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## I FELT LIKE I SAW THE NOVEL: TANPINAR'S NOVELS REVISITED

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### Abstract

This paper examines Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's diary to bring new interpretations to Tanpınar's novels. Since its publication in 2007, the diary has been at the center of many discussions, most of which remained as analysis on Tanpınar's sore remarks on people around him. However, there are several remarks which might bring new interpretations to his other texts, especially to his novels. It often gives clear clues about how the characters of a novel are produced, how the context is designed, and on top of that how the writer comes up with this kind of fictional universe. Therefore, the diary can be a guide to interpret or reinterpret the novels. This article aims to bring a new perspective to Tanpınar's novels by analyzing his remarks in the diary.

**Keywords:** Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, *Günlüklerin Işığında Tanpınar'la Başbaşa* [In Broad Daylight: Face to Face with Tanpınar], Tanpınar's novels, diary as a literary text.

### Introduction

In one of his published correspondences, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar says, "what upsets me most is that I have not kept a diary; my only advice to my young friends is that they keep diaries. A person can produce everything out of himself, out of his life. Keeping a diary means keeping oneself in the view all the time. There is no greater economy than that" (2006: 308). The given excerpt was published in *Varlık Magazine* in 1951, two years before Tanpınar began keeping a diary. He already had a certain objective in keeping a journal before he got his plan underway. Tanpınar began to keep his diary in 21 April 1953, in the third week after his arrival in Paris. His diary entries were compiled by İnci Enginün and Zeynep Kerman and published in 2007.<sup>1</sup> Since its publication, Tanpınar's diary has not been analyzed much although there were several discussions, mostly on his personality. One aspect of the diary has never been considered: it was a guidebook for Tanpınar's novels. This article aims to bring a different interpretation to Tanpınar's novels by analyzing Tanpınar's recently-published diary.

There was already information about Tanpınar's life, his childhood, how he was raised, and his idea of poetry available in some published interviews; besides, his travels abroad in 1953 and 1957 were published by himself as some excerpts from his personal journals.<sup>2</sup> The rest of his notebooks and some notes taken on pieces of paper were left unpublished; among these notebooks was one dated 1953, which the editors of Tanpınar's diary, İnci Enginün and Zeynep

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<sup>1</sup> Even though the writer of the *diary* is Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, I cite the editors of the diary, İnci Enginün and Zeynep Kerman, as the writers for two reasons: First, the editors put their names on the cover as the writers and with no indication of the editorial job on the cover. Secondly, they turned the collection of Tanpınar's diary entries into an academic study by including several comments and footnotes, which makes them writers rather than the editors.

<sup>2</sup> See pages 235-85 in Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2006). *Yaşadığım Gibi*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları. A section titled "Paris Tesadüfleri" [Paris Happenstances] were already published in 1958, much earlier than the publication of Tanpınar's diary in 2007.

Kerman, claim that Tanpınar was keeping as an “autocue” (2007: 6). Tanpınar began to keep his diary in 21 April 1953, in the third week after his arrival in Paris. The other two notebooks were used at the same time, starting from July on. The fourth one was kept from 1954 to 1956; the fifth was from 1956 to 1960. The first page of the last notebook was dated 26 July 1960 while the last entry was recorded thirteen days before his death.<sup>3</sup>

After the publication of the diary in 2007 with a title *Günlüklerin Işığında Tanpınar’la Başbaşa* [In Broad Daylight: Face to Face with Tanpınar<sup>4</sup>], most discussions about it were based on Tanpınar’s remarks which disappointed his audience. Instead of taking the diary as a literary work, as another text written by Tanpınar, literary communities have preferred to indulge in creating a discussion on what Tanpınar says about other people. Whereas, there are various important points in the diary such as his impressions, plans, novel and poetry drafts, his inner conflicts, his feelings and opinions about his surroundings, depressive moments, and even his sexual desires; all are recorded in the diary in passing. He made long lists of essays he planned to write and to compile in his books, some of which materialized but some remained as ideas jotted in the diary.

### **Novels are for “Money” and about “Everything except me”**

On the other hand, there are several remarks which might bring new interpretations to his other texts, especially to his novels. His notes on his characters in his novels and his inspirations are all recorded in Tanpınar’s personal account. Therefore, the diary can be a guide to interpret or reinterpret the novels. It often gives clear clues about how the characters of a novel are produced, how the context is designed, and on top of that how the writer comes up with this kind of fictional universe. Tanpınar’s novels should be reconsidered in the lights of his diary. Some comments of Tanpınar are informative about the novels and guide the interpretations of readers of his novels, even after his death.

In *Antalyalı Genç Kıza Mektup* [A Letter to the Young Girl from Antalya], Tanpınar defines the novel as a task of talking while he considers poetry as silence. He says, “You might ask me why I write novels. I shall say that poetry is silence rather than speaking up. I tell in my stories and novels all I don’t say in my poems. Therefore, my novels and stories give clues about the main hidden ideas of my poems, since I want them to be private spaces” (2006: 352). Tanpınar discriminates between his poetry and prose, and he writes how he is after himself in his poetry while in his novels he is after himself, life, and people – “after everything except me” (2006: 352-53). Considering Tanpınar’s remarks on his poetry and prose, we can say that he talks about himself in all of his texts, while in poetry his aesthetic concerns take the lead. On the other hand he does not necessarily think of poetry as totally different from his prose, as he writes, “For me novelist and poet are like brothers who live in the same house, who sometimes disturb each other but sometimes help each other out and who somewhat have to get along well with each other” (2006: 339).

We should also mention one of the dilemmas that Tanpınar suffered throughout his life, that is, his feelings on poetry and the need for money. Novels were expected to bring money while he was writing the poems for himself. In one of the diary entries, Tanpınar shows his dedication to being an artist while his need of money motivates him to finish and publish his novels:

I have not touched upon the drafts of *Beş Şehir*<sup>5</sup> [Five Cities] yet. I stayed in Erzurum. I have to publish *Beş Şehir*, poems, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* at once. Also I need to finish this novel [*Aydaki Kadın*] to earn some money. I think it will be my major work.

<sup>3</sup> We have the last entries of Tanpınar thirteen days before his death; having very recent accounts of him provides a good chance to analyze his insights before his death.

<sup>4</sup> The title of Tanpınar’s diary was first translated by me and used in my Ph.D. dissertation. I translated *Günlüklerin Işığında Tanpınar’la Başbaşa*, as “In Broad Daylight: Face to Face with Tanpınar.” See also my as-yet-unpublished Ph.D. dissertation titled, “The Diaries of Virginia Woolf and Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar: Culture and Disillusionment.”

<sup>5</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2010a). *Beş Şehir*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları.

However, I was planning to spend this coming two months on the poems! I should do so, anyways, and I will. Let it be I am out of money (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 219).

### **Those outside the Diary: *Huzur* and *Sahnenin Dışındakiler***

The diary was about Tanpınar's own interpretation on several points including the writing process of his novels and might lead to new interpretations. Two of his novels are rarely or never mentioned in the diary. *Huzur*<sup>6</sup> [A Mind at Peace<sup>7</sup>] is noted only twice in the diary since it was already published when Tanpınar started writing his diary in 1953. In the entry dated 6 January 1959, he writes how he became happy when "Ahter Onan's relative Melek Hanım had mentioned that *Huzur* was the only novel in Turkish. How happy I got. The saddest thing for a writer is not to have readers, and what is sadder is not to be able to work. Will I have time in my life for writing my masterpiece?" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 146). As mentioned very often in the diary, Tanpınar complains that his works do not get the praise he expected; in 18 September 1959 he cried that out loud and wrote, "*Huzur* is not read" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 167).

Tanpınar never mentions his third novel, *Sahnenin Dışındakiler*<sup>8</sup> [Those Outside the Scene<sup>9</sup>], in his diary. Serialized in *Yeni İstanbul* from 9 March to 26 May 1950, *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* was published as a book in 1973. Like his other novels, the serialized version of *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* was revised and edited by Tanpınar himself since he was obviously planning to publish it as a book. It is odd that Tanpınar never mentions the revision of the novel in his diary, perhaps because either he did the revision before he began to write his diary in 1953 or he did not want to say anything about it.

### **Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü: "A Great Caricature"**

While *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*<sup>10</sup> [The Time Regulation Institute<sup>11</sup>] was serialized in *Yeni İstanbul Newspaper*, Tanpınar was writing in his diary about his novel. On 24 July 1954, Tanpınar complained about the ambivalence of his *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* in a diary entry: "The reality is that *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* has become a great caricature. Each page saves itself. There is no harmony in it and no reference to any names. My mind cannot ever do the organization [...]. Everything in my life is so shattered. There are thousands of repetitions and interesting pieces in this novel" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 117).

On 15 October 1960 he wrote about how he did the changes in the serialized edition of *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* and made it ready for its publication as a book. He says, "I have been busy with *Saatleri Ayarlama* for three days. I have thoughts incubated in my mind about the changes that I will make. I will remove many unnecessary parts [from the novel]" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 224). The next day he writes about his plan to revise and deplorably says, "I am busy with *Saatleri Ayarlama* for a week. I have not managed to sort it out yet. I have even added new parts. I can see the manuscript with clarity now; some repetitions will be omitted, and some parts will be shortened" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 225). On the next day, he keeps writing about his revisions of the same novel. This time he very neatly writes an outline for the revision; in the first entry, he writes down five names, which most probably would turn out to be the inspiration for the characters in the novel.<sup>12</sup> We see Tanpınar wrote the epigraph<sup>13</sup> of the

<sup>6</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2009b). *Huzur*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2008). *A Mind at Peace*, trans. Erdağ Gökner, NY: Archipelago Books.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2007). *Sahnenin Dışındakiler*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları.

<sup>9</sup> The title of *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* is often translated by critics as *Waiting in the Wings*. *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* has not been yet translated into English.

<sup>10</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2009c). *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2014). *The Time Regulation Institute*, trans. Alexander Dawe and M. Freely, NY: Penguin Classics.

<sup>12</sup> Apart from its master plan, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* was based on Tanpınar's observations and notes on people and events happening in the meantime. However, some parts in the novel were removed by Tanpınar himself when the draft was being prepared for the book edition. Turan Alptekin, in *Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar: Bir Kültür, Bir İnsan* [Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar: One Culture, One Person], points out that "there was a long witty part about Peyami Safa that Tanpınar made me dictate; but upon the death of Peyami Safa's son, he said 'I cannot make fun of a sorrowful friend' and omitted that part" (2010: 29). Tanpınar does not mention that in his diary but give many ambivalent remarks on Peyami Safa; while on the one page he says, "I hate Peyami" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 203), after Safa's death, he

novel here in his diary along with some information about how he planned to divide *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* into four chapters (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 225). We understand that he finished the revision of *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü* on 19 March 1961: "Today, I have decided to send the *Saatleri Ayarlama* to the press without making any additions or changes. So, my six-year hesitation just ended. There are a few more pages to be revised on Tuesday [...]. I am very pleased with Turan" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 268).<sup>14</sup>

### **Selim or Tanpınar?: *Aydaki Kadın* as an Autobiographical Novel**

Tanpınar's other incomplete novel, *Aydaki Kadın*, is the most frequently mentioned novel in the diary. First published in *Journal of Turkish Studies* in the 1979 and 1984 volumes, *Aydaki Kadın* was collected into a book in 1987. Güler Güven, a student of Tanpınar, spent a lot of time on the manuscript since the novel had multiple copies and several unnumbered pages. Güven worked on Tanpınar's plans and notes on the novels, put the draft in order, and produced a novel out of a pile of pages; Güven claims that two thirds of the novel is complete. The diary entries about *Aydaki Kadın* hold a key to the novel, not only for interpretation but because of the editing process. No doubt Güler Güven studied the diary entries while working on the draft of the novel; therefore, *Aydaki Kadın* can be best understood if read together with the diary.

We see *Aydaki Kadın* mentioned in the diary as the writing process of *Aydaki Kadın*<sup>15</sup> [Woman on the Moon] is compared with that of *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*. compared with *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*. This entry gives a good idea about Tanpınar's reflection on the process of writing novels: "To tell the truth, I cannot catch it up. Everything seems to be missing in *Aydaki Kadın*. I cannot feel the satisfaction and the strong rhetoric that I had at the beginning of *Saatleri Ayarlama*" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 161). In the same entry, there is an important clue on what influences and inspires Tanpınar in the process of writing his novels. He says, "a very rare thought on death came to my mind yesterday. I sometimes think of death from another perspective. Indeed, yesterday I got scared of cancer like brother Ziya. Out of all these thoughts, I felt like I saw the novel. Selim hides the misery. Behind him there is an unlimited perspective" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 160-61). His thought of death becomes a kind of inspiration for him to outline the characterization of the protagonist Selim in *Aydaki Kadın*.

The significance of *Aydaki Kadın* is multiple: it shows how valuable a diary can be for a writer, especially in the process of producing some works other than the diary. And for a person like Tanpınar, who is ambivalent, restless, depressed, and somewhat messy, the diary was an autocue. Tanpınar used the diary pages for the excerpts that he planned to include in his novel. In the entry of 25 March 1959, he mentions the sixth of September as the "closure date." We see that the novel begins and finishes on the sixth of September. Tanpınar writes an important "closure dialogue" that he was making up in his mind for a while: "the worst thing a society ever experiences is when a régime or group of people assume they are indispensable and fundamental. Cancer is a kind of contention of independence or denial. The cancer is to have private politics" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 159). This dialogue is intended for the closing pages of the novel but is criticized right away by Tanpınar himself as it should have been "something similar to this but more documenté<sup>16</sup>" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 159). He probably put some more thought on this conversation, did some changes, and wrote long passages on politics. In the novel we see how Selim considers politics as the "calamity of modern times" (Tanpınar, 2009a: 182). Along with several notes on *Aydaki Kadın*, this excerpt as well as the preceding one about the setting and the time of the novel are important for they give

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says "I liked him anyways. We had a long friendship; he had a unique elegance, wit, and even sweetness" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 307).

<sup>13</sup> It is a couplet from İzzet Molla: *Bihakk-ı Hazret-i Mecnun izâle eyeleye Hak / Serimde derd-i hurreden biraz eser kaldı*. See (Tanpınar, 2009c: 3) and (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 226.)

<sup>14</sup> Turan Alptekin, Tanpınar's student and assistant, helped on the dictation of the novel.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2009a). *Aydaki Kadın*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları.

<sup>16</sup> "Documenté" is one of the several French words that Tanpınar uses in his diary. I have not translated some of these French words in the diary since the meaning is clear.

the main idea of the novel. It also shows that Tanpınar wanted to show his contemporary political concerns in the novel he worked on until the last days of his life.

There are a few diary entries that are important to understand *Aydaki Kadın* better. One was written 30-31 March 1961, when Tanpınar seems more determined about the unfolding of the story:

I have certainly decided to have an old lover in the novel. So, there will be three fantastic scenes. The old man can help me on the death of Emir. And İnci's dog. Perhaps, these scenes need to be the strongest because of Nevzat's child. Nevzat's son, Nevzat's maddening, and his death should all be divided into different conversations (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 273).

However, we do not see the novel finishes exactly the way Tanpınar was writing it. Probably Tanpınar would have included the death of Emir and many other points if he had time to complete his novel. By looking at the diary entries, other written plans for the novel, and those found in Tanpınar's house, one might guess the end of the novel or even dare to continue and finish the novel, and perhaps manage to write close to what Tanpınar was going to write, if not with the same delicacy.

On 19 December 1961, Tanpınar wrote the whole outline of his novel though he did not follow it in the process of writing:

Selim's life: Born in 1910. Graduates from high school in 1928 and has his first sexual encounter. At the same time he meets a very beautiful woman. He has an affair despite the fact that she is the wife of a close friend. The woman treats him like a child. In 1931, Paris; comes back in 1935 [...]. Loves Bardi. Devotes himself to literature [...]. He meets with Leyla in 1948. Goes to Europe in 1948, and they break up. In 1949 he returns. Between 1950 and 1955 he lives while yearning for her. In 1956 everything ends, and he works on a novel. Florence, Paris, Venice, Vienna (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 329).

In the same entry he also describes the subject matter he wants to include in his novel:

Fascism and Nazi Regime. Kemalism [...]. The question of Cyprus. As soon as we came to the table with the Greeks, this matter was done. Can I say that in the novel? Can I say that this question of Cyprus will cause us trouble like Crete. Why is it 1956 then? There is another year before the election. And I want the cocktail party at the Bosphorus. "Leylâ: I was married to my childhood. I was born in this house. I was married to die here." Does this make sense? (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 329).

On 25 June 1961, he was satisfied with the current version of his novel and wrote, "The novel is not bad as of today. If I do not bargain and do not yield to poverty, I will have a fine work next year. Mehmet Narlı can be a perfect character if I work more on him. Adrien is finished as of today. Selim, Gündüz, Refik, Suat, Nevzat should be more focused" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 309). Although he is content with the current form of his novel, he mentions his worries about it: "All of these should not break my bond with poetry. My poetry is fundamental. However, the novel will establish my reputation and character. One of them is my thought, my main aesthetic; the other is my point of contact with my era. This contact point should derive from my own aesthetic and become the means for finding an ideal life" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 309).

Another importance of *Aydaki Kadın* is that it is like a supplementary document for his diary or the biography/autobiography that gives information about Tanpınar himself. Unlike the other novels of Tanpınar, *Aydaki Kadın* is based more on individual themes. The successful and well-liked protagonist of the novel, Selim, might be considered a person whom Tanpınar would like himself to be. Especially in the second part of the novel he is quite similar to Tanpınar's own life; that is clear only if the diary entries about the novel are analyzed. Similar to Tanpınar himself, the main character Selim is an ambivalent person and is often faced with dilemma. In one of the diary entries Tanpınar mentions Selim's dilemma: "In the last four days, I have managed to complete some hollow parts of the novel. However, I have not linked it up to

Selim yet. Selim, who loves Leyla is different from Selim at home. A puzzle [...]. Should the young man become Leyla's illusion or serious?<sup>17</sup> Sahib Bey is not bad as a temporary character. But the novel itself is not clear yet" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 128). We see Tanpınar's tempered mood, always in search of something, in the process of writing the novel. On 14 December 1958 he wrote, "I have spent the whole night working on the novel. But it is not strong. I always begin with searching. I cannot find or hardly find something and get quickly exhausted. I need a case after all. (I have written only sixty pages so far. And some parts are quite shoddy.) Will Nuri be like Yunus? But he is in no way similar" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 141). Tanpınar's psychology during the writing process of the novel can be traced in the diary because the whole writing process of the novel was during the years Tanpınar kept a diary. We see him experiencing hardship in the early days of writing *Aydaki Kadın*: "I cannot feel the satisfaction and control that I had at the beginning of *Saatleri Ayarlama*" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 161).

Like many other novelists, Tanpınar establishes characters in his novels based on his life experiences and expectations. Out of his five novels, *Aydaki Kadın* was probably the most autobiographical since it includes several events that Tanpınar actually experienced. Therefore, even for writing Tanpınar's biography one might look at *Aydaki Kadın*; surely the diary entries shed light on the characters and events in the novel. The main character, Selim, always lives under the pressure of his past and struggles with loneliness and poverty. His dreams are affected by his mood so that they are always "complicated" (Tanpınar, 2009a: 12) and disturbing. Tanpınar was having recurrent nightmares due to poverty and sexual desire. He wrote on 4 March 1954: "Tuesday morning. Woke up from terrible dreams. I have some weird feelings; the problem of money makes it worse" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 113). He was even associating shortage of money with his freedom and says, "I am not free. Neither in myself nor in my surroundings. Neither in the matter of money nor time" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 137).

Selim's knowledge is quite similar to Tanpınar's. Selim reads Baudelaire, Hugo, Vigny, and Racine, and learns French. Selim knows about Haşım, Yahya Kemal, and Şeyh Galib (Tanpınar, 2009a: 71) and was under the influence of Joyce's *Ulysses* (Tanpınar, 2009a: 67) for a long while. The influence of such writers on Tanpınar is clear and is several times pointed out in the diary. About Joyce and *Ulysses*, for example, Tanpınar wrote on 23 October 1960 that "After reading Zola, now James Joyce; deconstruct the conventional interpretation of reality. After reading James Joyce, putting poetry into this solid reality and capturing time in a different and deeper way. Making it psychological time" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 228).

Selim is a doctor; however, his professional occupation is mentioned only once in the novel. His membership in parliament establishes his reputation and is more acclaimed than his profession as a doctor. He completes his military service in Kırklareli and is elected a congressman from the same polling district. Tanpınar was conscripted into military in Kırklareli and became a congressman from Maraş. Selim is produced out of Tanpınar's own experiences in the military and parliament. Selim is deeply affected by poverty after leaving parliament Tanpınar himself accepted the offer of membership in parliament due to poverty and faced similar hardship after leaving congress. As Selim states satisfaction in his membership in his political party, Tanpınar praises the CHP even though he was a fan of İsmet İnönü, not the party, as he many times mentions in his diary: "The People's Party and me: I have never got along well with the party. I am dedicated to the party due to İsmet İnönü and a few other friends" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 220). As Selim criticizes Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, his personality, and his politics (Tanpınar, 2009a: 171-73), Tanpınar too writes in his diary that "no matter what Adnan Bey does, he cannot achieve the reputation of İsmet Paşa, Atatürk, and the overthrown dynasty. The last ones [Menderes and his government] take their power from a past full of wrong doings and illiteracy" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 184). After the execution of Menderes in 1961, Tanpınar defines him in the diary as "the miserable fool" and writes how

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<sup>17</sup> Tanpınar uses a French word, *serieux* here.

“İsmet Paşa gave him a chance” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 323). Selim and Tanpınar have the identical political ideas. Selim mentions that he no longer likes politics and defines politics as “the calamity of modern times” (Tanpınar, 2009a: 182). After mentioning his character’s recklessness in politics, Tanpınar too defines it as a “cancer” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 159) and in another entry as “serving in the military” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 220).

Selim has a keen interest in art and literature; he has a novel project titled *İflas*. However, he cannot devote himself to writing his novel because he always hopes to concentrate on his job (Tanpınar, 2009a: 31). Tanpınar has a novel project with the same title mentioned twice in his diary. He too feels disorganized and says, “Which one will I write? I can no longer concentrate. Is it ‘İflas’? A failure that looks like success from the outside” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 234). Tanpınar uses *İflas* as a proper name with a capital letter and in quotation marks, referring to the novel project and as a common name referring to failure in his studies. He later writes why *İflas* was a failure: “The weakness of “İflas” comes from the fact that it is still composed of only anecdotes. I should look over it. The main themes should be distinguished and emphasized. All the themes should be based on human experience. I am not satisfied with some expressions, especially with the ordinary political quarrels” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 195). *İflas* is mentioned again on 29 May 1961 when Tanpınar gives a comprehensive outline of his *Aydaki Kadın*. Obviously *İflas* was going to be the third part of his *Aydaki Kadın* as the first part was titled as “İç İçe” [One within the Other] and the second “Karşı Karşıya” [Against the Opposition]. Selim has plans very similar to Tanpınar’s. For example, he plans to publish a periodical, as Tanpınar writes in his diary early on 17 July 1953 about his intentions of starting a magazine: “Now that I have worked off this complex of Europe, my only hope is to publish a magazine” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 70). Many years after this diary entry, Tanpınar was still writing about his plans for a magazine, even in the last days of his life: “As the days pass I feel a need to publish a magazine. A monthly magazine. An article a day on one subject. Even if it is published as a book, it will be composed of daily articles; a planned book of articles or studies” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 35).

#### **“I Got back to Mahur Beste Spiritually”: Inspirations in the Diary**

Tanpınar’s first novel, *Mahur Beste*<sup>18</sup> [Song in Mahur], started to be serialized in *Ülkü Magazine* in 1944 but remained incomplete; it was published in book format in 1975 more than a decade after Tanpınar’s death. The serialized version of the novel finishes with an incomplete sentence, so some critics thought that some parts of the novel were lost in the publishing house. However, Tanpınar writes a letter to the protagonist of the novel, Behçet Bey, also serialized as the last part of the novel in *Ülkü Magazine*, in Volume 99, (1 November 1945), 25-27. In the letter, titled *Mahur Beste Hakkında Behçet Beye Mektup* [A Letter to Behçet Bey on *Mahur Beste*], Tanpınar explains to the reader why he left the novel incomplete: “It started as your story, but you have carried such a huge crowd to the stage that it turned out to be not your story anymore. It has become the story of all of you, better to say that it has become the story of the eras that you and I have experienced. I would not let so many people gather around a person” (2010c: 152). He even writes about the worries of Behçet Bey, as if Behçet Bey said, “you no more work, so I am afraid you are going to leave me half furnished”; Tanpınar allays the anxieties of his protagonist and says, “No, you will not remain incomplete. However, there are thousands of people piled around me now, and all talk at the same time [...]” (2010c: 152-53). His letter and the novel finish as if he gave himself a break for a while and stopped serializing his novel by warning his protagonist: “Do not complete my word by yourself. I need to orchestrate the voices of all of them. You will be patient until this job is done. You will stay away from your friends for a while. You have no right to be less patient than me in this. Farewell! Always your friend, trust this” (2010c: 153).

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<sup>18</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2010c). *Mahur Beste*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları.

The 1945 letter<sup>19</sup> was the the most obvious sign for readers that Tanpınar was going to work on *Mahur Beste*. However, if it was not for the diary entry that Tanpınar wrote many years after the novel was serialized, no one would know anything about whether Tanpınar worked more on his novel. In the entry dated 22 April 1959, Tanpınar made a choice between *Aydaki Kadın* and *Mahur Beste*. He writes, “After the dinner: Either this hospital, or continue with Selim, or *Mahur Beste*. I think I will sail out to *Mahur Beste* for writing comfortably” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 162). On 8 December 1959, he wrote the sources of *Mahur Beste*. While Tanpınar was listening to a story that Selim Turan, a friend of his, was telling him, he found himself in a mood because of the fact that, he claims, he “has got back to *Mahur Beste* spiritually [...]. And at the very same minute *Mahur Beste* came to life. While [Selim Turan] was saying that, [he] was experiencing a different form of novel among those people that [he] hardly recognizes” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 177-78).

### Unpopular vs. Popular: *Beş Şehir* and *Eşik* in the Diary

Apart from the novels that Tanpınar writes about in his diary, we need to mention *Beş Şehir* and his famous poem *Eşik*<sup>20</sup> [Threshold] as texts several times noted in the diary. Although published very early in 1945, it took another fifteen years for *Beş Şehir* to be released. Tanpınar complains about that when he finds out his friends Mehmet Ali and Sabahittin Eyüpoğlu were rewarded for their efforts. He wrote on 1 November 1959, “Would not *Beş Şehir* get a prize” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 168). He several times gets mad at himself for not finishing the revision for the second print of *Beş Şehir*. Right before it was reprinted he writes, “I have brought<sup>21</sup> [sic] *Beş Şehir*. But, I do not like it anymore. I want no more to do with it” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 241). Even though Tanpınar defines *Beş Şehir* as dated, he later shows his satisfaction by saying “with my unpopular *Beş Şehir* [...] I am a big part of Turkish Literature” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 300).

Tanpınar’s famous poem *Eşik* is mentioned several times in his diary. Every time Tanpınar makes a list of his prospective texts, *Eşik* is placed at the top. The diary entries, especially the ones dated 19 and 21 April 1960, give important clues on the interpretation of his poem: “What I like in music is the revival of the musical instrument with the orchestral accompaniment [...]. I can do that in *Eşik* as Valery did that superbly. To what extent can I benefit from this in ‘Musical’ poetry and ‘Dance’ [...]? By listening to the first piano concerto, I have searched for an inspiration for the latest version of ‘*Eşik*’” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 183). Tanpınar was certainly expecting good reception for his poem as he writes, “I have not done anything about *Eşik*. It is like an iron leg. Yet this poem can save me, save the whole book. The book needs this kind of strong poem” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 183). Tanpınar was valuing his *Eşik* greatly because it was “the poem about a puzzle” (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 183).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> We find out from Turan Alptekin that there was a letter for *Sattleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, too. The letter was about Hayri İrdal, the protagonist of the novel, written by another character, Halit Ayarç, addressing to Doctor Ramiz. Upon finding this letter among Tanpınar’s papers, Turan Alptekin publishes it with a thought in his mind: “Hamdi Bey dictated this letter either to say more or for advertising purposes; however, he changed his mind and did not publish it. He did not ask me to tear it, so he approved that I kept it. Therefore I decided to publish it because it is a good explanation of the novel” (Alptekin, 2010: 31). Considering the diary entries in which Tanpınar writes about *Sattleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*, a new interpretation might be possible from the letter. The letter and the diary entries might give valuable clues on the characterization of Hayri İrdal and Halit Ayarç.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmet H. Tanpınar (2010b). “*Eşik*”, *Bütün Şiirleri*, ed. İnci Engünün, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, pp. 63-67.

<sup>21</sup> Tanpınar writes “*Beş Şehir*’i getirdim,” which should be translated as “I have brought *Beş Şehir*.” However, considering what comes right after this sentence, that is, “But, I do not like it anymore. I want no more to do with it,” I think Tanpınar wanted to say “*Beş Şehir*’i bitirdim,” which means “I have finished *Beş Şehir*.” The Turkish words, “getirdim” and “bitirdim” might get confused by Tanpınar. I should also note that there is no explanation about this sentence by the editors.

<sup>22</sup> By “puzzle,” Tanpınar means the poem’s context that questions the change of civilization and its impact on ambivalent identities.



## Conclusion

Since its publication in 2007, Tanpınar's diary has often been at the center of many discussions, which revolves around his personality and his remarks on people around him. However, the diary was a literary text, similar to Tanpınar's novels and short stories. One of the most important aspects of the diary was its use by Tanpınar as a guidebook for his novels. Readers of his diary can gain insight about his idea of aestheticism, clues about his inspirations, the process of characterization of his protagonists, and even how readers should interpret his novels.

Tanpınar does not mention all of his novels in his diary. The writing process of *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* and *Huzur* is a mystery for us since the diary entries do not give any clues or information about them. Tanpınar never mentions his *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* while he suffices to say only a few words about his *Huzur* in the diary. The reason was clearly that *Huzur* was already published when Tanpınar set his mind on taking personal notes. *Sahnenin Dışındakiler* was serialized in *Yeni İstanbul* in 1950, three years before Tanpınar's inception of diary keeping. Although there are clearly differences between the serialized version of the novel and its publication as a book in 1973, Tanpınar does not share his motives for the revision and editing that he most probably handled during the time of keeping his diary.<sup>23</sup>

We understand from the diary entries that Tanpınar felt both proud and discouraged about his *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü*. On the one hand, he complains about there is no harmony in the novel and that its organization is not satisfactory, but on the other hand, he writes in an entry that it has such a strong rhetoric that *Aydaki Kadın* does not have. The diary entries also help us find out about Tanpınar's inclinations in his *Aydaki Kadın* as the most frequently mentioned novel in the diary. The novel features Tanpınar's political views as Selim, the protagonist, considers politics as the "calamity of modern times" (Tanpınar, 2009a: 182). A diary entry specifically about *Aydaki Kadın* promotes Selim's view and reads: "the worst thing a society ever experiences is when a régime or group of people assume they are indispensable and fundamental. Cancer is a kind of contention of independence or denial. The cancer is to have private politics" (Enginün and Kerman, 2007: 159). We also see in the diary some clear plans about *Aydaki Kadın*; however, the novel does not finish exactly the way Tanpınar was outlining in his diary.

The diary is significant to understand Tanpınar's other incomplete novel, *Mahur Beste*. Although it was Tanpınar's first novel, *Mahur Beste* was abandoned by Tanpınar with a letter, serialized as the last part of the novel in 1945. If it was not for the diary entry that Tanpınar wrote many years after the novel was serialized, no one would know anything about whether Tanpınar worked more on his novel. We find out that Tanpınar still worked on the novel in 1959, many years after the interruption. In the same year, he gives clues about his inspirations of *Mahur Beste* and notes that his friend Selim Turan got him back to *Mahur Beste* "spiritually."

It is also important to consider the diary entries about *Beş Şehir* and his poem *Eşik*. The diary proves us how painful it was for Tanpınar to make *Beş Şehir* ready for publication as he several times gets mad at himself. A very interesting and perhaps unexpected note in the diary was that Tanpınar did not like *Beş Şehir* anymore because it was "dated." There is a very important diary entry about his poem *Eşik*. Tanpınar notes his intention of making his *Eşik* sound like a revival of the "musical instrument with the orchestral accompaniment" as "Valery did [...] superbly." The diary also shows his expectation of success about the *Eşik* and announces how it was going to be the strongest poem of his book of poetry. The notes in Tanpınar's diary hold great significance in terms of various interpretations of his novels. As Tanpınar's novels are revisited, criticisms written about Tanpınar's novels should be reviewed or revised.

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<sup>23</sup> For differences between the serialized and the published versions of *Sahnenin Dışındakiler*, see Şehnaz Aliş (2003). "Sahnenin Dışındakiler-Kitapla Tefrika Arasındaki Farklar", *Sahnenin Dışındakiler*, İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları.

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