs. However, each has a different perspective on what Turkey should be in the future. By using Ottoman classical music as a synecdoche for Turkey, Tanpınar's primary characters each advocate for a model of social change.

At the time of its publication, *A Mind at Peace*'s celebration of history and Ottoman classical music opposed Turkey's dominant political and social trends. Mustafa Kemal, better known as Atatürk, had implemented a series of westernizing reforms that tried to separate the new Turkish state from its Ottoman forefathers. Kemal's reforms, and the frustrations that inspired them, are an important component of *A Mind at Peace*. Therefore, as Mümtaz advises, I will describe some necessary context.

Section II: From Osman to Atatürk

According to legend, a late-thirteenth century tribal chieftain named Osman dreamed of a tree that "sprouted from his naval" and encompassed the world in its shade. A Sufi Sheikh told Osman that the dream meant his family would someday rule over a vast territory. Inspired to create this Ottoman empire, Osman and his descendants began the process of gradual territorial

expansion and consolidation of power. Osman's dream was realized in 1453, when Mehmed the Conqueror captured Constantinople, ended the Byzantine Empire, and gave the Ottomans a true imperial state (Kafadar 152).

In his new capital at Constantinople, Mehmed the Conqueror described himself as "the ruler of the two seas and the two continents" (Kafadar 152). His description was apt. At its height, the Ottoman Empire controlled a region that stretched from the Balkans to the Middle East and across Northern Africa. Ottoman rule was largely decentralized, with provinces retaining their own languages, religions and customs. While the vast differences between the Ottomans and their outlying provinces would ultimately figure into the Empire's decline, the Empire's diversity granted the Ottomans a unique legacy.

The multiethnic and multidenominational features of the Ottoman Empire informed its cultural landscape, particularly in the arenas of music, architecture, and poetry. In his book *Makam: Modal Practice in Turkish Art Music*, Karl L. Signell writes, "The vast embrace of [the Ottoman Empire] is reflected in the variety of nationalities, religions, and social stations of typical composers of the period" (5). Ethnic and religious minorities, as well as women, featured significantly in Ottoman music, particularly in the folk music of the countryside (Signell 5). These diverse artistic traditions were also visible in Constantinople's skyline, where mosque complexes and *medreses* blended both Islamic and Byzantine architectural styles. Mystical Sufi orders, like the Mevlevî, also greatly influenced Ottoman culture by uniting religion and art in their poetry and music.

Gradually, the Mevlevî Order came to represent the Ottoman artistic and intellectual elite (Hammarlund 1). The Mevlevî concept of *musiki*, referring to "intellectually underpinned music," was practiced and developed almost exclusively by the Ottoman high classes in

cosmopolitan centers like Constantinople, Damascus, and Alexandria (Hammarlund 2-5). Some politicians and princes began to preserve and compose music (Signell 5). And eventually, *musiki* became the purview of the very highest members of the Ottoman Empire—its sultans.

Multiple sultans earned a reputation for their musical talents. Thus, music came to reflect not only the Ottoman Empire's culture but also the individuals who presided over the Empire itself. Moreover, political and cultural changes often occurred simultaneously and were associated with one another. For example, the first period of major imperial reform coincided with what is considered to be the Golden Age of Ottoman Classical Music (Signell 5). Sultan Selim III (1761-1808), a member of the Mevlevî order, a patron of the arts, and a notable composer, introduced these modernizing reforms, called the "New Order" (Göknaar 447). The New Order would be the first of many reforms implemented during the empire's lifespan. This legacy of simultaneous cultural and political transformation would become a predominant theme in Ottoman history.

As the centuries progressed, the Ottoman Empire's decentralization plagued its ability to control its provinces. The unique identities of each province also challenged the Ottoman Empire's ability to create a distinct "Ottoman" identity. Furthermore, the Ottomans' autocratic structure rapidly lost popularity in the face of Western European modernization and democratization. The Ottoman Empire attempted to remedy these challenges during the Tanzimat Era, literally the "Reform Era," which began in 1839 and ended in 1876 (Findley 11). The Tanzimat sought to end political decentralization and reassert the authority of the sultans (Findley 11). In his chapter, "The Tanzimat," Carter Vaughn Findley writes, "Even as recurrent crises threatened the superstructure of multinational empire, at its core, state, economy, society, and culture all displayed great dynamism in this period. The Tanzimat reforms produced new

legislation, programmes, institutions, and elites. Statesmen and intellectuals strove to hold Ottoman society together by redefining Ottoman identity and guaranteeing rights at the individual, communal, and empire-wide levels” (Findley 37). The Tanzimat’s reforms also literally changed the face of Constantinople, as the city was nearly entirely rebuilt in Western styles throughout the nineteenth century, with only the mosque complexes and ancient structures surviving (Madden 324).

The modernizing reforms of the Tanzimat, however, only sparked a greater desire for democracy and constitutional government (Madden 324). As a result, two Constitutional Eras would follow with further reforms, driven first by the Young Ottomans and then the Young Turks, aimed at pushing for a constitutional government and westernization. Both these movements, however, would still emphasize the importance of Islam as the foundational basis of the Ottoman Empire (Madden 343).

Again, these reforms would be insufficient. Ethnic conflict, political upheaval, and economic challenges plagued the Ottoman Empire in its latter years. Then, nearly six centuries after its inception, the Ottoman Empire limped into the First World War on behalf of the Central Powers and signed its death warrant. Despite an important victory at Gallipoli, the Ottoman Empire and its allies lost the war. Two years after the 1918 armistice, the Treaty of Sévres divided the Ottoman Empire—distributing significant portions of its territories to the Greeks or to be governed under French or Italian mandates. A coalition of Western nations would administer Constantinople, where the Ottoman sultans would rule in name alone (Madden 334).

By the time the Ottoman Empire crumbled to the tune of genocide and political subjugation, very few were saddened by its departure (Gingeras 5). Its decline, however, would leave a lasting impression on its subjects. In his book, *Fall of the Sultanate: The Great War and*

the End of the Ottoman Empire, Ryan Gingeras argues that the extreme violence and upheaval that characterized the empire's final ten years exist as "a critical open wound that many peoples residing in the Balkans, North Africa, and Caucasus, and the Middle East still carry" (6). The uneven economic development of Ottoman territories would plague some of its provinces' ability to modernize for years. The physical and human cost of genocide and ethnic cleansing, particularly in the Empire's Armenian and Greek communities, was enormous. In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Andrew Mango writes that outside of Constantinople, the "country was devastated, its population reduced, and the fabric of the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society destroyed" (Mango 159). Additionally, the chaos deprived the Ottomans' citizens and subjects the "prosperity and peace needed for future intellectual and material growth," having profound cultural implications (Gingeras 6). Gingeras also writes, "All present-day nations derived from the empire's collapse share a common sense of loss and humiliation as a consequence of this era"(Gingeras 6).

Thus, the Ottoman Empire's latter years and decline tarnished its legacy. Its final years created a desire to distance any new successor states from the "loss and humiliation" associated with the Empire's decline. The cultural and artistic traditions, like *musiki*, being so closely associated with the elite only exacerbated the impetus to diminish any Ottoman vestige, an impetus that would drive a young commander who rose to notoriety at Gallipoli, Mustafa Kemal (Mango 155).

Rallying Turkish Nationalist forces, Mustafa Kemal, later given the surname Atatürk, drove out the occupying Allied forces in the Turkish War of Independence. In 1922, Kemal pushed the Greeks out of their gained territories. In 1923, Allied troops evacuated Constantinople (Madden 337). That same year, an Assembly in Ankara decreed that their new

state would be a constitutional republic, moved its capital from Constantinople to Ankara, renamed Constantinople Istanbul, and officially established the Republic of Turkey (Madden 337).

As Turkey's first President, Mustafa Kemal was eager to distinguish Turkey from the Ottoman Empire. In 1924, Kemal and the National Assembly abolished the caliphate and reduced the power of the country's religious institutions (Madden 342). After regaining lands lost to the Greeks, Kemal did not seek to reclaim the Ottoman's Empire's former provinces. Kemal and his supporters wanted to construct Turkey, not resurrect the Ottoman Empire (Madden 335). As Christians, Muslim Albanians, and Arabs all attained their own distinct states, the search for an Ottoman identity was replaced by a desire to create a single Turkish national identity (Mango 162). Kemal and his supporters would work to build this new identity as they shaped Turkey and cast aside the remnants of the Ottoman Empire.

“Uncivilized people are doomed to remain under the feet of those who are civilized,” Kemal argued. To Kemal, civilization and modernization equated westernization (Mango 162). As a result, he implemented a series of economic, social, and cultural reforms that would synchronize Turkey with the West (Mango 163). He required the adoption of legal surnames, a Western standard, and adopted the Christian Sunday as the day off instead of the Muslim Friday. The Gregorian calendar replaced the Muslim calendar (Madden 344). Kemal imposed European dress, banning the fez and preaching against the veil (Mango 164). In 1928, Roman letters replaced Arabic script throughout the country (Madden 344). Mango illustrates the concrete influence of this reform:

Young people who went to school after 1929 could not read books printed in the Arabic alphabet before that date; after the mid- and late 1930s they could no longer understand

these books even if they were printed in the Latin alphabet, for much of the old Arabic and Persian vocabulary had been banished from the Turkish language (Mango 166-167). Consequently, the linguistic changes profoundly affected Turkey's educational system and, when coinciding with the myriad of other westernizing reforms, widened the new gulf between Turkey and its Ottoman past.

While Kemal's reforms did not entirely transform some aspects of Turkey's conservative Muslim society, the reforms did rapidly change the country in significant and highly visible ways, chronicled by scholars and authors at the time. Kemal's death in 1938, fifteen years after he took power, was deeply felt by the new country. The loss of such a symbolic figure came at an especially difficult time in Europe, for one year after Kemal's death, World War II began.

Section III: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar

Born in 1901, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar experienced the dramatic reforms of the Kemalist Cultural Revolution first-hand. As a young man, Tanpınar watched the Ottoman Empire collapse. The National Assembly established the Republic of Turkey the same year Tanpınar received his literature degree from Istanbul University. Like others in his generation, Tanpınar grew up learning Arabic script, but as a high school teacher and university professor, taught students who read Turkish in Roman letters. As a result, many of his poems, essays, and novels highlight the consequences of Turkey's westernizing reforms and the identity crisis he believed the reforms created.

Tanpınar's use of art and literature to engage in political conversations was not atypical of Turkish novels. In *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Erdağ Göknar—the English translator of *A Mind at Peace*—explains that Turkish literature was often in conversation with politics.

Göknaar writes, “By the early 1910s, the novel became overtly politicized and was used as a vehicle for intellectual debates concerning state and society” (Göknaar 473).

In his chapter, “The novel in Turkish: narrative tradition to Nobel Prize,” Göknaar devises a new periodization of Turkish novels that marked eras by important social and political milestones. In this new periodization, Göknaar situates *A Mind at Peace* in an era he refers to as “Turkist social nationalism,” which was characterized by a prevalence of national allegories in which protagonists served as representations of Turkey. *A Mind at Peace*, however, was distinct for two main reasons. First, the novel was more complex than the era’s other straightforward allegories (Göknaar 486). Second, *A Mind at Peace* was one of the first novels to address the identity crisis arising from Kemalism’s modernizing and westernizing reforms. Göknaar writes, “In Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s work, the reader is confronted not with object lessons, morality or didactic ‘party’ novels espousing the Kemalist vision of society and history, but with a complex reckoning of the transition between Ottoman and Turkist states” (486).

Turkey’s identity crisis, or mental duality, described the challenge of situating Turkey within either the East or the West, creating what Tanpınar viewed as a crisis of civilization (Atis 304). Unable to fully embrace either a European or Ottoman identity, Turkey suffered from a cultural anxiety that inhibited it from creating a meaningful intellectual and cultural narrative. According to Tanpınar, the absence of this narrative promoted mediocrity and created a dehumanized society, without distinctive art, literature, or identity (Sezer 435).

However, Turkey did not need to construct an entirely new narrative. Instead, Tanpınar believed that a collective narrative for Turkey should be mined from the past. In his essay collection, *Five Cities*, Tanpınar writes, “The day we realize true creativity begins with preserving what already exists will make us happy” (Tanpınar 463). The desire to preserve the

past ran counter to the political trends and reforms of the era, which sought to sever Turkey's Eastern and Ottoman roots in favor of a more secularized society modeled after Western Europe.

Tanpinar suggested that the erasure of Turkey's Ottoman past lay at the root of its cultural anxiety. In his essay "The Exchange of Civilizations and the Inner Self," Tanpinar describes the past as "a treasure that ensures our wholeness of spirit," if only we would reach for it. Without its presence, we experience anxiety and uncertainty. He writes, "[At] the slightest uncertainty the past opens before us with the glimmer of an oasis; it calls to us, and when it doesn't, it makes us doubt our lives, [causing] hesitation and a kind of guilty conscience" (Tanpinar via Sezer 433).

In his essay, "The anxiety of cultural authenticity in Turkish communitarian thought: Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar and Peyami Safe on Europe and modernity," Devrim Sezer argues that the desire to turn to the past in order to establish a new Turkish narrative is a common theme of Tanpinar's work. According to Sezer, "[Most] of Tanpinar's essays make a compelling plea for recovering the traces of the obliterated past in order to preserve a collective narrative and memory." Nurdan Gürbilek echoes this in his essay, "Dandies and Originals: Authenticity, Belatedness, and the Turkish Novel," writing, "Tanpinar's every suggestion towards this objective starts with the word *self*: We need to go 'back to ourselves,' go back to our own past, go back to our own cultural wealth" (Gürbilek 602).

However, Tanpinar's vision of a new Turkish narrative would not prioritize its Eastern roots to the exclusion of Western ideas. Instead, the narrative would draw upon multiple sources and synthesize them in a new identity. From the synthesis of these ideas, "an organically composed and genuine cultural self" would grow (Gürbilek 607). The past was simply a place to

begin, a solid foundation upon which to establish a modern Turkey that embraced both past and present.

Recovering the “obliterated past,” as Sezer appropriately describes it, was challenging, particularly in Tanpınar’s time. Accessing the past amidst a period of historical erasure, where Kemal’s linguistic changes made past records and literature literally inaccessible to many people, complicated Tanpınar’s desire to use the past as a foundation, as much of the past had already been forgotten or fragmented. While the remaining mosque complexes recalled the past throughout Istanbul, Ottoman tradition and culture became alien to many Turkish citizens.

Tanpınar believed art and literature held a way for Turkey to remember the past. Through art, the Turkish citizen could access a past identity. In *Five Cities*, Tanpınar describes an area of Istanbul encircling the tomb of Sümbül Sinan, enshrined in a poem by Yahya Kemal. Tanpınar writes:

Undoubtedly tomorrow this landscape will change. Tumbledown old mansions will be replaced by modern workshops or reappear as stocking factories or similar places, and men with a different outlook on the world, who work by different rules, will come to inhabit the area round Sümbül Sinan, but the aura accumulated through centuries will still be preserved for us by Yahya Kemal’s poem of love and pity (Tanpınar 459).

And just as the Turkish people would use literature to access the identity of the past, future generations would rely on modern Turkish literature to capture the new Turkish identity. Amidst the cultural anxiety of the era, however, developing a distinctive Turkish literature was challenging. Gürbilek writes, “[Tanpınar] favored the idea of an unbroken continuum in cultural history and was occupied with problems of producing an authentic national literature, of creating an original synthesis of native characteristics and European ideals” (607).

Tanpinar's push for synthesis ran counter to the movements of Turkish literature at the time. In her book, *Semantic Structuring in the Modern Turkish Short Story*, Sarah Moment Atiş describes the development of Turkish literature during the Republican Period (8). In the fifty years before 1923, Turkish literature was embroiled in a "confusion of intellectual-political-literary movements" (Atiş 8). From this confusion arose four main labels. First, Pan-Ottomanism, which touted patriotism for native land. Second, Westernism, which sought to distance Turkish literature from religious and governmental institutions and embrace more secular, Western ideals. Third, Pan-Islamism, called upon the Turkish people to look towards the Arabs and advocated for a global Islamic Reformation that would raise Turkey to the level of Western civilization, yet remain distinct from it. Finally, Pan-Turkism suggested drawing from the Turks in Central Asia to provide cultural context.

While each label is distinct, all labels rejected the Ottoman courtly traditions. Tanpinar resisted this wholesale dismissal of the Ottoman past and actively drew upon the work of Ottoman court poets in his own work. He also drew upon both European and traditional Turkish folk sources in his writing, exemplifying the very synthesis he championed. Atiş describes Tanpinar's poetry as a "remarkable synthesis of elements drawn from these three divergent traditions, i.e., that of the French symbolists, the Ottoman court poets, and the Turkish folk minstrels" (5).

Despite Tanpinar's desire to synthesize elements of the labels to construct a new, distinct Turkish literature, few examples existed at the time. Furthermore, younger generations without knowledge of Arabic script and loan words would be incapable of reading un-translated Ottoman works. Consequently, Turkish people were forced to turn to other external sources of literature. To Tanpinar, this was problematic, as those works could not contain access to Turkey's history

or exist as a source of new identity that the country needed. In *A Mind at Peace*, a character laments, “The things we read don’t lead us anywhere. When we read what’s written about Turks, we realize that we’re wandering on the peripheries of life. A Westerner only satisfies us when he happens to remind us that we’re citizens of the world. In short, most of us read as if embarking on a voyage, as if escaping our own identities” (105).

Using art to escape identity directly opposed Tanpinar’s primary goal—to use art to construct a new identity. As a result, in *A Mind at Peace*, Tanpinar focused on a different medium to access the past—music.

Section IV: Ottoman Classical Music and the Makam Structure

As discussed earlier, Ottoman classical music was closely linked to the legacy of the Mevlevî Order, the Ottoman elite, and the Empire’s sultans. But beyond representing a key to Turkey’s Ottoman past, Ottoman music also offered Tanpinar an effective language to describe social models. Furthermore, since music already existed at the forefront of political debate, discussions about music were representative of larger debates surrounding westernizing reform. As a result, Tanpinar could use music as a synecdoche for Turkey itself.

Tanpinar’s extensive reliance on musical elements requires that the reader have a basic awareness of Ottoman classical music. The “intellectually underpinned music,” *musiki*, practiced by the Mevlevî Order and the Ottoman elite was distinguished by its adherence to a *makam* structure. In *Sufism, Music, and Society in Turkey and the Middle East*, Anders Hammarlund describes a *makam* as a “family of melodic formulae, sharing a common set of pitches and certain patterns of melodic movement” (Hammarlund 2). Much of Ottoman classical music

centers around 60-70 structurally distinctive *makam* forms, each with its own unique name (Signell 16).

In his book, *Music of the Ottoman Court*, Walter Feldman draws on Dimitrie Cantemir, who provided the only theory of musical mode in Turkey and the Middle East from 1600-1800, to provide more detail about the *makam* structure (Feldman 221). Cantemir distinguishes two main types of *makams* (Feldman 223). The first, independent *makams*, are built around eight basic notes (Feldman 223). The second, compound *makams*, are produced by combining two to four *makams* by mixing their notes together (Feldman 229). The most important *makam* in *A Mind at Peace*, the Mahur, is a compound *makam* (Felman 228).

The *makam* system provides Ottoman music a set of foundational rules regarding melody and scale. However, the system is not necessarily restrictive. Compositions and performances based on a single *makam* can be vastly different. A skilled musician might begin with a specific *makam*, but add his own pace, scale, and notes—only the basic melodic structure would remain consistent. Even then, elite Ottoman composers often combined abstract structural elements of different *makams*, like pauses, to form new *makams* (Signell 134). Consequently, new *makam* types were frequently produced and discovered (Hammarlund 2).

A simple way to explain the function that the *makam* serves in Ottoman music is through architecture. If an architect lays a square foundation, the building will be a square. The architect may choose to construct the building out of wood or steel or marble or glass, but at its base, the building will be a square. If the architect laid a circular foundation, however, the building would be a circle. As a result, the foundation beneath the soil determines the structure of whatever emerges above. In this metaphor, the building's foundation represents the *makam*, literally

derived from the Arabic word for “place” or “position.” The resulting building represents the unique composition or performance.

Furthermore, the *makam* system is especially important for providing modal principles and guidelines to a musical tradition that was largely oral. Hammarlund explains:

In the East much was written about music—theoretical treatises about pitch, intervals, scale, and rhythms. The music in itself, however, was *not* written. Of course the sophisticated culture of the Near East was perfectly able to develop a system of musical notation. But since the ties to oral production, to verbal communication, were so strong, a separate, full-fledged and universally accepted system of musical writing never took shape. As long as the traditional forms of education and oral transmission continued to exist, there was no great need for musical scripturalism (Hammarlund 40).

As a result, a *makam* could provide an aspiring musician with guidelines on how a composition should be performed in the absence of a musical script to follow. Even when the *makam* types were eventually recorded, Signell notes that the actual performance of the *makam* differed from its notation (Signell 39). Thus, preservation of Ottoman classical music relied heavily on continued performance and access to the music.

However, the complexity of the *makam* structure restricted *musiki*'s access to educated and skilled performers. Thus, the performers, composers, and audience of *musiki* were primarily found in the Ottoman Empire's upper classes, while the concept of *musiki* was virtually unknown in the rural countryside (Hammarlund 5). This close association with the Ottoman elite made classical musical a target for Kemalist cultural reforms, jeopardizing Ottoman music's future in the new Turkish state.

Mustafa Kemal viewed music as “one of the most important vehicles for societal transformation” (Hammarlund 41). In his mind, Ottoman music, so closely linked to the political elite that had driven the Empire to its collapse, could not accommodate the cultural progress of Turkey. After listening to a performance that featured both Western and Turkish music, Kemal remarked:

[Ottoman] music, this unsophisticated music, cannot possibly fulfill the needs of the innovative Turkish soul, the Turkish sensibility, in its yearning to explore new paths. We have just heard the music of the civilized world, upon which the audience, who, in contrast to its rather anemic reaction to the whimpering known as Eastern music, immediately came to life (Kemal via Hammarlund 114).

Seeing music as representative of culture, Kemal personally advocated for musical reformation across Turkey. Hammarlund writes, “Atatürk wanted to replace the traditional, holistic Islamic polity with a value-neutral, individualistic society, held together by the idea of an abstract, national solidarity. It was understood that this could not be done without emancipating the aesthetic, without letting the medium become the message” (Hammarlund 41). Thus, Kemal oversaw a number of coordinated cultural policies that instituted formal education of Western music at Western-modeled institutions, offered free concerts that performed Western symphonies, broadcasted Western music on the radio, and included Western musical history and composers in school curriculums (Tekelioğlu 114).

In a speech to parliament in 1934, Kemal demanded more expansive musical reform, explaining, “A measure of the change undergone by a nation is its capacity to absorb and grasp a change in music” (Kemal via Tekelioğlu 123). In order to progress, Turkish citizens had to relinquish their grasp on Ottoman music and embrace “civilized” Western music. Apparently

inspired by Kemal's speech, Ercüment Behzat Lav, a senior announcer and director on state-owned radio, implemented a ban of Ottoman music on the radio. He explained:

[It] is a social necessity in this modernizing Turkey of today to confine to the dustbin of history the opium-like music of unlearned men, which is played on *ud* [oriental lute] and *tef* [tambourine]. As the first step in this sorting and cleansing operation for the ear, the publication and printing of records of songs should be strictly limited and controlled (Lav via Tekelioğlu 122).

While the ban was lifted after twenty months, access to Ottoman music continued to be restricted. Due to Ottoman music's reliance on oral transmission and education, these Kemalist reforms posed a serious threat to the continuity of Ottoman music.

In a matter of years, the *musiki* that had once represented the intellectual elite of the Ottoman Empire was considered the purview of "uncivilized" performers and "unlearned" men. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar disagreed. In contrast to the era's trends, *A Mind at Peace* celebrates Ottoman classical music, which plays an increasingly important role as the novel progresses. While *A Mind at Peace* begins with a general exploration of art, architecture, and literature, music begins to take priority over other forms of art and expands its roles in the characters' lives.

However, Tanpınar did not appreciate music in the artistic and aesthetic sense only. Instead, Tanpınar shared Kemal's belief in music's ability to reflect change in society and represent conversations about reformation. He saw that the debate surrounding Ottoman music mirrored many of the political debates of the time about westernization, modernization, and progress. The fear of future generations losing Ottoman music was the same fear of future generations losing access to their past. Conversations about Ottoman music were the same conversations about Turkey itself.

As a result, Tanpınar uses music as a synecdoche for Turkey in *A Mind at Peace*. From the characters' ideas about classical music we can infer their thoughts about Turkey. Their discussions of musical structure reflect their vision of societal structure. Their experience of classical music reflects their experience of society. Tanpınar uses the language offered by Ottoman classical music to achieve this connection. Not only does the *makam* evoke the past through the legacy of the Ottoman imperial courts, but Tanpınar uses the *makam* to literally represent the past itself. Like an architectural foundation, Tanpınar uses the past as society's subterranean organizing element, its *makam*.

While Mümtaz may not serve as an allegory for Turkey like the protagonists of the era's prevalent nationalist allegories, Mümtaz does advocate for a particular model of social change. He, however, is not alone. Three other primary characters join Mümtaz to advocate for their own vision of Turkish reform: İhsan, Nuran, and Suad. The next four sections of this thesis will explore how Tanpınar uses Ottoman classical music to illustrate the model of social change advocated by each character and then challenge the models' potential for initiating positive reform.

Like *A Mind at Peace*, I will begin with Tanpınar's oldest character, İhsan.

Section V: İhsan

İhsan's model for social change emphasizes the importance of economic reform. In fact, İhsan is so focused on transforming Turkey's material conditions that he sees social and cultural reform as entirely ineffective. As a result, music is notably absent from İhsan's discussions of social change. He does not view the past as the concrete foundation, the *makam*, of society. Instead, the past is only life's organizing myth, one used to maintain an illusion of continuity in

the midst of change. Thus, İhsan rarely uses the language of Ottoman classical music and seldom addresses the impact of culture on society. Tanpınar uses this absence of music, however, to point to a problem within İhsan's model—İhsan's vision of reformation fails to accurately address what motivates individuals to pursue change.

A history teacher at the French lyceum Galatasary, İhsan spends much of his time reading, writing, and reflecting on the state of Turkey. He is introduced into the diegesis as Mümtaz's paternal cousin. After Mümtaz's parents pass away, Mümtaz comes to live with İhsan (23). Twenty-three years his senior, İhsan raises Mümtaz, becoming both a father and mentor to the young orphan (40). When Mümtaz enrolls at Galatasaray, İhsan becomes his teacher in both the classroom and at home. "Gradually," Tanpınar writes, "[İhsan] imparted his ideas to Mümtaz" (43).

Of the four primary characters, İhsan has the most explicit recommendations for the reformation of Turkey. Outside of teaching, he works primarily on a comprehensive history of the Turks that is meant to be a "vehicle for organizing the social doctrine he espoused" (43). But his social doctrine possesses no end-goal to aspire to, no model to recreate, because it does not yet exist. Instead, İhsan believes a new Turkey should develop naturally, in its own time. Following the modernizing strategies of other countries, like those in Europe, is ineffectual. "The time of the growing child is different from that of the ill," he explains (287). In this metaphor, İhsan does not see Turkey as the growing child, but the elderly infirm.

According to İhsan, the Turkey of 1939 exists in a state of crisis. The country still relies on its old agrarian modes of production, leaving large swathes of countryside underdeveloped. Indifference, pessimism, and fear leave people reluctant to forge a new future. Meanwhile, İhsan says, "The past is always nipping at our heels. A surplus of half-dead worldviews and modes of

being lie in wait to interfere in modern life” (283). Furthermore, the Republic’s preoccupation with modeling Turkey after Western European countries ignores challenges exclusive to Turkey—the pull between East and West, between modernity and tradition. The Turkish people are suspicious of modernity because it appears foreign, yet reject tradition because it feels antiquated (283). İhsan sees this state of duality as lying at the heart of Turkey’s crisis. “This duplicity, this paradox,” he says, “continues to confound us in our aesthetics, entertainment, morality, etiquette, and conceptions of the future” (283). Acknowledging these circumstances is what İhsan sees as the first necessary step towards reform.

“Second,” İhsan argues, “we must bring people together” (288). Those from different socio-economic classes, those who cling to traditional culture, and those “newly settled tenants of the modern world” must all unite (288). It is these individuals that will drive Turkey’s reformation. Thus, the Turkish people must be united towards a common goal. Unlike Atatürk, however, İhsan does not believe that unity can be achieved through cultural or social reforms directed towards building a common identity. Instead, synthesis can only be accomplished by transforming the material conditions of society through economic reform (289).

People, İhsan argues, are incapable of change absent some level of economic welfare that enables employment and production (286). Consequently, economic reformation must be prioritized. Turkey must emerge into the global market and transform its antiquated modes of production. A shift from mainly agrarian forms of production to a semi-agricultural, semi-industrial workforce would integrate the productive power of countryside villages with larger cities, synchronizing Turkey’s economy. Phase by phase, economic reformation could unify Turkey, forcing institutions, schools, and individuals to evolve to accommodate the new changes. “We must remake the family, the houses, the cities, and the village,” İhsan says. “As a

consequence, we shall also remake humanity” (287).

Drastic change, however, can result in instability. Whenever İhsan discusses current events, he often repeats a quotation from Albert Sorel: “When the world is about to slough its skin, mayhem is inevitable” (17). The world requires some illusion of continuity to retain order. For İhsan, this continuity can be mined from the past. Thus, establishing a “new relationship” with the past is the next step of İhsan’s vision of social reformation (288). Without established roots organizing society on a basic level, Turkey will continue to exist in its state of duplicity (288). But he acknowledges the vital role the past must play in his social doctrine with some degree of reluctance: “Like it or not we have to make [the past] part of the grand synthesis. It’s the source from which we must emerge. We need this notion of continuity even if it’s an illusion” (289). In this sense, the past is not a source of new identity, but a necessary fiction that will organize life until a new Turkey has found its form.

İhsan’s acceptance of the past is limited. He views Turkey as languishing amidst dead and decaying roots, roots that must be purged to allow for growth. But he does not yet know which roots Turkey must use as its foundation. İhsan perceives Turkey’s Ottoman roots as irrelevant, belonging to a civilization that has already collapsed. He rejects the mysticism of the East. He disdains the Republic’s preoccupation with the West. Only Turkish folk culture appears to appeal to him, describing the Turkish people as the “children of [folk] *turküis*,” but even İhsan admits that Turkish folk culture may be too shallow a well to draw from (245). But whatever the roots society decides to graft itself upon, the illusion of continuity will be preserved and maintained through cross-generational cooperation, a “myth” of social organization passed from old to young (106).

Despite İhsan’s love of Turkish folk music and admiration of Ottoman classical music,

art or culture does not factor into his social doctrine. İhsan cares less about which notes the musician chooses to play, and more about the economic welfare of the musician herself. Thus, social and cultural reform is unimportant. According to İhsan, art and music will develop as a natural result of the Turkish people's shared journey towards progress. As he explains to Suad, "Life is ours; we'll give it the form we desire. And as it assumes its form, it'll sing its song. But we won't meddle with art or ideas at all! We'll set them free. For they demand freedom, absolute freedom" (106).

In İhsan's social doctrine, individuals will reorganize material life after acknowledging Turkey's challenges. With the engines of the global market propelling economic welfare and the past's continuity offering stability, Turkey will begin to change. Constructive change will not be driven by the reformation of individuals and their culture, but through the reformation of the Turkish state. Only once Turkey finds its identity, will the new nation inform the identities of its citizens. Hyper-nationalism will supplant the past as life's organizing myth, and a new Turkey will be born. This is the narrative of social reformation that İhsan attempts to weave, each step feeding into the next.

His frustrated student, Mümtaz, however, reveals the doctrine's flaws with a single question: "*Why don't those advocating for society understand people?*" (381). By prioritizing economic reform and the transformation of material life, İhsan's social doctrine neglects the transformation of the individual. He describes cross-generational cooperation maintaining the past's myth of continuity, yet his own student and protégé, Mümtaz, no longer shares İhsan's views. İhsan describes Turkish people as "the children of [folk] *turküs*," yet fails to address the influence of those folk songs on individuals, and thus, society. Furthermore, İhsan's social doctrine begins with people acknowledging Turkey's challenges, yet he ignores the social and

cultural dimensions that might inspire individuals to change. Instead, İhsan believe people will be driven to take action through economic necessity alone. But despite the crisis İhsan describes in the Turkey of 1939, the cosmopolitan characters that inhabit *A Mind at Peace* take no action towards changing their material circumstances. Instead, some argue over what society should be, while most are simply content drinking by the Bosphorus. As a result, a public suffering from apathy and political disillusionment holds İhsan's social doctrine hostage.

Tanpınar illustrates these flaws in İhsan's doctrine by pointing to the way İhsan runs his household. Dubbed the "Island of İhsan," İhsan's home, properties, and the people living on them are all subject to his ideas. On the Island, "whatever one did was tolerated; each phantasy, each curiosity was met, if not with a chuckle then with a smirk. The lord of the island wanted it so; he believed if things were this way, everyone would be content" (14). When people do not act productively, however, all İhsan can do is wait. He waits for his tenant to pay rent, even though the tenant never does (12). Thus, Mümtaz describes the results of İhsan's island rule as a state of perpetual waiting, consistent with the present state of Turkey: "[In] this land, one's aims simply receded into the distance. Doubtless, the East was the place to sit and wait" (10). İhsan's social doctrine prioritizes statewide economic reform but fails to address the people who will actually usher in reformation. As a result, people's resistance to change leaves Turkey in stasis.

Tanpınar, however, sets a limit to the ability to wait for change. İhsan's part begins *A Mind at Peace* yet Part I does not discuss İhsan's social vision. Instead, *A Mind at Peace* begins with İhsan's deteriorating health. Mümtaz describes, "İhsan had complained of backaches, fever, and fatigue for about two days before pneumonia heralded its onset, sudden and sublime, establishing a sultanate over the household, a psychology of devastation through fear, dread, rue, and endless goodwill scarcely absent from lips or glances" (9). Like his earlier metaphor of

Turkey, the İhsan in the first and final parts of *A Mind at Peace* is an elderly infirm, only able to wait while the Second World War rapidly approaches. Also similar to Turkey, İhsan refuses to change, clinging to his social doctrine despite the long wait. When Macide, his wife, updates Mümtaz on İhsan's health, Tanpınar seems to be describing Turkey in the same breath: "There's been no change, Mümtaz. [...] He's always and forever the same" (18). This stagnant state equates a state of illness and decline.

In *A Mind at Peace*, İhsan represents a view of change that prioritizes economic reform, reform that will usher in the creation of a hyper-nationalist identity. He waits on individuals to acknowledge their circumstances and launch his social doctrine. By ignoring society and culture, however, İhsan ignores important factors that might inspire, or even prevent, people from actually pursuing change. Thus, when people do not act to change their material conditions, İhsan's social doctrine stagnates and ails. But the stasis cannot persist forever. Like Turkey, İhsan's "condition seemed to imply, 'I'm nearly done with being İhsan. Soon I'll be something else or I'll be nothing at all'" (17). This ultimatum between something new or nothing at all is explored most visibly in *A Mind at Peace's* most radical advocate for social transformation—Mümtaz's rival, Suad.

Section VI: Suad

One afternoon during their time at university, Mümtaz and his friends sat in a coffee shop and divided people into four distinct categories. They named those obsessed with a particular ideology "Cannibals." "Assassins" voiced their anxieties about society to anyone who would listen, while those same social anxieties would drive "Frantic Assassins" to revolt. They termed

those individuals who turned those social anxieties into irreconcilable choices “Suicidals” (102-103).

When Suad is first introduced, Mümtaz’s friends are unsure in which category he belongs, trying to place him in all four categories at once. When one person describes him as a “Cannibal,” another friend rejects the categorization, contesting, “No, he’s only an assassin, or a frantic assassin, that is to say, suicidal!” (102). Their debate regarding Suad’s categorization is a pertinent one. In *A Mind at Peace*, Suad does fit in each of the four categories. However, not all at once. Unlike İhsan, Suad’s social doctrine evolves throughout the novel, pushing him through each category sequentially—beginning with Cannibal and ending with Suicidal, an element of grim foreshadowing. Also unlike İhsan, Tanpinar uses Ottoman classical music to illustrate Suad’s evolving model, with music increasing its influence in each subsequent category. Consequently, using the four different categories is the most efficient way to track Suad’s progression.

Despite the vital role Suad would come to play in both Mümtaz and Nuran’s lives, Suad begins the book as a mere acquaintance. He is a distant relative of Mümtaz, as well as an old classmate and admirer of Nuran. He resides in the sanatorium, undergoing continuous treatment for tuberculosis that has plagued him for nine years (257). The disease wastes him away, his bones protruding further and face growing increasingly gaunt each time Mümtaz sees him. Yet despite his illness, Suad maintains his reputation as a prolific thinker within Mümtaz’s circle of intellectuals, well read and well spoken. While Mümtaz disagrees with his ideas, Mümtaz admits on multiple occasions that he cannot help but admire Suad.

At the beginning of Part II, Suad represents a perspective of reformation that advocates for the destruction of the past and the construction of an entirely new social order. Using

Ottoman music, if the *makam* represents the past, then Suad advocates for the complete erasure of the *makam*. Any element used to construct the current foundation of Turkish society should be cast aside. “The New Man,” Suad argues, “won’t acknowledge a single remnant of the past” (107). As long as history and tradition continue to guide and organize society, no change can ever be truly achieved.

Consequently, Suad does not resist the impending approach of the Second World War, which fills the other characters with dread. Instead, he welcomes the war and its potential to tear society apart. In Suad’s eyes, the Turkey of 1939 is unsalvageable: “Such convoluted accounts [can] only be settled through war” (108). By breaking all the ties that hold people together, the war would force humanity to forge new bonds and build a new society.

Thus, Suad’s social doctrine is straightforward: revolution (108). Driven by intense pessimism regarding the current state of society (“You don’t actually hope for anything new from humanity, do you?” he asks İhsan), Suad sees a violent overthrow of the social order as the only remaining solution. Like a Cannibal, humanity should devour itself—its history, its social organization, its *makams*—to make space for something entirely new. “I want to hear the sounds of unadulterated folk songs,” Suad says, “I want to look out upon the world through new eyes. Not just for Turkey. I want this for the entire world. I want to hear the songs of tribute sung for the newly born” (107). Suad’s folk songs are not traditional songs, but new music. Unlike the *musiki* confined to the Ottoman elite, the working classes would generate these new songs. His emphasis on the “newly born” and the “New Man” emphasizes his point of view. Suad tires of *turkiis* that transport people back to the past and extol historical figures. He prefers to celebrate people who have yet to come, who actually have the potential to change society.

Considered alongside Mümtaz's intense admiration of the past, Suad's desire to cannibalize history appears viciously destructive. However, his ideology is not initially presented as antagonistic. By contrast, İhsan accuses Suad's vision of total change as utopian (107). Despite Suad's pessimism regarding the current state of humanity, Suad believes that people, free from the past, can and will successfully build a new society. However, he does not know what this new society will look like. When Mümtaz asks Suad to describe his "New Man," Suad responds, "I can't! He has yet to be born!" (107).

By erasing the past and having no method with which to envision the future, however, Suad leaves himself with only the present—a present that Suad himself sees as hopeless. As his health continues to deteriorate and his anxiety grows, Suad begins to grasp for purpose in the present.

First, he turns to love. Not from his wife and children, but from Nuran. From his hospital bed, he pens her a letter. "Without you I'll be destroyed," he writes. "I've made a number of ventures in life, but because you weren't by my side, today, you see, I'm nothing but a zero, a cipher, *sifir*" (252). "Zero" represents the void he finds himself in. Reconnecting with Nuran could ascribe something meaningful to his present existence. As Mümtaz reflects, "Fate had directed Suad's afflicted mind to believe that Nuran represented everything he pined for while recuperating in the sanatorium..." (254). Moreover, Nuran could be a new companion. Throughout his letter, Suad complains to her of his condition, seeking an ally, begging her to come visit. The anxiety and desire for someone to listen to his troubles categorizes him as an "Assassin." Troubled, Nuran does not respond and Mümtaz shreds the letter. Once love fails, Suad turns, at least briefly, to music.

Before Emin Dede's performance, Suad dismisses Ottoman music. He would rather hear the "unadulterated" folk songs of a new society, not listen to *turküs* eulogizing the past or traditional *makams* evoking Turkey's Ottoman legacy. But when he finally sits for Emin Dede's performance, arriving late to both the musical performance and the musical subject of the book, Suad listens intently. The music pulls him away from his smirks at Mümtaz and glances towards Nuran. Instead, he leans forward as if, like İhsan, Nuran, and Mümtaz, he could find something within the notes that might give the present day some purpose (314).

Again, Suad fails. Mümtaz observes the moment Suad comes to this realization: "But soon—as if unable to locate what he'd been seeking, as if the music offered only empty chalices, as if the climes that the *ney* and Tevfik's voice explored in tandem amounted to only deceptive mirages—he raised his head in sedition. Mümtaz noticed the glimmer of caustic scorn and revolt, even wrath, in Suad's eyes" (314). The music fails to offer Suad a vision of the change he seeks, further increasing his anxiety. His shift towards revolt becomes explicit, pushing him into the category of "Frantic Assassin."

Music fails to be the answer Suad seeks because music voids the present. As Mümtaz watches Suad, he thinks, "Music, the ordering of time—*zamanin nizami*—elided the present" (320). In 18th and 19th-century Western music, elision describes a technique in which the end of one chord overlaps with the next. The result is the perceptual omission of a middle chord, as the end of the first and the beginning of the second merge together (Goetschius 124-125). When music is interpreted as a synecdoche for Turkey, contemporary Turkey becomes nothing more than a merging point between past and future. Independent from what preceded it and what would follow it, present society is nothing. It is elided by both past and future.

Thus, Suad fails to separate the present from the past. This failure is the main issue he takes with Emin Dede's performance: "What bothers me is that incessant gyre, circling around nothingness... that flailing in the form of an *idée fixe*" (321). In French music, an *idée fixe* is a recurring theme that serves as the foundation of a musical composition or performance (Calvocoressi 1081). The *idée fixe* is a clear reference to the *makam* structure that organizes traditional Ottoman compositions. The *makam* circles the elided "nothingness" of the present, giving it form. Consequently, Tanpinar seems to be arguing that Turkey itself cannot exist without the past. History is present in every lens used to encounter Turkey, inseparably linked to the present.

The inability to experience the present without the past suffocates a character like Suad, who views the past as the chains holding society back from change. "That night, how Dede Efendi impinged on us," he writes in a letter to Mümtaz, "In this violin concerto that I've listened to for one last time, how Beethoven imposed on me. And the musicians, more so than others" (391). He singles out the musicians specifically because their musical traditions are inextricably linked to the cultures from which they emerge. Thus, when he listens to Emin Dede's performance, Suad cannot escape the Ottoman legacy of Turkey's past. Likewise, when he turns to Beethoven, he cannot escape the West's influences.

When Suad explains that he failed to find what he was searching for in the music, İhsan exclaims, "You only find what you yourself bring!" (321). But therein lies the source of Suad's problem: he brings nothing with him. By leaving the past behind, Suad can find none of the answers that captivate İhsan, Mümtaz, and Nuran. Consequently, Suad cannot find meaning in the present through love, nor through music. The present, from which the New Man must be born, is a void.

Thus, Suad is trapped. On one hand, the desire for a new myth and new life not plagued by history's problems urges Suad to cast aside life's organizing elements, its *makams*. On the other hand, society itself is a void, where nothing seems to grow. He is left with two irreconcilable choices: accept the social organization imposed by the past or accept the present's nothingness. He becomes a "Suicidal." When they return home one quiet evening, Nuran and Mümtaz find Suad's corpse swinging in their hallway (375). Suad's social doctrine of destruction had led him to his own self-destruction. Death was the only way to be truly free of the past.

Since his introduction in the beginning of Part II, Suad's social doctrine was doomed to fail, particularly within Tanpinar's worldview, where music and history shape Turkey. However, Suad does not serve only as a warning of the dangers of casting aside the past. By contrast, Suad is the most influential figure on the other primary characters. His arguments about the inevitability of war complicate İhsan's belief that people will willingly build a better society. Suad's despair about the inescapable past and failure to envision the future infects Mümtaz and Nuran, souring their relationship. For example, during Emin Dede's performance, Mümtaz realizes that a "sense of despair, contracted from Suad, united with notions of Nuran" (317). Suad's suicide officially marks the end of their relationship as Nuran breaks it off with Mümtaz, saying, "There's a corpse between us. Don't expect my return! The dream is over" (375). Mümtaz himself is irrevocably changed—consumed by pessimism and driven to mental instability. By the end of the novel, Mümtaz realizes that, despite not sharing any of Suad's ideas, Suad's contagious despair would never leave him. Suad had become "part of the realities of his everyday life" (382).

Furthermore, Suad's ideas disrupt the social doctrines posed by İhsan, Mümtaz, and Nuran. All three depend on the *makam* structure. Even if İhsan views the past's influence as

mythic, his social doctrine still relies on its illusion of continuity. Suad's demonization of the *makams*, and by extension, the past itself, contaminates the other characters' faith in the *makams*. During the performance, Tanpinar writes, "Just as the melodies that emerged from the *makams* of Saba, Neva, Rast, Cargah, and Acem resolved on the Ferahfeza, just as the manifestation of that woeful, memory-laden suite prepared to bear and usurp the meaning of the totality of their lives, Suad's despair appropriated all these visions, and by means of his own cruel experiences, interjected them into Mümtaz." (316). Consequently, the character who relies the most on the *makam* structure is the most affected by Suad's doctrine—Tanpinar's protagonist, Mümtaz.

Section VII: Mümtaz

Tanpinar titles the final part of the novel after his central character, Mümtaz. Having lost his parents at a young age, Mümtaz is often preoccupied with thoughts of death and despair, though these are assuaged by his relationship with Nuran and his education at İhsan's hands. While helping İhsan finish a book, Mümtaz also works on his own—a historical novel about Shaykh Galip, an Ottoman divan poet who frequented the court of Sultan Selim III, described earlier as a Mevlevî and composer in his own right (447). The reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) was marked by Westernizing political reform as well as musical achievement—a combination central to Mümtaz's views of social change.

Like all the cosmopolitan characters in *A Mind at Peace*, the state of contemporary Turkish society frustrates Mümtaz. His social doctrine, however, is less explicitly articulated than either İhsan's or Suad's. It consists primarily of two missions. First, Turkey requires a reform program that addresses social realities and economic development. Mümtaz sees the implementation of such a reform program as inevitable, naturally occurring as people analyze

social realities and begin working to address the problems they see (198). Second, Turkey's relationship with the past must be re-examined in order to solve its identity crisis, a crisis that directly impacts the lives of Turkish people (198).

Unlike İhsan, however, Mümtaz does not view economic reform and cultural reform as part of the same process (198). Reforming Turkey's material conditions will not ultimately resolve the identity crisis the Turkish people face. By contrast, Mümtaz argues that Turkey's attachments to the past are what create contemporary social realities, forming the present and extending into the future. Without addressing Turkey's relationship to the past, the current identity crisis would continually plague the social realities that economic reform would seek to resolve.

Consequently, Mümtaz occupies himself primarily with the identity crisis plaguing Turkey. Long periods of continuous reform and change, stemming in part from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the Westernizing modernization reforms of the new Republic, resulted in an atmosphere of indecision and anxiety. He likens contemporary Turkey to shelves in a book market, cluttered with trinkets and old relics, an "omnium gatherum [engaged] in a hundred-year struggle and continuous sloughing of skin" (52). The mismatched array of artifacts serves as evidence of Turkey's "intellectual indigestion" (52).

Central to Turkey's identity crisis is the tension between East and West. Mümtaz resents the Westernizing reforms and the meager results they have earned at such a high cost: "An entire society grew despondent, strove, and suffered through anomie and birth pangs for a century so that digests of detective novels and these Jules Vernes might replace copies of *A Thousand and One Nights*..." (52). At the same time, Mümtaz draws upon ideas from Western thinkers and artists. On multiple occasions, he slips into Eastern philosophy only to be pulled back by

Western influences. In one example, Mümtaz begins to dissolve into a mystical experience, becoming “an enormous white lotus,” only to contradict himself a sentence later with an assertion of individual identity drawn from Descartes: “But no, not at all, instead Mümtaz thought: *I think therefore I am, cogito ergo sum. I perceive therefore I am. I struggle therefore I am. I suffer, therefore I am! I’m wretched, I am. I’m a fool, I am, I am, I am!*” (76- 77). He enjoys both European and Ottoman music, “but not as the same person” (419). The problem he encounters, however, is that he thinks with one mind, not two (420). Unable to choose which mind to think with, Mümtaz imagines himself as a “Siamese twin, one face looking East and the other West, with two bodies and four legs, scuttling sideways” (419-420). Mümtaz, like other Turkish citizens, finds himself suspended between both East and West, preventing forward motion.

Thus, contemporary Turkey stagnates in its cultural anxieties. Mümtaz acknowledges the frustration arising from this lack of forward momentum: “[Of] course we feel in our lives—rather in our flesh and blood—the vast fallout of two centuries of disintegration and collapse, of being the remnants of an empire and still unable to establish our norms and idioms” (48). Mümtaz believes that Turkey needs a new life to resolve its anxiety and frustrations (198). The resolution, however, does not lie in Suad’s suggestion to cast aside the past and build something entirely new. “In order to leap forward or reach new horizons,” Mümtaz argues, “One still had to stand on some solid ground. A sense of identity is necessary” (198). Mümtaz finds this identity in the in the golden age of the Ottoman Empire.

The magic and awe of the old Ottoman period, persisting in old mosques and palaces that Mümtaz passes during his daily walks, still survive amidst the old houses and rundown factories of Istanbul. Music, opulent costumes, and old traditions also still remain—evidence of a once

thriving culture. Mümtaz references old sultans and composers of the past, as well as Sufi mystics and poets, drawing from a deep pool of sources. Rather than associate these relics of the past with their decline, Mümtaz views them as access points to a new Turkish identity. “I’m no aesthete of decline,” he tells Nuran. “Maybe I’m searching for what’s still alive and viable in this decline. I’m making use of that” (198). The past does not contain only misery and sorrow, disintegration and collapse, but also “consolations and methods of perseverance” (59).

More importantly, the past has already formed the Turkish identity. Old historical figures that shaped contemporary society already exist in the minds of all Turkish citizens (201). The remaining attachments to the past shape social realities (198). As a result, when Suad suggests erasing the past, Mümtaz disagrees: “What do you think we’ll gain through refutation beside the loss of our very selves?” (104). Casting aside the past because of frustrations amounts to nothing but “*inkar*,” or self-denial.

Consequently, constructing the foundation for a “new life” begins by embracing a Turkish identity mined from the past. This effort, however, is complicated by the Westernizing reforms implemented by Atatürk and the Republic. As discussed earlier, much of Atatürk’s reforms were centered precisely on separating Turkey from its Ottoman past. “[The] past has no legs upon which to stand,” Mümtaz explains. “Today in Turkey we wouldn’t be able to name five books that consecutive generations read together. [...] Soon poets like Nedim or Nefi’î, or even traditional music, which is ever so appealing to us, will join a category of things from which we’ve been estranged” (289). He further argues that the artistry of traditional musicians shaped part of Turkey’s identity, yet modern, Westernized, music replaces the old songs throughout the country, creating a “state of spiritual hunger” that much of the public feels but cannot identify (92). The generations that live during the reforms—Tanpınar’s generation—are

some of the last links to the Ottoman past. When they pass away, a future Turkey might forever be severed from this source of identity—a catastrophe in Mümtaz’s eyes (92).

To reintroduce Turkey to its past, and ultimately, its future identity, Mümtaz turns to music. According to Mümtaz, every aspect of Turkish culture—from its filth to its splendor—is captured in its traditional music (197). So deeply ingrained in Turkish identity, Mümtaz argues that the Turkish people perceive their surroundings and social realities through *makams* that transform all other works of art (197). Thus, music serves as the most effective key to the past. By listening to traditional compositions, the Turkish people can access a lost identity, allowing the past to dress them in “its clothing” (197). As a result, Ottoman music blurs the lines between past and present: “Ottoman music is perhaps the art form that best articulates desire through an arrangement that disrupts what it has created and reduces, with a cursory glance, the days of time known as the present to nothing but ephemera” (307). As Mümtaz listens to Emin Dede’s performance, he imagines historical figures coming to life before him, from spinning Mevelvîs to Ottoman sultans (311). The “dead” live in the minds of the Turkish people, resurrected when their songs are sung (199). Therefore, by appreciating traditional music, the past can speak to the Turkish people and inform their identity (197).

Beyond music’s role in resurrecting the past, Mümtaz is drawn to music for its synthesizing power. In a time period marked by fragmentation and indecision, music is capable of establishing unity, pulling people into a mystical experience that makes them aware of the world’s oneness. He describes one *makam*, the Nühüft, as the most authentic kind of Turkish music for its ability to represent this push for unity: “The Nühüft, the thrust of its *élan vital*², was the essence of a civilization’s inner world hurtling toward a radiance that obliterated all else.” As

² “*Élan vital*” is French term by Henri Bergson that refers to life’s “vital impulse” to evolve (DiFrisko 54). The use of a French philosopher’s term to describe a unique element of a Turkish *makam* is another example of Mümtaz’s continued oscillation between East and West.

Mümtaz listens to the Nühüft, he is distilled from the world (173). In another example, as Mümtaz and Nuran walk through the city in a night that Tanpınar describes almost entirely through the melodies and notes of Ottoman music, one of the lovers says, “We’re part of a single unified realm” (215). The line is not specifically attributed to either Mümtaz or Nuran, as if—appropriately—belonging to both at once. This effort at unity succeeds in blurring the distinction between past and present to achieve what Mümtaz describes as “timeless time.” While listening to traditional music, he describes the instruments working together to create this effect:

The timbre and style of the *ney* acknowledged nothing as traditional or modern, but chased after *zaman* without *zaman*, timeless time, that is, after fate and humanity as unrefined essences. And not only that. From time to time, into *ney* and human voice mingled the sound of the *kudüm* [a central instrument in traditional Mevlevî music] that emerged from the depths, as if from beneath the ground, an awakening casting off the detritus of a thousand slumbers and laden with forgetting and being forgotten, or rather self-realization amid a multitude of cultures (310).

The process of sloughing away accumulated detritus and finding an identity amidst the pull of East and West is exactly the process contemporary Turkey is undergoing. From this example, it is evident that Tanpınar uses the language of music to represent social change.

Atatürk’s Westernizing reforms fail to have the same unifying effect as traditional Turkish music because the West does not possess the same synthesizing power as the East. According to Mümtaz, the East is unique for its ability “to see oneself and all existence as constituting a single entity” (196). Again, the difference between the East and West on this point is illustrated through music. As Mümtaz watches Emin Dede perform, he compares him to Western musicians like Beethoven, Wagner, Debussy, Liszt, and Borodin (298). Mümtaz casts

these Western composers in a very individualistic light, describing them as filled with “hubris” as they “single-handedly” displayed their theories, personalities, and eccentricities through their work (298). By contrast, the compositions of a lesser-known dervish like Emin Dede “consisted of repeated self-renunciations,” continuously returning to the past in order to reclaim the sensibilities of historic Ottoman composers (299). Thus, Eastern musicians like Emin Dede differed from Western composers because they did not use their art as a means of asserting their own selfhood. Instead, Eastern musicians used music as “the sole path to vanishing in sempiternal oneness” (299). Eastern music achieves this unity by pressing itself back into the past, creating timeless time. Western music fails to have the same effect because it does not have the same Ottoman and Mevlevî traditions to return to. Consequently, Western reforms could not successfully take root in Turkish society. Mümtaz argues, “The Occident roamed dumbly in our midst like a stranger due to its inability to fathom our music” (197).

However, Mümtaz does not completely discount Western ideas. Rather, Mümtaz relies heavily on Western ideas to describe the East. Ottoman music is frequently described through Western techniques and terminology, like *elision*, *idée fixe*, and *élan vital* (320; 321; 310). The new Turkish state had already modeled itself after the West and aspired to see itself as a part of Europe, to join the “civilized world.” While Mümtaz views Eastern and Ottoman traditions as essential foundations for Turkish identity, Mümtaz’s vision of unity includes a synthesis of both the East and the West.

Incorporating Western elements into a Turkey that seeks to strengthen its attachments to the past is possible because of society’s capacity for change. Mümtaz does not want to wholly model contemporary society after Ottoman structures. Instead, he simply wants to retain a foundation, a *makam*, for society to build upon. The *makam* would not be restrictive because

Mümtaz does not view the past as fixed. Instead, like a *makam*, the past can be adapted and performed in a myriad of ways. Emin Dede models this in his performance. Tanpinar writes, “[Emin Dede] ran the *makam* a number of times, in an arrangement that resembled distinct variations achieved through consistent structural motifs, before slowly abandoning the melodic progressions to associated ones” (306). Mümtaz views history as following a similar pattern of adaptation. Historical events change humanity, and as a result, humanity reconstructs its own history. “Humanity would continually reformulate time,” Mümtaz observes. “The knife’s edge of the present carried the weight of history while also transforming it, word by word” (395). This capacity for continuous adaptation and variation prevents a society inspired by the past from remaining trapped within it.

Meanwhile, a basic *makam* underlies society’s composition, guiding it and giving it structure as the composers decide which notes to play next. As Mümtaz passes a group of girls in dusty clothes playing games and singing folk songs in the street, he reflects, “*What should persist is this very song, our children’s growing up while singing this song [...] Everything is subject to transformation; we can even foster such change through our determination. What shouldn’t change are the things that structure social life, and mark it with our own stamp*” (22). Just as a *makam* serves to structure Ottoman compositions, the past and tradition will structure Turkish society.

Taking all these factors into account, Mümtaz’s social doctrine can be interpreted as wanting Turkish society to be composed like a traditional Ottoman song. The past and tradition serve as Turkey’s bedrock, a series of adaptable *makams* that form the basic structure of Turkish identity. With the *makam* providing stability, the Turkish people are free to integrate Western elements and make alterations that better suit contemporary social realities. If society can be

composed in such a way, it could potentially achieve the same effect of traditional Ottoman music: synthesis. Just as Eastern music pushes people towards a grand synthesis, a society like an Ottoman composition could unite the past and present, East and West—resolving the crisis of identity that plagues Turkey’s progress. Music, therefore, is intrinsically tied with Mümtaz’s vision of social change in *A Mind at Peace*. As Mümtaz says, “Until our music changes organically on its own, our station in life won’t change” (158).

When drawing upon Tanpınar’s previous works and his personal life, it becomes clear that his views on Turkey’s reformation strategy align most closely with Mümtaz. Like Mümtaz, Tanpınar ascribes Turkey’s cultural anxiety and uncertainty to the Republic’s erasure of the past, and seeks the past’s resurrection and preservation in contemporary society. And just as Mümtaz describes a refutation of the past as a denial of ourselves, Tanpınar describes going back to the past as a return to ourselves, intertwining past with individual identity (Gürbilek 602). Mümtaz serves as a culmination of Tanpınar’s beliefs, a synthesis of different ideas, fusing Ihsan’s faith in the past’s stabilizing power with Suad’s desire for something new. Thus, on the basis of authorial bias alone, Mümtaz’s social doctrine should be poised to triumph in the central characters’ debate on which model of social change Turkey should pursue.

However, the fourth part of *A Mind at Peace*, “Mümtaz,” centers on Mümtaz’s growing mental instability and confusion. Mümtaz’s social doctrine is not allowed to be the solution. Instead, Tanpınar challenges Mümtaz’s worldview and highlights its vulnerabilities, simultaneously challenging his own.

Suad lies at the center of these vulnerabilities. Suad’s desire to destroy the past and his despair infect Mümtaz, heightening his anxiety: “*What if everything he said was true?*”

Mümtaz asks himself, “*Allah, what if all he said was true?*” (340) After Suad’s suicide, Suad plagues Mümtaz’s dreams. In one, Mümtaz imagines himself in an enormous house, searching every room for Nuran, but in each he finds only Suad (390). Dread, which Nuran had once kept at bay, “colonizes” Mümtaz and closes him off to his aesthetic world—to the very keys to his identity (341).

Furthermore, Mümtaz’s desire to revive the past backfires when Suad appears to him after his suicide, resurrected by a violin concerto and a suicide note. Just like Mümtaz’s romanticized visions of old sultans and composers resurrected to inspire the present, Suad appears more beautiful than before, holding Mümtaz’s identity, a living being, within the palm of his hand (439-440). Without his identity, Mümtaz views everything as “atomized,” where every piece and idea exists separate from the other (439). Unity does not exist when one views the world from outside the perspective of identity because as Suad explains, “You were actually observing your own self. Neither life nor objects constitute a totality. Wholeness is a phantasy of the human mind” (439). Suad’s explanation directly contradicts Mümtaz, suggesting that Mümtaz had only been reflecting on his self the entire time, rather than society as a whole. According to Suad, the only way to truly achieve unity is to cast aside identity and the self—suicide. “You won’t be able to accomplish anything!” Suad says. “Come with me. You’ll be delivered of the whole lot” (444). Mümtaz refuses, citing responsibilities and work still left to do. Suad then abandons Mümtaz to the “cesspool,” while the radio announces news of Hitler’s attack (445).

By trying to achieve a synthesis of all ideas, Mümtaz makes himself vulnerable to ideas that dismantle his own. Mümtaz’s notion of an all-encompassing unity cannot be joined with Suad’s desire for complete erasure. Tanpinar makes a point of highlighting this: “When ‘all’ or

‘nothing’ appeared together, the mind of man, that consummate apparatus of balance, malfunctioned” (427). This is precisely what happens to Mümtaz as he begins to hallucinate, slipping into delusion as he reflects upon Suad’s actions and beliefs. Beyond the two men, the tension between “all” and “nothing” is prevalent in a society teetering on the precipice of war because death, Mümtaz argues, pushes people towards extremes: “At least, [people] say, let death catch me at an extreme, while hurtling towards one of the poles: either while singing ‘the Internationale’ en masse or while goose-stepping...” (145). The gulf between a socialist anthem condemning the authority of the State and a regimented military march is too wide to bridge. Especially in a “period of open fear that won’t scab over,” a push towards the extreme is inevitable, undermining the feasibility of Mümtaz’s social doctrine.

Additionally, the central characters in *A Mind at Peace* do not ascribe to Mümtaz’s desire for synthesis and resurrection of the past despite sharing a similar educational and musical foundation. While their views may differ, İhsan, Nuran, Suad, and Mümtaz are all members of the same social class, sharing the same social circles, and possessing similar knowledge of the past and traditional music. They do not need to rediscover the past the same way as students being taught the Republic’s new curriculums. Each, however, pushes against Mümtaz’s social doctrine in some way. İhsan sees the old *makam* structure of the past only as a myth, a means to stabilize society as it undergoes drastic economic reform. Moreover, he opposes Eastern mysticism and notions of synthesis, arguing, “The individual ought to preserve itself. Nobody has the right to dissolve into Creation” (293). Meanwhile, Nuran appreciates the past but finds its influence on her life restricting. Lastly, the imposition of the past on the present drives Suad to suicide. None ultimately accept Mümtaz’s notion of unity. Instead, each pursues his or her own ideas and thoughts—championing a range of models of change. As a result, the small group, like

Turkish society as a whole, remains anxious and fragmented, each having their ideas challenged and undermined by the others.

By the end of the book, İhsan's health deteriorates, Nuran has left Mümtaz for her ex-husband, war looms, and Suad haunts Mümtaz's thoughts and dreams. At İhsan's bedside, Mümtaz experiences a silence "the likes of which he hadn't experienced before" (405). Mümtaz runs from *makams* that he had once listened to with Nuran, the music becoming "an angel of torment chasing him, accosting him, and pinning him down" (356). The despair brought upon by his separation from Nuran and Suad's suicide heightens Mümtaz's anxiety, drawing him away from what used to structure his life and give it purpose (438). Despite the growing confidence Mümtaz displayed in his belief in music and the past as the key to resolving Turkey's cultural anxiety during the book's second and third parts, Mümtaz's social doctrine finds no more success than İhsan's, Nuran's, or Suad's. So after refusing Suad's invitation to commit suicide, Mümtaz can only crouch at the foot of the stairs, unable even to ascend to İhsan's bedside, and listen to the radio announcing the ignition of the Second World War (446).

Section VIII: Nuran

Of the four central characters in *A Mind at Peace*, Nuran's ideas regarding the reformation of Turkey are the least clearly defined. Unlike İhsan, Suad, and Mümtaz, she does not advocate for a specific model of social change. Instead, Nuran synthesizes all three, incorporating an appreciation for traditional music with more concrete social realities.

Part II of *A Mind at Peace*, titled "Nuran," begins "the simplest love story ever told, so simple as to recall an algebraic equation" (85). When Nuran meets Mümtaz, she is newly separated from her husband, Fâhir, and raising her young daughter, Fatma. She navigates her

family's stigma surrounding divorce and lives in relative isolation, disheartened by the failure of her first marriage. While she is attracted to Mümtaz, Nuran is initially hesitant to begin a new romantic relationship. "I'm a woman who's established her life, only to watch it crumble," she thinks. "I have a daughter. Love, for me, is nothing new. I've passed through this experience much earlier than [Mümtaz] [...] Am I to once more pass over roads that I've already traveled? Is there torment greater than this?" (130). Moreover, her family's long legacy of failed love haunts her.

Nuran's complicated relationship with her family's past foregrounds much of her thoughts during *A Mind at Peace*. On one hand, she finds much of her identity in the past. Both sides of her family subscribe to dervish orders—Mevlevî on her father's side, Bektashi on her mother's (136). She is the descendant of a line of musicians, so much so that traditional music is considered an heirloom in her family and represents a significant portion of her childhood: "Her entire girlhood had passed in a birdcage of melodies made by [her father's] flute. The world, which manifested for others through a thousand sensations, manifested for her purely through sound and music" (137). As a result, Nuran has learned how to perform *makams*, sing *turküs*, and dance Anatolian folk dances (178). This musical legacy enriches Nuran's identity and experience of the past. It also draws her closer to Mümtaz, as they share the same admiration for traditional Ottoman music.

On the other hand, her family's legacy of failed love fills Nuran with trepidation and pessimism. Much of this descends from her great-grandparents. Her great-grandmother had pursued love passionately, and her great-grandfather sacrificed everything to be with her (156). However, their love failed and led both to despair. Her entire family is plagued by this legacy of lost love, regulating their private lives (159). Consequently, as she considers beginning a

relationship with Mümtaz, the shadow of her great-grandmother haunts her and she worries about following too closely in her great-grandparents' footsteps (156-157).

Since her great-grandparents were also musicians, the legacy of failed love and despair unites in traditional music, specifically, her great-grandfather's version of the Mahur *makam*, "The Song in Mahur." Nuran describes the song as "a family heirloom with its periodic turpitude and keepsakes of cruelty, with its torments resembling the return to a primordial, primitive state of sorts—created an abyss through twin legacies, an abyss now yawning within her and summoning her" (158). Throughout *A Mind at Peace*, "The Song in Mahur" represents both love and anxiety—at times she performs the composition for Mümtaz and other times she is unable to sing more than the first verse because of the song's "ill fortune" (161). Nuran attributes her effort to "live rationally rather than through [her] emotions" to the song's influence (125). Unlike Mümtaz, who had denied much of the past during his childhood and only learned to cherish it as an adult, the past carries numerous associations for Nuran—good and bad (159). This tension between the past as a source of identity, but also as a source of despair, occupies much of Nuran's thoughts.

Despite her doubts, Nuran ultimately decides to pursue a relationship with Mümtaz, deciding that life and love, Eros, is as much a formative force in life as death and despair, Thanatos (161). Their relationship progresses rapidly, based to a considerable extent upon their shared appreciation for traditional music. While initially weary of Mümtaz's obsession with the past, Nuran is soon swept up by it, playing along by wearing traditional costumes and performing *makams*. As a result, Mümtaz comes to view Nuran as a "golden key" to time past (206). Mümtaz enjoys seeing her dress in traditional clothing. In certain settings, he casts Nuran

as an “odalisque,” a beloved of sultans long passed. He sees her in “the legends, faiths, and arts of centuries,” appearing in different forms but at the same time, always as herself (206).

At the same time, Nuran dresses in contemporary fashions and lives a relatively modern lifestyle—a single mother separated from her husband. She references Western thinkers nearly as much as Mümtaz, and in the next breath, recites couplets from Sufi poets (242). She performs *makams* and sings *turküis* while admiring Debussy. Consequently, Nuran represents to Mümtaz the perfect synthesis of the past and the present, East and West. Their relationship consists mostly of walking through old Istanbul, listening to traditional music, and reflecting on the state of Turkish society, until Mümtaz is unable to extricate “Istanbul, the Bosphorus, Ottoman music, or his beloved from one another” (238).

Nuran’s apparent ability to synthesize different dimensions gives her a mystical quality. By spending time with her, Mümtaz becomes aware of the world’s unity as she “[illuminates] everything such that the most disparate elements became part of a synthetic whole” (193). Thus, Nuran opens the pathway to a grand synthesis, embodying a mystical experience:

Mümtaz, representing an iota of being, now felt himself to be vast and infinite as all Creation. Through Nuran’s presence he’d discovered his own existence [...] He lived in a universe made up of an array of mirrors, and in each he saw another Nuran who constituted but another facet of himself. The trees, the water, the light, the wind, the Bosphorus villages, old make-believe *masals*, the books he read, the roads he wandered, the friends with whom he spoke, the covey of pigeons that fluttered above him, the buzzing summer insects whose bodies, colors, life cycles mystified him were all manifestations emanating from Nuran. It all belonged to her” (151).

For a country in the midst of an identity crisis—which Mümtaz views as a collection of disparate elements—Nuran’s ability to unite existence appeals to Mümtaz. She becomes the lens through which he interprets reality as a consistent part of a single whole.

By combining these elements, Nuran can be viewed as the realization of Mümtaz’s social doctrine. A *makam*, the “Song in Mahur,” organizes her life and roots her identity in the past. Meanwhile, she supplements the *makam* foundation, her knowledge of the traditional music and Eastern mysticism, with Western ideas. As a result, Nuran has the effect of a piece of Ottoman composition—unity. By synthesizing the contrasting elements of the Turkish identity crisis, Nuran draws Mümtaz into a grand synthesis. In essence, Nuran represents what Turkish society should aspire to be in Mümtaz’s mind.

Nuran, however, does not ascribe to Mümtaz’s social doctrine. By contrast, she counters Mümtaz’s ideas on multiple points, particularly his perspective on “timeless time.” While the past actively represents Turkish citizens’ identity in Mümtaz’s mind, Nuran holds a different view. As she explores an old lodge with Mümtaz, she thinks, “The peculiar redolence of the historic lingered everywhere. This, our scent within history, was so reminiscent of who we were” (147). Her use of the past tense, “who we were,” highlights how her stance differs from that of Mümtaz. While Mümtaz views the present as nothing but an extension of the past, Nuran views the present as its own entity. “Why don’t you live in the present, Mümtaz?” Nuran asks. “Why do you either dwell in the past or in the future? The present hour also exists” (207). This distinction, though subtle, is important, placing both characters at odds with one another despite their developing romance. When Mümtaz tries to cast Nuran as a beloved of old Sultans, Nuran objects. “No, thanks,” she says. “I’m Nuran. I live in Kandilli, in the year 1938 and I wear more or less the fashions of my day. I have no desire to change my style or my identity” (147).

Moreover, Nuran associates the past with death, existing in a dimension outside of the social realities of contemporary Turkey. As Mümtaz reflects on the ability of poetry and music to revive the past, Nuran tunes him out. “But what about society?” she thinks, “Where was the overture to life? Actually doing something, treating the afflicted hordes, finding work for the unemployed, bringing smiles to crestfallen faces, delivering those people from being nothing but relics of the past” (197). She likens the society Mümtaz envisions, one deeply entrenched in the past, to an “ancient corpse interred with all its objects” (199). In his tomb, the corpse relives his former life in a romanticized world. That world, however, forever exists “on the other side of death” (199). Consequently, all the corpse’s adored objects cannot alleviate the challenges of contemporary Turkey. “I might be preoccupied with my daughter,” Nuran tells Mümtaz, “but you’re meddling with corpses seven centuries old” (201).

For this very reason, Mümtaz’s preoccupation with the past troubles Nuran. She asks herself, “*Am I living in a country vanquished by Death?*” (197). Only a page later, Mümtaz expresses the exact opposite view. Before meeting Nuran, Mümtaz worries that his preoccupation with death, stemming from the loss of his parents, separated him from others. However, Nuran’s capacity to represent a character from the past alive in the present validates his social doctrine. Tanpınar writes, “In his love for Nuran, didn’t he consider her courage to live and her beauty something like life’s victories? Whenever he took her into his arms, wasn’t he declaring to the afreet of death looming just beyond her head, ‘I’m on the verge of vanquishing you. I’ve defeated you, here, regard my weapon and my shield’” (198). In this example, the gulf between Nuran and Mümtaz’s ideological views of the world is evident. Despite their initial similarities, they hold opposite views of the role the past plays. Nuran’s revival of the past through her life vanquishes death in Mümtaz’s mind. Thus, when their relationship ends,

Mümtaz returns to viewing social realities “from beyond the threshold of death” (435). By contrast, Mümtaz’s obsession with the past only reminds Nuran of the firm grip the past holds on her life.

Nuran resents the past’s role as a *makam*, organizing her life and influencing her family. She feels limited by the legacy of the past. For example, she fears the effect of her great-grandparents’ legacy on her relationship with Mümtaz, condemning their relationship to failure before it even truly begins: “[Mümtaz and Nuran’s] shadows would flit and dart inside the golden cage that was the ‘Song in Mahur’” (159). Nuran’s vision of the past as a “cage,” a restrictive element, recurs frequently. She describes the Turkish people as “bound” by the past. She sees Mümtaz’s desire to use the past as a *makam* limiting—by “living through a single idea,” people might risk becoming trapped “on the sidelines of life,” incapable of adapting to social realities and engaging with contemporary society (198). Ultimately, the pressure from the *makam*’s dictation of her life results in misfortune (249).

Moreover, Nuran resists the synthesizing effect of the past. Despite her family’s Mevlevî and Bektashi background, she does not find the notion of unity comforting. Unlike İhsan, she permits herself to dissolve into the synthesis. However, she does not find mystical experiences as enlightening as Mümtaz. For example, during Emin Dede’s performance, she believes the rhythm “[points] the way for a self no longer hers through the invitation of a time no longer ours” and in the music, she searches for “her totality” (308). Social realities, however, appear to her in the music in the form of Mümtaz’s face behind “closed doors³” and Fatma’s voice calling out to her. When Nuran accepts the mystical experience that Emin Dede’s music evokes, its allure rapidly becomes alienating:

³ The image of Mümtaz behind closed doors likely illustrates her vision of Mümtaz’s preoccupation with the past condemning him to a realm that exists on the other side of death.

She bore her entire world within her self. To soar, verily, to vanish. Why had this music, through its agile expression, recalled the Bairams [Islamic festivals] of her childhood? Why had it erupted in the elation of free and easy times, when the taste of every pleasure came unaccompanied by pangs of conscience? Was it right to resurrect so many of the dead at once? Through this elation did one arrive at Allah? Or at life itself? She didn't know. Just as during those carefree Bairams, she sensed that as she once faced being bereft of amusement and joy; she now ever so slowly prepared to forgo everything, and felt even the desire to soar abandon her. Oddly enough, she felt isolated. Her inner life was as vast as creation. '*I am a world unto myself,*' she thought. Yet she was not in control of this inner world (313).

The dissolution into the grand synthesis robs Nuran of control, restricting her free will just like the *makam*.

Notwithstanding all of her points of issue with Mümtaz's social doctrine, Nuran continues her relationship with Mümtaz because she finds the notion of a romanticized past appealing (147). While she may resent the constrictive element of the *makam*, Nuran views its place as Turkey's foundation as inevitable: "To admire Debussy and Wagner yet to live the 'Song in Mahur' was the fate of being a Turk" (161). But even as she maintains their romance, Nuran does not subscribe to his ideas. Despite the appeal of the past, Nuran does not view its resurrection as a workable solution to Turkey's identity crisis. Instead, Mümtaz's desire to build a contemporary society that used the past as its *makam*, its foundation, is nothing more than a dream. She regards Mümtaz's ideal society as a reality that exists on the other side of death, "Always conceptually, like a dream that belongs to another..." (199). But despite the presence of metaphorical death, the dream itself is appealing.

When literal death intercedes in the form of Suad's suicide, the dream ends. Nuran reverts to more practical lines of thought—rekindling her relationship with her ex-husband and offering Mümtaz nothing more than friendship. "There's a corpse between us," she writes in a letter. "Don't expect my return! The dream is over" (375).

By the end of the novel, it is possible to view Nuran as combining İhsan, Suad, and Mümtaz's ideas. Like Mümtaz, she accepts the past as an integral component of her identity and embraces both Eastern and Western ideas. Like İhsan, she cares about Turkey's social realities, emphasizing the importance of finding a solution to economic challenges in addition to cultural challenges. Lastly, she also shares Suad's concern about the imposition of the past on the present. Mümtaz's description of Nuran as someone who combines disparate elements into a synthetic whole supports this reading (193). While Nuran does not wholly accept any of the aforementioned social doctrines, she incorporates aspects from all three into her point of view.

Nuran's combination of the various social doctrines should result in balance, as her stance becomes more moderate than the men's relatively extreme points of view. After all, Nuran is the perfect synthesis of both past and present, East and West, all while caring about Turkey's social realities and cognizant of the potential problems that may arise from an overreliance on history. All these competing views, however, result in an inability to articulate a particular social model. Despite all her ideas, Nuran has no recommendations for Turkey's path to reformation. And when major change occurs in the form of Suad's suicide, she can only revert back to her old life instead of taking a chance on the idealistic world created by Mümtaz. Consequently, Tanpinar positions Nuran as incapable of remedying Turkey's identity crisis, just like the other characters.

Section IX: Conclusion

In *A Mind at Peace*, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar illustrates Turkey's identity crisis—a tension between past and present, East and West that imbues *A Mind at Peace's* cosmopolitan characters with a sense of anxiety and uncertainty. Using Ottoman classical music as a synecdoche for Turkey, the characters advocate for distinctive models of social change. At the end of the novel, however, each model fails. By resisting the impulse to espouse a single doctrine, Tanpınar differentiates *A Mind at Peace* from the era's prevailing national allegories and didactic party novels. Instead, Tanpınar uses the novel to highlight the problems in Turkish society and confront the consequences of the Kemalist Cultural Revolution.

The challenge of articulating a distinctive Turkish identity lies at the forefront of *A Mind at Peace*. Characters stand suspended between the past and the future, pulled between tradition and modernity, East and West. Unable to situate itself within any cultural narrative or create its own identity, present-day Turkey exists within a void. While each of Tanpınar's primary characters offer a solution to the crisis, each solution proves ineffectual by the conclusion of the novel. İhsan's health deteriorates as he waits for people to acknowledge their circumstances and initiate economic reform. Suad's desire to cannibalize Turkey's history leaves him with nothing, the past's inescapability driving him to commit suicide. Nuran resents the influence of the past and reverts back to her former life. Mümtaz embraces the past as Turkey's foundation, but his desire for a synthesis of all ideas cannot accommodate contradiction and he ends the novel filled with anxiety. Of all the four models, Mümtaz's failure is the most surprising, considering how closely Mümtaz's views align with Tanpınar's.

Like Mümtaz, Tanpınar viewed the past as a source of Turkish identity. In his poetry and essays, Tanpınar celebrates the Ottoman past—from the poetry of its court, to its old

architecture, and especially, its classical music. In his essay collection, *Five Cities*, Tanpınar writes, “[This] nostalgia is a world by itself, it can help us explain the past best; in this silent tune of the reed our dead live again with the faces we are most attached to; and perhaps because of this insight we have acquired, we are able to live in a present that is more sensitive and more authentic” (Tanpınar via Reddy 383). In *A Mind at Peace*, Mümtaz’s romanticized description of old Sultans and the experience of Ottoman classical music conjure a similar nostalgic tone. Also like Mümtaz, Tanpınar condemned the erasure of the past in his political writing. Thus, Tanpınar’s personal views are the most similar to Mümtaz, making it all the more striking when Tanpınar abandons his protagonist at the foot of a stairwell, alone and anxious at the outset of war.

In the failure of Mümtaz’s social doctrine, Tanpınar sacrifices his own views in favor of critiquing contemporary Turkish society. Consequently, Tanpınar allows *A Mind at Peace* to address the lasting consequences of the Kemalist Cultural Revolution. By analyzing the characters’ social models, it becomes evident that Tanpınar’s principal critique of the reforms lies in Atatürk’s alienation of the Ottoman past.

A common thread underlies all four models in *A Mind at Peace*—the important role history plays in constructing national identity. Throughout the novel, the *makam* of classical Ottoman compositions represents the past in Turkey. Like a *makam* organizes a melody, the past organizes society. For İhsan, the past’s myth of social organization offers an illusion of continuity. When Suad attempts to erase the past, he realizes that the present is a void without it. The past also serves as the foundation for Mümtaz’s social change model and an integral component of Nuran’s identity. Tanpınar represents the erasure of the past—or worse, its destruction—as amounting to nothing more than a denial of the present state of affairs.

Moreover, without understanding past challenges or relying on past successes, society cannot progress. “In order to leap forward or to reach new horizons, one still has to stand on some solid ground,” Mümtaz says. “A sense of identity is necessary... Every nation appropriates this identity from its golden age” (198).

By severing Turkey from its Ottoman golden age and imposing a Western model onto an Eastern foundation, the Kemalist Cultural Revolution helped create an atmosphere of anxiety and uncertainty. The erasure of the past robbed Turkish society of its *makam* and the solid ground necessary to propel the new nation into the future. In the resulting void, even characters like Mümtaz fail to rebuild a foundation out of the obliterated past. In his essay, “Istanbul,” Tanpinar describes his anxious search for the past through old relics and his concern that the past will no longer be recovered: “We search for a part of ourselves in these old things, which we think we lost in our battles within our souls, though there may not be any traces” (Tanpinar via Reddy 383).

In *A Mind at Peace*'s lack of answers, we find a critique of the Kemalist Cultural Revolution and an illustration of the identity crisis facing Turkey. Thus, we can view the failure of the four models not as a pessimistic outlook of Turkey's inability to progress, but as a way to appreciate the seriousness of the challenges confronting Turkey, challenges that force the Turkish people to continue to search for solutions. To Tanpinar, arriving at this realization can be enough. In his own words, “Perhaps it is sufficient to keep searching and knocking on all the doors” (Tanpinar via Reddy 383).

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