

Kürşad Ertuğrul

A READING OF THE TURKISH NOVEL: THREE WAYS OF CONSTITUTING THE “TURKISH MODERN”

This study give voices to three possibilities of becoming modern in the Turkish experience through a reading of the novels of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Oğuz Atay, and Orhan Pamuk. The analysis of the novels invites rethinking, with an eye to gender relations, the terms “modernity” and “modern existence” as well as Paul Gilroy’s inversion of the relationship between center and margin. In this framework, I explore the Turkish experience through the themes of “constituting one’s self across the East–West duality” and “temporality.” Tanpınar’s novel represents a conservative, anti-individualistic response to modernity concerned with reproducing the “authentic whole” in the face of Westernization. Pamuk’s novels take the opposite stance; here becoming modern coincides with full replication of Western individuality. The works of Atay, in contrast, display a “truly modern” possibility—a critical, creative, and open-ended process of self-creation that leads subjects toward individual and social autonomy, although it remains unrealized.