Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

The Tragic as an Ironic (Im)possibility in Orhan Pamuk's *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*

Orhan Pamuk'un *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*'nda İronik Bir İmkân(sızlık) Olarak Trajik Olan

AHMED NURİ

University of Amsterdam.
(a.n.ahmed3@uva.nl), ORCID: 0000-0001-8684-1078.

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Abstract: This article examines how the tragic is configured and later ironically subverted in Orhan Pamuk's first novel *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*. By focusing particularly on how one of the main protagonists Refik's story is narrated, this article analyzes the relationship between his existential crisis, his quest for meaning, his failure, and the configuration of the tragic in the novel. The analysis of the novel concentrates on the existential and ideological aspects of Refik's crisis and how this crisis is ironically connected to Turkish modernity. This article first analyzes why and how Refik's existential angst and his sense of failure are represented as inevitable, both of which are linked to Turkey's secular nationalist modernization. Second, it scrutinizes how irony is mockingly used in this representation and how this use negates the tragic in Refik's story, which is closely related to the socio-historical context of Westernizing Turkey in the 1930s.
Keywords: The tragic, Orhan Pamuk, Turkish literature, Turkish modernity, irony.

Özet: Bu makale, Orhan Pamuk'un ilk romanı *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*'nda trajik olanın nasıl kurgulandığını ve sonrasında bunun ironik bir biçimde nasıl tersyüz edildiğini incelemektedir. Bu minvalde, bu makale romanın ana karakterlerden Refik'in hikâyesine odaklanarak, Refik'in varoluşsal krizi, anlam arayışı ve başarısızlık hissiyatıyla trajik olanın kurgulanması arasındaki ilişkiyi analiz etmektedir. Romanın analizi, Refik'in krizinin varoluşsal ve ideolojik yönlerine ve bu krizin Türk modernitesiyle ironik olarak nasıl ilişkilendirildiğine yoğunlaşmaktadır. Makalede, öncelikle, Türkiye'nin laik milliyetçi modernleşmesiyle ilişkilendirilen Refik'in varoluşsal krizinin ve başarısızlık duygusunun nasıl ve neden kaçınılmaz olarak temsil edildiği incelenmektedir. İkinci olarak, 1930'ların Batılılaşan Türkiye'sinin sosyo-tarihsel bağlamıyla ele alınan Refik'in hikayesinde, ironin nasıl alaycı bir düzlemde kullanıldığı ve bu kullanımın trajik olanı nasıl hükümsüz kıldığı irdelenmektedir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Trajik olan, Orhan Pamuk, Türk edebiyatı, Türk modernitesi, ironi.

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Orhan Pamuk's debut novel, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* (*Cevdet Bey and His Sons*, 1982), is seemingly a nineteenth-century realist novel that resembles the conventional *Bildungsroman* due to its theme, content, and form, to a large extent. This novel narrates the story of three generations of a bourgeois Turkish family from 1905 to 1970, and includes several key features of the *Bildungsroman*, such as the search for the characters' self-actualizations, the theme of personal (de)growth, and conflictual relations with society.[1] However, it is hard to classify the novel under this genre as the idea of the characters' "education" and the epistemology of this idea itself are repetitively undermined in the novel, especially when considering the socio-historical context of Turkey's modernization, insomuch as narrated in the novel.[2]

While *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* recounts the experiences of the members of an upper-class family in Turkey, it renders a socio-cultural and even ideological panorama of Turkey's modernization through a wide range of characters, capturing the first seven decades of the twentieth century. In this sense, the novel contains the representations of different socio-cultural agents and mentalities that played varying roles in the making of modern Turkey, which is depicted from the perspective of the late 1970s. The plot construction of the novel corresponds to Peter Brooks' argument that a "narrative fiction of the realist type uses and represents itself in metonymy, the selected parts that we must construct sequentially into a whole."[3] Within the panoramic representation of

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1 For such key features of the *Bildungsroman*, see Joseph R. Slaughter, "Bildungsroman/Küntsler-roman," in *The Encyclopedia of the Novel*, ed. Peter Melville Morgan (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 94-95.

2 *Bildungsroman* as either a subgenre derived from the tradition of the European novel or a loose narrative template should not be taken for granted in the case of the Turkish novel, despite some common traits and narrative patterns. For a notable analysis of the novel based on intention and the continuity of Pamuk's noveldom, see Erol Köroğlu, "Başlangıç: *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*'nda Niyet ve Yöntem," in *Orhan Pamuk'un Edebi Dünyası*, ed. Nüket Esen and Engin Kılıç (Istanbul: YKY, 2008), 79-124. For the influence of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* on this novel, see Orhan Pamuk, "SONSÖZ, Ülke, Aile Roman," in *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 6th ed. (Istanbul: YKY, 2018), 580 and F. Işıl Britten, "The Anxiety of Writing the First Novel: Houses as Symbols in *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* and *Buddenbrooks: Verfall Einer Familie*," *Trakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 8, no. 15 (2018): 90-102.

3 Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 16.

Turkish society and some of its actors, the novel covers existentialist questions and variations of the quest for meaning in life. The novel narrates the struggles of several protagonists and their failed attempts to self-actualize themselves in the modes that accentuate the tensions between the characters' worldviews, socio-economic or cultural realities of Turkey at a given period, and the external narrator,[4] who tells the story in the third person.

The different aspects of these tensions and the characters' existential crises are diversely narrated within three distinct plot structures, that is, three main parts of the novel, entitled Foreword, Part Two, and Afterword. Each chapter covers the story of a new generation of an upper-class family in Istanbul and, in as Jale Parla highlights, a crucial period of Turkey's history.[5] Foreword narrates a day of Cevdet Bey in July 1905, giving every fine detail about this one day involving a dense amount of information and numerous events. It recounts the successful story of Cevdet's quest for meaning and survival in the changing values of the late Ottoman period, portraying his experience of modernity as individuation and pragmatic Westernization. Chapter Two depicts unevenly combined stories of three close friends, Refik, Ömer, and Muhittin, from 1936 to 1939. Afterword narrates a day of young Ahmet, Refik's son (and Cevdet's grandson) and his aesthetic-oriented vision of life in Istanbul in 1970, which resembles the first part in regards to its narrative structure and length.[6]

Among these chapters, Chapter Two forms the backbone of the novel in terms of the narrative logic, plot construction, length, naming of the chapters, scope of events, and number of characters. Despite the parallel stories of the three protagonists, this long middle chapter foregrounds Refik's story, telling his pursuit of meaning in life and his existential struggle through his idealism. Refik's idealism is indeed directly associated with Turkey's socio-cultural con-

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4 Through the article, I use the terminology of narratology offered by Mieke Bal. "External narrator" refers to the (unnamed) narrator who is outside of the events and plot of the novel. See Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2009), 21-23.

5 Jale Parla, "Orhan Pamuk'ta Yazıyla Kefaret," in *Orhan Pamuk'ta Yazıyla Kefaret* (Istanbul: YKY, 2018), 11.

6 Foreword consists of twelve subsections on seventy-three pages whereas Afterword is composed of ten subsections on seventy-five pages. The length of Chapter Two is four-hundred twenty pages.

ditions in the 1930s and the prevalent mindset (i.e., the Republican ideology) at a time that relies on the idea of progress and Westernization, especially when considering the secular, nationalist modernization of the country. Accordingly, Refik is depicted as an upper-class, well-educated, urban, young, and confused man in the 1930s who struggles to find harmony between his inner self and the external world under the circumstances of the time.

This article explores how the tragic[7] is configured in Refik's story, focusing mainly on his existential crisis, and his way of dealing with it, which is intertwined with Turkey's modernization project, and his failure, which is depicted as inherently inevitable. The tragic in Refik's story primarily lies in his existential crisis, presented as an inevitable condition in the plot. As the story proceeds, the narrative discourse of the novel highlights how he is also doomed to repeated failure because his idealism that relies on a social-engineering approach that does not correspond with the reality, that is, the socio-economic and cultural conditions of 1930s Turkey.

By considering Refik's existential struggle, the reasoning for his crisis and its inevitability, and his failure, which is mocked by the narrator, I first examine to what extent and how the tragic idea is configured in the novel and then scrutinize the relationship between Refik's way of coping with his crisis and the tragic as it is constructed in the novel. With this aim, I analyze why and how Refik's quest for meaning in his life is directly associated with Turkey's modernization in the novel and later how the tragic in his story is negated by the ironic and subversive approach of the external narrator who determines how Refik's story is narrated.

The Tragic as a Concept and its Use

Despite all the various (and varying) meanings, theoretical definitions, and philosophical dimensions, the importance of the tragic is that it simply raises a question about what it is to be a human in this world, particularly in times of crisis, conflict, and ambiguity. In the case of the novel analyzed here, this question is more specific and asks what it is to be a modern, urban, slightly intellectual Turkish individual in 1930s Istanbul, when considering the new, nationalist ethos of the period in which Turkey was being "Westernized" through a wide range of reforms. The

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7 I use "the tragic," "tragic idea," and "the idea of the tragic" interchangeably in this article to avoid repetition.

idea of the tragic then pertains to the matter of existence[8] and reflects how people respond to this matter in their own particular circumstances. By discussing the tragic in Pamuk's novel, I pay particular attention to the relation of Refik's existential struggle and his idealism to the context of Turkey's modernization in the 1930s.

Accordingly, I discuss the narrative logic of Refik's story and how this logic bears on the articulation of the tragic in the novel in detail. Later, I examine several binary oppositions (e.g., light-darkness, East-West, rational-idiot) and metaphors (e.g., railway, light) that associate Refik's existential struggle, his attempts to deal with it, and his failure with some aspects of Turkish modernity. Each binary opposition or metaphor involves a double meaning that playfully conveys an ideological or orientalist discourse in Refik's story and "the emplotment"[9] of the novel in general. The double function of the oppositions and metaphors regulated by the external narrator simultaneously undermine Refik's Occidentalist mindset and the top-down ideology of the reformist elites who made modern Turkey, implementing radical reforms from the 1920s onwards. Thus, I examine how Refik's idealism, which resembles the same mindset of the country's ruling elites, and his eventual failure are ironically negated towards the end of the novel, including the mocking irony.

Before commencing with an analysis of the novel, I want to define the tragic as a concept and explain how I use it in my analysis. As is known, the genealogy of the tragic lies in the ancient Greek tragedies that narrate the fall of men or women due to an unavoidable conflict of values. However, the notion of the tragic has undergone significant changes in terms of its meaning, function, and philosophical aspects since the Greek tragedies. Numerous and diverse theories and definitions of the tragic emerged after Aristoteles' famous *Poetics*. Accordingly, the use and representation of the tragic in fiction are quite complex and diverse, especially in modern literature. Furthermore, the idea of the tragic derived from Greek tragedy has been a prominent subject of Western philosophy, particularly in the German philosophical tradition since the eighteenth century.[10] It is, then, important to make a distinction, for as Murray

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8 Richard B. Sewall, *The Vision of Tragedy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980), 4.

9 Regarding the notion of emplotment in this sense, see Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 3:100, 152, 185.

10 For further details about tragedy and the tragic, see Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Kenneth A. Telford (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1970); Clifford Leech, *Tragedy* (London: Methuen, 1969), 22-23;

Krieger put, "'tragedy' refers to an object's literary form, 'the tragic vision' to a subject's psychology, his view, and version of reality."[11]

Despite the diversity of such definitions and theories, I do not aim to impose a certain theory of the tragic in my analysis of the novel. I use the tragic particularly to refer to an inevitable and necessarily elusive condition that leads to an inner crisis, utter confusion, and conflict of values in different conditions. The state of crisis and the conflict of values may also turn into either a short or long process in which the protagonist strives for a resolution, involving, alienation, confusion, suffering, self-confrontation, moment(s) of recognition, and even failure, which itself ranges from suicide and death to moral decline, economic collapse, or the loss of prestige and status. The two key points in the configuration of the tragic are indeed the *inevitability* of the protagonist's existential struggle and the complex interplay between individual agency, fate, chance, contingency, and external dynamics, all of which form this inevitability. By taking these points into account, I apply the tragic as a framework to grasp the reasoning in Refik's existential crisis, vacillation, failure, and the complexity of different factors in this process, which is predicated on the context of 1930s Turkey.

Another significant aspect of the tragic is that it enables us to (re-)think individual agency and its limits as the tension between the agency of the individual and external factor(s) beyond his control generates a conflict, forming the sources of the tragic. In contemporary literature, this conflict predominantly relies on the "secular perspective"[12] rather than on the idea of God, fate, and anything transcendentally elusive or sublime. The external factors from such a secular perspective vary, and they can be a morally ambiguous, a contingency, an ideological structure, or "something humanly engineered and happening in a world in which something could and should be done, for instance, about sexual inequality, racism, and so on."[13] Whether

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Andrew Bennett and Nicolas Royle, "The Tragic," in *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism, and Theory*, 5th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 124-25; Richard H. Palmer, *Tragedy and The Tragic: An Analytical Guide* (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1992), 5; and William Storm, *After Dionysus: A Theory of the Tragic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 33.

11 Murray Krieger, *The Tragic Vision: The Confrontation of Extremity* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973), 2-3.

12 Bennett and Royle, "Tragic," 125.

13 Bennett and Royle, "Tragic," 125. See also Michel Maffesoli, "The Return of the Tragic in Postmodern Society," trans. Rita Felski et al., *New Literary History* 35, no. 1 (Winter 2004): 133-49.

secular or divine, the tragic in fiction "suggests that not everything is knowable by humans, nor can everything be controlled by humans."[14] Accordingly, the tragic and its features do not necessarily lie in the Aristotelian understanding of tragedy in modern literature, though its importance and elements do not need to be refused or dismissed. The principle to define the tragic, then, is, as Krieger highlights, "by moving from formalistic aesthetics to what [he] would term 'thematics'."[15] I will analyze Refik's crisis and its existential, ethical and socio-cultural implications in *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* in this respect.

From Boredom to the Quest for Meaning as a Crisis

Each part of the novel primarily recounts the story of a young protagonist seeking a purpose and meaning in life in different periods in Turkey. This theme variously poses the question of "What is to be done in life?" to which each protagonist responds according to specific conditions, and therefore, differently. The restlessness of the protagonists covers the content of their stories and the plot of the novel. Refik's quest for inner harmony also dominates his story.[16] In different chapters of the novel, the word *tasarı*, which denotes "plan" or "project" in English, is repeatedly mentioned not only in a semantic sense but also as a manifestation of each character's worldview, referring to a vision of life and ideals, including moral motivation. In other words, the gap between Refik's pursuit of meaning in life and his struggle to reach his ideal version designates the content of his story and its narrative logic. In Part Two, the trajectory of the narrative therefore shifts from Cevdet's story of success as a self-made man in the previous part to the story of Refik's crisis and failed idealism.

Part Two recounts the stories of Refik, Ömer, and Muhittin in late 1930s Turkey. These three young men are close friends, engineers who had graduated from the same university. Each character typically presents a young hero who has an ideal and strong desire in life. This part depicts each character's experience of Turkish modernity and how their experiences are shaped by the combination

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14 Nancy Rabinowitz, *Greek Tragedy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 6-7.

15 Krieger, *Tragic Vision*, 2.

16 The quest for self is a common theme in Pamuk's other novels. See Parla, "Yazıyla Kefaret," 31. See also Jale Parla, *Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başkalaşım*, 3rd ed. (Istanbul: İletişim, 2015), 130.

of the socio-cultural development and the radical Westernizing reforms in Turkey at that time, as well as alienation and disillusionment. These three friends meet up in March 1936. Ömer is just back from London after his education and intends to be a "conqueror," as he explains. Muhittin wants to be a great poet before he becomes thirty years old. Otherwise, he claims that he will commit suicide. Refik is married to Perihan and owns a share of his Cevdet's business and works at his company.[17]

In Chapter Six of Part Two, entitled "What is to be done?" Cevdet Bey (Refik's father) advises these three young men, underlining the importance of family and work as the two most significant things in life.[18] Compared to Ömer and Muhittin, Refik is portrayed as the least ambitious character. Devoid of a certain purpose in his life, he seems pleased by his untroubled, luxurious upper-class life at the outset of the story. Refik only contents himself with daily activities, his marriage, and work: that is, boredom, mundaneness, and meaninglessness of his life, as the narrator implies. While Refik's friends are ambitious and self-confident in regards to their goals and ideals, Refik is depicted as an ordinary, friendly, and cheerful young man. However, a pivotal moment in Refik's story comes when his father Cevdet dies unexpectedly.[19]

The loss of his father sparks the beginning of Refik's sense of unease and existential angst. No literal or figurative authority remains that Refik must obey henceforth. In his famous study *Reading for the Plot*, Peter Brooks argues the "situation that the novel often ensures by making the son an orphan, or by killing off or otherwise occulting the biological father before the text brings to maturity its dominant alternatives."[20] These three fatherless young protagonists are also in a similar situation, without guidance or experience at the threshold of their personal, spiritual, intellectual, and moral formation. A short while after his father dies, Refik's inner crisis surfaces with "a strong sense of

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17 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 121-23.

18 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 128.

19 Ömer and Muhittin's fathers also die when they were younger. The protagonist's loss of a biological father is indeed a striking leitmotif since the emergence of the Turkish novel. For the discussion on fatherlessness in the early Turkish novel, see Robert Finn, *The Early Turkish Novels: 1872-1900* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1984), 86.

20 Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 63.

purpose" and a "chronic alienation," and he even "struggl[es] to find one" in his everyday bourgeois life, indicating what Stephen Kern defines as the major symptomatic aspects of the modernist novel.[21] In other words, Refik struggles to find a purpose in his Western-oriented bourgeois lifestyle and therefore begins a search for meaning, raising the question of the urban individual's conception of modern life and his life in 1930s Istanbul.

The story of Refik is told in the third person, as most of the narrative except for three chapters. The unknown, external narrator sometimes—but explicitly—reflects Refik's thoughts and feelings by presenting his unease and its psychological manifestations in the plot. For instance, the scene that depicts Refik walking under the rain shows both Refik's displeasure with his life and his suppressed anger about it: "While he is running, he is also getting angry. *He confines himself to daily life*. *Everything was due to that*. He does not want something unexpected, an unforeseeable nuisance to overturn the order of his life, and he is avoiding the rain."[22] The narrator here describes Refik's actions and views from a certain distance. However, the two italicized sentences are Refik's inner voice, explaining the reason for his unease to himself in a reproachful tone. The narrator here focalizes Refik's consciousness and thus binds the narratorial voice to his mind, conveying his thoughts as his stream of consciousness. In this way, Refik's angst appears for the first time, and he begins to recognize his existential crisis, although, remains unnamed.

The mundaneness and boredom of Refik's life and his increasing awareness of this fact gradually become evident. In one scene, Refik's wife Perihan complains that he seems to have lost the balance of his previously steady mood. Unexpectedly, Refik yells at her: "I want other things to happen in my life!"[23] With this aggressive reaction, the external narrator focalizes Refik's mind once again and shows his way of thinking about his angst at the moment of this yet unnamed but increasing crisis:

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21 Stephen Kern, *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 31-32.

22 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 139. All the translations of quotations in the novel from Turkish into English are mine. The italics are also mine unless otherwise stated.

23 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 205.

> Refik began to think: "I just ran away from the office. The weather is too hot. I understand that I need to do something, but I can't find what it is. The following can be done: first, a program and reading regularly for a long time; second, attempting to write something; third, selling my share in the company to Osman [his older brother] and starting to work as an engineer by leaving this home; and fourth, going on a trip to Europe. But I cannot do the last one, because I have a newborn child. The fifth is then to go on a trip alone. I need to find an excuse for that.[24]

Refik's quest for a purpose in his life is explicit here, but the purpose itself remains absent. The tagged speech presents Refik's inner confrontation and the apparent recognition of his inner crisis, which derives from the monotony and boredom of life and his angst, the cause of which is as yet unidentified. The mundaneness of his daily life is exemplified in a similar scene in which Perihan and Refik ask each other what they have done during that day. This scene illustrates Refik's alienation from his bourgeois life and its values and saliently highlights his boredom and displeasure. A need for a purpose in life turns into a growing existential crisis.

The Deficient Reasoning for the Existential Crisis

However, Refik's inner crisis does not lead to a tragic predicament immediately, for his unease is not connected to a specific conflict between different positive or negative values yet. Refik has not yet reached an unavoidable point of choosing between two or more important things in his life that the fiction would offer soon. By paying attention to the existentialist perspective of the tragic, for Richard H. Palmer "the ambiguity of the tragic response" bears on "the inherently ambiguous human position in an uncertain universe."[25] Although Refik's angst can be considered ontological in this sense, the tragic in his story begins with the moment he recognizes in the subsequent pages that there is no balance between the social world and himself. This troublesome awareness generates the source of his existential struggle. However, there is no tenable necessity in the novel which shows Refik feeling detached from the external world, especially considering his upper-class status.

It is then possible to argue that Refik's existential angst derives from the human condition and the complexity of existence —the state of being in the

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24 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 206.

25 Palmer, *Tragedy*, 68.

world, in a sense. Refik's struggle for inner harmony may imply both the tragic sense of life intrinsically and the difference between the two generations in the Turkey of that era. While the former raises the question of what it is to be an urban, Republican, Western-oriented (privileged) citizen and a restless young man in the 1930s, the latter indicates the changing worldviews and approaches to new life in a Westernizing Turkey.

Refik and his father Cevdet possess two completely different visions of life, conveying distinct "projects"—ideals and desires regarding the Western-oriented lifestyle that have been emerging since the late Ottoman period due to the intricate process of Westernization, secularization, and nationalization. Unlike his father, Refik lacks a specific purpose in his life through which he can find meaning and thus a path to happiness or self-fulfillment. The spark for Refik's inner crisis lies in his boredom and a need to find a "project" that transcends his current state, as the novel narrates it. He already owns a trading company (together with his brother) and has a happy family with a newborn child. However, he does not content himself with the mundaneness of daily life and individual happiness in the luxury conditions of an upper-class lifestyle. His dissatisfaction with his life culminates in him ignoring his family and his high social status, unlike the logic of his father's successful self-actualization, which is affirmatively depicted in the first part of the novel. A successful business and a European-style family are indeed two primary aspects of Cevdet's life and his vision of being modern, with individuation and Westernization corresponding to the subjects of occupation and family.

From this aspect, Refik's quest for meaning and self-fulfillment as a story of an upper-class, married young man departs from the final point of Cevdet's primary ideal. In other words, Refik values his family, social status, and other manifestations of his upper-class urban lifestyle less than his father did. Refik's unease reveals his inability to fit into bourgeois family values. The narrative logic of the conventional *Bildungsroman* is then reversed, and Refik's story lies in a "distorted plot of [his] alienation"[26] as a confused young man who pursues meaning in life by leaving home. Thus, the novel underscores a strong link between Refik's existential crisis and the impossibility of the idea of self-fulfillment in the Turkish context.

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26 Slaughter, "Bildungsroman/Künstlerroman," 94.

Indeed, Refik rejects his father's way of being a modern man in the socio-cultural conditions of 1930s Turkey, the heyday of the Kemalist modernization project. "The modern, goal-oriented project of individual *Bildung* and social development" in many novels, as Rita Felski points out, "is giving way to a renewed tragic consciousness, embodied in an ethics and aesthetics of the moment, a fascination with extremity and excess, and a surrendering of the self to impersonal forces."[27] Although Felski's view can be considered a generalization, Refik's existential struggle involves a similar tragic vision and a conflict between himself and the external world because high social status, a well-respected occupation, and a bourgeois family do not suffice to give him happiness and self-fulfillment. The discourse of the novel thus dismisses the idea of *Bildung* to be associated with Turkish modernity.[28] That is to say, from then on, Refik is doomed to failure. This inevitability forms the tragic in his story. The significant question here is why the novel then presents Refik as doomed to fail and how the reasoning for this inevitability is connected to his views about Turkey's modernization.

Toying with Binary Oppositions

Indeed, Refik's existential angst, rooted in boredom with life and a need for a purpose, is not the explicit reason for the tragic in his story, but they are presented as its necessary conditions. In his discussion with Perihan, Refik suddenly decides to leave home and go to Kemah, a remote town in Eastern Turkey, where his friend, Ömer, works as an engineer. A happily married, Western-oriented, upper-class, urban, and confused man leaves home on a soul-searching journey to cope with his existential struggle. Refik's arrival and prolonged stay in Kemah configure the tragic as he discovers the reason for his sense of alienation and even its inevitability with the help of Herr Rudolf, who works there. The tragic becomes apparent in this phase of Refik's story through metaphors and binary oppositions employed in the novel. These devices reveal why Refik's crisis emerged and how it is linked intimately with Turkey's modernization in the 1930s.

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27 Rita Felski, "Introduction," *New Literary History* 35, no. 1 (2004): xv.

28 Indeed, there is no point to hunt for the idea of *Bildung* as in the European narrative tradition in the novel; however, Refik's story is directly related to "the failing of the Bildung ideal." See Gregory Castle, "Destinies of Bildung: Belatedness and the Modernist Novel," in *A History of the Modernist Novel*, ed. Gregory Castle (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 495.

These binary oppositions (e.g., light-darkness, East-West, and rational-idiot) and metaphors (e.g., railway, light) play significant roles in how Refik's existential struggle is represented in relation to Turkey's modernization of the 1930s from the perspective of the late 1970s. In other words, the novel offers its own perception and interpretation of Turkish modernity at that time. All the metaphors and antagonisms gain double meanings in playful ways. For instance, the first metaphor, "*hayatın raydan çıkması*" is used in the novel many times, denoting in English that "one's life derails." This phrase, first and foremost, refers to Refik's loss of inner harmony and that of control over his life. It also implies the sudden act of leaving home due to his unease and displeasure and thus underlines the overturning of his given roles and manners: fatherhood, membership in an upper-class family, and arguably a strong sense of masculinity.

This metaphor produces its self-referentiality. However, as Mieke Bal argues, as soon as there is a metaphor in a text, there is always a particular view covertly represented about the subject.[29] The railway metaphor validates this argument as it involves several embedded discourses in the novel by conveying oblique references to Turkey's modernization and history. While Refik's disharmony is expressed through derailment, the word "railway" is used to recall the Republican discourse of progress and national unity in the making of modern Turkey. Refik's life "derails" figuratively because he loses his inner harmony and steady mood. He goes to the provincial town of Kemah by rail to stay with Ömer, who is working on a tunnel for a new railway project. Toying with the word "railway" may seem to be banal in a sense, but this word is loaded with the legacy of both Republican modernity and the Turkish novel.[30]

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29 Mieke Bal, "The Point of Narratology," *Poetics Today* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 739.

30 The railway is a nineteenth-century phenomenon that refers to development related to modernization, communication, the changing conception of time and space, and the unity of the nation. The railway is also a common leitmotiv in nineteenth-century literature. "Knotting the country with the iron webs" is popular rhetoric of the 1930s that emphasizes rapid modernization, socio-economic development, and the unity of the nation; it is a part of the tenth year of the Turkish Republic anthem. For the psychoanalytical reading of the railway combined with the colonialist discourse in Orhan Pamuk's three novels, see Beril Işık, *Aydınlıktan Karanlığa İktidar: Orhan Pamuk Romanlarında Demiryolu* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012). Nazım Hikmet Ran's epic poem-novel *Memleketimden İnsan Manzaraları* (*Human Landscapes from My Country*) (1938) also uses the railway as "a metaphor of this modernity" where imperialism, war, and the interior worlds

The word railway also depicts another antagonism, that of the light-darkness, which forges the source of Refik's existential crisis and even the inevitability of impending failure. It is worth remembering here that the first title of the novel was *Aydınlık ve Karanlık* (Light and Darkness).[31] This metaphor, like others, is not only a rhetorical device but also a "conceptual"[32] instrument that carries a certain worldview manifested in and through language, even forming the texture of the novel as a whole. The word "light" is repetitively used as a leitmotif and symbol, and the multiple uses generate the light-darkness antagonism from the outset of the novel. Unlike Ömer and Muhittin's ambitious ideals, Refik's crisis arises out of the inevitability that has no conceivable explanation at the beginning of the story. At this juncture, Herr Rudolph plays a crucial role, using these metaphors and antagonisms to give the reason for Refik's existential struggle and its insoluble paradox through his orientalist discourse.

The Idea of Inevitability as an Orientalist Justification

Rudolph, a German engineer, has been in Turkey for more than a decade and has worked on different railway projects. He knows the dynamics of Westernizing Turkey well and can also speak Turkish. When Refik meets him in Kemah, they become good friends. Rudolph seems to be a kind of mentor for Refik, conveying a "paternity"[33] authority due to his wisdom and intellect, and with slightly authoritative attitude. In their conversations, Rudolph clearly states his dislike of "the East," as he cannot accustom himself to Turkey and its mentality. He explains his displeasure with the primary conditions of Turkey by quoting a poem from the German poet Hölderlin, which describes the eye-brightening light of the East under which people live as slaves.[34] Rudolph's speeches vividly

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of ordinary people" interpenetrate. See Duygu Köksal, "Domesticating the Avant-garde in a Nationalist Era: Aesthetic Modernism in 1930s Turkey," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 50 (2015): 50.

31 Pamuk changed this name to the recent one at the late stage of its publication. For the analysis of the color imagery in the novel based on the light-darkness duality, see Parla, "Orhan Pamuk'ta Yazıyla Kefaret," 69-87.

32 Georg Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 160.

33 Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 62-67. Paternity is "a dominant issue" and "a principal" in nineteenth- and twentieth-century novels, reflecting "authority, legitimacy, the conflict of generations, and transmissions of wisdom." See Brooks, *Reading for the Plot*, 63.

34 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 264.

convey the idea of the East-West divide in the narrative and even regenerate this divide from a Euro-centric perspective as he repeatedly defines East as "the place of darkness and slavery" and where the "human being is not free, [and] their souls are captive."[35] In his Orientalist perspective, darkness refers to the East as spatial imagery and an epistemological concept, but there is no certain meaning or physical border of the East in his conception.

The East in Rudolph's discourses then signifies a non-Western epistemology and its manifestations, such as faith, allegiance, communality, and lack of criticism, rather than a geopolitical or conceptual aspect. Rudolph's words, then, give an arbitrary, ambiguous, and limitless definition of the East. In this definition, Rudolph claims that Refik's mindset cannot adapt to the current socio-cultural conditions of Turkey and the dominant mentality of this backward country. Thus, the strong discrepancy between Refik's vision of life and his community in Turkey accounts for his existential angst:

> You have the devil inside you once as *the light of reason* reflects upon your soul and thus you are a stranger. You will remain a stranger, whatever you do. There is an incompatibility between your soul and the world in which you live. I know it; I see it explicitly. You will either change the world or stay outside it.[36]

According to Rudolph, there is a direct connection between Refik's unease and his conception of the external world. What is striking here is the presentation of "the light of reason" as evil, which leads to Refik's existential struggle and his continuing quest for a purpose to overcome his crisis. More importantly, the symbolic meaning of the devil justifies why Refik's existential struggle is inevitable, involving the process of his confusion and suffering, thereby configuring the tragic in the novel. *Reason* here implies the combination of Western rationalism and the progressivist mindset, and it becomes evil, an awareness that Refik finds seductive. This seduction then causes his unease, intellectual confusion, and growing alienation as the plot progresses. In other words, the evil that Rudolph refers to derives from the ideas of rationalism and progress.

Accordingly, the novel designates the relationship between Refik's existential crisis, its inevitability, and his agency. In the configuration of the tragic idea,

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35 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 311.

36 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 264.

Rowan Williams argues, "[t]he modern subject does not identify with an external imperative," "but with an individual and internal set of requirements."[37] Indeed, the imperative in Refik's crisis lies in how he perceives and experiences the social world, that is, the rationalist, progressivist vision of 1930s Republican ideology. Rudolph's words, however, not only justify the inescapability of Refik's crisis and its teleology in the setting of Turkey but also convey an explicit Orientalist discourse by using the light-darkness dichotomy as the essence of the tragic as configured in the novel. Rudolph's words constitute "an unavoidable collision of ethical forces or a conflict between freedom and necessity"[38] with which Refik has to deal. This dichotomy corresponds to the East-West divide and generates other binary oppositions employed in the novel: rational-idiot, modern-backward, Enlightened Europe-the dark East, and developed-underdeveloped.

Refik's response to Rudolph's views about the Orientalist construction of the East is, indeed, affirmative due to either his silence or unprotesting manners. Refik even writes in his diary that he learns more about rationalism, which reflects his naivety, confusion, and struggle through his voice in the first person.[39] These diary notes reveal the shifts in his mood to the reader by serving as self-confessions, indicating his self-awareness of his fallacies. For instance, Refik asks himself why he cannot encounter "the soul of light" in his mindset or in Turkish writers, but rather only in Voltaire, Stendhal, and Rousseau instead.[40] His explicit references to the Enlightenment and European literature also display his affirmation of Rudolph's orientalist discourse. Refik's question here pertains to the narrative structure of the novel and aims at "unmask[ing] the reformist ideal of the enlightened to be a myth. The unmasking has necessitated ontological as well as political interrogations of the symbol of light," as observed by Jale Parla in other Turkish novels, too.[41]

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37 Rowan Williams, *The Tragic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 63.

38 Blair Hoxby, *What was Tragedy: Theory and the Early Modern Canon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.

39 Three chapters consist of Refik's diary notes written in three different periods between September 1937 and December 1939. It is only Refik that has a direct voice, which also highlights his significance in the novel.

40 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 26.

41 Jale Parla, "Dark Knowledge Befits the Color: Turkish Novelists Interrogate the Ideology of Light," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 41 (2009): 40.

The Inescapability of Failure

Having been influenced by Rudolph, Refik finds purpose during his stay in Kemah: to write a report on the development of rural areas in Turkey. Refik aims to emancipate the villages from "backwardness" and modernize them through this report, which itself is based on other books and ready-made opinions. Refik's first visible initiative, then, reflects his interest in socio-economic issues, on the one hand, and his naive dedication to Turkey's socio-economic modernization, on the other hand. Searching for ways to modernize the country is represented as the antidote to Refik's existential crisis in the novel. In this sense, Refik embodies a typical Western-oriented, republican, urban, and intellectual figure who intends to make society more "developed" with a socially engineered, top-down mindset and a strong romantic ideal.

At this point, Refik's primary representation in the novel shifts from being a member of the upper class and a father of a family to a dedicated intellectual who wants to contribute to the socio-economic progress of his country.[42] Refik's existential quest for meaning and self-fulfillment is bound to Turkey's modernization explicitly. In other words, his self-actualization, or at least his way of coping with his existential crisis, entails a society-oriented ideal that substantially involves the motive of intellectual responsibility. The narrative discourse in the novel constructs this project as the essence of the tragic through Rudolph's orientalist view. As a textual strategy, this way of representation precedes the flaw inherent in Refik's actions while designating the inevitability of his failure due to his free but simply bad, unrealistic choices. Gabriela Basterra asserts that "tragic destiny or objective necessity derives its appearance of inevitability from the tension between essentiality and artificiality that structures it."[43] Justifying the inevitability of Refik's unease enables the narrator to emphasize the inesca-

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42 For the shift from the representation of the intellectual to that of the urban individual, see Burcu Alkan, *Promethean Encounters: Representation of the Intellectual in the Modern Turkish Novel of the 1970s* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018), 4-7. Refik's stay in Kemah resembles the canonical novel Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's *Yaban* (*Stranger*) (1932) as its protagonist also leaves Istanbul and goes to a rustic village in Anatolia. His other novel *Ankara* (1934), which depicts people who believe in Kemalist modernity in the 1920s and 1930s, is mentioned a couple of times concerning Refik's idealism in *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*.

43 Gabriela Basterra, *Seductions of Fate: Tragic Subjectivity, Ethics, Politics* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 2.

pability of the ethos of the early Republican years and, more importantly, to mock the content of this inevitability and Refik's actions.

Why Refik fails to be a tragic character is then related to the paradox of a double task. As Todd Kontje points out, the protagonist in many novels "engages in the double task of self-integration and integration into society. Under ideal conditions, the first implies the second: the mature hero becomes a useful and satisfied citizen" in this narrative logic.[44] However, Refik's story involves neither "self-integration" nor "integration into society" in the novel. Although Refik is detached from rural society and has no knowledge of it, he wants to save villages from so-called backwardness, revealing that he is symbolically blind to the reality and the socio-economic and cultural conditions of his country. This blindness becomes the reason for the futility of his first attempt at escaping from his angst which reveals the artificiality and pure idiocy of his idealism. This blindness leads to Refik unavoidably coming up with a flawed "solution" not only once but twice.[45]

Refik's first attempt to modernize the country results in disappointment and a recognition that his idea about writing and publishing such a report is unreasonable. He goes to Ankara, presents his report to some politicians, and meets some high-level bureaucrats, but he cannot find what he expects in the intricate bureaucracy and single-party politics of the time. In another chapter, the novel recounts Refik in Istanbul, living with his family after his stay in Kemah and Ankara. However, his unease maintains despite his attempts to persuade himself otherwise. After a while, Refik comes up with a new idea: to establish a publishing company that introduces well-translated classics of Western literature to Turkish readers at affordable prices. The trajectory of his ideal to modernize society shifts from socio-economic development to cultural enlightenment, implicitly evoking the cultural politics and mindset of Republican modernity in the 1930s and even 1940s, particularly the translation policy of the Western classics as a state-initiated program.

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44 Todd Kontje, *Private Lives in the Public Sphere: The German Bildungsroman as Metafiction* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1992), 12.

45 For a sociological reading of Refik concerning Turkish modernization, see İlhan Tekeli, "Cevdet Bey'in Oğlu Refik'te Kadroculuğun Üretilemeyişi Üzerine," in *Orhan Pamuk'u Anlamak*, ed. Engin Kılıç (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000), 45-59.

Refik's second attempt becomes his second error; it is the same approach but with a different method. In other words, Refik's blindness to the reality of Turkey continues, and he fails once again. In this sense, neither Refik's disillusionment with his experiences nor his lapsing devotion to Republican modernity helps him gain self-recognition, or, at least, knowledge of life. That is to say, his altruism brings nothing to either himself or to the development of Turkey. At this point, how and by whom Refik's story is narrated becomes prominent. The function of the external narrator is determinative and relies on what Monika Fludernik calls the "authorial novel," which "allows for a variety of different modes: serious and facetious, flamboyant and ironic, realistic and metafictional. Its flexibility includes the easy combination of irony and sympathy, intrusive (if not obtrusive) narratorial meddling with the story as well as restrained covert telling."[46] The external narrator is not the only one but the most powerful authority that recounts Refik's story and his crisis as inevitable, and this authority stops at the edge of his conflict of values. The existentialist dimension of the tragic in Refik's story thus fades away as the novel crushes the idea that "the Existentialist hero is doomed to failure, but it is this fact of failure that justifies his struggle."[47] The inevitability of Refik's failure is, then, associated with the inescapability of his inner crisis, which derives from the Western-oriented mindset that Rudolph had promoted.

From Blind Will to Pure Idiocy

The external narrator recounts Refik's struggles with his existential angst and the contrast between his will and the reality of Turkey more from an ironic perspective rather than from a tragic mode. As a result, the mode of narration dismisses the process of suffering and its self-transformative power and also annihilates Refik's idealism, which is based on the Republican discourse of modernization and the idea of sacrifice as a virtue. Refik's second flawed action costs more than the first, however. His idea to start a publishing company results in a real failure as the company goes bankrupt —that is, a socio-economic

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46 Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, trans. Patricia Häusler-Greenfield and Monika Fludernik (London: Routledge, 2009), 129.

47 Charles I. Glicksberg, *The Tragic Vision in the Twentieth Century Literature* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), 108.

failure. His wife, Perihan, also divorces him in 1955 because of his passivism and inertia, suggesting once again a weak masculinity and lack of potency.[48] Refik lives alone for almost ten years until he dies from cancer in 1965.[49] His idea of progress and society-oriented dedication led to Refik's failure. Refik's blindness to the reality of Turkey, in which lies his downfall, is narrated with various degrees of irony and hints of mockery at his idealism.

Irony in the novel functions to show the moments of Refik's self-revelation and simultaneously undermine the dramatic layer of the tragic in his story. Frances E. Bolen argues that "[t]he blindness, which makes the most tragic of irony possible, is the hero's blindness to the truth of himself,"[50] as in many tragic conflicts. At this juncture, Refik's blindness is narrated through different levels of irony both in the plot and narrative discourse. For instance, Refik acknowledges that his first attempt—to improve the socio-economic condition of the villages—is foolish and unrealistic. Refik's diary, which reflects his voice in the first person, reinforces this acknowledgment and represents his attitude as one of idiocy and futility; Refik writes that he feels like "a pure-minded fool."[51] Although the moment of his revelation is realistic and conceivable in the story, how Refik's paradoxical state is told conveys a self-critical tone with an explicit degree of irony conveyed by the external narrator.

In another scene, Refik goes inside the tunnel under construction in Kemah and looks at the workers on the last day of the railway project. The narrator focalizes him and describes the scene: "While looking at the trackmen, he self-mockingly smiled and remembered that he was grouching 'I have lost the track of my life' once upon a time and he went back."[52] Refik's epiphany here involves a self-referential irony of his existential crisis in retrospect and is yet another playful reference to the railway metaphor. This "self-mocking" irony undermines his quest for meaning

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48 Several examples problematize Refik's masculinity. The most striking examples are Muhittin's advice to Refik to focus on his wife and a young engineer in Kemah mocks his stay there instead of being with his wife.

49 Ahmet's conversations with his girlfriend provide brief information about the main characters and their statements after 1939. See Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 509.

50 Frances E. Bolen, *Irony and Self-Knowledge in the Creation of Tragedy* (Salzburg: Salzburg University, 1973), 7.

51 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 285-87.

52 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 324.

and purpose as told by the external narrator, but it is presented as if it is Refik's perspective. Although this scene seems to illustrate Refik's self-awareness, it still conveys a negative and self-deprecating sign from the edge of irony.

Thus, the dynamics of Refik's crisis are undermined through several ironic instances as a textual strategy. His quest for meaning, derived from the question of existence, turns into a motif in the narrative and contains strong irony and implicit criticism of the Republican ideology and its mindset, rather than the emotional or psychological depictions of either ontological or epistemological crisis in detail.[53] At this point, the tragic dimension of Refik's story loses the sense of seriousness of an existential crisis and suffering. In other words, the different uses of irony prevail over the aspects that configure the tragic in his story. Additionally, as the first publication of *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları* was in 1982, the novel looks back critically on Turkish modernity and its social-engineering programs and associated implicit socio-political and cultural references. It is therefore possible to argue that Turkey's modernization project had failed in the narrative discourse of the novel. By considering the aftermath of the coup in 1980, one can also note that this view of failure underscored in the novel reflects the varying perception of Turkish modernity from the 1980s onwards.

Many different ironic instances in Part Two reinforce the negative dimension of Refik's blind will as naivete, instead of presenting it as confusion, vulnerability, or suffering. In this way, the tragic in Refik's story is linked to his blindness, failure, and idiocy, placing explicit distance between the protagonist and the reader. This link also adds a new dimension to the idiocy-cleverness dichotomy already employed in the first part of the novel. This antagonism bears on the other binary oppositions (light-darkness, East-West), and all these antagonisms constitute the socio-cultural and ideological layers of Refik's crisis. Like his revolutionary uncle, Nusret, depicted in Foreword, a confused, young Refik is represented as an unrealistic and romantic "idiot" who seeks "the light of reason."[54] On the other

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53 In Pamuk's novels, "the discourse of being in-between" is not "an indication of the identity crisis." See Zafer Doğan, *Orhan Pamuk Edebiyatında Tarih ve Kimlik Söylemi* (Istanbul: İthaki, 2014), 52.

54 Refik's naive idealism resembles his uncle Nusret's romantic revolutionary idealism, and it re-establishes the "Reasonable People and Idiots" duality in Refik's story, which is the name of a section in the first part. For instance, even Ömer's fiancé Nazlı in the plot recognizes that Refik is detached from the reality of life. See Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 349.

hand, the "clever" people are implicitly Cevdet Bey and Refik's brother Osman, who only think of their private interests: that is, those who do not wrestle with the "darkness" of the East and the question of existence.

The narrative discourse of the novel therefore invalidates not only Refik's potential self-fulfillment, which entails a devotion to Turkey's progressive modernization, but also the values of his idealism in repeating his naivete and idiocy. "Tragedy is always about a kind of folly [...]; it is not, however, the folly of the fool," as Robert Bechtold Heilman argues, "but the representative foolishness of—an intelligent man, or the stupidity of a too intelligent man."[55] Refik is portrayed as a fool because of his blind will and through the ironic ways of this depiction. Thus, the novel "satirize[s] the superficial rhetoric of Turkish modernization,"[56] to a great extent. The content of Refik's crisis and its inevitability is then attenuated due to the subversive function of irony and the role of the external narrator.

In the scene where three friends gather in Refik's house in 1939, they confront themselves while criticizing each other's ideals and current positions. None of them reaches their desires and ideals, and Ömer's question typifies their failures and disappointments: "What have we done? Nothing!"[57] Not only the story of Refik but also that of his friends culminate in complete failure, bleak despair, and disillusionment. But the novel neither features the process of the suffering of these protagonists nor contains a particular self-transformation or self-knowledge in their cases. There is a striking deviation from narrating Refik's existential struggle associated with Turkish modernity, and this deviation underscores "a radical difference between deliverance achieved within the tragic and the deliverance from the tragic," as Karl Jaspers carefully distinguished them.[58] The novel's discourse explicitly shifts gear to the latter. This shift from the tragic to a more ironic and even parodic mode arguably reflects the change in the perception of Turkish modernity and its representation.

While the last part of the novel depicts a day in the life of Refik's son in 1970, it raises the same question of "what is to be done?" in life but dismisses

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55 Robert Bechtold Heilman, *Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 16.

56 Parla, "Dark Knowledge," 29.

57 Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 468.

58 Karl Jaspers, *Tragedy is not Enough*, trans. Harald A. T. Reiche et al. (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1952), 76.

the paradox with which Refik grappled. Ahmet's conversations with his leftist friend and girlfriend reject the legacy of his father Refik's idea of socio-economic and cultural modernization in the 1930s, the revolutionary, leftist discourse of the 1970s, and socio-political engagement itself. In this way, Refik's crisis and its tragic articulation are disapproved by a member of the latest generation of the family in the 1970s. Instead, Ahmet seeks meaning in life within and through art as a young artist. When he finds his father Refik's diary, Ahmet ridicules Refik's existence and even mocks his naïve idealism and devotion to Turkey's modernization project.[59] Ahmet mocks the previous generations and their approaches to being. He attempts neither to succeed in business like his grandfather Cevdet nor to modernize Turkey with socio-economic and cultural projects like his father, whom he cruelly evaluates as a "third-world intellectual" and "a Robinson who seeks the salvation of the country in his room."[60]

Refik's story thus embodies the inevitable fall of the Western-oriented urban protagonist and his vain attempts for self-fulfillment in relation to Turkish modernization. The tragic and its reasoning in Refik's story become the determinant features of the plot construction of Part Two, along with the concurrent stories of Ömer and Muhittin, which also depict two different variations of downfall. The tragic dimensions of their downfalls, however, are weakened due to the various uses of irony and the narrator's biased position. From this aspect, the novel does not seem to present a tragic condition as a whole but uses the inevitability, lack of agency, and a sense of failure, all of which add an orientalist justification for Refik's existential crisis, while simultaneously mocking this crisis and vacillation.

Conclusion

In sum, the ideological and teleological aspects of Refik's crisis and its tragic dimension are dismissed as a textual strategy. This dismissive approach is related to the period in which the novel was written, for the narrative itself critically reconstructs the socio-cultural discourses about Turkish modernity in retrospect. In this retrospective representation, the novel recounts Refik's inevitable crisis

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59 Muhittin also belittles him, saying that his approach exemplifies a typical Turkish intellectual who is aimless, unprincipled, flaccid, and most importantly, purposeless, and detached from reality. See Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 435.

60 Ahmet imagined that his father Refik meets Jean-Paul Sartre in Paris. Pamuk, *Cevdet Bey ve Oğulları*, 560.

from the perspective of the late 1970s. Although Refik's story contains the tragic dimension of human existence and links it with Turkish modernity, his crisis is represented in an ironic mode and even a slightly parodic mode. The pitying sense of Refik's confusion, pathetic failure, and suffering is depicted ironically, even as foolishness or pure idiocy. His existential crisis and its direct link with Turkish modernity in the novel are thus, to a great extent, instrumentalized to negate society-oriented idealism, its rhetoric, and its heroic attitude, leaving no space for reconciliation, contemplation, and redemption, only disdain.

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