TRAGIC THOUGHT IN OĞUZ ATAY'S *TEHLIKELI OYUNLAR*:

IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

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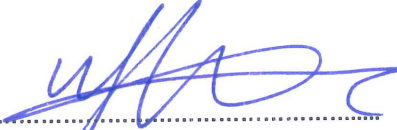Boğaziçi University

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ABSTRACT

Tragic Thought in Oğuz Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*:

Identity, Culture, and History

This work discusses how Oğuz Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* calls the notions of identity, culture, and history into question from the standpoint of tragic thought. The term "tragic thought" is derived from Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet's main thesis that ancient Greek tragedy entails a form of critical (re)thinking in which human being and human action are interpreted as riddles and problems ridden with ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions evading definitive solutions. In ancient Greek tragedy, the notion of identity comes across as a pursuit of self-understanding while the concepts of history and culture are taken from a critical standpoint concerning one's relation to his era in the prism of past, present, and future. To flesh out this critical core, I majorly concentrate upon the conflicts and double binds at play in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* with respect to notions of identity, history, and culture understood as such. With an interdisciplinary approach, I examine how Atay's tragic thought articulates the conundrums and paradoxes inherent in his own historical and cultural milieu and sheds light on the unmasterable contingencies and conflicts defining human condition. By demonstrating that pre-established structures and narratives do not provide satisfying answers to restless human search, I claim that *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* ultimately brings about the question of crisis. The concluding remarks illustrate that the crisis comes across as the experience of the vanishing of ground upon which one constructs his sense of identity in course of his pursuit of self-understanding and establishes his historical and cultural framework of relation to the self and the world.

ÖZET

Oğuz Atay'ın *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*'ında Trajik Düşünce:

Kimlik, Kültür ve Tarih

Bu çalışma temel olarak Oğuz Atay'ın *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* romanının kimlik, kültür ve tarih kavramlarını trajik düşünce bağlamında nasıl tartışmaya açtığını inceliyor. "Trajik düşünce" kavramı, Pierre Vidal-Naquet ve Jean-Pierre Vernant'ın, antik Yunan tragedyalarının insan varoluşu ve eylemlerini belirsizlik, gerilim ve çelişkilerle dolu bir muamma ve sorun olarak ele alan eleştirel bir düşünce barındırdığı tezine dayanıyor. Antik Yunan tragedyasında kimlik sorunu insanın kendini anlama çabası olarak ele alınırken, tarih ve kültür kavramları ise kişinin çağıyla geçmiş, şimdiki zaman ve gelecek bağlamında kurduğu ilişkinin eleştirel bir perspektiften işlenmesi olarak karşımıza çıkar. *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*'da aslında Atay'ın bu minvalde bir trajik düşünceyi düşündüğünü savunuyorum. Atay'ın insanın kendini anlama mücadelesi ve çağıyla kurduğu ilişkiyi trajik düşünce üzerinden nasıl ele aldığını incelemek için romandaki çatışma, gerilim ve çıkmazlara odaklanıyorum. Bu bağlamda Atay'ın *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*'da kendi tarihsel ve kültürel dönemine içkin açmaz ve paradoksları hangi yönlerden ele aldığı ve genel anlamda insan durumunu belirleyen değişken, öngörülemez ve çelişkili öğeleri nasıl ön plana çıkardığını inceliyorum. Çalışmamın sonunda, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*'ın halihazırda verili yapı ya da anlatıların insanın arayışlarına tatmin edici cevaplar veremediğini göstererek nihayetinde bir kriz düşüncesini dile getirdiğini savunuyorum. Bu kriz sorusu insanın kendini anlama çabası ve dünyayla kurduğu tarihsel-kültürel ilişkinin temellendirildiği zeminin yok olmasını içeriyor. Bir başka deyişle, Oğuz Atay'ın *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*'daki trajik düşüncesi, çelişkili ve çatışmalı özellikleri nihai bir

sonuca bağlamadan gerginlikleri içerisinde muhafaza ederek açtığı kriz sorusu üzerinden bir zeminsizlik deneyimini işaret ediyor. Bu zeminsizlik deneyiminde, insanın kendini anlama çabası ve dünyayla kurduğu tarihsel-kültürel ilişki ucu açık bir soru ve yanıtlanamaz bir muamma olarak kalıyor.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> What a chimera, then, is man! What a
> novelty! What a monster, what a chaos,
> what a contradiction, what a prodigy!
> Judge of all things, imbecile worm of
> the earth; depository of truth, sink of
> uncertainty and error; the pride and
> refuse of the universe!
>
> –Pascal, *Pensées*

Conscious of their finitude, transience, and mortality, human beings try to orient their actions and thoughts in a world where nothing is ever stable or unequivocal. This does not amount to say that there is only confusion and chaos and that the affairs of the world remain thoroughly unintelligible. Rather, it means that the human experience of being present in the world is of great tension and antagonism. Indeed, one constantly strives to find a place and sense of belonging in the ever-changing present, to come up with projections and aspirations with regard to ambiguous future, to make decisions at the crossroads, to achieve certain goals, to understand oneself and the world. This is Greek tragedy's outlook on human condition, where the inquiry concerning what it means to be human and being present in the world consists of exploring the unceasing distress and conflict between clarity and ambiguity, necessity and contingency, fulfillment and dissatisfaction, harmony and disharmony, knowledge and ignorance, insight and blindness assailing one's relation with oneself and the world. In the most general sense, it is this understanding of human circumstance at play in Greek tragedy that I aim to explore and discuss as "tragic thought" in my reading of Oğuz Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*.

Oğuz Atay penned his works with ferocious intensity and dazzling prolificacy as if pressed by a searing intuition of an early death. He published his first novel *Tutunamayanlar* in 1971-1972 in two volumes in a relatively late period of his life at the age of 36. This debut novel remained more or less obscure. A year later, he published *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, which shared a similar fate with the debut novel. Four years later, in 1977, Atay died at the age of 43. He left behind a play *Oyunlarla Yaşayanlar* (1985), a collection of short stories *Korkuyu Beklerken* (1973), a novel *Bir Bilim Adamının Romanı* (1975), and a manuscript of an unfinished novel *Eylembilim*, which was first published as a 40-pages addendum to Atay's diary *Günlük* in 1987, and then published separately as a book in 1998.

Atay finished *Tutunamayanlar* in 1970 and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* in 1973, both of which, as I have remarked above, did not gain immediate critical acclaim. Indeed, up until the end of 1970s, there were only short articles in magazines and newspapers on *Tutunamayanlar*. In 1980s and 1990s, more developed readings on *Tutunamayanlar* and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* were published in local journals. 2000s saw a rekindling of interest in Atay's works with several symposiums held to discuss Atay's literary output and critical articles –some of which were published in international journals– that explore and examine Atay's oeuvre with a more theoretical edge.

To present these shifts, I wish to provide a short outline concerning the critical literature on Atay's works throughout 1970s and 2000s. Murat Belge (1972/2007) is one of the first literary critics who discussed Atay's *Tutunamayanlar* upon its publication in the same year. His short commentary titled "Tutunamayanlar" majorly focuses on the literary techniques employed in the novel and elaboration of the novel's protagonists Selim and Turgut with intertextual references. Çağlar

Keyder (1984/2007), in his short piece "Biz Niçin Onlar Gibi Olamıyoruz?", discusses the influence of 1960s Turkey and the process of Westernization in works of Atay from a socio-cultural and historico-political perspective. Tatjana Seyppel's *Oğuz Atay'ın Dünyası* (1989) focuses on certain thematic links between Atay's *Tutunamayanlar* and other works in the literary canon such as Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, and Goncharov's *Oblomov*. Seyppel's discussion also includes the interpretation of protagonists Turgut and Selim in *Tutunamayanlar* as intellectuals in pursuit of understanding themselves in their socio-cultural milieu.

In the second volume of his third-volume work *Türk Romanına Eleştirel Bir Bakış* (1990), in which he provides an extensive literary canon of Turkish literature, Berna Moran discusses the rhetorical devices and literary techniques such as parody, irony, metafiction, pastiche, and so forth used in Atay's works, specifically focusing on *Tutunamayanlar*. Moran also situates Atay's works in the literary canon among modernist/post-modernist writings based on themes and techniques employed. In her article "*Tutunamayanlar*'da Çokseslilik ve Sınırları", Sibel Irzık (1995/2007) examines Atay's first novel *Tutunamayanlar* majorly from the standpoint of Bakhtinian dialogism as a subversive carnivalesque writing in the vein of Cervantes and Dostoyevsky.

Nurdan Gürbilek made substantial contributions to the literature on Atay with her thought-provoking essays. In "Kemalizmin Delisi Oğuz Atay" (1995), Gürbilek examines how Atay appropriates the intricate historico-cultural and socio-political dimensions of his own milieu through irony and satire. Hikmet Benol and Colonel Hüsamettin, the protagonists of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, are discussed majorly in the socio-

cultural context, more specifically via Atay's relationship with Kemalist thought. Gürbilek also provides fruitful comparisons between *Tutunamayanlar* and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* that shed light on formal, thematic, and rhetorical differences between the two works in Atay's oeuvre. In another essay titled "Oyun ve Adalet" (1999), Gürbilek discusses the relationship of the concept of justice and the notion of play at work in Atay's novels. Gürbilek pays close attention to Atay's use of language and tries to elaborate on what is entailed in Atay's use of parody and irony via the polarity of affects, such as guilt and redemption, acceptance and rejection, and so forth, at play in *Tutunamayanlar* and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. Hikmet Benol's engagement with his own socio-cultural milieu is interpreted as a form of playing along that constitutes various links with a search for compensation and justice. Gürbilek again provides insightful comparisons between Atay's two novels and discusses contrasts and similarities between protagonists and their interactions.

Yıldız Ecevit's works *Türk Romanında Postmodernist Açılımlar* (2001) and *Ben Buradayım* (2005) provide one of the most comprehensive research and discussion with respect to Atay's oeuvre. In *Türk Romanında Postmodernist Açılımlar* (2001), Ecevit examines the structural characteristics of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* by elaborating on Atay's use of literary techniques such as intertextuality and metafiction. In *Ben Buradayım* (2005), she not only provides a detailed biographical account of Atay, but also discusses the characteristics of Atay's works by establishing thematic links with the works of a wide range of writers such as Shakespeare, Camus, Weiss, Dostoyevsky, and Kafka. In the section where she discusses *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, Ecevit elaborates on the use of language and rhetorical devices, discusses certain references to Christian thought, the notion of play/game,

and biographical links that influenced the writing of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. Ecevit's reading remains one of the most substantial contributions to the discussion of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* in the critical literature on Atay's works.

Focusing on Atay's debut novel in her article "Takib-i Macera-i Metindir Şiir: *Tutunamayanlar*" Jale Parla (2000/2007) discusses the use of certain literary techniques and the characteristics of Atay's *Tutunamayanlar* based on its relationship with the literary canon. Zeynep Atamer (2007), in her article "Oğuz Atay'ı *Günlük* Üzerinden Sosyolojik Bir Okuma Denemesi", offers a short archival work by reading the diary of Atay in relation with the socio-cultural context from a sociological perspective. In her reading, Atamer aims to flesh out the influence of various themes regarding modernization and West-East divide dominant in 1950s Turkey on Atay's literary output. In his article "Oğuz Atay'daki Kimliksizleşme ve *Sense of Humour*" Ali Akay (2007) takes up the question of identity and self from a Deleuzian-Guattarian perspective majorly focusing on *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. With a theoretical approach, Akay argues that the use of humor and irony situates the identity of Atay's characters in constant flux that defy any fixed socio-political or theoretical definition and determination.

Overall, with a bird's-eye view of the critical literature on Atay's works, it can be said that most of the readings focus on *Tutunamayanlar* whereas the discussions on *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* remain rather secondary and insufficient. Critical interpretations and discussions on *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* start to come forth only in 1990s. Towards the end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000s, there were critical essays and works that focus on *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* along with *Tutunamayanlar* with a

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more theoretical edge and critical potential that made substantial contributions to the critical literature on Atay's oeuvre.

In terms of general tendency, the literature on Atay mostly aimed to situate his works in accordance with the boundaries and categories of the literary canon, establishing intertextual, thematic, and referential links between Atay and a wide array of writers ranging from Shakespeare and Cervantes to Dostoyevsky, Goncharov, Nabokov, Kafka, Camus, Beckett, and so forth. This tendency usually goes hand in hand with the discussion and examination of the structural characteristics, literary techniques, and rhetorical devices employed in Atay's works.

It goes without saying that these readings are significant in terms of properly presenting and appropriating Atay's works as a body of literary output entailing various structural and formal dimensions as well as links with other works of literature in the canon. However, the downside of such approaches is that they attempt to exhaust Atay's inexhaustible texts by endeavoring to fix their elusiveness with definitions, canonizations, and limited structural analyses. As such, there occurs a lack of interpretative reading with regard to shed light on the perspectives and thoughts at play in Atay's texts.

Accordingly, what I principally aim to do in this work is to provide an interpretative hermeneutical reading of Oğuz Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. My reading is not merely limited with the discussion of the mechanics and structural characteristics of the text, but also endeavors to explore, interpret, and elucidate the meaning of the conflicts, antagonisms, and conundrums comprising the novel from the standpoint of tragic thought. In this regard, the focus of my work is to explore how *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* calls the notions of identity, culture, and history into question

from the vantage point of tragic thought. I situate Atay's novel midst a dialogue with diverse ideas borrowed from classical literature, literary criticism, and philosophy. Such dialogue is unfortunately absent in the critical literature on Atay's oeuvre. Concerning my reading, it goes without saying that there is an inevitable tension between modern concepts in my discussion and the ideas at work in ancient Greek tragedy. Nevertheless, I believe that this dialogue not only establishes a fruitful communication between different ideas and theories, but also unveils a sort of communality. That is to say, in the space opened by such interdisciplinary dialogue, approaching and exploring the themes, problems, and questions from different angles fleshes out a common concern of human thought and inquiry for reflecting upon one's interpretation and relation with respect to the self and the world.

In this regard, I wish to clearly state that my discussion does not offer an exhaustive traditional literary analysis of the novel categorizing and schematizing characters and plot. Neither does it provide a detailed structural comparative literary analysis of a modernist/post-modernist novel and a series of ancient tragedies. Instead, the interpretative hermeneutical reading that I offer entails an elucidative endeavor. It focuses on certain aspects, such as double binds, contradictions, and ambiguities at work in the novel by means of fleshing out main antagonisms between characters and interpreting them as clash of various perspectives and ideas. This interpretation consists of an elucidative reading of the antagonistic clash of ideas between characters in which conundrums and tensions at work in the novel can be properly presented and discussed. The elucidation that I provide through this interpretative hermeneutical reading aims to explore and articulate how these tensions and double binds, which are approached and interpreted from different

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perspectives and within different contexts in a vast interdisciplinary dialogue, can shed light upon understanding the tragic thought at play in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*.

Having shortly discussed the main tendencies found in the critical literature on Atay's oeuvre and presented the method of approaching and interpreting the novel, I wish to provide a short remark on Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. The most convenient description of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* would be to say that it is a work of fiction structured as a labyrinth. It is a demanding work that employs a wide range of narrative and rhetorical techniques, which includes long detours, digressions, vast monologues, destabilizing shifts of perspective, sudden changes in narrative tempo, parody, irony, pun, multilayered details, stream of consciousness, and so forth. Thus from the outset it resists to a traditional literary analysis, does not easily yield to any conceptual appropriation, and structural schematization. Like every great literary work, it is a *sui generis* universe. This labyrinthine work does not have a single, fixed, and indisputable center that can be discovered by the assiduous reader. Rather, Atay's novel is made up of many centers, none of which will be entirely satisfactory for a reader in pursuit of finding a hidden message, a master key to decipher, or a stable and irrefragable vantage point of interpretation in the text. Indeed, there remains something elusive and elliptic, leaving the curious eye with the feeling that something is on the verge of revealing itself, yet it never comes out in the open.

In the simplest sense, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* is based on the aspirations and disappointments of its protagonist Hikmet Benol who lives in a two-stored wooden house, or as he likes to call it *gecekondu*, with retired Colonel Hüsamettin. My discussion majorly revolves around the complex characterization of Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist in obstinate pursuit of self-knowledge, like King Oedipus of

Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Throughout the plot, Hikmet's characterization is structured upon a contrast with other characters such as Colonel Hüsamettin, Bilge, and Sevgi. Hikmet's relationship with Bilge (ex-girlfriend) and Sevgi (ex-wife), which is a strenuous love affair, comprises the details about his tumultuous private life. However, my discussion mainly concentrates upon Hikmet's exchanges and interactions with Colonel Hüsamettin, as these provide profound and fruitful insights into the tensions, conundrums and antagonisms at work in the novel.

One of the main aspirations of Hikmet is to write plays whose topics erratically range from French Revolution and Battle of Austerlitz to the Biblical account of the Last Judgment and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Hikmet writes most of his plays with Colonel Hüsamettin, and their discussions with regard to these plays usually turn into long and thought-provoking debates on topics such as history, politics, literature, and philosophy. In this regard, Hikmet's plays, an integral part of his narrative characterization, are not idle intellectual exercises and frivolous games, but rather fictional constructs through which Hikmet strives to understand himself and his social and cultural milieu. These plays suddenly interrupt the flow of the prose and transform the novel, for a short period, into a drama with classical dramaturgical elements such as dramatic dialogues, action/reaction flow between characters, tirades, soliloquies, and so forth. In this respect, the dazzling shifts between prose and drama also underline Hikmet's agitated and restless state of mind that stops at nothing in his self-imposed task of pursuing an inquiry into who he is through radical self-criticism.

In my interpretative hermeneutical reading of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, I majorly concentrate upon Hikmet's plays and his interactions with Colonel Hüsamettin. I

take them as clash of ideas that antagonistically flesh out conflicting arguments and perspectives, which I interpret from the standpoint of tragic thought based on the main concerns of my discussion, namely, the question of identity as pursuit of self-understanding, and the appropriation of history and culture. I believe that such interpretation and elucidation provides a proper basis to discuss the tragic thought that endorses an antagonistic view of human being and human action as something conflict-ridden, enigmatic, and paradoxical. In overall, the main argument of this work is that tragic thought traverses *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* in such a way that the totality of the novel, paradoxically structured upon its extremely fragmented and labyrinthine character, presents Atay's encompassing tragic view of human experience of being present in the world immersed in contradiction, contingency, and ambiguity defying definitive denouements and solutions.

Now I would like to present an outline of the main themes, problems, and questions that I focus throughout my discussion. Chapter 2 introduces the socio-cultural and historical background of the formation of tragedy in ancient Greece. By drawing from the works of Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1972/1996), I argue that tragedy is not only a literary genre among others, but also a form of critical (re)thinking. As such, from the critical standpoint of tragic thought, human beings and human action are not characterized through coherent and fixed qualities but interpreted as riddles and problems full of ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions evading definitive solutions. In this respect, what I term as "tragic thought" throughout my discussion is an umbrella term referring to this perspective.

One of the most prominent characteristics of tragic thought is its critical potential, which I refer by the phrase "critical gesture of tragedy", that has two

interrelated dimensions. First, it calls into question what it means to be human by means of exploring the aporetic and equivocal nature of the human experience of being present in the world. Second, it establishes a critical dialogue with the past by interrogating historico-cultural narratives that define one's way of appropriating the constellation of culture, history, and identity. Chapter 2 focuses on the first dimension while Chapter 3 concentrates upon the second dimension.

The question of identity comes across in tragic thought as a pursuit of self-understanding, which is one of the fundamental motifs defining ancient Greek tragedy. I explore what is entailed in the question of identity understood as the pursuit of self-understanding by means of taking King Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* as a primary exemplary model. I discuss the main characteristics of tragic thought and the question of identity, self-understanding, and tragic experience through the model of Oedipus. Then I explore and elaborate how these characteristics are at play in the characterization of Hikmet Benol in Oğuz Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. In my interpretation, via making comparisons when relevant without conflating the characterization of two protagonists, I discuss the various ways by which Oedipus and Hikmet Benol are in pursuit of self-knowledge as I claim that they are essentially driven by the same question of self-understanding ("who am I?") paving the way for their radical self-questioning.

In the course of his pursuit of self-understanding, Hikmet Benol's narrative identity is characterized not in a self-identical and coherent fashion, but in a manner of a complex riddle that poses questions and demands answers. In his exchanges with Colonel Hüsamettin, Hikmet's identity comes across as an enormous and a dazzling puzzle whose pieces are made out of different religious beliefs, nationalities,

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ethnicities, and even far distant historical epochs. Indeed, not only his identity, but also his corporeal existence is characterized as a site of conflicts and tensions. Another level regarding Hikmet Benol's characterization as a tragic protagonist is the motif of the divided self. The "crowd of Hikmets" (*Hikmetler kalabalığı*) with which Hikmet Benol struggles throughout the novel is the dramatization of his archly fragmented and divided self constantly tormenting and haunting his quest for self-understanding. Understood in this way, I claim that Hikmet Benol eventually comes across, just like Oedipus, as a tragic character in the shape of a riddle with no fixed qualities, consistency, pre-given essence, and point of attachment.

The question of self-understanding is explored further via discussion of tragic experience in which I interpret one's pursuit of self-understanding as a work of hermeneutical self-interpretation. I emphasize that, from the vantage point of tragic thought, self-understanding is not a theoretical reflection on self and identity, but rather a form of experience entailing transformation and exposure that drives one into inevitable encounters with otherness, difference, and self-division undermining any conception of self and identity based on selfsameness, coherence, and unity.

I elaborate on this theme of self-understanding and tragic experience that it entails with references to the works of Paul Ricoeur, G.W.F. Hegel and Gerald L. Bruns. Following Bruns (1992), I claim that tragic understanding of self and identity entails a sort of critique of the subject. I argue that Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* structures this critique through a contrast between two conceptions of the subject, namely, tragic understanding of self embodied by the characterization of Hikmet Benol and the Cartesian conceptualization of modern subjectivity embodied by the discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin. Exploration of this contrast is fruitful in two

senses. First, it situates the current discussion within a long tradition of philosophical thought –Cartesian metaphysics in this case– on self-understanding and identity. Second, it interrogates, with a critical gesture befit to tragic thought, the assumptions and limits of modern subjectivity derived from the Cartesian thought that sets the self-conscious and self-identical subject and Reason as the unshakable ground (*fundamentum inconcussum*) of indubitable knowledge with regard to one's relation to and interpretation of the self and the world.

Chapter 3 continues with the unfolding of the critical gesture of tragedy on socio-cultural sphere, which is the second dimension mentioned above. In this chapter, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* is situated in the socio-cultural and historical background of Turkey roughly from 1950s to 1970s. This period, in which Atay penned his works including *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* and *Tutunamayanlar*, marks a tumultuous era when Turkey witnessed a series of radical economic, political, and socio-cultural transformations. The main aim of the discussion in this chapter is to demonstrate how certain elements from this background influenced the formation of Atay's tragic thought, and, in turn, how the tragic thought at work in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* calls its own era into question.

I claim that Atay's tragic thought engages in a debate with the socio-cultural and historical heritage of his own country by bringing the notions of history and historiography, understood as the appropriation of tradition and heritage, under scrutiny. In his almost obsessive engagement with it, Hikmet Benol sees history, that is, the past itself as the conglomeration of tradition and heritage, as something spectral that haunts the present by thoroughly defining its conditions and possibilities. Being unable to dispense with its burden and properly appropriate its

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intricate socio-cultural accumulation, Hikmet feels that he is a slave to the history of his own country. His attempt to rewrite Turkey's history, which inevitably turns into a gesture of parody of rewriting the very beginning of creation as it is told in the story of Biblical Genesis, is an expression of this frustration.

This is interpreted on two interrelated dimensions. On a broader level, I argue that this gesture brings forward the question of origin and foundation as a concern for beginnings and ends formulated through the logic of progress, teleology, and necessity. On the background of the socio-cultural and historical context of Turkey, I interpret Hikmet's parody as an allegorical mirroring of the attempts of republican era's endeavors for producing various foundation/origination narratives such as the Turkish History Thesis, the Sun-Language Thesis, and Blue Anatolianism. I claim that these narratives strove to provide a stable framework and a firm ground for the formation of an authentic cultural identity and the definition of various ways through which Turkish community could appropriate the heritage of its past, make sense of its present turbulences, and project its own historical continuity into future. At each and every turn, I aim to demonstrate how Atay's tragic thought interrogates and explores the inner contradictions residing in these foundation narratives which eventually come across as myths of origin, impotent to confer any framework of meaning, identity and belonging concerning one's ontological, historical, and cultural relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world.

Another layer of this debate is given through a contrast between Colonel Hüsamettin and Hikmet Benol who are trying to write a history play based on the Battle of Austerlitz. I examine this curious contrast by means of two perspectives on history and historiography, namely Hegelian conception of progressive history and

teleological historiography and the critique of this understanding of history and historiography from different perspectives via Derrida (1966/1978) and Foucault (1971/1984). Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse on history takes the form of a parody personification named the Voice of History, which acts as a mouthpiece for a sort of Hegelian conception of history with an over-arching narrative of historical progression built upon absolutism of necessity and teleology. In contrast, Hikmet Benol's interruptions and interventions, such as his exaggerated focus on particularities and details regarding events and characters in the history play or his frequent digressions from the plot, downplays the non-biased and universalist view of institutionalized historiography.

I interpret Hikmet's attempt to write history plays as a subversive intervention, which employs the act of writing as a sort of Derridean sphere of difference, parody, play, and duplication without any origin or fixed center. That is to say, while Hikmet's digressions from the plot of the play violates the discursive strictures conditioned by traditional writing of historiography, his exaggerated attention to characters and events in the play come across as rhetorical diversions undermining the architectonics of teleological continuity and rational coherence claimed by the traditional accounts of history and historiography. In this respect, historiography's claim to original and singular account of writing history as it is is interrupted by Hikmet's playful writing, which subversively (re)appropriates history as play in the course of writing history plays.

This interruption is further examined via Foucault's genealogical approach to history and historiography, in which the sameness produced by teleological narratives of progression is undermined by the surfacing of difference and otherness

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through fleshing out the repressed disjunctions and contingencies residing at the very heart of these narratives of teleological continuity. From this Foucauldian standpoint, Hikmet's parody of writing history play undermines the entire edifice of the over-arching narratives of Hegelian world history as rational and teleological progress.

The interruption at work in this contrast brings up the question of self and identity, which is discussed via the tragic characterization of Hikmet Benol in Chapter 2, again in Chapter 3. This time, however, the plethora of layers defining the tragic characterization of Hikmet Benol's identity and corporeality is interpreted as a sphere of cultural difference evading the sameness ascribed to it by socio-culturally and historically defined frameworks and narratives. Through this interrelation between narrative identity and cultural identity, it is seen that the question of identity defining Hikmet's tragic quest for self-knowledge (who am I?) simultaneously comes across as a question of cultural identity (who are we?). I claim that Atay's tragic thought preserves and underlines the ambiguity, contradiction, and tension assailing historico-cultural realm precisely by marking out the interrelation between narrative and cultural identity as well as keeping this interrelation open to interrogation from the standpoint of the critical gesture of tragedy as a social phenomenon.

Towards the end of Chapter 3, it is seen that the frameworks established by teleological narratives of progressive history or foundation narrations as myths of origin are exposed in their failure to provide a sense of meaning and ground for stability to human beings and human action. In this state of restlessness, Hikmet Benol is haunted by sense of incompleteness and failure, which are expressed in the novel with disturbing spectral images of half-human beings. I interpret Hikmet's

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sense of restlessness, frustration, incompleteness, and failure on the socio-cultural and political basis of Turkey's experience of modernity as belatedness.

To demonstrate this, I draw parallels between these two levels in the following way. The inner antagonisms, tensions, and contradictions residing in Turkey's modernization process emphasize Turkey's constant failure to properly situate itself between the past and the present of its historico-political heritage and socio-cultural disposition. Analogously, Hikmet is characterized as a tragic protagonist who is situated amidst tensions and antagonisms stemming from not being able to concordantly appropriate the heritage and tradition of the past or to find himself a place in the narrations of his time that might give him a sense of belonging, identity, and stability.

Hikmet Benol's struggle and frustration concerning this state of *in-betweenness* interpreted via the experience of modernity as belatedness are not mere ruminations regarding the past. Indeed, instead of merely reiterating or depicting the socio-political, historical, and cultural concerns of his own era, I argue that Atay's tragic thought transforms such concerns into problems to be discussed. Accordingly, the implications of restlessness, failure, and incompleteness haunting Hikmet and frustrating him into a sense of being stuck in a state of *in-betweenness* mirroring Turkey's failure to properly designate itself between the past and the present in the experience of modernity as belatedness remain as an open-ended question to be explored. I claim that this question is taken up in Hikmet's play based on the Biblical theme of the Last Judgment and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Hikmet's play is structured upon a great paradox, which is crystallized at the conjecture of tragic thought and apocalyptic thought. On the one hand, from the

standpoint of apocalyptic thought, I claim that Hikmet's frustration and struggle are the expression of a desire for a radical change of self and world. Indeed, this desire is articulated in the idea of compensatory justice that lies at the core of apocalyptic thought, which expresses an expectation of a divine justice that will eventually alleviate and compensate all the grief, destitution, and suffering at the end of history and time. On the other hand, from the point of view of tragic thought, there is no grand historical narrative, over-arching teleological framework, or a stable ground to fulfill such expectation and desire.

This antagonism between tragic thought and apocalyptic thought is accompanied by another paradox at work in Hikmet's play. On the one hand, Hikmet fashions himself in the play as the self-stylized Horseman of Death in the apocalyptic horde, that is, as the bringer of ultimate justice that can compensate all grief, suffering, and corruption. On the other hand, Hikmet eventually resigns from his post in the apocalyptic horde because he cannot keep up with the destruction and havoc he has wreaked. I claim that by this playful paradox Atay's tragic thought underlines the limits of one's projections and designs in the face of the uncontainable and ungovernable contingency and ambiguity of the affairs of the world. Considered on the basis of the clash between tragic thought and apocalyptic thought, I maintain that these conundrums and antagonisms emphasized by Atay's tragic thought ultimately mark out that the restlessness, destitution and suffering assailing the human condition cannot be simply exchanged or resolved with a recourse to certain promise of reconciliation and salvation.

The double binds, conundrums, antagonisms, and tensions fleshed out and discussed throughout the discussion of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*

finally culminate in the question of crisis. In my concluding discussion towards the end of Chapter 3, I claim that the question of crisis is opened up by Atay's pun on *düşmek* (falling) and *düşünmek* (thinking) in Chapter 17 titled *Düşüş* (The Fall). Even though this is the penultimate chapter of the novel, it marks the end of Hikmet Benol's story in the plot. For this reason, I take this chapter to be the closure of Hikmet's arduous quest for self-understanding through self-questioning, which ends with a curious scene where Hikmet falls from the balcony of his two-stored wooden house, or as Hikmet calls it, his *gecekondu*. The accounts in this chapter are written mostly as a monologue. In the last instant of the moment he falls from the balcony, Hikmet does not utter, "I am falling" (*Düşüyorum*), but instead he says, "I am thinking" (*Düşünüyorum*), which is also the concluding sentence of the chapter. Interestingly, in the penultimate chapter that bears the title *Düşüş* (The Fall), the experience of falling is articulated as the experience of thinking. That is to say, the experience of thinking entails the experience of falling. I claim that this is the core of Atay's brilliant pun on thinking and falling, which I aim to explicate via Atay's tragic thought.

Admittedly, it is ambiguous whether Hikmet deliberately jumps to commit suicide or accidentally stumbles and falls down. However, as can be seen in the preparatory sketches of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* in *Günlük*, this ambiguity is deliberately constructed. While this might be a sort of post-modernist play, a rhetorical technique blurring the lines between reality and fiction, thus also upsetting the traditional expectation of a clear dénouement, I aim to interpret Atay's use of ambiguity in a different way. To this end, I reflect upon the pun on thinking and falling, understood as the articulation of the experience of thinking as the experience of falling as

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mentioned above, in order to explore and interpret its possible associations and significations from the vantage point of Atay's tragic thought.

I argue that the path Hikmet initially set himself upon in his tragic quest for self-understanding through self-questioning radically transforms him by shattering his sense of self, identity, and belonging. In this penultimate chapter of the novel, it is seen that Hikmet's last stroll around the streets of his neighborhood gradually turns into a wandering entailing uncertainty, anxiety, and dread. At the height of his sense of despair and confusion, Hikmet finally returns to his *gecekondu*. However, this return is not a homecoming anymore, but fleshes out a tragic experience of estrangement and desolation. Indeed, for a tragic protagonist like Hikmet Benol, who has undergone the radical transformations shattering the sameness supporting his sense of identity and exposing him to the contingency and ambiguity of the self and the world, home as a familiar place of shelter and abode of dwelling becomes unattainable. Uprooted from that which is selfsame and familiar, the tragic experience of Hikmet's venture into the labyrinth of his own identity, wrestling with the riddle of who he is, and his obstinacy to carry this inquiry as far as it can go ultimately borders on a sort of epistemological and ontological crisis. In this state of crisis, Hikmet loses the ground upon which one constructs his sense of identity, establishes his framework of meaning, and constructs his relation and interpretation with regard to the self and the world.

The question of crisis gains its most acute articulation in this experience of groundlessness. I explore what is at stake in this experience through what Friedrich Nietzsche called "tragic insight" concerning the experience of the vanishing of ground as a tragic event. I point out that this tragic event in the thought of Nietzsche

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corresponds to the consummation of a way of being and thinking that determines one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world. I incorporate this idea to the discussion at hand and claim that the sense of crisis that marks the culmination of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* entails the tragic event of the vanishing of ground. The vanishing of ground comes across as a total exhaustion of a way of being and thinking defining one's relation and interpretation with regard to the self and the world.

I argue that Atay's pun on *düşmek* (falling) and *düşünmek* (thinking) that opens up the question of crisis ultimately captures this experience of the vanishing of ground manifesting itself as the bankruptcy of a way of being and thinking that determines one's relation and interpretation with regard to the self and the world. Indeed, the relegation of thinking and falling expressed by the pun, in effect, articulates the tragic experience of thinking and questioning in the state of crisis, that is, as I have mentioned above, it articulates that the experience of thinking entails the experience of falling. Understood in this way, Hikmet's fall, at the bottom, is a descend into the vanishing of ground, namely, an act of going down towards the abyss to undergo the disappearance of the ground that comes across as the bankruptcy of a way of being and thinking defining one's interpretation and relation concerning the self and the world.

The penultimate chapter of the novel articulates what is at stake in Hikmet's pursuit of self-understanding through radical self-criticism with the pun on thinking and falling. To think and to question in the face of the event of crisis is to descend into the abyss. That is to say, thinking and questioning entails undergoing the vanishing of ground by means of traversing the ambiguities, contingencies, and

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tensions. One follows this path, like Hikmet Benol, as far as it can go so as to confront and undertake what is singled out in the crisis as the bankruptcy of a way of being and thinking defining one's interpretation and relation concerning the self and the world.

In the Conclusion chapter, I provide a bird's-eye view of the entire discussion by mapping out the paths I have followed throughout this work. I evaluate and reevaluate certain points, underline and recall significant moments, and bring together the diverse aspects of my interpretation and discussion of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. Furthermore, I offer a sort of summary, or one might say a framework, outlining the five major points with respect to my explication of the various ways in which tragic thought is at play in the novel. After traversing the discussion at hand from beginning to end, I flesh out how the peculiar nature of Atay's literary writing preserves the extreme tensions, rending antagonisms, and bewildering double binds and paradoxes so dear to the heart of tragic thought. Ultimately, I conclude my discussion with the remark that Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* embodies the tragic experience of carrying thinking and questioning up to the limit. The point of this limit is defined by a confrontation with and undertaking of the crisis entailing the vanishing of ground that comes across as the consummation of a way of being and thinking determining one's interpretation and relation concerning the self and the world.

CHAPTER 2

THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN *TEHLİKELİ OYUNLAR* FROM THE

STANDPOINT OF TRAGIC THOUGHT

> Nothing great comes into human life
> without disaster.
>
> –Sophocles, *Antigone*

In this chapter, I start my discussion by providing the socio-cultural and historical

background of the formation of tragedy in ancient Greece. Drawing from the works

of Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet on ancient Greek tragedy, I claim

that tragedy is not only a literary genre among others, but also a form of critical

(re)thinking. From the vantage point of tragic thought, human beings and human

action are interpreted as riddles and problems ridden with conundrums, ambiguities,

and contradictions evading definitive solutions. What I call tragic thought is an

umbrella term that mainly based on this argument put forth by Vernant and Vidal-

Naquet, which I develop and elaborate in my discussion with the term critical gesture

of tragedy.

As I have stated in the Introduction, the notion of identity comes across as a

pursuit of self-understanding in ancient Greek tragedy. I take the protagonist King

Oedipus, who is driven by the question "who am I?", in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* as

the primary model to examine how ancient Greek tragedy problematizes the notion

of identity as a pursuit of self-understanding. I argue that the protagonist Hikmet

Benol of Oğuz Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* is driven by the same question of self-

understanding, which I explore by examining the formation of his identity and self from the standpoint of tragic thought.

However, I neither intend to conflate the works of Sophocles and Atay, nor aim to provide over-emphasized parallels between King Oedipus and Hikmet Benol. Instead, by taking Oedipus' story as a primary model, I wish to discuss the fundamental characteristics of tragic thought including the appropriation of the notion of identity as a pursuit of self-understanding, the elucidation of self-understanding as a work of hermeneutical self-interpretation, and the explication of the quest for self-knowledge on the basis of what I call tragic experience. To that extent, in order to flesh out how these features are at play in the tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, I make comparisons between Oedipus and Hikmet Benol when relevant.

I discuss the tragic experience characterizing the pursuit of self-understanding via the works of Paul Ricoeur, G. W. F. Hegel, and Gerald L. Bruns. My explication of tragic experience majorly concentrates upon the idea that self-understanding does not consist of methodological analysis, logico-algebraic reasoning and deduction, or rational accumulation of knowledge through conceptual appropriation. Rather, I claim that self-understanding in tragic thought entails a form of hermeneutical self-interpretation that is fundamentally concerned with one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world. This relation and interpretation, however, are not exercised through serene and sealed-off reflection. On the contrary, tragic experience of self-understanding entails a form of engagement with the contingency and ambiguity of the affairs of the world. In this engagement, one undergoes radical transformations with regard to one's self-interpretation, thus at once becomes

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exposed to the otherness and difference residing within his divided self, undermining the selfsameness, cohesion, and unity of one's conception of oneself and the world.

Tragic understanding of self and identity entails, as Bruns (1992) aptly remarks, what might be called the "critique of the subject" (p. 189). I elaborate on this theme by concentrating upon an antagonistic contrast between Hikmet Benol and Colonel Hüsamettin. I interpret this antagonism as a clash of two conflicting perspectives with respect to the conception of the subject, namely, the understanding of self and identity from the vantage point of tragic thought embodied by the characterization of Hikmet Benol and the Cartesian conceptualization of modern subjectivity embodied by the discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin. In this interpretation, I aim to flesh out and discuss how this antagonism takes the form of an exposure of the inner-contradictions and shortcomings governing the fundamental concepts of the coherent, self-identical and self-conscious subject and Reason of Cartesian thought.

As Vernant (1986/1996) states, tragedy has a universal scope which "lays bare the network of contradictory forces that assail all human beings, given that, not only in Greek society but in all societies and cultures, tensions and conflicts are inevitable" (p. 247). Hence, the kernel of tragic thought is "to submit the human condition, limited and necessarily finite as it is, to general interrogation" (p. 247). I claim that Oğuz Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* entails the same critical inquiry in the sense that through the characterization of Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist, Atay also carries out a broader questioning with respect to human condition from the standpoint of tragic thought.

2.1 Tragedy in ancient Greece: Socio-political and historico-cultural background

The invention of tragedy corresponds to a specific period of time and geographical location in the history of Ancient Greece, that is, the late sixth and early fifth-centuries B.C. in Athens (Vernant, 1986/1996, p. 185). This period was marked by immense transformations and radical changes with respect to the socio-political and cultural status of not only Athens, but also Greece as a nation. Greeks managed to establish extensive trade routes and industrial resources that offered a chance for them to spread all over the Mediterranean world, from Western Europe to the Black Sea. Early fifth-century was marked by a series of victories of Greeks against Persian forces at Marathon, Salamis and Platea (Muller, 1956, pp. 53-54).

Following their victory against the forces of the Persian Empire, Greeks formed a voluntary maritime confederacy known as the Delian League, ruled under the leadership of Athens. The formation of this confederacy gradually turned Athens into an imperial naval power, which marked the rise of the Athenian Empire. Another crucial development that occurred around this period, the late 460s and 450s B.C., was the full transition into participatory democracy as a political system (Garland, 2013, pp. 20-22). This transition led Greeks to consider themselves as "free men . . . citizens with recognized rights, subject to law but not subservient to arbitrary authority" (Muller, 1956, p. 54). The new *polis*, defined as a city-state, was a democratic and free society.

However, these significant changes cannot be portrayed as a simple success story. Indeed, the expansionist attitude of the newly empowered city-states enhanced the conception of liberty and democracy, but at the same time led to wars between ambitious city-states and violent class struggles (p. 56). The freedom brought about

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by the democratic establishments resulted in the rise of individualism, which meant "increasing self-consciousness, conflict with ancient institutions, [and] strife between individuals" (p. 56). Unrest among the people and the increasing socio-political turbulence were aggravated by the Peloponnesian War, which ended in disaster for the people of Athens. This was the conflict-ridden state of the Greek society in the era of tragedy, which, as I shall discuss, reflects on these destabilizations with a definitely critical outlook. In other words, as Muller (1956) aptly expresses, "tragedy . . . may be regarded as the product of both the growing freedom and growing tension" (p. 57).

Athenians attributed the invention of tragedy to Thespis, himself a playwright who added the first actor/protagonist interacting with the dance and songs of the chorus, which was, in effect, much older than drama itself (Knox, 1984, p. 20). Then, Aeschylus added the second protagonist into the structure of tragedy plays. This enabled the formation of basic narratives (protagonist to chorus), dramatic relationships (protagonist to protagonist/antagonist), and dramatic conflict (protagonist against protagonist). After Aeschylus, Sophocles introduced the third actor thus complicating the structure of tragic plot in terms of creating various events, exchanges and relations. This incidentally resulted in the reduction of the chorus to the role of the spectator (p. 20). Finally, Euripides, with the exception of *Bacchae*, greatly diminished the weight of chorus in the plot, perhaps merely reducing them to mere appendage (Muller, 1956, p. 103).

Tragedies were initially performed in the festival known as Great or City Dionysia, which lasted for three to four days. Usually held in March or early April, this festival coincided with the beginning of the sailing season, which enabled

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foreigners and tourists to attend besides the usual Athenians (Garland, 2013, p. 285).

Furthermore, business interactions were suspended and some prisoners were even let

out on bail to be a part of the festival (Knox, 1984, p. 18). Pisistratus of Athens was

the tyrant who showed immense support in favor of the popular cult of Dionysus, and

established the annual festival, along with its competitions of tragedy in 534 B.C.,

where Thespis won the first prize (Muller, 1956, p. 54). Every tragedian who wanted

their works to be staged had to enter into the competition with three tragedies that

they submitted to an eponymous archon (the Athenian magistrate whose name is

given to the year) who, in turn, was solely responsible for the process of choosing

which play to be performed on stage (Garland, 2013, p. 285).

In light of these socio-cultural and historical facts, it can be seen that tragedy

was an integral part of the communal and political life of *polis*. The aforementioned

rise of democracy brought an inclusive and participatory mode of thought to the city-

states, especially to Athens. Analogously, this was entailed in the very organization

of the festival and the conception of Greek theatre itself. For instance, the rules

followed by the archons while choosing the plays for the competition were the same

ones used in the courts and other democratic assemblies (Vernant, 1986/1996, p.

185). Similarly, the prizes in the festival awarded to the chosen playwrights were

administered by a jury consisted of ten judges who were, on the first day of the

festival, not only elected by lot but also sworn to be unbiased during the process

(Knox, 1984, p. 21).

This socio-political and historico-cultural background demonstrates that

tragedy was more than a literary genre produced to be consumed for purposes of

entertainment in leisure time. In this respect, the close relationship between the

procedures of social institutions and the formation of tragedy should be conceived as "a manifestation of the city turning itself into theater, presenting itself on stage before its assembled citizens" (Vernant, 1986/1996, p. 185). By means of tragedy plays, in other words, the community gained a chance to reflect on their beliefs, traditions, history, and socio-political relationships; Athens became a theatre-city, presenting and watching its own dramatization on the stage.

2.2 The critical gesture of tragedy: A call into question

As I have remarked above, tragedy is more than a literary genre produced to be consumed for purposes of entertainment in leisure time. On the contrary, it is integral to the communal life of *polis*, to which tragedy provides a sort of space for critical reflection. I wish to call this critical kernel of tragic thought as "the critical gesture of tragedy". The critical aspect of tragedy operates on two closely interrelated levels. First, the critical gesture of tragedy calls into question what it means to be human by means of characterizing an outlook on human experience of being where one's relation to the self and the world is interpreted as an enigmatic journey traversing ambiguities, contingencies, and contradictions defying conclusive solutions. Second, the critical thought at play in this gesture articulates a debate with the past and the present by questioning historical, cultural, social, and political narratives that determine one's relation, interpretation, and appropriation regarding the self and the world in the prism of the past, present, and future. I aim to discuss below how these two interrelated levels are at play in the formation of tragic thought.

Vernant (1972/1996) concisely remarks that "the tragic turning point . . . occurs when a gap develops at the heart of the social experience" (p. 27). Tragedy's

characteristics as a communal and political phenomenon are closely linked with its critical potential, which can shed light to this gap in the midst of socio-cultural experience. What makes tragedy's gesture fundamentally critical is that it creates a space of questioning through which the notions of individuality, identity, self, tradition, culture, and history are problematized and scrutinized. In the context of ancient Greek tragedy, this critical dimension becomes clearer in tragedy's critical engagement with two notions, namely, the system of legal thought and the mythico-religious background.

The establishment of the democracy in the fifth-century Athens was closely linked to the system of law. The new laws of city-states were shaped under neither the influence of past mythical narratives nor the pantheon of Greek gods. Rather, Greek *polis* aimed to establish its own laws in accordance with their own political thought that emphasized a certain distance from the past. There are various features that defined the construction of legal thought such as "social institutions, human practices, and mental categories" all of which were positioned as "opposed to other forms of thought, in particular religious ones" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 30). Aspects such as these played a crucial role in the formation of legal thought and directly corresponded to the emergence of the Greek *polis*, which, in turn, created its own "political institutions, modes of behavior, and thought" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 30).

This correspondence had its counterpart in tragedy plays, which critically reflected on these changes by means of a contextual displacement and transformation on the level of language. Vernant (1972/1996) points out how tragedy plays creatively used the linguistic reserve of the technical legal terminology as follows:

Words, ideas, and schemata of thought are used by the poets quite differently from the way they are used in a court of justice or by the orators. Once they are taken out of their technical context, their function to some extent changes. In the hands of the tragic writers, intermingled with and opposed to other terms, they become elements in a general clash of values and in a reappraisal of all norms that are part of an inquiry that is no longer concerned with the law but is focused upon man himself. (p. 32)

This is one of the fundamental aspects related to the critical gesture of tragedy, which will recur throughout my discussion as well, namely, that tragic thought problematizes context-bound particularities on a universal level. However, one can raise an objection to such terminological de-contextualization claiming that it is nothing more than a violation and distortion of the contextual signification of events and thoughts. However, as can be seen in the example of tragedy, this is not a simple case of transferring terms, manipulating concepts, or making clumsy generalizations. Since the tragic writers' way of using the terminological vocabulary emphasizes "shifts of meaning, incoherences and contradictions, all of which reveal the disagreements within legal thought itself" (1972/1996, p. 25), this process can be perceived as a comprehensive and critical exposition of particular elements that discloses the paradoxical aspects immanent to the context in question.

As I have stated above, tragic thought entails a debate with the past, which, in the case of ancient Greek community, refers to a critical engagement with mythico-religious narratives that greatly shaped the socio-political and historico-cultural circumstances of the era. Greek tragedy has its roots in two traditions, the rites of

Dionysius[1] and the Homeric poems. The relationship between Homeric epics and tragedy is built upon tragedy's critical re-consideration of myth, which should be thought on the background of the aforementioned socio-political changes. Vernant (1986/1996) designates epic as the proper source of materials such as themes, characters and plot schemata for tragedy. "Epic," says Vernant (1986/1996) "had presented the great figures of the heroes of former times as models. It had exalted the heroic values, virtues and high deeds" (p. 186). At this point, it is highly important to see that events and characters of Homeric epics are not merely fictional constructs, as "for the Greeks they were not poetry but history, the records of national heroes; Agamemnon and Oedipus were actual kings who had ruled Greek cities" (Muller, 1956, p. 52). In addition to the historical authority of these mythical narrations, they also had the authority of religion: "these stories are the sacred tales of religious cult and recall (or rather create) a time when men and gods were closer than they have been ever since" (Knox, 1984, p. 23).

This mythical and religious context is not taken by tragedy at face value, instead "the heroic past served as a backdrop for the lively investigation of contemporary political, moral, and social issues" (Garland, 2013, p. 293). The investigation turns itself into a critical debate at the hands of tragic writers, who relies on a dichotomy between the chorus and the protagonist. Before anything else, chorus, which was older than tragedy itself, assumed an inestimable role in the composition of tragic drama by building up "an emotional bridge between spectators

[1] Since it is not within the scope of this work, I will not discuss tragedy's roots in the rites of Dionysus. However, Vernant provides an intriguing perspective to the relationship between Dionysian rites and tragic drama, see Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 1986/1996, pp. 181-189.

and actors . . . as if the audience itself were part of the action" (Knox, 1984, p. 21).

Understood in this way, chorus can be perceived as "the collective and anonymous

presence embodied by an official college of citizens" whose primary role "is to

express through its fears, hopes, questions, and judgments the feelings of the

spectators who make up the civic community" (Vernant, 1972/1996, pp. 33-34). In

contrast to chorus, the protagonist of tragedy "is the individualized character whose

actions form the core of the drama and appears as a hero from an age gone by,

always more or less estranged from the ordinary condition of the citizen" (p. 34).

The interplay between the chorus and the protagonist can be examined further

through use of language. Chants of the chorus are presented in lyric form whereas the

passages concerning the heroes are composed in dialogue form written in a meter

that is closer to prose. According to Vernant (1972/1996), the use of lyric in the

chorus "is less concerned to glorify the exemplary virtues of the hero . . . than to

express anxiety and uncertainties about him" (p. 25). So the chorus, and by extension

the civic community, give voice to doubts regarding the mythical narratives of hero-

worship thus undermining the legitimacy and reliability of the traditional

representation of legendary heroes.

On part of the protagonists/heroes, the use of prose-dialogue has a two-fold

function. Firstly, it brings the heroic figures of tragedy closer to ordinary men thus

offers a chance for a dialogue between the world of the citizens and the world of the

heroes (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 24). Secondly, it assumes a critical role by

transforming heroes, particularly through their exchanges with the chorus and with

one another, into subjects of a public debate (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 24). In this

debate, tragedy primarily seeks to establish "a distance between itself and the myths

of the heroes that inspire it [thus] *it scrutinizes them* [emphasis added]" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 26). This distance articulates the critical stance of tragedy in terms of appropriating the past.

Tragedy calls the past narratives of legendary hero and the city-state's socio-historical background into question: "In the new framework of tragic interplay, then, the hero has ceased to be a model. *He has become, both for himself and for others, a problem* [emphasis added]" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 25). In this process, tragedy not only provides a critical reconsideration of the past, but also creates a point of access through which the citizens can reflect upon their socio-political and historico-cultural circumstances concerning the present and the future of each individual as well as the whole of the community. In this respect, the human experience of being present in the world and its interrelation with historico-cultural and socio-political narratives and constructs that shape one's interpretation and relation with respect to the self and the world is taken as a problem to be explored and discussed from the perspective of critical gesture of tragedy. Indeed, as Vernant (1972/1996) points out, the articulation of this problematization exceeds mere imitation and obsolete reiteration, as "it [tragedy] does not reflect that reality but calls it into question. By depicting it rent and divided against itself, it turns it into a problem" (p. 33).

As I have remarked above, the theatrical resources of tragedy provide a unique chance for spectators to witness this questioning on the stage as a dramatization before the entire city. Dramatic performance of a tragedy play sets the stage for a critical self-reflection on part of the spectator: "when the hero is publicly brought into question . . . it is the individual Greek in the audience who discovers himself to be a problem, in and through the presentation of the tragic drama"

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(Vernant, 1986/1996, p. 186). In other words, when particular problems related to past and present of the *polis* are brought into discussion, the individuality of each citizen is called into question as well.

Considered from the perspective of the critical gesture of tragedy, this call into question, in effect, not only articulates the concerns of individual self-reflection and historico-cultural and socio-political criticism, but also interprets them as ontologico-epistemological questions regarding human experience of life. Indeed, as Vernant (1986/1996) states, even though various presentations of the human condition in tragic plays "are connected with individual characters and events and with the particular historical and social framework that surrounds them", ultimately they are discussed with "a much wider resonance and significance" (pp. 246-247).

In other words, tragic thought translates particular context-bound problems into a questioning with respect to one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world defined by impasses, ambiguities, and contradictions:

> From the point of view of tragedy, human beings and human action are seen, not as realities to be pinned down and defined in their essential qualities . . . but as problems that defy resolution, riddles with double meanings that are never fully decoded. (Vernant, 1986/1996, p. 242)

Accordingly, the universal scope of tragedy "lays bare the network of contradictory forces that assail all human beings, given that, not only in Greek society but in all societies and cultures, tensions and conflicts are inevitable" (p. 247). Understood in this way, the critical gesture of tragedy ultimately aims "to submit the human condition, limited and necessarily finite as it is, to general interrogation" (p. 247). In this respect, tragedy entails a grand inquiry into understanding and expressing the

human experience of being present in the world. This inquiry aims to problematize both particularities and universals that go hand in hand.

2.3 The explication of tragic thought: *Oedipus Rex* as the model of the tragic conception of the notion of identity as a pursuit of self-understanding

I have discussed hitherto the significant moments and characteristics of the socio-political and historico-cultural circumstances that gave birth to tragedy in ancient Greece. Now I wish to discuss the fundamental characteristics of tragic thought including the notion of identity as a pursuit of self-understanding, the elucidation of self-understanding as a work of hermeneutical self-interpretation, and the explication of the quest for self-understanding via tragic experience entailing transformations, exposures, and mediation through difference and otherness that undermine sameness and self-identity. I will discuss Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, which remains one of the most outstanding examples in ancient literature presenting the stakes of one's pursuit of self-understanding, as the primary model for the elaboration of these elements. Here my aim is not to provide a detailed explication or literary analysis of Sophocles' play, but to employ it as an exemplary model to flesh out the features that I have mentioned above that constitute the tragic thought. I believe that such demonstration would be fruitful in terms of laying out characteristics of the conception of self and identity from the standpoint of tragic thought.

The fundamental concern of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* is to articulate the arduous path and disorienting experience of one's pursuit of self-understanding. As Bernard Knox (1984) remarks, the story of Oedipus is not originally of Sophocles' making; it was an old and well-known myth to the audience (p. 131). However, what

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made Sophocles' interpretation so influential was that he put the emphasis not on the violation of taboos (patricide and incest prioritized and emphasized by the Freudian conception of Oedipus complex), but on Oedipus' strenuous search for truth regarding his own identity (Knox, 1984, p. 131). Instead of relating this motif of pursuit and recognition of truth to any divine agency (as in the case of Homer), Sophocles emphasizes "the persistent, courageous action of Oedipus himself" (p. 131). Vernant (1972/1996) makes a similar remark on this intransigent attitude saying that Oedipus "is not a man to content himself with half-measures or settle for a compromise", as he remains steadfast in his pursuit of self-knowledge and questioning, "Oedipus goes all the way" (p. 116).

Vernant (1972/1996) underlines that Oedipus "is himself a riddle", an "enigmatic" character who establishes the hallmark of the conception of the tragic self and identity with "the duality of his being" (p. 116). Oedipus' name carries the mark of this double quality, that is, the tragic double bind. Let me elaborate on this on two levels. First, "*oida*" meaning "I know" refers to Oedipus' mental acuity by which he solved the riddle of Sphinx, hence became the king of Thebes as Oedipus the Tyrant (*turannos*) who was perceived almost as a divine being.[2] Second, Oedipus' name also points to his autobiographical origins; he was rejected as a small child by his own father King Laius and was left to the savage nature to die with a swollen (*oidos*) foot (*pous*) (Vernant, 1972/1996, pp. 123-124).

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[2] Vernant (1972/1996) stresses the relationship between the concept of tyranny and godlike power to do anything one wants, which was not only a commonplace understanding in the Greek literature of fifth and fourth centuries, but also a core motif explicated by Euripides and Plato, who equated tyranny to divine beings (*turannos isotheos*) (p. 127). Indeed, at the beginning of *Oedipus Rex*, the priest of Zeus, addressing Oedipus, speaks of kneeling before "your [Oedipus'] altars," (Sophocles, pp. 160-161), which is, in fact, a representation of the altar of Apollo (Sophocles, p. 211). As Knox (1984) remarks, Oedipus "acts, and is seen by his fellow-citizens, as almost divine" (p. 405).

Indeed, as I shall discuss, not only the characterization of Oedipus, but also the very structure of the plot of *Oedipus Rex* is based on the play of such double meanings and linguistic ambivalences. The significant aspect of this doubleness is that it is presented as a co-existence of mutually exclusive qualities in the characterization. In other words, Oedipus is not characterized through the logic of either/or because the whole of the truth presents him as "*both* the equal of the gods *and* the equal of nothing at all [emphasis added]" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 119). Indeed, as the plot progresses, "the figure of Oedipus the Sage, placed far above other men, is revered like a god as the unchallenged master of justice who holds in his hands the salvation of the entire city" becomes at the end of the play "Oedipus the Swollen Foot" which embodies "the lowest degree of degradation . . . the abominable defilement in whom all the world's impurity is concentrated" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 125). The demi-god (*turannos*) status of Oedipus at the same time marks his subhuman, abject, and scapegoat-like (*pharmakos*) quality.[3] Peter Szondi (1961/2002) emphasizes this concurrence by pointing out that Oedipus as "the savior of Thebes proves himself to be *simultaneously* [emphasis added] its destroyer" (pp. 62-63). Similarly, the antagonistic tensions of contradictory qualities characterizing Oedipus present him as a great model for the tragic conception of the self that is divided, doubled, and ambiguous.

It is of utmost importance to see that Sophocles confers a general significance to the characterization of Oedipus by presenting him as the principal model of human condition (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 119, 131). This is most clearly observed in the exchange between Oedipus and the chorus, where Oedipus is called as the "great

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[3] For a detailed account of *pharmakos-turannos* polarity, see Vernant, 1972/1996, pp. 126-130.

example" (*paradeigma*) (Sophocles, p. 233), meaning that he is characterized as a paradigm whose axis provides the core of tragic thought articulating "the fragility of all human prosperity and achievement" (Knox, 1984, p. 413). Indeed, as Vernant (1972/1996) strikingly points out, the message of tragedy becomes clearer to the extent that one forgoes his conception of rigid discrepancies to reach the tragic awareness articulating "that words, values, men themselves, are ambiguous, that the universe is one of conflict" (p. 43). This awareness crystallizes the characterization of Oedipus as the model defining tragic thought's outlook on human condition, which articulates that "man is not a being that can be described or defined; he is a problem, a riddle the double meanings of which are inexhaustible" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 121). In this respect, tragedy conceives human being as an enigma, that is, a riddle ridden with a manifold of double meanings, uncertainties, conundrums, and antagonisms.

2.3.1 The riddle of Sphinx as the riddle of self-knowledge

However, it goes without saying that tragic thought's conception of human being as an enigma and a riddle is not a sort of crude mystification that obscurely declares human being to be an unintelligible mystery beyond comprehension. On the contrary, by taking human being and human action as riddle, tragic thought articulates that human experience of being in the world entails double binds, conundrums, paradoxes, and conflicts that do not easily yield to fulfilling solutions and reconciliations. To that extent, tragic thought conceives human condition as a riddle in the sense that it is characterized by a state of great distress where conflicting elements always stay together in rending tension without clear resolutions.

I wish to elaborate on this notion of riddle, because it is not only an important aspect of *Oedipus Rex* but also, as I shall discuss in next heading, it defines a fundamental aspect in the tragic conception of the notion of identity as a pursuit of self-understanding. What is striking in riddles is that the wording of the question is constructed in such a way that it leaves the addressee baffled and confused. In *Poetics*, Aristotle remarks this eccentricity by saying that riddles essentially "attach impossibilities to a description of real things" (58a25-26). This is to say that the quasi-cryptic nature of riddles disturb the ordinary manner of semantics and referentiality in terms of describing things and events. Affirming Aristotle's description of riddle, Vernant (1972/1996) points out that "riddles join together terms that are irreconcilable" (p. 121). Indeed, riddles reverse the commonsense conceptions of meaning thus they entail the tragic coexistence of incompatible elements in tension. Understood in this way, the riddle of Sphinx –even though it is only implied in the play, the riddle plays a significant role in the myth of Oedipus in Greek literature– constitutes one of the most fundamental components of the plot of *Oedipus Rex* (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 120).

I wish to take a closer look both to the structure of the riddle of Sphinx and the significations of this riddle in relation to the story of *Oedipus Rex*. After the death of Thebes' ruler King Laius (Oedipus' father), the city falls into the hands of the Sphinx who ravages it by a deadly plague. The Sphinx sits at the crossroads and asks the following riddle to everyone that wishes to enter to Thebes: "What is the creature with one voice that has two, three, and four feet?" Oedipus is the first one who gives the correct answer: "human." The riddle refers to three successive phases of human

life in the sense that a child crawls on four legs, an adult stands firmly on his two feet, and an old man leans on his stick.

Underlining its linguistic nuances, Vernant (1972/1996) explains the riddle's structure as follows: "Who is the being that is at the same time *dipous*, *tripous*, and *tetrapous*? For *oi-dipous* [*dipous* meaning 'two-footed'] the mystery is an apparent, not a real one: Of course the answer is himself, man" (p. 124). The answer is correct only on the surface though. As Vernant (1972/1996) points out, the deceptive simplicity of the riddle hides its complexity: "The true problem that is still masked is: What then is man, what is Oedipus?" (p. 124). In other words, the question of what it means to be human still remains unanswered, yet Oedipus is blind to this just as he is blind to himself.

As can be seen, the riddle's complexity corresponds to the multi-layered characterization of Oedipus ridden with double-meanings and conundrums. Sophocles' play articulates this mutuality by means of employing what Vidal-Naquet (1986/1996) calls "double speeches" (*dissoi logoi*) (p. 319).[4] Operating through lexical ambiguity, the double speech is the use of the same expression to denote conflicting meanings, positions, claims, or theses whose semantic significations are different from each other.

Vernant's (1972/1996) meticulous explication of the following line from *Oedipus Rex* provides a good example for the use of double speeches. With regard to

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[4] Sophocles' *Antigone* contains similar elements as well. For instance, the word *nómos* denotes for Creon "an edict promulgated by the head of state" whereas in the discourse of Antigone it embodies "the religious rule" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 113). There are also other curious examples where the very structure of the plays can be considered through notions of ambiguity and *peripeteia* as is the case with *Electra* and *Oedipus Rex* (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 116; Vidal-Naquet, 1986/1996, pp. 319-320).

solving the murder of Laius (Oedipus' father), Oedipus says, "By going right back, in my turn, to the beginning [of the events that remained unknown] I am the one who will bring them to light [*egō phanō*]" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 118; Sophocles, p. 167). Of course, as the plot unfolds, eventually it is revealed that the perpetrator in question is no one but Oedipus himself. In this sense, the expression *egō phanō* functions as a double speech by juxtaposing the questions of "who killed Laius?" (interrogation regarding the crime) and "who is Oedipus?" (the hidden answer of the interrogation). Vernant (1972/1996) translates the double meaning of *egō phanō* from the perspective of Oedipus as follows: "It is I who will bring the criminal to light" and *simultaneously* "I shall discover myself to be the criminal" (p. 118).

The notion of doubleness that is at play in the very name of Oedipus also operates as the tragic twist of the riddle of Sphinx. Oedipus provides the correct answer, enters Thebes, and becomes a king; yet he simultaneously takes another step towards his own disaster, as he will commit incest and learn the truth of his own act of patricide. Thought from this point of view, however, it goes without saying that the use of double speeches is not a mere rhetorical device for the purposes of creating nuances through word plays. On the contrary, tragedy's use of double speeches, in fact, presents the very nature of the course of acquiring self-knowledge from the standpoint of tragic thought by articulating it as a pursuit entailing suspicions, ambiguities, and contradictions.

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2.3.2 The notion of tragic experience and the question of self-understanding as hermeneutical self-interpretation

Considered from the perspective of the riddle-solving element defining Oedipus' story, as I have discussed above, I claim that tragic thought presents the idea that the pursuit of self-understanding is, at the bottom, a matter of hermeneutical interpretation. In *Oedipus Rex*, this idea takes the form of a process of deciphering including solving the riddle of Sphinx, decoding the meaning of the Tiresias' oracle –which is defined in the play as "the riddle posed by god" (Sophocles, p. 182)– and the gradual unfolding of the intricacies of the double meaning of Oedipus' name.

However, none of these elements of deciphering/interpretation corresponds to a sort of serene and sheltered reflection. On the contrary, they entail a series of devastating encounters that radically shift one's self-interpretation. Indeed, while solving the riddle, Oedipus actually encounters himself without, of course, being fully aware of what is entailed in this encounter. The oracles of Tiresias, himself a figure of otherness par excellence, eventually lead Oedipus to confront with who he is and what he had done. In other words, the double meaning at work in Oedipus' name, that is, the very doubleness of his existence, becomes unfolded via a series of radical encounters, recognitions, and transformations on part of Oedipus.

I wish to discuss this idea of self-understanding as a process of hermeneutical interpretation and the tragic experience that entails radical shifts of interpretation regarding one's relation with respect to the self and the world. One interprets to understand, yet understanding is not necessarily related to conceptually grasping a problem or methodically solving a question. From a hermeneutical point of view, it entails a form of exposure in which one "encounters the other in its otherness . . . as

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that which resists the grasp of my own knowledge" (Bruns, 1992, p. 180). The process of self-understanding through this exposure characterizes the fundamental dimension of tragic experience in which the impossibility of thoroughly re-appropriating the other/the otherness within one's own conceptual schema results in a radical shift of one's own self-interpretation (Bruns, 1992, p. 180). In this respect, the entire process becomes an event of "self-estrangement" where the interpreter, the one who pursues self-knowledge, is "left unguarded or exposed to the other as well as to oneself and the world" (Bruns, 1992, p. 180). I wish to elaborate on this process of self-understanding as a hermeneutical interpretation and the tragic experience that characterizes this process by establishing a dialogue between Paul Ricoeur and G.W.F. Hegel regarding the notions of self, identity, and subject.

In *Oneself as Another*, Paul Ricoeur (1990/1994) expounds that the notion of identity is fundamentally composed of two interrelated dimensions as sameness (idem) and selfhood (ipse). Sameness entails the recognition, appropriation, and affirmation of identity by means of elements such as self-identity, coherence, consistency, unity, and selfsameness. Selfhood, on the other hand, includes elements such as change, contingency, and mutability that might resist to the operations of the elements of sameness. As Ricoeur (1990/1994) points out, these two dimensions at work in the formation of identity of a character in course of literary narrations are in constant shift and modulation between coherence and incoherence, unity and disorder, constancy and inconstancy (p. 246).

Ricoeur (1990/1994) remarks that "the limit cases" of literature that deal with one's pursuit of self-understanding, such as the works of Beckett, Joyce, Woolf, and Musil, and so forth, articulates the radical changes in the relationship between

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sameness and selfhood, which borders on a state of crisis that Ricoeur calls "the loss of identity" (p. 149). What does this loss of identity entail exactly from the standpoint of the dynamic relationship between sameness and selfhood? In course of one's pursuit of self-understanding, the event of the loss of identity fleshes out a shift in which sameness is in withdrawal, hence leaving selfhood exposed: "these unsettling cases of narrativity [limit cases] can be reinterpreted as *exposing selfhood by taking away the support of sameness* [emphasis added]" (Ricoeur, 1990/1994, p. 149). In this respect, the loss of identity entails the disqualification of the superimposition of sameness and self, which ultimately articulates the exposition of selfhood without the support of sameness.

Selfhood without sameness, in effect, means that the notion of identity that comes across as pursuit of self-understanding guided by the question "who am I?" does not refer to a single, coherent, unified, self-identical and selfsame subject. Instead, one encounters in the exposition of selfhood without sameness what Ricoeur (1990/1994) expresses as the "nothingness of identity" (p. 166) that is at play in the loss of identity. However, this nothingness ascribed to the identity and self of the subject is not sidestepping the question of self-understanding. Indeed, as Ricoeur (1990/1994) remarks, "this nothingness is not the nothing of which there is nothing to say. . . 'nothing' would mean nothing at all if 'nothing' were not in fact attributed to an 'I'" (p. 166). If the event of the loss of identity, which I have remarked above, attributes nothingness to the subject, that is, to the "I", in what Ricoeur referred as the "nothingness of identity", it is not to disqualify the notion of subject but to reformulate it in a negative modulation as a non-subject. I shall explain this negative modulation below.

What is at work in this negative modulation? "A non-subject is not nothing," says Ricoeur (1991), because otherwise "we would not be interested in this drama of dissolution and we would not be thrown into confusion by it if the non-subject were not still a figure of the subject, even in the negative mode" (p. 78). In other words, the nothingness of identity encountered in the loss of identity entails the reformulation of the subject as non-subject in a negative modulation, which principally underlines the absence of the elements of sameness supporting selfhood. In this respect, it is precisely through this negative modulation, that is, in the withdrawal of sameness that the self comes out into the open without being appropriated as coherent, unified, self-identical and selfsame subject.

The call for the subject to come out into the open voiced by the question of self-understanding ("who am I?"), as I have remarked above, situates the subject into the region of the question where the notions of identity and self are bereft of the support of elements of sameness. Posing the question in this region and in this fashion, as Ricoeur expounds, eventually fleshes out a moment characterized as "the existential 'crisis' of the self", where the subject "pass[es] through the crucible of this nothingness of identity" (Ricoeur, 1990/1994, p. 166). By defining the course of self-understanding as a crisis in which one undergoes the nothingness of identity, Ricoeur articulates a form of experience peculiar to tragic experience of self-understanding. Indeed, Ricoeur underlines that this experience fleshed out in the event of the loss of identity entails "moments of extreme destitution. . . [which] refers not to the nullity but to the nakedness of the question [of self and identity]" (Ricoeur, 1990/1994, pp. 166-197). The nakedness of the question, as I will explain below, constitutes the core of Ricoeur's conception of identity.

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The nakedness of the question concerning self and identity articulated in this state of crisis does not correspond, as Ricoeur's remark points out, to the disqualification of the question, but actually marks the inaugural moment of the essential questioning of self and identity. Indeed, asked in this openness, the question of self-understanding as "who am I?" leaves the subject naked without the support of sameness. That is to say, situated in the openness of this stark question of self-understanding, one is called to pose the question "who am I?" once more. However, this time the question is asked by undergoing the despairing experience of the loss of identity as an open-ended question where the notions of self, identity, and subject are not defined by or reduced into any pre-given sameness and fixed point of attachment.

By establishing a dialogue with Hegel, I wish to elaborate on this Ricoeurian emphasis on the question of self-understanding as an experience of ontologico-epistemological crisis, which entails the exposure of selfhood in the withdrawal of sameness where the subject encounters the nothingness of identity that redefines the subject as non-subject in a negative modulation. I basically claim that what Ricoeur proposes here has an affiliation with the work of negativity in Hegel's concept of experience as *Erfahrung* defining the process of self-understanding that situates the subject in mediation through the other/otherness and self-differentiation.

In *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807/1977), Hegel presents the acquisition of self-consciousness as an experience of self-understanding. Hegel (1807/1977) defines this experience (*Erfahrung*) as "reversal of consciousness (*Umkehrung des Bewusstseins*)" (p. 55). The movement of consciousness in question here is principally "something that goes beyond limits, and since these limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself" (Hegel, 1807/1977, p. 51). In its own reversal,

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consciousness folds back upon itself through trespassing its own limits thus "suffers violence at its own hands" (Hegel, 1807/1977, p. 51). The experience characterizing the entire course of this movement is defined by an unceasing tension and restlessness: "When consciousness feels this violence . . . it can find no peace. If it wishes to remain in a state of unthinking inertia, then thought troubles its thoughtlessness, and its own unrest disturbs its inertia" (Hegel, 1807/1977, p. 51). In this sense, the course of self-realization of consciousness is "regarded as the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely as the way of despair" (Hegel, 1807/1977, p. 49). Recall that Ricoeur emphasized a similar aspect regarding the experience of self-understanding that takes place through moments of extreme destitution and despair in one's encounter with the nothingness of identity in the event of the loss of identity, which exposes self as it stands out naked and in the open without the support of sameness.

In the thought of Hegel, this process is structured upon a work of negativity that entails an indispensible necessity for mediation through otherness. The path of self-consciousness, namely, the course of self-understanding, is that of strife and disquiet because it is fundamentally defined by the work of negativity operating on two levels. First, the entire dialectical movement of self-consciousness is based on a disproportion where consciousness is never identical to itself. This amounts to say that the tautological structure of the immediacy of self-identity (I am I) is negated, that is, it is situated in mediation through the other/otherness (non-I) within the dialectics of self-consciousness. Second, the other/otherness is not an external appendage to consciousness, but rather constitutes the very condition for the emergence of the self (Ferro, 2013, p. 2). This is what Hegel calls "the return from otherness" (*die Rückkehr aus dem Anderssein*), a movement where "the self is

defined, negatively, by what it is not" (Ferro, 2013, p. 4). As such, the self and the

other become co-dependent and dialectical movement towards self-knowledge is

defined by infinite dynamism through the work of negation (Ferro, 2013, pp. 3-4). It

goes without saying that this dialectical mediation entails a process of self-alienation

in the sense that consciousness alienates itself from itself with a gesture of self-

differentiation, poses an otherness within it, then mediates through that otherness to

return back to itself.[5]

What can be said, from the viewpoint of the affiliation between Ricoeur and

Hegel, about the work of negation understood as such? As I have argued above, for

Ricoeur, the process of self-understanding entails the destitute experience of the

nothingness of identity encountered in the event of the loss of identity. In this event,

the subject is redefined in a negative modulation as non-subject, which means that

the self is brought out into the open where it stands naked and exposed without the

support of sameness. Considered from the standpoint of Hegelian negativity, this

process entails that self is exposed to the other/otherness residing within itself

precisely at the moment when the support of sameness is taken away. In this respect,

the work of negativity operates as a dialectical negation of self as something

immediately selfsame, coherent, unified, and self-identical as it situates the process

of self-understanding in mediation through otherness, that is, it defines the self

precisely by means of what it is not. From the standpoint of Ricoeur's thought, this

amounts to say that without the support of the elements of sameness, that is, when

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[5] In *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1980/1994), Heidegger succinctly describes this movement as follows: "Through the experience [*Erfahrung*] which consciousness undergoes with itself, consciousness becomes other to itself. But this becoming-different-to-itself is exactly a coming-to-itself" (p. 22).

the self is not defined and appropriated as something selfsame, self-identical, unified, and singular, the self is configured as an open-ended question that entails change, mutability, contingency in its mediation through otherness and difference.

Self-understanding as hermeneutical interpretation, understood along these Hegelian and Ricoeurian lines, does not entail a tautological self-affirmation but articulates the inescapability of mediation through otherness and difference. This is the main idea at work in tragedy's conception of the notion of identity taken as one's pursuit of self-knowledge. Indeed, as Bruns (1992) remarks, the tragic experience of the pursuit of self-understanding is "inevitably painful, because it entails the defeat of will or desire, the breakdown of design or expectation, of power and projection" (p. 184). The tragic overtones of this Hegelian *Erfahrung* of self-understanding fundamentally denote "*an event that one undergoes and from which one cannot turn back because one has been turned into someone else* [emphasis added]" (Bruns, 1992, p. 155). That is to say, to put in Ricoeurian terms, one is not the same person in the aftermath of the tragic experience because one has lost the support of the elements of sameness constituting his identity thus remains face to face with the nakedness of his own selfhood exposed to otherness and difference.

In this sense, tragic thought entails that the pursuit of self-knowledge is an experience that is essentially destructive, which takes place, as I have also emphasized above via Ricoeur and Hegel, "through suffering and destitution" (Bruns, 1992, p. 182). On the other hand, this destructiveness of the tragic experience, at the bottom, a metamorphic displacement, namely, the negativity, otherness, and difference at play in this experience articulates a form of exposure and transformation that "places us in the open, in the region of the question. . . [where]

one's conceptual resources have been blown away by what one has encountered. . .
one finds itself radically situated with no place to hide" (Bruns, 1992, p. 184). It is
through this tragic experience that the ruination of former knowledge and
interpretation regarding one's relation to the self and the world can be revitalized as a
transformative questioning that takes place out in the open, where the breakdown of
the economy of sameness exposes one to the radical contingency and ambiguity of
the self and the world.

Having demonstrated and elucidated what is at work in the course of the
tragic experience of self-understanding on a theoretical level, I wish to turn back and
pick up the thread to discuss how tragic experience takes place in the exemplary
model case of Oedipus. Tragic experience exposes Oedipus to who he is through an
experience of self-estrangement. The curious aspect here is that virtually nothing
about Oedipus changes, yet his perception of himself, that is, his self-interpretation
becomes radically altered (Bruns, 1992, p. 185). This is the core element in the event
of exposure and transformation on part of Oedipus; he is exposed to the otherness
constituting his own self, hence his self-interpretation undergoes a radical
transformation.

Indeed, when Oedipus is asked to live up to his name and save the city of
Thebes from the plague, his identity, or, more precisely, the doubleness of his name
is tried before a tribunal. The whole process of this test of identity/name, which
comprises the plot, is a course of self-alienation. It works, as Bruns (1992) remarks,
"to confirm the identity of Oedipus by estranging him from it" (p. 184). This self-
alienation must be understood in the context of my discussion above with respect to
negativity as mediation through otherness and difference. In this regard, it is through

this test that Oedipus' ignorance with respect to his own identity appears clearly. When Oedipus acquires self-knowledge, which is to say, when he recognizes the otherness and difference residing within his own self, the doubleness of his name is confirmed as well. Bruns (1992) suggests that "the story of Oedipus is about the implacable reality of this otherness, its inescapability as Fate" (p. 185). Indeed, the traditional thought categorizes *Oedipus Rex* as tragedy of fate, and the notion of fate here must be understood "as the otherness of identity, or reality, that which we seek to avoid but meet willy-nilly at the crossroads" (Bruns, 1992, p. 185). Later in my discussion of Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, I will explain how this doubleness of the name, which is the very doubleness and multiplicity of one's identity, and the meaning of fate understood as such are at play in the characterization process of Hikmet Benol.

In this regard, Oedipus' recognition as *anagnōrisis* is not a discovery of a purely new knowledge regarding his own identity and deeds. In the tragic experience, recognition is an event of exposure to this otherness that at the same time fleshes out the limits of self-recognition. Bruns (1992) stresses the fact that "Oedipus encounters the limits of self-understanding, *or that his self-understanding encounters the limits of the human or the same, which is to say, the limits of the speakable* [emphasis added]" (p. 185). This encounter with the limits of sameness is at once the opening up of a radical difference and otherness haunting the question of identity and self, that is, the pursuit of self-knowledge from the beginning.

Indeed, to put it in Ricoeurian and Hegelian terms, what is at stake in undergoing the tragic experience as *Erfahrung* is the abandonment (or the transgression of the limits) of sameness understood as idem-identity and giving

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oneself to the ambiguity brought up by this difference that crystallizes the riddle of self as ipse-identity in its nakedness. It is in this sense that the tragic experience marks the borders of the speakable, which is to say that it upsets, disconcerts, and questions the very possibility of the representation of the self in coherence and unity.

It is imperative at this point to recall the aforementioned remark by Vernant, which underlines that in the course of the events Oedipus the Sage becomes Oedipus the Swollen Foot, thus the demi-god (*turannos*) status of Oedipus manifests its own otherness as an abject/scapegoat (*pharmakos*) character trait. Oedipus as "the stain" (*miasma*) of the land is uncontainable within the borders of the city, that is, the borders defining the communal representability of identity within community (Bruns, p. 185). As such, Oedipus is singled out and expelled from the community of Thebes; he becomes *apolis* (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 137).

The well-known ending of the play, in effect, presents us the standpoint of Theban community from the mouth of Oedipus, who defines this otherness and difference on his own part as a monstrosity that should be expelled. In anguish and despair, Oedipus plucks his eyes out and mourns: "I am abomination – heart and soul! I must be exiled" because now he is the man that "no alien, no citizen welcomes to his house, *law forbids it* [emphasis added] – not a word to me in public, driven out of every hearth and home" (Sophocles, p. 206). To be *apolis* is to be *anómos*; being exiled from the land, the home, and the community makes one an outlaw, an outsider of law and society.

In this respect, the aforementioned tragic reversal of the riddle comes forth once more. It shows that it is his triumph over the Sphinx that "turns Oedipus into, not the solution that he guessed, but the very question posed, *not a man like other*

men but a creature of confusion and chaos . . . a man in the shape of a riddle

[emphasis added]" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 138). Since Oedipus is the *paradeigma* of

human condition, his search for self-knowledge through severe self-questioning

ultimately signifies what Vernant (1972/1996) remarkably presents as follows:

> When man decides, like Oedipus, to carry the inquiry into what he is as far as
> it can go, he discovers himself to be enigmatic, without consistency, without
> any domain of his own or any fixed point of attachment, with no defined
> essence, oscillating between being the equal of the gods and the equal of
> nothing at all. His real greatness consists in the very thing that expresses his
> enigmatic nature: his questioning. (p. 139)

As such, Oedipus' pursuit of self-knowledge constitutes the primary model that

expresses the process of questioning and self-understanding, in which the question of

self is revealed to be a problem ridden with conflicts, tensions, conundrums, and

double-binds. By means of conceiving human beings and human action as riddle

with double meanings and significations that cannot be clearly resolved, tragic

thought characterizes one's pursuit of self-knowledge, and, to that extent, one's

relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world, as agonistic and

paradoxical.

2.4 The conception of the tragic self and identity in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*: Hikmet Benol

as a tragic character

I have discussed hitherto the fundamental characteristics of tragic thought via using

Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* as primary model. Now I wish to explore how these

fundamental characteristics and conceptions are at play in Oğuz Atay's tragic

thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*.

In the beginning of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, the protagonist Hikmet Benol comes across as a man who lives in a two-stored wooden house, or, as he likes to call it *gecekondu*, with his friend Colonel Hüsamettin. His marriage to Sevgi and love affair with Bilge ended in failure, and he lives off from a small amount of money while trying to write plays with his friend Colonel Hüsamettin. As I have stated in the Introduction, these plays are not idle intellectual exercises, but fictional constructs through which Hikmet tries to understand himself and the world. Indeed, as the labyrinthine plot of the novel unfolds, it is seen that Hikmet is assailed by a haunting need and exigency to understand himself, which gradually turns into a monomaniacal obsession in pursuit of self-knowledge. Accordingly, Hikmet sets himself the task to undertake a radical self-criticism for truly understanding himself at last.

This task, however, is defined not only as a personal need, but also refers to a significant problem in the socio-political and historico-cultural realm. Indeed, Hikmet states that such indispensable task of self-criticism for acquiring self-knowledge and understanding the world is absent in Turkish society. This absence haunts him in form of an exigency to set himself on a path to undertake what is necessary in his pursuit of self-understanding: "By pursuing 'the question of self-criticism' on my own, which I think is absent in our country, I've become one of the first victims of this pursuit" (p. 335, own translation, see Appendix A, 1). This relation between the struggle for self-understanding and becoming the victim of this endeavor, as I shall discuss below, is the primary tragic motif that pervades Hikmet's search for self-knowledge.

As I have stated in the Introduction, Hikmet Benol's exchanges and interactions with Colonel Hüsamettin provide fruitful insights into his pursuit of self-

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understanding. Here I will focus and elaborate on a scene from the novel that takes place in the thirteenth chapter titled *Korku* (Fear). The relationship between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin is presented through a therapy session, in which Hikmet becomes the patient/client and Colonel Hüsamettin is characterized as the doctor/psychologist. Indeed, even though I am not going to pursue its connotations here, one might even call this a Freudian session of psychoanalysis for Hikmet lies down on a couch and talks about how he feels and what he thinks while Colonel Hüsamettin listens.

2.4.1 The characterization of Hikmet Benol's self and identity from the standpoint of tragic thought

In any case, what I would like to focus here is that this scene established through an exchange between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin offers a profound insight into the characterization of Hikmet's self and identity, which I will explore and discuss from the standpoint of tragic thought. Hikmet describes himself to Colonel Hüsamettin as follows:

> My hands are taken from the corpse of a man who has been buried recently; we couldn't understand who that was . . . was he a painter, or a writer? . . . I think he was just a poor guy, made up of many different people who are clumsily patched up together, just like me. Doctor, there are also sinister rumors saying that some of my inner organs are taken from a slaughterhouse. . . I know doctor, you are most curious about my heart. They say that it belongs to me. Now that is something I cannot stand. Besides, is it possible to mention a thing such as "I" amidst all these different pieces? Aren't all these parts taken from somewhere else? But, who am I then? To which part do I serve? . . . I wish you could know the mess in me. I've suffered a lot to put all my pieces together to become Hikmet. They say that these pieces are not taken from people who lived in the same age; they belonged to people of different races, religions, and languages. For this reason I've wobbled across different feelings and thoughts. I've become the plaything of fate . . . Now I see, doctor: Pieces taken from the East are in revolt against the West . . . and

my heart cannot bear these contradictions. (pp. 336-337, own translation, see Appendix A, 2)

In this pivotal passage, the question of self and identity entailed in Hikmet's pursuit of self-understanding –"who am I then?"– is preceded by a suspicion raised with regard to this question itself: "Is it possible to mention a thing such as 'I' amidst all these different pieces?" This is significant aspect in the flow of the passage, because it underlines an act of submitting from the outset the conception of "I" as a coherent, unified, and self-identical entity into question with a gesture of radical self-criticism. As can be seen from the passage, the name "Hikmet", that is, the denominator of the first person singular pronoun "I" as the marker of the subject, does not signify a unified and coherent self, but rather it entails a conglomeration of radically estranged layers involving geographical, historico-cultural, socio-political, temporal, racial, linguistic, and religious differences.

Understood in this way, the superimposition of the selfhood (ipse) and sameness (idem) constituting what Ricoeur (1991) calls "the anchorage of the proper name" (p. 78) is taken to its limits. In this state, the linguistic denominator of the self and identity ("I"/"Hikmet") is robbed of the support of the sameness precisely because the self and identity is structured through the mediation of mutually exclusive and estranged qualities. As such, the passage quoted above depicts the self and identity of Hikmet in its nakedness bereft of the elements that support sameness, coherence, and consistency. Indeed, Hikmet's question "who am I then?" articulates a complex series of mediations that characterize his self and identity through destabilizing difference and otherness.

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Another aspect that I wish to point out in the passage quoted above with respect to the identity and self of Hikmet is the corporeal dimension. In order to elaborate on this dimension, I will establish a dialogue between Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty. I claim that the radical divergences, differences, and plethora of layers pervading Hikmet's identity and self correspond to the manifold of significations inscribed on his body.

As Ricoeur (1990/1994) points out, the configuration of identity in the tension between selfhood (ipse) and sameness (idem) at once corresponds to the configuration of the corporeality of the character, "insofar as the body as one's own is a dimension of oneself, the imaginative variations *around* the corporeal condition are variations on the self and its selfhood" (p. 150). That is to say, any consideration of self and identity is always already an engagement with the corporeality, and in this sense, "the feature of selfhood belonging to corporeality is extended to that of the world as it is inhabited corporeally" (Ricoeur, 1990/1994, p. 150). Understood in this way, the corporeal existence entails the various modulations of one's way of being in the world and with others.

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1996) aptly describes this corporeal presence as a state of interrelatedness: "True reflection presents me to myself not as an idle and inaccessible subjectivity, but as identical with my presence in the world and to others" (p. 452). As I have remarked above, Hikmet's body maps out the vast network of differences and relations. In this sense, his corporeality becomes what Merleau-Ponty (1945/1996) calls "intersubjective field": "I am all that I see, I am an intersubjective field, not despite my body and historical situation, but, on the contrary, by being this body and this situation, and through them, all the rest" (p.

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452). In this respect, this intersubjectivity entails that one's self, identity, and corporeality is defined by being embedded in the world. In other words, from the perspective of the notion of corporeality, this embeddedness comprises one's orientation in the world towards oneself and the other, which Merleau-Ponty (1945/1996) articulates in a concise remark: "the body is our anchorage in the world" (p. 144).

Recall that, as I have discussed above, Ricoeur also uses the expression "anchorage" to define the fundamental function of the proper name, which I have pointed out in relation to my discussion of Hikmet's self and identity. Is it not possible to think together the Ricoeurian anchorage of the proper name and the Merleau-Pontyian definition of the body as an anchorage of our being in the world that comes across in the field opened up by intersubjectivity? What can such thinking articulate with respect to the characterization of Hikmet Benol?

As I have discussed above with regard to the passage quoted, Hikmet's self and identity consists of radically estranged qualities involving socio-political, historico-cultural, linguistic, and temporal differences. It goes without saying that, by virtue of this intersubjectivity defined by corporeal embeddedness, Hikmet's body is characterized, just as his self and identity, in an unceasing dialogue with the multiplicity of the world as an open canvas rewritten by differences extending across divergent continents, ages, and cultures. However, this dialogue is not of consensus and complacency, but consists of tensions, conundrums, and antagonisms.

Considering this point of view on the background of the affinity that I have proposed between Ricoeur's idea of proper name as an anchorage and Merleau-Pontyian definition of the body as the anchorage of one's being in the world, I claim

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that what is fundamentally at work in the characterization of Hikmet Benol is the loss of these anchorages. This loss of anchorages does not mean the erasure of self, identity, or corporeality, but rather it entails that the question of self-knowledge (who am I?), from the standpoint of tragic thought, brings one face to face with the complexity of the self, identity, and corporeality characterized by otherness, difference, and antagonisms. It is this confrontation, as I have also discussed above in relation to Oedipus' story, that is entailed in the disorienting tragic experience of self-understanding. In this respect, the loss of anchorages comes across as the loss of directions. That is to say, it is the articulation of a sort of wandering off the beaten track in the course of tragic experience of self-understanding, in which one has to encounter and traverse multitude of difference, otherness, and ambiguities that stand in great tension and antagonism defining one's interpretation and relation with respect to the self and the world.

It is in this wandering that the paths of Oedipus and Hikmet coincide, and they face with the riddle of Sphinx, that is, they encounter their own self and identity in the shape of a riddle. Recall that the riddle-like characterization of Oedipus' self and identity is given in the tragic doubleness entailed in his name. I would like to argue that there is a parallel tragic doubleness at play in Hikmet Benol's name that articulates the riddle-like characterization of his self and identity as well. The doubleness at play, in this sense, offers a point of comparison between Hikmet and Oedipus.

The wittily constructed doubleness of Hikmet Benol's name entails the intricacies of his pursuit of self-understanding. The first name "Hikmet", which can be translated as "wisdom", designates a certain mastery of knowledge signifying a

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form of sagacity (just as Oedipus the Sage). On the other hand, the surname "Benol",

which can be translated as "becoming-I", which denotes a process or "be myself!",

that is, which expresses an imperative. Both translations articulate a demand for a

sort of clear and unequivocal self-knowledge by which one defines who he is,

namely, reaches into a definition of his "I". Understood in this way, I wish to

elucidate the significations of Hikmet's name on two levels. First, the relationship

between the first name and the surname, in effect, fleshes out the main aim of the

pursuit of self-understanding. As I have remarked above, Hikmet takes upon himself

to understand who he is as a task of radical self-criticism. The imperative expression

at work in the surname "Benol" as "be myself" emphasizes Hikmet's burdening task.

In this sense, one has to learn and know to be prudent and wise enough (Hikmet) to

reach a truthful self-interpretation to know who he really is, that is, to accomplish the

task of a long process of becoming an "I" (Benol). Second, what is expressed in the

surname as the core of self-knowledge, that is, one's struggle to be who he is that

comes across as becoming an "I" (Benol) is already articulated by the

prudence/sagacity in the first name (Hikmet) as an impossibility of becoming an "I".

However, this does not simply mean that one cannot be who he is. Rather, the

impossibility in question entails that coherent, unified, and self-identical "I" is

simply unattainable. Indeed, at the bottom, is this not the core idea articulated in the

passage I have quoted and discussed above with regard to the characterization of

Hikmet Benol's self and identity as a dazzling plethora of layers entailing

destabilizing and disorienting differences, ambiguities, and otherness? Recall that in

the passage quoted above, Hikmet first asks "is it possible to mention a thing such as

'I' amidst all these different pieces?" before posing the question of self-knowledge

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"who am I then?". As I have remarked above, this is a significant aspect in the passage because it submits from the outset the conception of "I" as a coherent, unified, and self-identical entity into question with a gesture of radical self-criticism. Considered from the standpoint of the elucidation of Hikmet Benol's name, with this gesture Hikmet, in fact, articulates the impossibility –understood in the context I have just discussed– residing within the tragic doubleness of his own name.

Indeed, this is the reason why, in the passage quoted above, Hikmet enigmatically states that "I've become the plaything of fate." As I have argued via Bruns (1992) in my discussion with respect to Oedipus' self-interpretation that fate, at the bottom, articulates one's encounter with "the otherness of identity, or reality, that which we seek to avoid but meet willy-nilly at the crossroads" (p. 185). I would like to suggest a similar reading in reference to Hikmet's statement that he has become the plaything of fate. That is to say, Hikmet's self-understanding through radical self-questioning entails an encounter "the implacable reality of this otherness, its inescapability as Fate" (Bruns, 1992, p. 185). Becoming a plaything of fate, in this sense, means that Hikmet's self and identity cannot be articulated without an encounter with the otherness and difference residing within the strenuous antagonism and tension –characterized by, as I have discussed at length, divergent geographical, historico-cultural, socio-political, temporal, linguistic elements– defining his identity.

2.4.2 The dramatization of Hikmet Benol's divided self: "Crowd of Hikmets"

Now I wish to explore and discuss another layer at work in the characterization of Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist that articulates Hikmet's self and identity in a radically discordant fashion. In the fourteenth chapter titled *Büyük Oyun* (The Grand

Play), which is preceded by the thirteenth chapter titled *Korku* (Fear) that I have examined at length above, Atay presents a dramatization of the inner antagonisms, contradictions, and tensions characterizing Hikmet's self and identity in an extremely discordant and divided fashion. This motif of divided self, as Szondi (1961/2002) remarks, is one of the fundamental sources of inner antagonisms and contradictions defining tragic protagonist (p. 55). Atay structures this motif of divided self in form of a drama text that interrupts the flow of the prose for almost like sixteen pages with classical dramaturgical elements such as dramatic dialogues, tirades, soliloquies, and so forth. I will elaborate on the signification of this structural change in terms of its significations for the characterization of Hikmet Benol.

As I have remarked above, the motif of divided self is structured as a drama, that is, as a play. The main theme of this play, as I have mentioned above, is the inner antagonisms, contradictions, and tensions characterizing Hikmet's self and identity. To that extent, in fact, Hikmet presents his divided self as a dramatization, which amounts to say that this play is, at the bottom, Hikmet's self-dramatization, that is, a fictional construct with which he attempts to understand who he is. Indeed, in this self-dramatization, Hikmet refers to the turmoil of the inner antagonisms and contradictions defining his own self and identity as the "crowd of Hikmets", which is composed of six different Hikmets in total and each persona signifies a certain phase of Hikmet Benol's life.

The play starts with the funeral of Hikmet I and the wedding ceremony of Hikmet II who is about to marry Sevgi. While Hikmet's friends Behçet, Dumrul, Nazmi, and Fikret (Bilge's ex-boyfriend) are gambling in a casino, Dumrul mentions that Hikmet II is, in fact, afraid of facing with Hikmet I, thus acts as if Hikmet I is

really dead (p. 368). Then Hikmet I is seen with Hamit Bey (Hikmet's father) and Safiye Hanım (the new wife of Hikmet's father, after the deceased Mukadder Hanım) in a dinner scene, talking about Sevgi and Hikmet I's plans for marriage (pp. 368-375). Hikmet II suddenly enters the scene and impersonates Hikmet I, but then Hikmet I appears again to take control of the conversation (p. 376).

Scene changes back into the casino as Hikmet III appears with a strong light illuminating his presence. He tells that he was on his way to bring them invitations for his wedding ceremony. However, he sarcastically adds that they failed to notice him, as they were trapped in a loop of gambling in the casino for years and years, and he had already got divorced by the time they saw him (pp. 377-378). Interestingly, at the moment his friends offer Hikmet III a seat on the gambling table, he suddenly transforms into Hikmet IV, which represents the time period where he and Sevgi remained married (p. 378). Following this, four Hikmets start to argue with each other about Hikmet Benol's decisions in his life. Another Hikmet (Hikmet V), who represents Hikmet's failed love affair with Bilge, is only mentioned (p. 380). And the last Hikmet (Hikmet VI) enters and concludes the scene. At this point, the structure of the text changes from drama back to prose, yet dramatic personae still linger on. This perfectly illustrates the pacing thoughts, agitated state of mind, and inner turmoil of Hikmet Benol, portrayed at the height of the dramatization of his divided self.

Myriad of personas ranging from Hikmet I to Hikmet VI rush toward the surface of the text, raising their voices, arguing, asking questions, giving answers, sighing, and accusing up until the last moment when Hikmet VI intervenes and declares: "I'm the ruler now. All Hikmets are dead, long live Hikmet VI!" (p. 380,

own translation, see Appendix A, 3). Hikmet III suddenly objects to this coup d'état

exclaiming: "Stop this madman! He's going to set all Hikmets at odds with each

other" (p. 380, own translation, see Appendix A, 4). Since all personas are already at

conflict with each other, Hikmet III's objection is nugatory. Having seized control

over the other personas, Hikmet VI provides an over-arching criticism of Hikmet's

life by rebuking all other Hikmets for their past deeds such as marrying Sevgi,

having an affair with Bilge, moving to *gecekondu*, and befriending Colonel

Hüsamettin, all of which, according to Hikmet VI, brought nothing but misery.

Hikmet VI concludes his fierce diatribe with a curious and crucial remark: "If the

words are all that matters, then I'll play with them as I wish. I will construct a new

Reason built on words" (p. 381, own translation, see Appendix A, 5). Towards the

end of this chapter, I will discuss the significations of this ambitious remark in detail,

so for now, I wish to elaborate on this dazzling and hilarious dramatization of the

divided self of Hikmet.

As I have stated at the beginning of this sub-heading, each Hikmet acts as a

dramatic personae in this disorienting dramatization of the divided self of Hikmet,

and each of them represents a specific period in the life of Hikmet. Here it is

significant to note that this dramatization is narrated and temporally presented in the

present tense. In this respect, what seems to be successive changes and shifts

concerning both the temporal phases and the dramatic personae (different Hikmets

comprising the "crowd of Hikmets") are actually happening all at once in the present

time. This means that the characterization of Hikmet Benol through the "crowd of

Hikmets" is not defined by a chronological succession starting from Hikmet I and

ending with Hikmet VI. On the contrary, he is characterized precisely at one through all the Hikmets; Hikmet Benol is the crowd of Hikmets.

In this regard, this dramatization both presents and affirms Hikmet Benol's identity and self as a radical dividedness entailing multiplicity, discordance, and dispersal undermining coherence, consistency, and unity. Understood in this way, the "crowd of Hikmets", in effect, articulates the impossibility, which I have underlined above in my discussion regarding tragic conundrums and doubleness characterizing Hikmet Benol's name, of referring to a single subject that can be conceptually reframed as "I" in a singular, coherent, unified, and undivided fashion. Indeed, the antagonisms, conflicts, and dividedness residing within Hikmet's self and identity are defined with a mediation through self-difference that is at play in the extremely chaotic and dispersed characterization of Hikmet's inner turmoil on the basis of the tragic motif of divided self.

Overall, Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist, as I have discussed in these two sub-headings, encounters destabilizing differences, otherness, antagonisms, and tensions at each and every turn in his pursuit of self-knowledge. I believe that the best definition of Hikmet Benol, in this respect, can be found in Vernant's words. Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist, just as Oedipus, is ultimately characterized as "a creature of confusion and chaos . . . without consistency, without any domain of his own or any fixed point of attachment, with no defined essence" (Vernant, 1972/1996, pp. 138-139). Principally, it is this riddle-like quality, which consists of conflicts, conundrums, and paradoxes, that is at play in the characterization of Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist.

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2.5 Tragic thought as critique of the subject: Cartesian thought contra tragic thought

I have discussed hitherto the fundamental characteristics defining tragic thought and demonstrated these features in the exemplary model of Oedipus in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Then I have explored and fleshed out how these elements are at play in Oğuz Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* by examining Hikmet Benol's characterization in the course of his pursuit of self-understanding. Meanwhile, I have attempted to articulate what is entailed in one's pursuit of self-understanding by means of exploring and discussing the question of self, identity, and corporeality from various perspectives and in dialogue with different thoughts and theoretical discussions.

Now I wish to move on to discuss the idea, which is proposed by Bruns (1992), that the understanding of self and identity from the standpoint of tragic thought entails a critique of the subject (p. 189). In *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, this critique is structured as a sharp antagonism between two conceptions of the subject, namely, tragic understanding of self and identity found in the characterization of Hikmet Benol and the Cartesian conceptualization of modern subjectivity embodied by the discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin. I will interpret the exchanges and dialogues between Colonel Hüsamettin and Hikmet on the background of this antagonism, and try to discuss their positions as a clash of two conflicting perspectives on the notion of self and identity.

I believe that elaboration and discussion of this contrast will be fruitful in two senses. First, it will situate the current discussion within a long and significant tradition of philosophical thought –specifically Cartesian metaphysics in the case of the discussion at hand– that presents a certain understanding of human being and his pursuit of understanding the self and the world that greatly influenced the formation

of modern subjectivity. Second, my discussion will provide an interrogation, with a critical gesture befit to tragic thought, the premises and limits of Cartesian thought/modern subjectivity that designates the self-conscious and self-identical subject and Reason as the unshakable ground (*fundamentum inconcussum*) of indubitable knowledge with respect to one's relation and interpretation of the self and the world.

Another layer of my discussion aims to shed light on the curious statement uttered by Hikmet Benol (or Hikmet V) at the zenith of the dramatization of his inner antagonisms, conflicts, and tensions which I have discussed in detail above: "If the words are all that matters, then I'll play with them as I wish. I will construct a new Reason built on words" (p. 381). On first reading, it seems like Hikmet's statement entails a project of formulating a new conception of Reason. However, as I will discuss in detail, Hikmet's project is, in fact, comes across as an attempt to undermine the premises of the Cartesian conception of Reason. I will interpret this from the standpoint of tragic thought as a gesture of rending Reason against itself to flesh out the contradictions, difference, and otherness residing within.

To this end, first I would like to outline the basic characteristics of Cartesian thought to lay out its fundamental premises and formulations. Then I will move on with my reading of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* to demonstrate how the aforementioned antagonism between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin as a conflict between two different conceptions of subject plays out in the clash of Cartesian thought and tragic thought in Atay's novel.

2.5.1 The introduction of the basic characteristics of Cartesian thought on the background of tragic thought

The main starting point of Cartesian thought is found in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In the simplest sense, Descartes' inquiry in *Meditations* is concerned with the need to distinguish the false opinions from the fundamental truths about the basic structure of reality to acquire indubitable and firm knowledge (*scientia*) with respect to the self and the world (Hudac, 1991, p. 208). To this end, Descartes (1641/2008) (more precisely, the Mediator who acts as the narrator of *Meditations*) suspends his habitual beliefs and formal opinions through a radical doubting process, also known as methodological skepticism, in favor of starting from scratch. (p. 13).

This suspension is Descartes' reaction against the tradition of Aristotelian-Thomist scholasticism favored in his time, which argued for the primacy of the senses in the course of acquiring knowledge about the nature of reality. Descartes, on the other hand, aims to repudiate the primacy of sense-data by arguing that the nature of reality can be perceived through purely intellectual perception (Reason), which he expresses as "the withdrawal of our mind from senses" (Descartes, 1641/2008, p. 10). Accordingly, Descartes prioritizes Reason against the senses in terms gaining knowledge of the world.

As I have remarked above, the main aim of Cartesian thought is to acquire indubitable and firm knowledge with respect to the self and the world. It is to this end that Descartes (1641/2008) comes up with the well-known formulation *ego cogito, ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am") (p. 18). At risk of oversimplifying, the basic thesis of *Cogito* can be concisely expressed as follows: Since at the outset the

sensory knowledge is deemed unreliable, the individual who doubts by means of the intellect ultimately realizes that he cannot doubt his own existence. Indeed, for there to be a doubting/thinking process, there must be an individual who undertakes this skeptical reflection. In turn, this basic point is perceived by Reason (the human intellect) itself. In other words, the mere fact that one thinks necessarily implies that there has to be someone (a subject/an "I") engaged in this doubting activity with the use of pure intellect, namely, Reason. As such, Descartes reaches into the conclusion that throughout this doubting process, only the subject who doubts remains indubitable and, to that extent, necessary. Accordingly, Descartes (1641/2008) expresses this in the well-known and cornerstone principle of Cartesian thought: *ego cogito, ergo sum*; "I think, therefore I am" (p. 18).

As can be seen, for Descartes, the indubitable and necessary existence of the subject ("I") and Reason serve as an axiom that provides the most fundamental ontologico-epistemological ground concerning one's perception of the self and the world. Indeed, while elaborating on the significations of Cartesian metaphysics, Heidegger (1961/1991) remarks that Cartesian thought entails a project of laying a new ground for the interpretation of the self and the world in the wake of the rejection of dogmatism and orthodox religious faith (p. 97). From the standpoint of Cartesian thought, this ground is indubitable and necessary, that is, it is conceptualized and posited as "the *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis*, the absolute, unshakable ground of truth" (Heidegger, 1961/1991, p. 97).

The ground in question, as I have mentioned above, defined by the fundamental principle *ego cogito, ergo sum*. Accordingly, this means that what is posited as the unshakable ground is the subject, and, to that extent, Reason. Indeed,

as Ricoeur (1996) remarks, in this Cartesian principle the "'I' is taken for the first time in the position of *foundation*" which marks "the opening of the era of modern subjectivity" (p. 57). While elucidating the basic premises of Cartesian thought, Heidegger (1961/1991) provides similar remarks, saying that from the standpoint of Cartesian thought that formulates the principle *ego cogito, ergo sum*, "the *self* of man is essential as what lies at the very ground" (p. 108). In short, Cartesian thought posits the subject and Reason as the unshakable ground/foundation concerning one's perception, relation, and interpretation of the self and the world.

Indeed, structured upon the premises and formulations of Cartesian thought, modern subjectivity analogously conceptualizes the "I" and Reason as the primary foundation/ground and conceives the notion of self as "a point-like, ahistorical identity of the *I*. . . which escapes the alternatives of permanence and change in time" (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 61). This means that the subject is taken as an entity that is sealed-off from the contingencies of the world, impervious to the equivocality and unexpectedness of the events. When the subject, and, to that extent, Reason is determined and posited in this fashion, according to Heidegger (1961/1991), the world "becomes an *object for* this subject" (p. 119). Indeed, by means of conceptualizing the subject as the ground and the world as its object, Cartesian thought, and, to that extent, modern subjectivity articulates that one's relationship with the self and the world entails a sort of striving for control, mastery, and dominion (Heidegger, 1961/1991, p. 99).

By means of establish such relationship, as Bruns (1992) remarks, Cartesian thought comes across as an attempt at "worldmaking predicated on the exclusion of the uncontainable" (p. 202). However, this "uncontainable" is precisely what is

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included in tragic thought's conception of human being as a riddle assailed by ambiguities, contingencies, contradictions, and double-meanings. In this sense, the sense of certainty, clarity, coherence, and unity consigned to the self and identity of the sealed-off subject in Cartesian thought becomes simply unattainable, a wishful thinking from the standpoint of tragic thought. It goes without saying that, from the vantage point of tragic thought, self-identical and self-conscious subject and Reason, as they are formulated in Cartesian thought, cannot be the foundation/ground determining one's relation and interpretation with regard to the self and the world. This is because in tragic thought human beings are defined neither as self-sufficient subjects against whom the world is set as an object nor as autonomous subject who can establish mastery over themselves and the world. Rather, from the vantage point of tragic thought, human beings and human action are exposed and vulnerable to the unknown, unequivocal, and contingent affairs of the world.

Being unable to disengage themselves from the double binds, contradictions, and antagonisms characterizing their relation and interpretation of the self and the world, human beings are not impervious to events or sealed-off from adversity. Indeed, as Rita Felski (2008) aptly expresses tragedy primarily articulates "the limits of reason, the fragility of human endeavor, the clash of irreconcilable desires or incommensurable worlds, the inescapability of suffering and loss" so as to "underscore the hopelessness of our attempts to master the self and the world" (p. 11). As such, tragic thought inscribes the tensions of the unknown, uncontainable, ambiguous, and contradictory at the heart of one's relation and interpretation of the self and the world. In tragic thought, one sees that human being and human action are conceived "not as things that can be defined and described, but as problems", thus

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they are presented "as riddles whose double meanings can never be pinned down or exhausted" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 38).

As can be seen from this short outline, what is at work in Cartesian thought is the positing of subject and Reason as the absolute and unshakable ground of knowledge with respect to one's relation and interpretation of the self and the world. The subject, from the standpoint of Cartesian thought, is conceptualized as a self-sufficient and self-identical entity that is sheltered from contingency and ambiguity. As such, the subject is endowed with the rational capacity to master itself and the world. Human intellect as Reason, on the other hand, is characterized as the most appropriate source of perception and cognition that provides, with a strong reflection capacity, non-contradictory and indubitable knowledge with respect to the self and the world. In contrast, tragic thought stands opposite to Cartesian discourse by means of fleshing out an understanding of human being inevitably exposed to the disorienting contradictions, ambiguities, and contingencies assailing the self and the world, which are, at the bottom, ungovernable and uncontainable by the rational capacities of the subject and Reason.

2.5.2 The clash of tragic thought and Cartesian thought

Having provided a short outline pinpointing what is fundamentally at work in Cartesian thought, and situating this outline in a contrast with tragic thought's outlook on human being and human action, now I would like move on to discuss how the antagonism between two conceptions is at play in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* from the standpoint of the critique of the subject. As I have remarked above, this critique of the subject is structured in the novel as an antagonism between two conceptions of

the subject, namely, tragic understanding of self and identity found in the characterization of Hikmet Benol and the Cartesian conceptualization of modern subjectivity embodied by the discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin. In the discussion below, focusing on the fifteenth chapter titled *En Büyük Hazinemiz Aklımızdır* (Our Greatest Treasure is our Reason), I aim to interpret the exchanges and dialogues between Colonel Hüsamettin and Hikmet on the basis of this antagonism to discuss their positions as a clash of two conflicting perspectives on the notion of self and identity understood as such.

The antagonism is presented as a sharp contrasts articulated by Hikmet as a call for parting ways:

> The world must be separated into two. We have lived together long enough already. The ones who wish to live according to the rules defined by Descartes have to go their own way. This farce must end. We have to find our true selves. (p. 352, own translation, see Appendix A, 6)

As the passage suggests, at the outset Hikmet's pursuit of self-understanding is set against the "farce" of Cartesian thought. In the antagonism that I have mentioned above, Hikmet plays the caricatured Easterner as a clumsy, hasty, and hot-blooded person, while Colonel Hüsamettin is the caricaturized Westerner as a steady, cool-headed, and dispassionate person. Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse functions as a call for a sober Cartesian reflection, which stands for the methodological, calculative, and objective attitude traditionally attributed to Western thought. Conversely, Hikmet Benol comes across as an Easterner who is eager to learn the methodical and rational ways of Cartesian thought, yet constantly falls short in his attempts. As such, the interactions between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin, at first, do not entail any antagonism. However, as the caricaturization fades away, which only serves as a pre-

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setting for the real antagonism between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin, the true

conflict comes across as a clash between tragic thought and Cartesian thought.

According to Hikmet, Easterners are neither "patient" and "cold-blooded" nor

able to keep themselves in check, which prevents them from gaining the "calculative

attitude" of the Western thought (pp. 412-413). In their exchanges, Hikmet tries to

learn the ways of Cartesian meditation, under the guidance of Colonel Hüsamettin, as

a sober and disengaged contemplation on the self and the world. The starting point

offered by Colonel Hüsamettin to Hikmet in course of this learning process is a

thoroughly Cartesian one: "Forget everything you ever know" (p. 411, own

translation, see Appendix A, 7). Indeed, Descartes (1641/2008) introduces the

departure point of his *Meditations* as "the task of destroying all my former opinions"

(p. 15), which is echoed in Colonel Hüsamettin's advice. In a similar vein, Colonel

Hüsamettin repeats the sentiment that "we really need to forget everything at once"

and advises Hikmet that "before anything else, you should be calm" (p. 413, own

translation, see Appendix A, 8-9). Colonel Hüsamettin's call for unhurried reflection

again echoes what Descartes (1641/2008) says regarding the preparation phase of his

long mediations: "The moment has come, and so today I have discharged my mind

from all its cares, and have carved out a space of untroubled leisure" (p. 15).

Hikmet is dedicated to follow the path of Cartesian discourse, as he clearly

expresses to himself the need for a serious patience to form his own thoughts: "You

have to wait until your thoughts have matured enough" (p. 413, own translation, see

Appendix A, 10). This advice of patience mirrors that of Descartes (1641/2008) who

delayed his "massive task" of skeptical reflection until he had "reached the age when

one is as fit as one will ever be to master the various disciplines" so that one can

"begin again from the bottom up. . . to construct something lasting and unshakeable" (p. 15). This is the patience and assiduousness of the great thinkers that radically altered the way one perceives the self and the world.[6] Therefore, Hikmet decides that instead of losing time with idle chat and "self-pitying", it is time to "know ourselves" by "understanding the true meaning of these words" (p. 414, own translation, see Appendix A, 12).

To fulfill this project, Hikmet hastily comes up with a plan to visit every home in his neighborhood door to door with Colonel Hüsamettin to ask people's help for self-knowledge. This plan faintly mirrors the aforementioned scene where Oedipus asks people of Thebes to reveal the murderer of Laius, which amounts to say that Oedipus actually, without even realizing it, asks for self-knowledge since he is the murderer of Laius, his own father. Due to his impatience, however, Hikmet loses his temper:

> Show no mercy to us. Introduce us to ourselves . . . Knock us around so that we can get ourselves together and know ourselves better. We can't afford to lose anymore. This country can't stand to lose anymore. The only thing that matters is to get to know ourselves, and then we can perish for all I care. (pp. 414-415, own translation, see Appendix A, 13)

Upon hearing this, Colonel Hüsamettin swiftly intervenes: "Don't hastily jump from one pole to another . . . don't lose yourself between the extremes" (p. 415, own translation, see Appendix A, 14). Yet, Hikmet knows the true meaning of this

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[6] Along with Descartes, Hikmet also cites Kant as the paragon of this patient and attentive thinking: "After all. . . Kant remained patient until he was fifty-two years old. But I can't understand even a word he wrote, because I'm impatient" (p. 413, own translation, see Appendix A, 11). This is probably a reference to the period when Kant was working on *Critique of Pure Reason*. Even though he published the first edition of this work when he was fifty-seven, it is well known that Kant spent at least ten years on formulating his thoughts.

warning very well: "You mean 'find the middle ground', Colonel, right?" (p. 415, own translation, see Appendix A, 15). Hikmet's dedication to gain self-knowledge cannot be contained within the leisurely mood of Cartesian reflection.

However, the tendency to go to the extremes in thought and attitude does not simply result from Hikmet's inability to contain himself. Rather, it is an essential trait of the tragic character. Just as Oedipus, who "is not a man to content himself with half-measures or settle for a compromise" (Vernant, 1972/1996, p. 116), Hikmet is a man of extremes constantly pressing forward with greater impatience and intransigence. Indeed, in the restlessness of his pursuit, the tragic character not only sacrifices the comforts of the middle road but also disregards the prudence of the commonsense, as he "scorn[s] those who choose an intermediary position" (Goldmann, 1964/2013, p. 57). Be it unwaveringly following the lures of self-knowledge (Oedipus) or standing fast for the righteousness of a socio-political/personal cause (Antigone), the tragic character is defined by a staunch determination amidst a clash of ideas and values, which underlines that the tragic mind-set "concentrates solely on that of 'All' or 'Nothing'" (Goldmann, 1964/2013, p. 51).

2.5.3 Subverting *Cogito*: Reason divided against itself in the play of Unreason

With this tragic mind-set of extremity, it should be noted that the relationship between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin slowly changes into a rivalry and antagonism. Indeed this antagonism becomes bitterer as Hikmet carries his opposing position as far as it can go. To elaborate on this, I wish to discuss Hikmet's curious remark voiced at the height of the dramatization of his inner antagonisms, conflicts,

and tensions that I have mentioned in the previous heading above: "If the words are all that matters, then I'll play with them as I wish. I will construct a new Reason built on words" (p. 381). As I have remarked, on the first reading, it seems like Hikmet's statement is about formulating a new conception of Reason. However, as I shall discuss below, Hikmet's statement will ultimately take the shape of an incisive subversive gesture that rends Reason against itself to flesh out the contradictions, difference, and otherness residing within the discourse of Reason.

As the antagonism between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin becomes clearer and starker, their roles change as well. Colonel Hüsamettin's warnings, interventions, and injunctions start to function as a discourse that tries to safeguard the Reason of *Cogito* while Hikmet's erratic digressions and uncontainable impatience with which he bombards Colonel Hüsamettin with questions come across as a form of critical and subversive engagement with the notion of Reason. In this sense, while Colonel Hüsamettin tries to protect Reason, Hikmet's questioning haunts and undermines the discourse of Reason. I will borrow the term "Unreason" used by Derrida (1964/1978) to name that which haunts the Cartesian *Cogito* from the inside, to refer this critical engagement represented by Hikmet. I will demonstrate how Hikmet's questioning, befit to his trait of extremity as a tragic character, will carry the Cartesian discourse to its ultimate limit where Reason collapses from the inside because of the hauntings of Unreason.

As Derrida (1964/1978) argues, Cartesian discourse entails different maneuvers and discursive strategies to justify and sustain the structure of its own discourse. That is to say, while Cartesian discourse posits the rationally conceived self-identical, coherent, unified subject and Reason as the unshakable

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ground/foundation defining one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world, its methodological skepticism constantly represses uncontainable and destabilizing otherness and difference residing within its own discourse. Indeed, as Derrida (1964/1978) says, in this process "all mad and hyperbolical wanderings [process of questioning] . . . are given reassurance within the order of reasons" (p. 58). By means of this logico-discursive operation, Cartesian discourse "insures [one's] representations and . . . cognitive determinations, that is, [one's] discourse against madness" (p. 58). Bereft of this certitude, the Reason of *Cogito* remains vulnerable to being exposed to its other, that is, Unreason, which manifests itself as the immanent insecurities, namely, madness haunting the Reason from within (Derrida, 1964/1978, p. 61). These inner hauntings gradually reveal the inner contradictions of the notion of Reason.

As I have discussed above, the antagonism between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin gradually becomes starker and bitterer. Indeed, this change becomes clearer when Hikmet starts sharing his suspicions, hesitations, and anxieties with respect to this disengaged, detached, and sealed-off Cartesian reflection in their *gecekondu*: "There was a sense of fear of working in a room on our own without any help. Nobody in the country supported us. Nobody knew what we were doing" (pp. 417-418, own translation, see Appendix A, 16). There is a curious reversal of mood here. Hikmet's obstinacy and uncontainable impatience for self-knowledge is replaced with nervous distress. However, this reversal is not a sign of surrender on part of Hikmet. On the contrary, it articulates Hikmet's role as Unreason that gives voice to gnawing doubts and suspicions with respect to the Cartesian discourse of

Reason that comes across as a sober and disengaged activity of reflection, thus at once designates Hikmet's rebuff against the certitude and indubitableness of *Cogito*.

Hikmet goes on to express these anxieties and doubts in future tense, directly referring to Colonel Hüsamettin: "Are they going to recognize us, Colonel? Will we be heard? Or are we going to perish like a guinea pig or an unknown scientist while making experiments on ourselves? Is it possible to accomplish this task?" (p. 418, own translation, see Appendix A, 17). It is important to pay close attention to the use of imageries and metaphors (guinea pig, experiments, and the figure of scientist) which invoke a form of laboratory condition to express the characteristics of the pseudo-scientific self-presentation of Cartesian thought. One can say that, taking the risks of a backlash for such harsh comparison in advance, Descartes uses methodological skepticism –the instrumentalization of doubt– just as a surgeon uses surgical instruments. *Cogito* is born when Descartes, with a surgical operation, turned the human being into a guinea pig on the operation table of his meditations in *Meditations*. However, in the quotation above, this cynical caricature is immediately followed by a stark question interrogating the entire undertaking of sober and detached Cartesian reflection: "Is it possible to accomplish this task?"

Faced with Hikmet's overwhelming suspicion, that is, Unreason's uncontainable hauntings, this question prompts Colonel Hüsamettin to make a last Cartesian gesture to sooth Hikmet's worries, which amounts to, in the context of the discussion at hand, neutralizing Hikmet's subversive questioning and attempting to protect Reason against Unreason's onslaught at once: "Our task is built upon solid foundations. . . *We stand on the ground of Reason* [emphasis added]" (p. 418, own translation, see Appendix A, 18). The sense of security and assuring certitude of

Cartesian discourse articulated in Colonel Hüsamettin's protective maneuver, however, is not placatory in the eyes of Hikmet anymore. By means of expressing his suspicions and hesitations, Hikmet as Unreason actually fleshes out the anxieties inherent to the Cartesian discourse of Reason voiced by Colonel Hüsamettin.

In this sense, as the embodiment of that which haunts the Cartesian discourse as Unreason, Hikmet's critical engagement with the notion of Reason galvanizes the uncontainable elements residing within its discourse to the limit. Indeed, as I will focus below, Hikmet's response to Colonel Hüsamettin's attempt to cover up and assuage these anxieties eventually turns into an incisive satire. This satire marks the boiling point in the antagonism between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin as a clash of Cartesian thought and tragic thought.

Upon hearing the conciliating words of Colonel Hüsamettin, Hikmet cynically rebuts, "I was excited. I got excited whenever I heard the word Reason. I was in love with Reason" (p. 418, own translation, see Appendix A, 19). Then, all of a sudden, both Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin get up on their feet and sing together the hilarious anthem called "Our Greatest Treasure is our Reason", which is the national anthem of the imaginary Republic of Reason, and the satire blooms:

> Our greatest treasure is our Reason
> It is our right to trust our Reason
> The best thing in our life is our Reason
> Hear us, the ones ignorant of Reason!
>
> Our most precious is Reason
> It is our duty to protect Reason
> We are free, burdens us other Reasons
> Our greatest treasure is Reason. (p. 418, own translation, see Appendix A, 20)

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Why use an anthem at this precise moment, instead of, for instance, a sardonic remark in prose? Is it not possible to consider the sudden shift from prose to anthem as a move that draws its source from the play of language? I intend to think this on the background of Hikmet's curious remark that I have quoted few times above: "If the words are all that matters, then I'll play with them as I wish. I will construct a new Reason built on words" (p. 381). The creation of new Reason through the play of words is presented in this hilarious anthem as a subversive gesture. Indeed, if an anthem, by definition, entails the praise and glorification of its subject, what happens when it becomes a vehicle of subversion? What seemingly praised and glorified under the name of Reason –presented as the "treasure" with a "preciousness" that places one under the "duty to protect" and demands our unwavering "trust"– is overturned by the anthem, which now derides and disavows Reason.

Being subjected and exposed to the playful language of the anthem, Reason at once becomes the main subject of the anthem. That is to say, Reason is redefined precisely through this subversive play. Accordingly, this new Reason is not the *fundamentum inconcussum*, namely, it is not posited as the unshakable ground/foundation securing one's way relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world with indisputable certitude and indubitableness. Instead, Reason is brought out into the open realm of the play by the playful subversive gesture of the anthem that marks the culmination point of Hikmet's critical and antagonistic engagement as Unreason with the discourse of Reason embodied by Colonel Hüsamettin. In other words, with the introduction of the anthem, one enters into the realm of Unreason that has been constantly haunting Reason since the beginning. In this subversive gesture, what is silenced or repressed in the discourse of Reason

becomes crystallized through the playful subversion by Unreason, thus the inverse side, namely, the *other* of Reason manifests itself. In this respect, Hikmet's curious remark to create a new Reason through play of words, in fact, articulates the decreation and displacement of Reason.

The Unreason, however, is not simply the absence of Reason or the exaltation of non-sense. The relationship, or one might say the interplay, between them is not dichotomous, that is, it does not operate according to any logic of opposition. Instead, by limiting Reason from inside, that is, by crystallizing its inner boundaries, Unreason fleshes out a space of difference and otherness inherent to the discourse of Reason itself. Indeed, considered from the standpoint of tragic thought, the knowledge of this limitation –and since it is derived from the play of Unreason as the other of Reason, this is also a limit-knowledge regarding otherness– signifies the Reason's exposure to otherness and difference, which are, at the bottom, at play as the constitutive edifice of Reason itself. One can even consider this as an auto-deconstruction of Reason, for it is not displaced by something external, but dissolved through implosion. The coherence, unity, and selfsameness –of subject, self, and identity– claimed in the discourse of Reason are undercut by the play of Unreason. As the embodiment of that which is neutralized, erased, or silenced within the discourse of Reason, the play of Unreason comes across not as the negation but as the self-undermining of Reason.

As I have remarked above, the introduction of this anthem marks the culmination point in the antagonism between Hikmet Benol and Colonel Hüsamettin, which I have interpreted as a clash of tragic thought and Cartesian thought from different angles and in various contexts. What does the interplay of Unreason and

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Reason ultimately signify at this culmination point of the antagonism? I claim that Unreason that ultimately comes across as the self-undermining of Reason crystallizes a sort of contradiction inherent to Reason that can be evaluated from the standpoint of tragic thought. Indeed, as I have discussed above, the play of Unreason fleshes out a space of difference and otherness inherent to the discourse of Reason that is built upon coherence, unity, and sameness. That is to say, Reason that is posited, along with the subject, in the Cartesian discourse as the unshakable ground/foundation is inseparably bound with its own dissolution crystallized by the play of Unreason.

In this respect, from the standpoint of tragic thought, Hikmet's critical and subversive engagement entailed in his curious aspiration to create a new Reason through play of words underlines that subject and Reason cannot constitute the fundamental ground upon which one constructs his relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world in a secured and indubitable manner. There is a sort of tragic awareness here that stays vigilant of the fact that one's engagement with the world and himself, as I have remarked numerous times throughout my discussion, entails contradictory, ambiguous, and contingent interpretations, relations, and encounters that cannot be contained within or explained away with any discourse of certainty and indubitableness that excludes differences and otherness. In this sense, Hikmet's engagement crystallizes the tragic thought's outlook concisely expressed by Vernant (1972/1996) that "words, values, men themselves, are ambiguous, that the universe is one of conflict" (p. 43).

Overall, in this chapter, I have introduced and discussed the basic characteristics of tragic thought. In the first part of my discussion, I have aimed to illustrate how the question of self and identity comes across as a pursuit of self-

understanding in ancient Greek tragedy. This pursuit entails the tragic experience that situates one's struggle to gain self-knowledge in mediation through otherness and difference by exposures and transformations constantly undermining sameness, coherence and unity in one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world.

In the second part of my discussion, I have aimed to demonstrate in what ways tragic thought entails a critique of the subject. I have examined this through a contrast between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin, which I have interpreted as a clash between tragic thought and Cartesian thought. This antagonism eventually resulted in the undermining of the Cartesian conceptualization of subject and Reason as the ground/foundation upon which one constructs his relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world in a secured and indubitable fashion.

In the next chapter, I shall discuss how Atay employs the critical gesture of tragic thought from a socio-political and historico-cultural perspective. This will enhance my discussion regarding the question of identity and the notion of self by placing it within the socio-political and historico-cultural context of Turkey. Throughout my discussion in the next chapter, I will again concentrate upon fleshing out and discussing various antagonisms, conundrums, double binds, and tensions that shape one's relation and interpretation regarding the self and the world.

CHAPTER 3

THE QUESTION OF CULTURE AND HISTORY IN *TEHLİKELİ OYUNLAR*

FROM THE STANDPOINT OF TRAGIC THOUGHT

> For in tremendous extremities human
> souls are like drowning men; well
> enough they know they are in peril; well
> enough they know the causes of that
> peril; nevertheless, the sea is the sea,
> and these drowning men do drown.
>
> –Melville, *Pierre; or, the Ambiguities*

In this chapter, I aim to situate *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* in the socio-cultural and historical circumstances of the time that gave birth to it. I establish this relationship not only to observe the influence of the context-bound particularities in shaping Atay's tragic thought, but more importantly to discuss the various ways through which the tragic thought pervading Atay's novel calls its own era into question.

As I have remarked in the previous chapter, the critical core of tragic thought has two interrelated levels. First, it calls into question what it means to be human by means of exploring the aporetic and equivocal nature of the human experience of being present in the world. Second, it establishes a critical dialogue with the past by interrogating historico-cultural narratives that define one's way of appropriating the constellation of culture, history, and identity. My discussion in this chapter will majorly concentrate upon the second level. Since these two levels are interrelated in the inquiry carried out by the critical gesture of tragic thought, certain moments of my discussion in this chapter will also flesh out and emphasize the various aspects of the interrelationship between these two inseparable levels on different dimensions.

As I have discussed at the beginning of the second chapter, the formation of Greek tragedy is inseparably bound with the tumultuous historical, political, social, and cultural background consists of conflicts and paradoxes that characterize Athens of late sixth and fifth century BC. Analogously, the antagonisms and tensions prevailing in Turkish society roughly around 1950s and 1970s played an undeniable role in the formation of Oğuz Atay's tragic thought. Indeed, this period, in which Atay penned his works including *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* and *Tutunamayanlar*, marks a tumultuous era when Turkey witnessed a series of radical economic, political, and socio-cultural transformations.

However, I do not intent to draw anachronistic and over-emphasized parallels conflating Athens of late sixth and fifth century B.C. with Turkey of 1950s and 1970s. Rather, what I would like to do is to present a sort of historico-cultural and socio-political framework of Turkey concerning the period in question, which I believe can shed light on the formation of Atay's tragic thought shaped during a period of great socio-political transformation and distress entailing antagonisms, tensions, ambiguities, and puzzling paradoxes. In this respect, my aim in this chapter is to interpret and illustrate how certain elements from this background influenced the formation of Atay's tragic thought, and, in turn, how tragic thought at work in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* calls its own era into question in accordance with the critical gesture of tragedy as a social phenomenon.

Born in 1934 and died in 1977, Oğuz Atay lived and wrote in one of the most turbulent periods in Turkish history. Starting from the post-World War II era, Turkey witnessed a series of radical changes in its socio-cultural, economic, and political structure, whose repercussions were tensely felt during the three consecutive coups

d'état in 1960, 1971, and 1980. Having overthrown the imperial rule of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey established itself anew as a republic that valorized the necessity and supremacy of democratic ideals. Single-party regime officially initiated by Mustafa Kemal following the declaration of republic in 1923 was brought to an end by the official registration of Demokrat Parti (*Democrat Party*) in 1946 as the main opposition party against Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (*Republican People's Party*), which marked the beginning of the multi-party regime aimed to democratize the government institutions and the parliamentary system.

Over the course of 1950s and 1960s, the ideological clashes between secularists and Islamists and the worsening relationships between RPP and DP caused mounting financial and social problems by straining the already delicate balance of power in the political arena. Subsequent unrests in election campaigns, various student demonstrations, and the growing ideological strife between political parties resulted in the declaration of martial law on April 28, 1960 and ultimately led to the coup d'état on May 27, 1960, which officially marked the military excursion into the realm of politics (Harris, 2011, p. 203). In the aftermath, the increasing influence of Islamist political ideologies in clash with emerging socialist-leftist positions heightened the inherently discordant socio-political relationships thus signaled the beginning of a serious polarization between right wing and left wing campaigns (Cremer, 2016, p. 294). There were various measures such as the establishment of Milli Güvenlik Kurulu (*The National Security Council*) and the preparation of a new constitution (the Constitution of 1961) to ameliorate the tense atmosphere.

However, these strategic maneuvers were insufficient to prevent the escalation of violence and domestic disorder. Eventually, military forces were prompted to intervene into politics for the second time on March 12, 1971 with a coup by memorandum. Supporters of the coup d'état held the government responsible for not appropriately following Kemalist reforms and the articles of the Constitution of 1961 (Cremer, 2016, p. 294). Immediately after the coup of 1971, certain constitutional changes that shaped the legislative system in favor of the political ideology upheld by Turkish military were enacted (Cremer, 2016, p. 294).

Unfortunately, these constitutional amendments also failed to bring any constructive and lasting change. Turkey had gradually turned into a country awash with political violence, assassinations, unsolved murders, extreme ideological partisanship, economic crisis, and social instability. As is well known, this dysfunctional state led to another coup on September 12, 1980. This time the overall scope of the military intervention was more extensive and radical. High-rank military officials in control drafted a completely new constitution (the Constitution of 1982), issued curfew orders, established martial law and restrictive regulations concerning future demonstrations and strikes (Cremer, 2016, p. 296).

This considerably short and blunt summary is of course unable to do justice in terms of appropriately conveying the intricate socio-political context of Turkey during the period in question. However, it provides a general framework that fleshes out the conflict-ridden times in which Atay lived and penned his works. Understood in this way, the main thread that guides the discussion in this chapter is the underlying idea that tragedy comes forth in periods of social transformation. These periods, as I have remarked, include strenuous tensions between attempts at radical

social change and loss of stability. Indeed, they are marked with a search for new beginning and conflicts with the traditional institutions as well as challenges posed against redefinition of a community through establishing a relationship between past, present, and future.

As I have stated in the previous chapter, tragic thought views human circumstance as something enigmatic, ambiguous, and conflict-ridden, which gains its most acute crystallization in periods characterized by rending socio-political, historical and cultural tensions. As Goldmann (1964/2013) states, "on a social as well as on an individual plane . . . it is in periods of social and political crisis that men are most aware of the enigma of their presence in the world" (p. 48). In this respect, tragic thought fundamentally "expresses a deep crisis in the relationship between man and his social and spiritual world" (Goldmann, 1964/2013, p. 41). It is through this disorienting crisis that one starts to question his own individuality and its inseparable interrelation with the circumstances of one's social, historical, cultural, and political milieu. Atay's tragic thought undertakes this encompassing inquiry by calling his own crisis-ridden era into question, which I wish to discuss below.

3.1 The question of origin and foundation: Foundation narratives as myths of origin

Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* engages in a debate with the social, cultural, and political heritage of his own country by bringing the dominant socio-cultural and politico-historical narratives that determine one's interpretation, relation, and appropriation with respect to the self and the world into question. In his almost obsessive engagement with it, Hikmet Benol sees history, that is, the past itself as the

conglomeration of tradition and heritage, as something spectral that haunts the present by thoroughly defining its conditions and possibilities.

Unable to appropriate what comes down to him from the past under the name of history, Hikmet feels crushed under the burden of the past. One might even say that history becomes a nightmare from which he is trying to awake, a sense of frustration and dread also shared by Stephen Dedalus of Joyce's *Ulysses*.[7] As a fervent reaction to this agitating and destitute sense of entrapment, Hikmet attempts to gain mastery over a narrative of historical past, which haunts him and defines the possibilities and conditions of his present and future from the outset, with the hyperbolic act of rewriting the history of his own country. Perhaps Hikmet's hyperbolic gesture here can be thought as what George Steiner (2008) calls "the Promethean impulse. . . [which] is at once ineradicable and doomed" defining the tragic characters "seek[ing] to bend the history to their will, as do Shakespeare's and Sophocles' protagonists" (p. 38). In other words, Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist is driven by the same impulse in his hyperbolic act of rewriting history.

In the third chapter of the novel titled *Albay Hüsamettin Bey* (Colonel Hüsamettin), while talking to Colonel Hüsamettin and his friend from the army Colonel Sermet, Hikmet defines his attempt as follows: "Please, colonels, we should not be slaves to history; we can rewrite the world history from scratch, if it's necessary. Let's provide new comments to all past events. Don't we have what it

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[7] In the second episode of Joyce's *Ulysses* titled Nestor, the anti-Semitist ramblings of the Irish schoolmaster Garrett Deasy concerning the well-being of England's historical development are met by Stephen Dedalus' rebuking answer: "History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (p. 60). Dedalus' definition of history as "nightmare" challenges Mr. Deasy's conception of history as a teleological-theological progress towards the absolute *telos*, namely, the manifestation of God.

takes?" (pp. 70-71, own translation, see Appendix A, 21). Hikmet's frustrations with regard to the historical heritage of his own country take the form of a general dissatisfaction with history as such. This dissatisfaction, in turn, comes across as a parody entailing an exaggerated gesture of rewriting the entire world history by means of rewriting the beginning of creation. Indeed, Hikmet invokes the Biblical story of creation with ingenious and hilarious parody.

As it is told in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament, the story of creation is the story of the origin of all existence (*génesis*, meaning "origin" and "source"), which starts with the well-known expression: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1.1). Genesis primarily tells the story of the creation of an orderly existence from the primordial formlessness *ex nihilo*, including the creation of the day and the night, the seas, the mountains, the plants, the animal kingdom, and the successive generations of humankind as descendants of Adam.

Hikmet begins his version of Genesis addressing to Colonel Hüsamettin and his friend Colonel Sermet: "Colonels! I'm not going to perform a play. I'm going to read your history to you. I'm going to tell everything chronologically" (p. 77, own translation, see Appendix A, 22). In his hyperbolic take on chronology, Hikmet rewrites the beginning of creation:

> In the beginning, there was nothing. The entire universe was made of a wordless monotony . . . After a while, bored of this monotony, God created stillness. Then the ["]still["] was created. However, this adjective couldn't exist by itself, thus still seas, still airs, and still lands were created. (All because of a grammatical necessity). There were no clouds in the air because of this stillness, so the seas were always blue; the air was also unstirred thanks to stillness, so the seas were calm. Since there was no motion, there was no growth. There was neither increase nor distention. No one was able to surpass the other. Competition was not invented. And God created the first ancestor of Hüsamettin Tambay, the first human. (p. 77, own translation, see Appendix A, 23)

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Following this, the parody extends into giving the long list of Hüsamettin Tambay's lineage, mimicking the account of Genesis' chronology of the lineage of humankind descending from Adam. This parallelism is curiously structured in the novel.[8] For instance, the birth and the life spans of Adam's lineage are given in the Book of Genesis as follows:

> *And* Adam lived an *hundred and thirty years*, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: *And* the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were *eight hundred years*: and he begat sons and daughters: *And* all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died [emphasis added]. (Gen. 5. 3-5)

Now, Atay employs the same grammatical structure that is used here in terms of expressing numbers and using conjunctions at the beginning of sentences:

> *And* Colonel Adam begat Zühtü in the second year of his compulsory national service. After he had begotten Zühtü, Adam Tambay [Colonel Adam] lived *an hundred and thirty years*; he had begotten other sons and daughters. . . *And* in the *seventy-ninth year* of his military service, he had an early retirement due to signing a petition [emphasis added]. (p. 78, own translation, see Appendix A, 24)

Hikmet's hilarious parody of Genesis runs a few pages more with the repetition of the basic characteristic that I have mentioned above, and then it abruptly ends. However, this does not mean that Atay's engagement with the question of origin begins and ends with this short parody. Rather, this parody provides a sort of opening that can be thought as an entrance that paves the way for exploring and designating

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[8] For other similarities between two texts, compare Genesis (5. 1-32) and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* (pp. 78-80).

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the manifold of associations and significations entailed in the notion of origin and the concept of foundation.

Atay will later take up the question of origin again as a narration of foundation that claims to provide an origin/foundation to a community. Accordingly, first, I will explore some of the premises and connotations concerning the question of origin as taken up here by Hikmet's parody of Genesis. Then, I will move on to discuss the question of origin as narration of foundation by situating it within the context of the foundation narratives prevalent during the early republican era of 1930s and certain revisions of these narratives in 1950s to examine how Atay's tragic thought engages in a debate with their premises, logic, and discourse.

Atay's opens up the question of origin with the Biblical story of creation as it is told in the Book of Genesis. How to understand this gesture? The question of origin is, at the bottom, an onto-theological question. That is to say, the idea of origin provides a sort of theological schema and frame that determines the fundamental beginnings of existence. Atay's specific choice of the Biblical account of creation as Genesis to open up the question of origin should be interpreted as an awareness of this onto-theological characteristic of the question of origin.

The theological account of creation, as Rudi Te Velde (2006) points out, entails that "'God' refers to the first principle of being, the *causa prima*, from which all things proceed and to which all things return as to their ultimate goal" (p. 11). By definition, such account of origin as the grounding of creation is singular, unique, coherent, and unrepeatable, namely, there is no other beginning, only *this* one. The onto-theological schema is at work as a sort of referential framework according to which "the whole of what exists in the world receives its ultimate meaning and

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intelligibility" (Velde, 2006, p. 11). In other words, the diversity, contingency, and difference characterizing existence gains a sort of all-pervading order, necessity, structure, and meaning in reference to this onto-theological schema. As I will discuss, the same logic operates in any narration of origin that claims to articulate a certain beginning, ground, and foundation.

However, Atay's engagement with the question of origin, understood in this onto-theological context, does not correspond to a sort of direct and vulgar criticism of the account of creation found in Abrahamic religions. Rather, it underlines an awareness of the implications of the onto-theological characteristics of the question of origin that conceptualizes the very notion of origin as something fixed, singular, indisputable, unrepeatable, and coherent. This awareness emphasizes a very crucial dimension, that is, any narration that is concerned with the notion of origin –be it is religious, philosophical, political, historical, and so forth– inevitably entails the implications and premises of this onto-theological schema. In other words, the fundamental significations of the onto-theological framework are always already at play in every narration of origin.

If, as I have stated above, the notion of origin, understood on the basis its onto-theological characteristics, provides a theological frame that determines the beginnings of existence, then what it actually does is to offer a narrative with regard to how existence came to be in the first place. In this respect, the onto-theological characteristic of the question of origin is inextricably bound with narrative and narrativization of origin/foundation. The notion of origin as providing a foundation means creating a narrative of (and for) this foundation, or, in other words, narrativizing the foundation.

Jean-Luc Nancy (1986/1991) argues that the narrative of foundations/origins is always already a mythical narrative, that is, "it relates back to a mythic foundation, and through this relation it founds itself (a consciousness, a people, a narrative)" (p. 45). With the one and same operation, the narrative of origins as a mythical narrative provides a mythical foundation to a community and "reveals the community to itself and founds it" (Nancy, 1986/1991, pp. 50-51). In this respect, foundation narratives provide a mythical ground/foundation to a community by means of offering a mythical narrativization of origin/foundation, which amounts to say that foundation narratives of a community come across as myths of origin. Indeed, as Nancy (1986/1991) states, what is at work in these mythical narratives is "in effect nothing other than *the thought of a founding fiction, or a foundation by fiction*" (p. 53). In this respect, insofar as foundation narratives of a community come across as myths of origin it expresses the mythical foundations/origins of a community ("foundation by fiction") that presents itself as an all-encompassing and grounding mythical narrative ("founding fiction").

The act of laying foundations and giving grounds to a community is accomplished by means of determining and articulating from the outset what is most common to the community (as a destiny, *telos*, identity, history, nationality, and so forth). The foundation narratives that come across as myths of origin, in this sense, operate through logic of "fusion", which is to say that the mythical character of these narratives determine "multiple existences as immanent to [their] own unique fiction" (Nancy, 1986/1991, p. 57). It can be seen that the claims of uniqueness, unrepeatability, and singularity articulated in the aforementioned onto-theological characteristics of the notion origin are, from the outset, at play here in the narrative

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foundations as myths of origin. Considered in this way, foundation narratives homogenize and totalize all multiplicities, divergences, and differences and subsume them under the genus of a single/singular ontologico-historical destiny, over-arching nationality, and homogenous identity that comes to define the community itself.

3.1.1 Three narratives of foundation: The Turkish History Thesis, the Sun-Language Theory, and Blue Anatolianism

Now I would like to discuss Atay's engagement with the question of origin on the background of the politico-historical and socio-cultural context as a critical engagement with the various attempts at providing foundation narratives during the early republican era of 1930s and certain revisions of these narratives in 1950s. To understand what is at work in this discussion, it is crucial to keep in mind the framework that I have fleshed out above concerning the onto-theological character at play in the question of origin and the significations of the foundation narrative as myths of origin that provide a mythical foundation/origin to a community.

Recall that, as I have mentioned above, Hikmet presents his parody version of Genesis, which opens up the question of origin, to Colonel Hüsamettin and his friend Colonel Sermet with the following statement: "I'm not going to perform a play. I'm going to read your history to you" (p. 77). Reading colonels their own history, in effect, signifies that the consideration of the notion of origin entails an engagement with the foundation narratives that consists of a military past. From a socio-cultural and politico-historical perspective, this corresponds to the efforts of *narrativizing* the foundations of the Turkish Republic established through the armed warfare for emancipation during the Turkish War of Independence fought in 1921-1922.

The victory gained in the War of Independence and the subsequent

declaration of Turkish Republic on October 29, 1923 marks a period of radical break

with the past. Indeed, having overthrown the Ottoman rule, which was already

weakened by its defeat in the World War I in 1918, emancipated itself from the

threats of France, Italy, and the British-supported Greek forces, Turkey strove to

designate itself a new beginning, a new origin. Understood in this way, as Tanıl Bora

(1996) states, the Turkish War of Independence became "the foundation myth of the

new Turkey" forming the proper ground upon which the Turkish Republic was

founded anew as a nation-state (p. 45). Similarly, Erik Zürcher (1993/2016) remarks

that the preoccupation with the origin of Turkish nation and identity during the

formation period of the early republic era of 1930s demanded a narrative, that is, a

national myth of origin "to construct a new national identity and strong national

cohesion" (p. 191). This consequently produced two narratives, namely, the Turkish

History Thesis (*Türk Tarih Tezi*) and the Sun-Language Theory (*Güneş Dil Teorisi*).

Under the supervision of Mustafa Kemal, the First Turkish History Congress

held on July 2-12, 1932, came up with the two-fold Turkish History Thesis. As Bilsel

(2007) remarks, the first layer of the Thesis aimed "to establish that 'the Turks,' an

ancient, 'brachycephalic,' and 'white' race, had founded the first human civilization

in Central Asia and later disseminated it to the rest of the ancient world during their

prehistoric migrations" (p. 225). Through the framework of racial and cultural

essentialism, the Thesis created an origin upon which the "contemporary Turks

therefore could claim to have created all the major civilizations of the ancient world,

including Sumerian, Egyptian, and 'ancient Mediterranean' (i.e., Greek)" (Bilsel,

2007, p. 225). The second layer sought to fortify this ethno-historical narrative by

stating that "the Hittites, 'the first civilized race in Anatolia,' were 'Turkish'" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 225). In this sense, the contemporary Turks "were presented as the autochthonous race of Anatolia", whose regional significations were transformed into "a central metaphor of a national myth of origin" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 225). According to Aslı Gür (2010), the main motivation of this Thesis "was to make a case for a primordial Turkish existence in Anatolia and hence to support the claim that the Turkish nation-state should be recognized as the 'natural heir' of Anatolia in the international arena" (p. 77).[9]

Analogously, in the sphere of linguistics and culture, the project of Sun-Language Theory launched in 1935 basically sought to designate that "all languages derived originally from one primeval language, spoken in Central Asia, that Turkish was closest of all languages to this origin and that all languages had developed from the primeval language through Turkish" (Zürcher, 1993/2016, p. 190). In other words, "the 'cultured languages' of the world were dialects of the primal 'ur-Turkish' (*ana Türk Dili*)" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 225). İbrahim Necmi Dilmen, the general secretary of the Turkish Language Society, defined the project as "a scientific analysis of the Turkish language," which revealed the "substantial truth" that it is "not different from the Indo-European and Semitic languages, and that Turkish is the main source (*ana kaynağı*) of all languages of culture (*kültür dilleri*)" (cited in Bilsel, p. 225).

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[9] This was also a discursive move against the historical narratives produced by Orientalist paradigms, imperialist discourses, and philhellenic scholarly traditions that either excluded or downplayed the Turkish history and culture from the official historiography of (Western) civilization (Gür, 2010, p. 78; Bilsel, 2007, p. 224).

This mythical narrative of origin functioned not only to formulate "a cohesive and organic 'culture,' which, not coincidentally, corresponded with the ethnic and social homogenization of the remains of Ottoman society" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 227), but also sought to locate the Turkish identity within a continuity that encompassed the entire civilization as its original essence (Bora, 1996, p. 34, 37). In this respect, the Turkish History Thesis and Sun-Language Theory as the officially sanctioned discourses of the national myths of origin with one stroke re-appropriated a restored version of the past and established a secure historico-ontological horizon for the future prospects of Turkish nation in the path of modernization and Westernization. By means of striving to decenter the officially sanctioned European discourses on Hellenic origins of Western civilization, it sought to relocate the Turkish heritage from the margin to the very origin of Western civilization (Gür, 2010, p. 81; Bilsel, 2007, p. 227).

During 1950s, these efforts were taken up by a movement called "Mavi Anadolu" (*Blue Anatolia*) consisting of intellectuals such as Azra Erhat, Sabahattin Eyüboğlu, Cevat Şakir Kabaağaçlı among others. Blue Anatolianists aimed to form "a utopian, constructivist society" by means of "dedicating themselves to reinstituting the village education reform (Köy Enstitüleri) of the early 1940s" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 238). Their main concern was to work towards "an 'Anatolian renaissance' (or an 'Anatolian enlightenment') in which the peasants were expected to return their own cultural essence by being rationalized and Westernized" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 238). To this end, Blue Anatolianists provided a humanist revision of the republic's myth of origin, in which the "Anatolia" is aestheticized and sublimated to the point where the name Anatolia encompasses the entire Greco-Roman civilization.

However, this revisionist project, in effect, was more or less the repetition of the same ideological program employed during the early Republic period with the Turkish History Thesis and Sun-Language Theory. That is to say, the discourse of Blue Anatolianists was "merely substituting one transcendental identity –'the Anatolian people'– for another, 'the Turks'" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 237). In this respect, the universalism and humanism adopted by Blue Anatolianists was, in fact, suffused with ethno-cultural nationalism,[10] as "they traced the origins of almost every element of Greco-Roman culture back to the near East and to the ancient civilizations of Anatolia and Mesopotamia, particularly the Aegean region" (Gür, 2010, p. 83). As such, the discourse of Blue Anatolians created a fabricated Anatolian essence/origin for Turkish community that gave birth to the procession of the cultural products and values of Greco-Roman civilization (Gür, 2010, p. 83). The apex of this perspective is crystallized in the metaphorization of Anatolia as the cradle of civilizations, which, according to Bilsel (2007) entails a discursive dimension: "it implies that the ancient Anatolians are not merely the cultural forbearers of contemporary Turkey, but, more importantly, are among the originators of contemporary (that is, Western) civilization" (p. 234).

3.1.2 Rewriting the foundation narratives as parody: The case of Blue Anatolianism

Having outlined the fundamental characteristics of these three foundation narratives, now I wish to discuss how Atay submits the logic and premises of foundation

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[10] A similar point is also made by Tanıl Bora (1996) who states that the values of humanism and universalism were ideological façades disguising the inherent cultural-biological racism and xenophobia operating within the homogenizing discourses of early Anatolianism of 1930s and Blue Anatolianism of 1950s (pp. 34-35).

narratives into a scrutinizing interrogation. In the fourth chapter of the novel titled *Ülkemiz* (Our Country) –which is preceded by the third chapter titled *Albay Hüsamettin Bey* (Colonel Hüsamettin) that presents the parody of origin– I claim that Atay engages in a debate over the claims of Blue Anatolianism as a foundation narrative that attempts to construct a mythical narrative of origin/foundation.

In other words, as I have remarked at the beginning of my discussion, after opening up the question of origin with the parody of Genesis, Atay now submits the notion of origin into question from the standpoint of the foundation narratives in its relation to the aforementioned socio-political and historico-cultural background. I claim that Atay's critical engagement is structured as a form of rewriting as parody. That is to say, Atay takes the premises of the discourse of Blue Anatolianists and repeats/rewrites them with a gesture of parody that exposes and subverts the logic of the foundation narrative of Blue Anatolianism, and to that extent, it also exposes and undermines the very logic of foundation narratives as such.

The fourth chapter of the novel, *Ülkemiz* (Our Country), starts with a scene where Hikmet is helping his neighbor Nurhayat Hanım's son Selim to write his homework about summarizing the elementary social, geographical, historical, and cultural features of Turkey as a country. It is important to read the portrait of Turkey presented in this homework text by bearing in mind aforementioned concerns:

> Since the ancient times, many civilizations have grown up in our country. Our country has been the cradle of many different civilizations. Many civilizations have been rocked in this cradle, and we have put many civilizations to sleep [*birçok medeniyeti uyutmuşuzdur*] . . . However, the most widely grown product in our country is the peasant. The peasant can grow in any season . . . The peasant grows on steppes, plateaus, forests, mountains, in arid climates, on plains, in wet climates. The peasant grows rapidly, fructifies early. The peasant grows on its own, fructifies on its own. We love the peasants very

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much. If they come to the cities, we make them janitors and laborers. (p. 111, own translation, see Appendix A, 25)

The passage starts with a witty play of the metaphor of "the cradle of civilizations," followed with the expression "putting civilizations to sleep" (*medeniyetleri uyutmak*), which has a double meaning that can be unpacked as follows. First, it designates the rise and fall of various civilizations in Anatolia. In this sense, it is a metaphorical presentation of the historical life cycle of birth, coming-of-age, maturity, and death of various civilizations in the rocking of the cradle of Anatolia throughout the ages. Second, it makes use of a word play, in which the verb "uyutmak" (*put to sleep*) used in the expression "birçok medeniyeti uyutmuşuzdur" ("we have put many civilizations to sleep") also has negative connotations such as "to trick" or "to deceive" in Turkish.

There is a tension at play in this double meaning, which also crystallizes the logic operating not only in the discourse of Blue Anatolianists, but also in the discourse of foundation narratives in general: On the one hand, it is true that Anatolia region has been the home of many great civilizations that cultivated the human history throughout different epochs. On the other hand, Blue Anatolianism, precisely by its metaphorization of Anatolia as the cradle of civilizations as I have discussed above, fabricates the origins/foundations of contemporary Turkey under the genus of "Anatolian people", thus transforms, or, more accurately, distorts and perverts this historical account into a mythical narration of foundation.

Indeed, in the passage quoted above it is "our country" –the Turkish Republic, that is, the new Turkey endeavoring to legitimize itself against its old past by positing itself with a gesture of auto-foundation articulating a clean historico-

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cultural break that comes to be the origin/foundation of new Turkey– defined as the cradle of many different civilizations. In this respect, the metaphorization employed in the discourse of Blue Anatolianists' foundation narrative constructs a narrative of origin by providing a mythical foundation (the Anatolian essence/origin) for contemporary Turkish community. However, at the same time, it designates the ancient Anatolians as the indigenous historico-cultural forbearers of not only contemporary Turkey, but also contemporary Western civilization rooted in the Greco-Roman heritage. However, the passage quoted above not only presents the distortive logic of Blue Anatolianists' foundation narrative, but also fleshes out a contradiction inherent in their discourse (and in that of foundation narratives in general). To elaborate on this, I will discuss the rest of the passage quoted above on the background of Blue Anatolianism in 1950s, which will help to flesh out the contradictions in a lively manner.

I will focus on two interrelated expressions from the passage quoted above and will interpret them in their interrelation. First is the ironic depiction of peasants as if they are agricultural products naturally growing out of the Anatolian soil ("the most widely grown product in our country is the peasant"), which brings the heroic-romantic role conferred to the peasants by the discourses of Blue Anatolianists prevalent in 1950s into question. Second is the curious twist at the end of the passage ("We love the peasants very much. If they come to the cities, we make them janitors and laborers"), which defines a sort of culture shock stemming from the contradictions between the organicist idealism found in Blue Anatolianists' discourse consigning this heroic-romantic role to the peasants and the galvanizing tensions of the socio-cultural circumstances in 1950s that undercut this discourse.

From a historical and political perspective, 1950s were marked by Democrat Party's modernization program –including massive investments in agriculture, mechanization, industrial developments, road networks, NATO membership, and encouragement of foreign investments– that aimed to incorporate Turkey into the world capitalist system, among the Western nations to be accepted on equal terms.[11] Furthermore, as Zürcher (1993/2016) remarks, 1950s also witnessed the start of mass migration of villagers from countryside to major cities in search for jobs (p. 226). This was indeed a massive mobilization from rural areas to big cities, in which "over a million people left the land and by the end of the decade the major cities were growing 10 per cent a year" (Zürcher, 1993/2016, p. 226).

However, the capacity of these newly-structured industries in major cities were limited hence "only a small proportion of the migrants found permanent jobs in industry, while most of them ended up as casual laborers or as street vendors" (Zürcher, 1993/2016, p. 226). In the face of such dramatic changes, settlement and accommodation became a problem because cities were not sufficiently equipped to receive large numbers of new inhabitants. For this reason, "most of the new settlers had to fend for themselves, building their own houses on unused land on the outskirts of town," which was later named as "*gecekondu* (built at night)," buildings without proper infrastructure and access to sewer systems, roads, electricity and water (Zürcher, 1993/2016, pp. 226-227). In this respect, the period in discussion is defined by chaotic conglomeration of modernization/Westernization, mass internal migration, illegal housing, unemployment, and overpopulation. Ironically, it was in

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[11] For a more detailed historical discussion of the socio-cultural, economic, and political aspects of these developments in Turkey on the background of the strenuous relationship between Democrat Party and Republican People's Party, see Zürcher, 1993/2016, pp. 222-240.

this period that Blue Anatolianists "celebrated the art and culture of the 'Anatolian people' as 'authentic' and wholesome [while] migrants from the countryside were engulfing the cities and changing the cultural landscapes of Turkish metropolitan life" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 238).

The curious twist at the end of the passage quoted above –"We love the peasants very much. If they come to the cities, we make them janitors and laborers"– must be interpreted on the background of this contradiction. I claim that Atay here underlines a form of "culture shock" experienced by migrants "on encountering the city [which] would give birth to hybrid, popular forms that did not always comply with the organicist and pastoral ideals of an 'authentic' folk culture" (Bilsel, 2007, p. 238). Indeed, the massive socio-cultural transformations in 1950s were heterogeneous, uprooting, and destabilizing, which undermines and resists to the organicist and pastoral idealization of authentic folk culture that will be established by the heroic-romantic role conferred to the peasants. Understood from the standpoint of this culture shock, there was no "Anatolian renaissance" by which the peasants were supposed to merge with their "cultural essence", namely, "the Anatolian essence" designated as the mythical foundation of contemporary Turkey.

Indeed, the galvanizing tensions and antagonisms underlying the massive socio-cultural transformations defining 1950s, which I have discussed above, were far from providing any form of "Anatolian enlightenment", as the migrant peasants, dazzled by the trepidations of this culture shock, found nothing more than debilitating life conditions, uncertainty, financial insecurity, overpopulation, and accommodation problems. By means of fleshing out these contradictions and tensions, I claim that Atay's subversive engagement with the question of origin and

its unfolding in the socio-political and historcio-cultural context as foundation narratives, crystallizes that these narratives are ridden with inner contradictions, tensions, and antagonisms. This operates as follows: As I have stated at the beginning of my discussion, Atay's subversive engagement with the notion of origin and foundation narratives on the background of the socio-political and historcio-cultural circumstances in question is a form of rewriting as parody, that is, an act of repetition through parody.

The interrelation between parody and repetition was put forth by Linda Hutcheon's (1986) well-known thesis that defines "parody as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity" (p. 185). Understood in this way, Atay's rewriting, in effect, repeats the logic of the discourse of foundation narratives and the onto-theological schema at work in the question of origin/foundation, on the level of fiction in form of a parody. In this repetition/rewriting through parody, Atay's subversive engagement with the notion of origin and foundation narratives crystallizes the conundrums and contradictions. This crystallization articulates the uncontainable differences, multiplicities, and discordances that undermine the totalizing and homogenizing logic of singularity and uniqueness claimed by the discourse of foundation narratives and the onto-theological schema of the notion of origin/foundation.

What does this subversive engagement signify from the standpoint of Atay's tragic thought that critically calls the historico-cultural narrations of his own era into question? The underlying idea in the discourse of foundation narratives is to provide an encompassing framework and a firm ground/foundation. Upon this ground and within this framework, the aim is to construct a single and homogeneous identity,

historical consciousness, and so forth that can determine the various ways through which Turkish community could appropriate the heritage of its past, make sense of its present turbulences, and project its own historical continuity into future. I argue that Atay's engagement with foundation narratives through parody fleshes out the inner contradictions, conundrums, tensions, and antagonisms undercutting these narratives. As such, Atay's engagement with the question of origin and foundation narratives entails a subversive operation articulating that these narratives are, at the bottom, impotent and inoperative, for they fail in terms of intelligibly defining and conferring any framework of identity, meaning, and belonging concerning the individual's historico-cultural relation and interpretation with respect to himself and the world.

3.2 The question of history and historiography: Hikmet Benol's and Colonel Hüsamettin's history play

Another layer of my discussion concerning the critical gesture of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* that engages in a debate with the social, cultural, and political heritage of his own country is concerned with notions of history and historiography. The critical engagement of Atay's tragic thought with the notion history and historiography is structured in the novel on an antagonism between Hikmet Benol and Colonel Hüsamettin, who are trying to write a history play based on the Battle of Austerlitz. This history play is presented as a drama text that runs for almost thirteen pages and interrupts the prose flow of the novel, for a short period, with classical dramaturgical elements such as dramatic dialogues, action/reaction flow between characters, tirades, soliloquys, and so forth. Here, Atay employs what I

would like to call "metafictional" perspective. That is to say, this metafictional

perspective creates the sense that it is as if history is an immense theatrical play

designed to be performed on stage. The reader, in turn, is welcomed into the

backstage of the writing process of this play, offered a change to see the

configuration of characters and events in the plot that eventually comprise history

itself. I will later elaborate on the implications and what is at work in this curious

presentation as a metafictional perspective on the understanding of history and

historiographical practice as my discussion progresses.

There is a role-distribution between the two authors of the play, which I

interpret as an antagonism that is presented as a clash between two perspectives:

Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse represents the idea of world history conceptualized

as a rational, objective, and coherent progress and its historiographical

narrativization as an over-arching teleological development. In contrast, Hikmet

Benol's position is defined by his hyperbolic focus on particularities and details

concerning events and characters in the history play and his frequent digressions

from the plot of the history play into his own private affairs with Bilge and Sevgi. In

this sense, Hikmet constantly interrupts Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse, thus

represents a critical perspective.

I will elaborate Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse through Hegel's

understanding of history/historiography, while Hikmet's position as a critical

scrutiny of Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse will be discussed through different

perspective provided via Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. However, before

moving on with my examination of the history play written by Hikmet and Colonel

Hüsamettin, I would like to provide a short socio-political and historico-cultural

background to outline the basic characteristics of the prevalent understanding of history and historiography in Turkey. Elementary features that define these prevalent understanding of history and historiography will also be at play in Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse. In this respect, this background will prove useful to understand Atay's critical engagement with these prevalent understanding of history and historiography.

Büşra Ersanlı (2009) traces the roots of the field of historiography in Turkey back to romantic, idealist, and positivist accounts of French and German historiographies developed during 18th and 19th century (p. 22). The account of Ottoman-Turkish historiography was heavily influenced by the conception of history as an encompassing and future-oriented progress that became a widely favored thesis during 18th century; for instance, Voltaire's emphasis on the progress in history was greatly endorsed by the reformists in Tanzimat (Ersanlı, 2009, p. 25). Accordingly, as underlined by Sibel Bozdoğan (2001), following a conception of history as an encompassing and unfolding progression, "Ottoman reformers had diagnosed the 'sickness' and decline of the empire to be a consequence of lagging behind the scientific spirit of the Enlightenment and the technological and industrial progress of Europe" (p. 107).

These influences resonated on the background of "the attempts of rewriting the history" during the early republican period (Ersanlı, 2009, p. 25). With the establishment of the republic, the idea of civilization –or, as the ideological formulation goes, the notion of "contemporary civilization" (*muasır medeniyet*)– was inscribed into "the universal trajectory of progress that every nation had to follow –*a teleological destiny that could not and should not be resisted* [emphasis added]"

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(Bozdoğan, 2001, p. 106). In the developing course of the progression of history, Kemalism as the official ideology of the republican era "presented itself as the last stage in the historical evolution of the Turkish nation . . . [and] claimed to reflect the spirit of 'contemporary civilization' in the twentieth century" (Bozdoğan, 2001, p. 107).

As can be seen, the idea of world history conceptualized as an over-arching, rational, and universal progress and its historiographical narrativization as a coherent and teleological development constitute the fundamental characteristics of the prevalent understanding of history and historiography. Now I would like to move on to discuss the history play and the antagonism between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin as clash of conflicting perspectives on history and historiography to flesh out how these ideas are at work in the history play.

The play opens up with a dialogue between Heine and Hroboviç concerning the situation of the war:

> HEINE: I don't know. I have a weird hunch. I don't know what the enemy is up to. It feels like they are luring us into a trap.
>
> HROBOVIÇ: (Gives Heine a pat on the back) We Russians are a romantic nation just like you, old sport. We're going to defeat these cold Frenchmen, you'll see. After all, it's in our national culture.
>
> Colonel Hüsamettin objected: "Hikmet, what does this have to do with romanticism or national character?" Hikmet stopped: "They haven't been promoted to the rank of colonel like you, Colonel, not yet. So they are just confused." Colonel Hüsamettin was unconvinced: "A captain and a major cannot talk like this on the eve of battle." "But Colonel," said Hikmet, "we're not writing a book on the art of war." Colonel Hüsamettin scolds back: "Where's your sense of realism?" "It's long gone," answers Hikmet. (p. 266, own translation, see Appendix A, 26)

Following this, Heine and Hroboviç exchange ideas about the possible outcomes of the war and try to devise strategies that can be used during the skirmish. However, talk of war rapidly turns into a chat about women, and Hroboviç starts to share his anxieties about not "getting a response letter from his mistress for a month" (p. 267, own translation, see Appendix A, 27). Heine responds by recounting his encounter with a woman named Monika, who is married to Gustav Archibald Schlick, the general of the Austrian Army (pp. 270-71). He talks about his attempts to flirt with Monika in a dinner party, which ended in failure because he had too much to drink and felt ashamed for his misbehaviors (pp. 270-271).

These digressions are aggravated by Hikmet's own interruption into the flow of events with his personal problems. For instance, while writing an intense argument that takes place between Schlick and his lover Monika in the play, Hikmet suddenly digresses out of the context into his own private life (p. 277). By transforming the argument between Schlick and Monika into his own troublesome love affair with Bilge, Hikmet abruptly suspends the narrative. Colonel Hüsamettin issues a warning at this point again: "The state of the events we're trying to explain is already confusing enough. We shouldn't make it more complicated with our private matters" (p. 277, own translation, see Appendix A, 28). Hikmet sometimes heeds these warnings and edits the text, but most of the time continues to digress as he wishes. Eventually, Colonel Hüsamettin's concerns are transformed into a discourse through an omnipresent character named the Voice of History, which takes over the control of the narrative (p. 281). The Voice of History acts as the authority of official history by assuming the detached position of an unbiased perspective that

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counter-balances Hikmet's exaggerated emphasis on the emotional and psychological dimensions of characters and his frequent digressions from the plot.

Towards the end of the play, Hikmet announces the winners and losers in the Battle of Austerlitz in his distinctively playful approach. He tells that young English Colonel Mills wins thanks to his cool and aloof attitude; Hroboviç wins with the help of his slyness and by cheating in gambling; and Schlick wins as he achieves to have an affair with Monika, even for a short period of time (p. 281). The only loser in this play is Heine, who is killed in action by the forces of the French Army without being able to find a chance to be with Monika.

As one of the authors of this play, Hikmet now sides with Heine, and complains about his unfortunate fate: "What would have happened if Napoleon were defeated at Austerlitz, even just for once?" (p. 281, own translation, see Appendix A, 29). This rhetorical question, in effect, also reflects a sense of helplessness in the face of the course of events that are beyond human control. Hikmet continues: "But that wasn't the case, so it was Heine who was defeated in every battle . . . There's nothing left for Heine, Colonel, except death . . . There's only the Voice of History now" (p. 281, own translation, see Appendix A, 30). Following this, the Voice of History (Colonel Hüsamettin) enters the scene:

> THE VOICE OF HISTORY: Likes of Heine will always answer for their sins. Even their smallest transgressions will be punished so that the proper course of divine judgment remains undisturbed. . . Fate and destiny solely exist for the likes of him. In my overwhelming progression, justice exists only for the ones who are afraid of it. Heine, who was infatuated with a hopeless love for a woman, jumped right on the front lines in the heat of the battle, and became, befit to a young lieutenant, a deceased warrior of a defeated army. (pp. 281-282, own translation, see Appendix A, 31)

There are two different evaluations of the same event here. Hikmet's sympathetic bond with Heine is obviously exaggerated. Nevertheless, precisely by virtue of this hyperbolic construct, Hikmet's perspective also functions to pose the questions from the perspective of particularities that are eschewed by the over-arching narrative of teleological universality claimed by notions invoked in the passage quoted above such as necessity, fate, and progression inscribed into the teleological-progressivist understanding of history. On the other hand, the perspective of the Voice of History, the parody personification of Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse on history, provides a bird's-eye view with an unbiased and objective take on the events. In the discourse of the Voice of History, the individual existence (particulars) is destined to perish in the great progression of history (universals) which is indifferent to particular contingencies, losses, and sufferings.

The universality and progression claimed by this notion of history upheld by the Voice of History/Colonel Hüsamettin finds its proper conceptualization in Hegel's concept of "world history" (*Weltgeschichte*). According to Hegel (1830/1984), world history is composed of separate stages that "are themselves only moments of the one universal spirit, which ascends through them in the course of history to its consummation in an all-embracing totality" (p. 65). This progression is characterized by dictates of Reason, where the spirit "has an infinite urge and an irresistible impulse" to realize itself by dialectically traversing particular moments to rationally actualize itself on the universal level (p. 65). Hegel (1830/1984) strikingly expresses the absolute universality of history that presents itself as an over-arching teleological progression as follows:

> But even as we look upon history as an altar on which the happiness of
> nations, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals are slaughtered,

our thoughts inevitably impel us to ask: to whom, or to what ultimate end have these monstrous sacrifices been made? . . . we proceed to define those same events which afford so sad a spectacle for gloomy sentiments and brooding reflection as no more than the means whereby what we have specified as the substantial destiny, the absolute and final end, or in other words, the true result of world history, is realized. (p. 69)

By defining the history as an altar of sacrifice or a slaughter-bench (*Schlachtbank*),[12] Hegel crystallizes the kernel of this notion of world history. Indeed, in Hegelian world history particularities such as the downfall of different empires, dissolution of divergent nations, and death of separate individuals culminating in incidents of mass murder are nothing but necessary steps in the course of the unswerving progression of world history.

Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy (1990) emphasize the discourse of teleology and progress inscribed within the idea of world history as universal progression. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1990) draw attention to Hegel's concept of "world history" by stating that it signifies "not the 'history of the world' but rather the 'world-as-history,' a world consisting only of a process, and the necessity of that process" (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1990, p. 293). In the unfolding of world history as the world-as-history, the totality claimed by progression and teleology "leav[es] neither gaps nor remainders" (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1990, p. 293) thus everything is subsumed under the ever-marching development of history as the single totalizing absolute characterized by indisputable necessity and teleology. In other words, the contingent events of the world (or the

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[12] In *Tutunamayanlar* (1971/2015), Atay plays with Hegel's expression that history is a slaughter-bench by means of writing a hilarious parody of Hegel's biography (and caricaturing Hegel's friendship with the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte) as an illiterate butcher that later turns into a failed philosopher. For more, see Atay, 1971/2015, pp. 175-182.

contingency of the world as such) are inscribed within a narrative of historical necessity (or the teleology of the world-as-history) which confers individuals/particularities only the inescapable fate to be sacrificed for the greater development of history/universality.

Having elaborated on the understanding of history and historiography articulated by the discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin/Voice of History, now I would like to discuss Hikmet's conflicting position with respect to this perspective on two interrelated levels. Firstly, as I have mentioned above, Atay presents this history play through one might call metafictional perspective, which, for the reader (of this novel and the history play implemented in the novel as a drama text), creates the sense that it is as if history is an immense theatrical play to be performed on stage. I shall elaborate on this writing process through arguing that Hikmet's attempt at writing history plays employs the very act of writing as a sort of Derridean space of difference, otherness, and play, which disrupts the so-called unity of historiographical narrativization. Secondly, I will interpret this disruption from the perspective of Foucault's genealogical approach to history and historiography, which provides a space of critical interpretation. I will situate my discussion in this space to discuss issues related to the historico-cultural formation of identity by means of emphasizing that the question of self-understanding (who am I?) is interrelated to the understanding of the question of historico-cultural identity (who are we?). To this end, I will invoke my discussion of the characterization of Hikmet's self and identity in Chapter 2.

3.2.1 The metafictional presentation of history and historiography: A Derridean reading of the history play as history as play

As I have mentioned above, the history play written by Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin entails a metafictional perspective. In this perspective, history is presented as if it is an immense theatrical play performed to be on stage and that the reader (of the novel and the history play implemented in the novel) is welcomed into the backstage of the writing process of this play. This curious presentation of history play, which I dubbed "metafictional", in fact, presents the idea of history as history in the making. That is to say, the metafictional aspect of the presentation of the writing process of the history play crystallizes the operations of writing history in the making. Atay's metafictional approach provides a form of self-reflective consciousness on part of the operations of historiography with respect to its own process of writing and narrativizing history.

In this regard, the very idea of historiography as *historia* and *graphein*, that is, as *history* and *writing* articulates that giving accounts of historical events as they happened entails an operation of writing and narrativization that not only records, translates, and transmits historical events, but also determines the very definition of history precisely by this process of writing and narrativization. Admittedly, this is a dazzling perspective, which points out that insofar as history is taken from the standpoint of this metafictional approach as a theatrical play performed to be on stage before the reader, then its performance would be in the stage of writing.

This is not, however, a question of methodology, which amounts to a discursive delimitation of a research plan or program to define the ways of writing historical accounts. Rather, Atay's metafictional presentation, understood in the

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context that I have remarked above, brings forward the idea (or metafictional awareness) that the rational progress of world history (or world history as rational progress) gains its definition as a coherent and unified progress precisely by being written as an over-arching teleological development. That is to say, the writing of world history as rational progress is the simultaneously the narrativization and definition of history through teleological historiography. This process of writing and narrativization constantly inscribes and re-inscribes history into the logic of rational and teleological process that has a claim of coherence and unity. Indeed, as I have pointed out above, the world history as an over-arching, universal and rational progress and its narrativization through teleological historiography from the outset excludes, represses and erases all particularities, differences, disjunctions, and discordances. Their operation subsumes all these divergences under the totality, unity, and coherence of its own discourse established upon irrefragable necessity and *telos* of the logic of progress.

As I have discussed above, there is an antagonism fleshed out in the writing process of the history play between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin, which I interpret as a clash of two conflicting perspectives. From the vantage point of this antagonism, I would like to interpret Hikmet's playful digressions from the plot of history play as a sort of transgression. This act of transgression constantly tries to break down the discursive limitations and operations embodied by Voice of History/Colonel Hüsamettin in compliance with the logic of conferring unity, progress, and coherence to history in the process of its narrativization as a teleological rational development. Similarly, Hikmet has an exaggerated focus on the details of events (constantly undermining the accounts of what has happened by

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speculating on possibilities of events as what could have happened) and characters
(reflecting upon their psychological states, moral dilemmas, unfortunate experiences,
idle chatting, and so forth). I claim that this hyperbolic focus is a sort of digression
and interruption upsetting the very structure of continuity and coherence demanded
by the discourse of Voice of History/Colonel Hüsamettin.

The fact that these transgressions, digressions, and interruptions are fleshed
out in the writing process of history play problematizes the very process of writing
history, that is, the world history as an over-arching, universal and rational progress
and its narrativization through teleological historiography as I have pointed out
above. Indeed, to the extent that the rational progress of world history acquires its
coherence, consistency, and unity in the very process of being inscribed by the
teleological historiography, the historiographical narrativization operates as a
structure for the representation of historical events. I wish to elaborate on what is at
work in this logic of structure acquired through the historiographical process, and to
flesh out how Hikmet's digressions and transgression are at play here, via Derrida's
remark on writing, structure, and play.

The thought of structure entails a center, that is, a fixed point of reference
structuring the principles that govern and sustain the structure (and its very
structurality). However, by doing so, center also limits the play within the structure
itself; it is, in effect, a structure insofar as it limits and governs the permutations of
the play thus, at the same time, presents itself beyond the reach of play. Derrida
(1966/1978) points out this relationship as follows:

> The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of play based on a
> fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental
> immobility and a reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of

play. And on the basis of this certitude anxiety can be mastered, for anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, of being caught by the game, of being as it were at stake in the game from the outset. (p. 279)

The game and play in question here, as can be seen, come with the stakes of undermining and disrupting the structure. Thus the "anxiety" of this disruption of the structure by the play is constantly neutralized by the process of delimiting the free play of the play within the boundaries of the structure, thus within the limits set down by the center/ground of structure. The notions of play and game articulate the substitutability of center, which amounts to say that the center/ground that governs the structure by delimiting and neutralizing the disruptive effects of play is not a fixed center, but "a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center" (Derrida, 1966/1978, p. 279). Accordingly, in the relationship between the structure, center, and play, the fixedness and invariability of center as the governing principle/ground is always already undermined and destabilized by the play/game.

The disruptive and destabilizing character of play/game gains its most acute expression in the very act of writing. Indeed, Derrida (1966/1978) remarks that to write is to "enter the game" in which the "the play of signifying references that constitute language" constantly destabilize and decenter any center/ground that is established as immutable, immovable, an invariable (p. 7). Every time a structure legitimizes and constructs itself on a center/ground (the original/transcendental signifier) for gaining stability, coherence, consistency, and unity, the playfulness of writing undermines this attempt by employing irony, parody, and pun as modes of repetition.

This repetition, however, is not re-production of the selfsameness and self-identity of the logic of structure, but, on the contrary, it is the displacement of center and destabilization of structure through otherness and difference. Indeed, Derrida (1966/1978) remarks that the disruption acts as repetition in the relationship between center/ground, structure, and play I have mentioned above (p. 280). As such, the notion of center/origin that limits the play and presents itself "on the basis of a full presence which is beyond play" is not a fixed locus but an open realm "in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences (Derrida, 1966/1978, p. 280). Through the repetition of play and the permutations of play as repetition, what is expressed as play in the realm of writing is the opening up of this difference at the heart of the sameness, which, at the same time, amounts to say that what is called sameness is nothing but the repression of this difference.

In light of this short detour to Derrida's remarks, I wish to return to my interpretation of Hikmet's role in conflict with that of the discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin/Voice of History in the writing process of the history play, which turns into a curious debate over history and historiography. I interpret Hikmet's playful digressions from the plot of history play as a sort of transgression of the discursive limitations and operations embodied by Voice of History/Colonel Hüsamettin that acts in accordance to the structural logic that confers unity, progress, and coherence to history in the process of its narrativization/writing as a teleological rational development. On the other hand, I interpret Hikmet's exaggerated focus on the details of events and characters as digressions and interruptions undermining and frustrating the very structure of continuity and coherence inscribed by the discourse

of Voice of History/Colonel Hüsamettin. I shall explain below how these two levels are at work in the antagonism between Hikmet and Voice of History/Colonel Hüsamettin.

What do these digressions, interruptions, and transgression ultimately entail? The discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin/Voice of History, as I have explicated via Hegel's world history, conceptualizes history as world history that unfolds itself through rational and coherent progress. The logic of the writing of world history understood as such, that is, the very structure of the historiographical narrativization of world history as a teleological development is undermined in Hikmet's digressions, interruptions, and transgressions. Indeed, Hikmet's very attempt at writing history plays turns into an imitation of historiography understood as such. That is to say, Hikmet's play doubles/duplicates historiography's original/singular account of writing history as it is, namely, the historiographical narrativization of world history as a singular, teleological and rational progress, thus disrupts its logic and structure. Indeed, Hikmet's playful digressions, transgressions, and interruptions flesh out the differences, discordances, and disjunctions always already at work in the notion of play/game that constitute writing itself, which threatens the very logic and discourse of structure.

By employing the act of writing in this Derridean sense –that is, as I have mentioned above, as a sphere of difference, play, parody, repetition, and duplication without any reserve, origin, or fixed center– Hikmet's writing of the history play re-appropriates history as play in the course of writing the history play. This amounts to say that Hikmet's playful digressions, transgressions, and interruptions, understood in this way, ultimately disrupts the discourse of structural logic (embodied by

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Colonel Hüsamettin/Voice of History) that confers unity, progress, and coherence to history in the process of its narrativization through writing as a teleological rational development.

3.2.2 "Who am I?" is "who are we?": A Foucauldian reading of the historico-cultural formation of identity and corporeality

I wish to take this disruption and interruption that introduces discontinuity and disunity to the structure and logic of historiographical narrativization conferring unity and coherence to world history as a rational and teleological progress as my critical vantage point. The re-appropriation of history as play, which I have discussed above, discloses that the realm of history (and the operations of historiographical narrativizations/writings) is traversed by ambiguities, discontinuities, and differences. I would like to elaborate on the significations of this critical engagement via Foucault's genealogical approach to history, which resists, at the bottom, to the discourse of traditional/institutionalized progressive-teleological history that I have discussed at length.

Foucault's genealogical approach to history entails a radical critique of the structure and premises of the conceptualization of history as a steady progress that rationally unfolds itself in a teleological fashion assuming a clear beginning and end. Foucault (1971/1984) remarks that simply refers to this discourse as "the historian's history," which strives to assume "a suprahistorical perspective" through which it finds "support outside of time and pretends to base its judgments on an apocalyptic [revelatory and prophetic] objectivity" (pp. 86-87). This teleological-progressivist account of history is constantly haunted by "the chimeras of the origin" (Foucault,

1971/1984, p. 80). The origin/center/ground, as it is remarked in the discussion above related to Derrida, are the governing principles of a structure (of history and operations of historiography) that govern and delimit the play/game of uncontainable elements of differences and discontinuities that constantly threaten the unity and coherence of the structure. Foucault provides similar remarks to such governing principles of a structure of the discourse of history and historiography understood as such, which posits itself through "the metahistorical deployments of ideal significations" (Foucault, 1971/1984, p. 77).

In this respect, Foucault (1971/1984) compares the discourses of traditional history ("historian's history") to that of demagogue: "As the demagogue is obliged to invoke truth, laws of essences, and eternal necessity, the historian must invoke objectivity, the accuracy of facts, and the permanence of the past" (p. 91). Foucault's parallel between demagogy and history sheds light on the discourse of teleological-progressivist history, which I have discussed in detail in relation to the discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin/Voice of History and its explication via Hegel. Such discourse, as Foucault (1971/1984) remarks, principally operates "under the cloak of universals" and posits a "comprehensive view excluding differences" where particularities, contingencies, and discordances are reduced "to the lowest common denominator" (p. 91). This reduction and exclusion of differences go hand in hand, that is, with the same gesture they neutralize differences, disjunctions, and discontinuities, as I have discussed above, by means of subsuming them under the logic of the structure of rational, coherent, teleological progress.

However, Foucault points out that when this structure is interrupted and destabilized –as is the case with Hikmet's playful re-appropriation of history

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discussed above– the repressed and silenced aspects, that , the *other* of "the events of history" becomes crystallized with its disruptive effects "its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats" (Foucault, 1971/1984, p. 80). The surfacing of the repressed, erased, and neutralized elements, in effect, radically alters one's ontologico-historical relation with respect to the self and the world. Indeed, here Foucault emphasizes an emancipatory dimension that subverts the singularity of events and their narrativization/writing through the pre-established structure operating via the logic of teleology and progression.

This subversion opens up a space of critical reflection and questioning concerning one's own identity, belongingness, corporeality, and the ontologico-historical relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world precisely by means of "mak[ing] visible all of those discontinuities that cross us" (Foucault, 1971/1984, p. 95). In this respect, the unmasterable, uncontainable, and contradictory elements at play in one's relation and interpretation with regard to the self and the world becomes articulated as "distinct and multiple elements, unable to be mastered by the powers of synthesis" (Foucault, 1971/1984, p. 94).

I wish to situate my discussion in this space of critical reflection on the question of identity, belongingness, and corporeality concerning one's historico-cultural relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world. I aim to flesh out an interrelation between Hikmet's most pressing concern, that is, his self-imposed task of self-understanding through radical self-criticism and his relation and interpretation with respect to the socio-political and historico-cultural circumstances of his milieu. In this respect, my intention is to demonstrate that the question of identity that comes across as a pursuit of self-understanding in tragic thought (who

am I?) is, in effect, inseparable from the question of historico-cultural identity (who are we?). To this end, I would like to invoke my discussion in Chapter 2 concerning the characterization of Hikmet's self and identity to discuss it from the standpoint of the critical engagement of Atay's tragic thought with the socio-political and historico-cultural circumstances of his milieu.

Before moving on to my discussion, I wish to provide a background of the identity politics to outline the fundamental characteristics, ambiguities, tensions, and conundrums at work in the construction and appropriation of historico-cultural identity within the framework of the prevalent understanding of history and historiography in Turkey. As Tanıl Bora (1996) remarks, the idea of progress in history, supported and propagated throughout the early Republic period by means of Kemalist doctrines, was the essential background for the construction of Turkish identity, which was always interrelated with a nationalistic framework (p. 23). The underlying principle governing the nationalistic identity construction discourses was the will to establish "a sense of continuity" (Bora, 1996, pp. 15-16) that aimed to characterize Turkish identity in a wider spatio-temporal spectrum. In this respect, identity politics structured the "Turkishness as an integral part of humanity and civilization" within the narrative of progressive history (Bora, 1996, pp. 24-25). Subsequently, in a Hegelian manner, "the Turkish nation became a world history nation" (Bora, 1996, p. 25) and designated itself in an ontologico-historical trajectory oscillating between universalism of progression and localized nationalistic fervor.

However, the national project of establishing a stable and universally legitimate identity was ridden with conundrums and double binds. Ayşe Kadıoğlu (1996) emphasizes that the main paradox problematizing the identity construction

process was stemming from the pursuit of contradictory aims of "opting for transforming a national culture by adjusting it to the requirements of progress while at the same time maintaining its distinctive identity" (p. 178). Starting with the changes sought by the Tanzimat reforms, which was also the principal source that marked the beginnings of the early Westernization efforts, the identity politics entailed strenuous paradoxes and contradictions in which "the Turkish psyche has been burdened with the difficult task of achieving a balance between the Western civilization and the Turkish culture" (Kadıoğlu, 1996, p. 178).

These problematic dimensions were also at work in the identity politics of the republican period. Analogous to the previous discussion concerning the attempts at providing a mythical foundation through narratives of origin, it can be seen here that the attempts of creating the Turkish identity were always fictive in nature. Indeed, Kadıoğlu (1996) pinpoints that the attempts to accomplish a historico-cultural break with the past by providing a mythical foundation resulted in the clumsily fabricated "Turkish identity," which was principally "distinguished by its manufactured character. Turks were a 'made' nation by virtue of emphasizing their difference from the Ottomans along the similar Jacobin lines that the French revolutionaries followed in creating the Frenchman" (p. 188). In this respect, the entire identity politics was imbued with deep-seated contradictions, paradoxes, and double binds.

Having provided a short outline that demonstrates the premises, socio-political circumstances, the tensions and conundrums at play in the identity politics of Turkey, now I wish to discuss how Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* poses the question of identity in relation to the question of historico-cultural identity. To this end, I wish to invoke my discussion in Chapter 2 with respect to the

characterization of Hikmet Benol's identity and corporeality entailing a dazzling plethora of layers. It goes without saying that the conundrums and tensions expressed in the context above are at work in this interrelation.

As I have remarked in Chapter 2, Hikmet's identity is characterized by conglomeration of radically estranged layers entailing historico-political, socio-cultural, temporal, geographical, religious, and linguistic differences.[13] Indeed, recall Hikmet's remark that he is "made up of many different people who are clumsily patched up together" (p. 336). The puzzle of Hikmet's identity is made up of pieces that "belong to people of different races, religions, and languages" which puts Hikmet in a destabilized and insecure position in which he "wobbles across different feelings and thoughts" (pp. 336-337). The sense of instability and ambiguity traversing this characterization of Hikmet's tragic self becomes crystallized, as I have discussed, in the course of his pursuit of self-understanding by following the question "who am I?". I argue that this question of self-knowledge comes across as the question of historico-cultural identity, that is, the radical difference and otherness defining Hikmet's self and exposed in the question "who am I?" also characterizes the question of historico-cultural identity as "who are we?".

This point becomes clearer when it is thought on the background of the short outline that I have provided above concerning the attempts at constructing a coherent, consistent, and unified historico-cultural identity in compliance with the logic of the structure of teleological-progressivist accounts of history/historiography.

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[13] Here, I am adding another layer to my discussion with regard to Hikmet Benol's characterization as a tragic protagonist. To recall this discussion, please see the sub-heading "2.4. The conception of the tragic self and identity in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*: Hikmet Benol as a tragic character" in Chapter 2 (p. 54). For the related original quotations translated into English, see Appendix A, 2.

Indeed, with respect to his rending inner antagonisms, Hikmet remarks that "pieces taken from the East are in revolt against the West . . . and my heart cannot bear these contradictions" (p. 337). This expression, taken into consideration with the characteristics that I have discussed above, crystallizes not only the double binds and conflicts that characterize Hikmet's tragic self but also fleshes out how his sense of self and identity are thoroughly traversed with the antagonisms and contradictions that define the socio-cultural and historico-political circumstances of his milieu.

The radical divergences and differences characterizing Hikmet's identity and self, as I have argued, are also articulated through his corporeality. Indeed, I have remarked in Chapter 2 via Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty that any consideration of selfhood is always already an engagement with corporeality since the world is inhabited corporeally, that is to say, with a corporeal presence shared with the world and others in a state of interrelatedness. In this respect, as I have pointed out, Hikmet's body, identity, and self are presented as an intersubjective field situated in an unceasing dialogue with the world. What does this corporeal situatedness entail within the context of the socio-political and historico-cultural circumstances and practices in question?

Corporeality as one's bodily existence cannot be thought outside the historico-cultural transformations and shifts. Indeed, Foucault (1971/1984) remarks that the body is not defined by pre-given structures and frameworks, but rather becomes "molded by a great many distinct regimes" (p. 87). Being traversed by the shifts and transformations in the historico-cultural realm, the understanding of corporeality entails a conception of "body totally imprinted by history" (Foucault, 1971/1984, p. 83). Disjunctions, discontinuities, and turbulences in one's historico-

cultural relation to the self and the world leave their mark upon the body, thus it "manifests the stigmata of past experiences and also gives rise to desires, failings, and errors", which ultimately transforms the body into "the pretext of their insurmountable conflict" (Foucault, 1971/1984, p. 83). Indeed, as I have pointed out above, the plethora of layers entailing immense divergences and differences characterizing Hikmet's identity and self are also articulated through his bodily existence. In this respect, Hikmet's body, just as his self and identity, is a mess "made up of many different people who are clumsily patched up together" (p. 336) embodying radical differences and heterogeneities.

Therefore, considered on the level of corporeality, the interrelation of "who am I?" and "who are we?" reveals Hikmet's body to be *topos* of conflicts, tensions, and antagonisms. In other words, as Foucault (1971/1984) remarks, one's identity and corporeality is situated in the historico-cultural realm "among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference" (p. 89). In this respect, I claim that Hikmet's body becomes the bearer of the conundrums, contradictions, and conflicts characterizing the socio-cultural and historico-political circumstances of his milieu. Indeed, Hikmet's corporeality is articulated as a site of antagonisms and double binds that constantly re-define the body, which is the corporeal bearer of identity, through difference, ambiguity, and otherness without the sense of coherence and unity claimed by the narratives of identity politics of teleological-progressive history and historiography.

As I have remarked, Atay's tragic thought engages in a debate with the historico-cultural and socio-political circumstances of his milieu. He does this by means of submitting the notion of history and practices of historiography, understood

within the historico-cultural and socio-political context at hand, into question from the perspective of the critical gesture of tragic thought as a social phenomenon. As I have discussed, the world history as a rational and coherent progress and its historiographical narrativization as a teleological development neutralize the dispersive effects of all differences, contingencies, disjunctions, and contradictions by means of subsuming (or rewriting) them under the singular, absolute, necessary movement of progress. This eventually aims to provide a coherent sense of historico-cultural identity that defines one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world.

However, as I have discussed in detail, at every turn, Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* demonstrates the fragility of these historico-cultural narratives of identity and their structure established upon an assumingly fixed center/ground, as they are thoroughly assailed by insurmountable conflicts, tensions, contradictions, and antagonisms. Therefore, these narratives fall short of constructing a fully transparent and intelligible framework as well as establishing a stable ground from which one can derive a proper sense of meaning, identity, and belonging concerning one's historico-cultural relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world.

3.3 The question of failure and restlessness: Tragic thought, apocalyptic thought, and modernity as belatedness

The discussion at hand so far demonstrated that the frameworks established by teleological narratives of progressive history or foundation narrations as myths of origin are exposed in their failure to provide a sense of meaning and ground for

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stability to human beings and human action. This creates, in turn, an unceasing tension preserved throughout *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, which comes across as a sense of restlessness, incompleteness, and failure.

As a tragic protagonist, Hikmet Benol suffers from this sense of restlessness, as his future plans and projections constantly end in disappointment, thus turning into "half-realized dreams" (*yarım kalmış hayaller*) (p. 156). Understood in this way, Hikmet's disquietude comes from a persistent sense of incompleteness and failure: "I wasn't able to reach anywhere. My dreams were shattering apart because of the anger caused by failures. Bad dreams and torturing images were lying in wait, suddenly ambushing me" (p. 156, own translation, see Appendix A, 32). These disturbing thoughts boiling inside Hikmet are ultimately transformed into grotesque images, which he refers as "half-humans" (*yarım kalmış insanlar*) and "torturers" (p. 156). The half-human images constantly haunting and torturing Hikmet are the projections coming from the frustrations of his sense of incompleteness and failure. However, these spectral images should not be taken as mere reflections of Hikmet's personal shortcomings, but rather must be interpreted in the social, cultural, historical, and political context of Turkey in question.

3.3.1 Interpreting Hikmet Benol's sense of restlessness via the experience of modernity as belatedness

I wish to elaborate on this sense of failure and restlessness fueling Hikmet's disturbing thoughts through the experience of belatedness in the course of modernization of Turkey. As Zeynep Atamer (2007) remarks, the question of modernization in Turkey has always set itself "the (ultimate) aim that is expressed as

'to reach the level of contemporary civilization'" which is principally "configured as a process where the modernization has been considered identical to be Westernized" (p. 324). For non-Western countries, concerns related to modernity has been expressed through modes of comparison with the other, namely, the West as the singular and absolute articulation of all that is modern. Considered in this way, following Gregory Jusdanis (1991), it can be said that for societies of non-Western countries, the phenomenon of belated modernization "necessarily remains 'incomplete' not because it deviates from the supposedly correct path but because it cannot culminate in a faithful duplication of western prototypes" (p. xiii). As such, the course of modernity is characterized as an experience of belatedness that entails a frustrating sense of failure and incompleteness.

As Nurdan Gürbilek (2003) remarks, the experience of modernity as belatedness "concerns not only ideas and ideologies but also desires and aspirations, anxieties and fears, envies and resentments" (p. 615). In this regard, half-human images as tropes of spectrality embody the experience of modernity as belatedness, which expresses a form of being and thinking "that has come to accept its insufficiency before a modern one presuming to be superior, and a culture that has adopted an infantile role when confronted by foreign modern ideals" (Gürbilek, 2003, p. 599). In *Günlük*, Atay (1987/2014) comments on a similar socio-cultural concern entailing the sentiments of inferiority and infantilism (of Turkish culture/history) against the exemplar of superior thus modern ideals (of Western culture/history). Atay (1987/2014) remarks that, in the face of Western culture, Turkish people act with "a childish pride" and "feistiness" as if they are "street urchins throwing muds to posh children with a good family life" (p. 26, own

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translation, see Appendix B, 1). However, Atay (1987/2014) remains ambivalent towards this "naïve" attitude and the socio-cultural conditions that constantly re-produce it; he is "sympathetic in general", yet cannot help but feel "a seething rage while living in it day-to-day" (p. 26, own translation, see Appendix B, 1). Indeed, while working on the draft of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* and sketching out the characterization of Hikmet Benol, Atay (1987/2014) notes that "Hikmet may be feeling the same way" (p. 26, own translation, see Appendix B, 1). From the outset, then, this conundrum at work in the experience of modernity as belatedness is also found in the characterization Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist.

Atay's emphasis on this double bind between acceptance and rejection, concordance and discordance, sympathy and antipathy expresses a form of anxiety at work in the experience of modernity as belatedness. Gürbilek (2003) expounds that the intricate nature of the experience of modernity as belatedness is crystallized in the sense of anxiety concerning "the desire to be the other and the fear of losing one's self in the other" (p. 615). The anxiety hovering above this dilemma entails a tension peculiar to the notion of cultural identity as a sphere of conflicts with respect to the self and the other. Indeed, on the one hand, there is an attempt to construct an authentic cultural identity against the other, namely, conceptualizing a self that can lay its own ground so that it can justify and structure its own existence through this gesture of auto-foundation that excludes the other from the process. On the other hand, this process is thoroughly haunted by the anxiety of losing this sense of authentic self in the existence of the other, which upsets the discourse of authentic self as a sealed off and enclosed entity that can lay its own ground without any mediation. This tension is, in turn, accompanied and aggravated by the impossibility

of positing such authentic self, as the formation of self's desire always already occurs by means of a mediation through the other.

Understood in this socio-cultural context bearing the anxieties between the self and the other, the spectrality of the disturbing images of half-human figures haunting Hikmet might be interpreted on a two-fold dimension. First, the sense of failure, restlessness, and incompleteness expressed by the half-human images is inscribed in the other, understood not only as the socio-cultural and historical context characterizing the intricacies of the experience of belatedness, but also the more general significations of the shortcomings of modernization/Westernization. Second, being constantly haunted by these images (of the other), it is seen that Hikmet comes across as someone who is unable to conceptually re-appropriate the sense of restlessness and failure. Therefore, Hikmet finds himself, that is, his own self, naked and exposed to the hauntings of the spectral imagery of half-human torturers. Considering these two dimensions together, it can be said that Hikmet is not only the object, but also the subject of this experience. In other words, Hikmet's exposure to the spectrality of these images entails, in fact, his own exposure to the otherness residing within his self and identity, inseparably characterizing him through that which frustrates him into a state of restlessness and failure.

Turkey's entire modernization process is characterized by the anxieties, dilemmas, and double binds discussed above, which transforms the experience of modernity to that of belatedness. Suna Ertuğrul (2003) remarks that as a country constantly oscillating between its past and present, Turkey remains stuck between the tradition and heritage of its historical past and the attempts of finding new historico-cultural narratives of foundation/origin to design a clean break with this spectral past.

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The experience of modernity as belatedness principally articulates this tragic state of dividedness, which is accompanied by a sense of being stuck in a state of in-betweenness. The shortcomings of the modernization project, manifested as a sense of socio-cultural and historical belatedness, leaves the subject "torn between a failed modernity and an exhausted past" (Ertuğrul, 2003, p. 639). Understood in this context, the spectral imagery of half-human figures constantly haunting and torturing Hikmet, as I have discussed above, in effect, is the expression of this tragically divided state of existence. Indeed, Hikmet Benol was born into a culture vis-à-vis belated to itself, namely, torn between its past and present, and situated on the horizon of an ambiguous future. As such, Hikmet is a tragic character stuck between antagonisms and tensions of not being able to appropriate the heritage and tradition of the past or to find himself a place in the narrations of his time that might give him a sense of belonging, identity, and stability.

3.3.2 Specters encountered: Hikmet's play "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse"

Befit to the critical gesture of tragic thought, as I have argued at the beginning of this chapter, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* calls the fundamental concerns of his era into question by transforming them into problems. Accordingly, the antagonisms, double binds, and dilemmas at work in the relationship between Hikmet's sense of failure and restlessness and the experience of modernity as belatedness are not mere ruminations regarding the past, but also entail a form of struggle and questioning that traverses the concerns of the present. I claim that Hikmet's frustration and struggle concerning this tragic state of in-betweenness are expressed and problematized in Hikmet's play

"The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse", which is based on the apocalyptic theme of the Last Judgment and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

The Biblical story of the Last Judgment is based on the apocalyptic visions narrated in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament. The text of Revelation narrates a series of catastrophic events ultimately foretelling the eschatological closure of history and time, which will be followed by a new and just order under the rule of the Kingdom of God and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. One of these catastrophic events is the coming of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, representing four divine forces ravaging the earth during the Last Judgment. Even though interpretations may vary, traditionally it is thought that the first white horse of the apocalyptic horde symbolizes "conquest" (Rev. 6.2), the second red horse symbolizes "war" (Rev. 6.4), the third black horse stands for "famine" (Rev. 6.5-6), and the fourth pale horse –with which Hikmet identifies himself– symbolizes "death" (Rev. 6.8).

In his hilarious play based on the Biblical theme of the Last Judgment and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Hikmet fashions himself as the Horseman of Death in the apocalyptic horde. The members of the apocalyptic horde enter into the field where the grotesque half-human figures are playing football (p. 156, see Appendix A, 33). However, in no time, things escalate in a climactic fashion, and the apocalyptic horde wreaks havoc in the field, destroying everything in their way, including their opponents the half-humans:

> The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse was about to enter into the field. The real horsemen. With Atilla, Cengiz, and Hülâgû, we were riding the long-legged horses of the American cowboys, and we rushed into the field and scattered all of them [half-humans]. And we weren't the second string substitute players of the Apocalyptic horde, we were the real thing, the first-

stringers of the national football team. We brushed them off with the sweepers dangling on the side of our horses as if we were playing polo. They were there with their cars made out of boxes used to carry oranges, with four-legged buff shadings they placed on top of their cars, badges-shoelaces-phone tokens-cheap and stained pocket mirrors-lighter fluid refills-toffees-oranges sold separately in string bags-evil eye talismans-matchboxes-filtered cigarettes-porn magazines-plastic balls-shaving razors-gift postcards-lottery tickets-condoms-Swiss steel razors-newspapers with supplements-empty fountain pens-lead pencils with erasers placed inside a cup-deaf blind mute signs-corn pieces thrown to pigeons-gillyflowers in their trembling hands; and we said 'such remorse is just too much for this world', and we eradicated them all. Even their tire-tracks were erased from the grass . . . So it was done. Everything was restored to its former place. But I couldn't stop myself . . . I established a reign throughout the world which was longed for ages. (In six months, I had set our country back on track.). . . I swung my sword, which was sharp on both sides, at both directions (I brought emancipation and tyranny at the same time). . . But when I realized that I couldn't keep up with all this destruction, I offered my resignation to the high commanders. (pp. 159-160, own translation, see Appendix A, 34)

In this admittedly bizarre and hilarious scene, half-human figures are depicted with an assemblage of objects. This description creates a sort of constellation, in which the objects stand for a manifold of socio-cultural significations. This signification ranges from minor social rituals of everyday life (corn pieces thrown to pigeons) and traditional-cultural superstitions (evil eye talisman) to frequently used products (cheap and stained pocket mirrors, Swiss steel razors, filtered cigarettes, matchboxes, toffees, and so forth) and items found around the streets in vendors and shops echoing the rhythm of daily grind (plastic balls, deaf mute blind signs, gift postcards, lottery tickets). This depiction can be interpreted as a form of constellation that adjoins, without conflating, the socio-cultural sedimentation of the past and the rhythm of everyday life of the present time. The divergence of objects that denote habits, traditions, and communality of day-to-day life indeed offers a vast network of temporal and spatial significations. Depicted via these objects, then, half-human

figures also bear the connotations of this antagonistic constellation of the past and the present.

As I have stated above, Hikmet's sense of restlessness, incompleteness, and failure are expressively embodied by the spectral imagery of half-human figures. Considered in the socio-political context, I have claimed that this spectrality stems out of the anxieties and conundrums of the experience of modernity as belatedness, which comes across as a state of tragic dividedness between the past and the present. The configuration of half-human figures as the antagonistic expression of the past and the present, as I have discussed above, should be considered on the background of this tragic state of in-betweenness. Accordingly, in Hikmet's play, the imagery of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse attacking half-humans, understood in this way, can be interpreted as a vehicle that transforms deep-seated frustrations into a desire for a radical change.

That is to say, Hikmet's play expresses a demand for the transformation of the past and the present understood as the agonistic constellation of that which is traditional and historical, social and cultural right in the midst of the tragic state of in-betweenness defining one's relation to the self and the world. Furthermore, as I have pointed out, Hikmet's exposure to the hauntings of half-human figures, in fact, entails his own exposure to the otherness residing within his self, which inseparably characterizes his self and identity through the mediation of the half-human figures haunting and frustrating him into a state of restlessness and sense of failure. Considered in this way, the use of the imagery of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse expresses an equally radical desire for self-transformation, for it also entails the allegorical articulation of Hikmet's struggle with himself. As such,

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Hikmet's play comes across as a strong yearning for an uprooting change of the self and the world from a radical perspective.

3.3.3 Reading "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" on the basis of tragic thought and apocalyptic thought

Indeed, it is no wonder that Atay's uses the apocalyptic theme of the Last Judgment and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, as this yearning is the fundamental characteristic of apocalyptic thought. As Richard Holloway (2007) remarks, at the heart of apocalyptic thought resides a form of "longing [that] is best thought of as an ultimate form of compensatory justice" (p. 113). Not only personal, but also historical and socio-cultural experiences of grief, loss, disappointment, and oppression are interwoven in this apocalyptic longing of compensatory justice, which is a projection into the future in form of an "expectation of a supernatural eruption into history by God to avenge his children and establish justice on earth" (Holloway, 2007, p. 113).

The idea of compensatory justice would become clearer once it is situated in its socio-historical context. Holloway (2007) states that modern scholarship considers the apocalyptic foreshadowing of catastrophic events narrated in the Book of Revelation not as an abstract spiritual allegory, but as a work that responds to a specific historical and social crisis. The text of Revelation is estimated to be written somewhere around 95CE, in the early Christian era when the pains of Domitian's oppressive rule against Christians was still very fresh. Thereby, situated in its socio-historical context, the text can be considered as "a veiled and coded response to the persecution of the Church, and the increasing corruption of the Roman Empire, in the

reign of Domitian" (Holloway, 2007, p. 118). On a more universal level, without ignoring its particular context, it can be said that the catastrophic events and the wish for divine justice articulated by the apocalyptic visions narrated in the Book of Revelation not only underline "the horrifying imprint of human brutality" but also "capture the enduring tragedy of the human condition" (Holloway, 2007, p. 118). When thinking about the apocalyptic discourse and the idea of compensatory justice, it would be fruitful to keep in mind these two dimensions at work.

Understood on the basis of this context, the idea of compensatory justice, in effect, corresponds to a yearning for radical transformation projected into the future with a sure faith in salvation and compensation of wrongdoings through the eschatological foreshortening of time and history. The divine interference into history is at the same time a temporal intervention accompanied by the idea of a transcendental manifestation that manipulates the flow of time, history, and the order of things. Indeed, the Christian teaching of the Last Judgment, according to Reinhart Koselleck (2002), is characterized by such "apocalyptic foreshortening of time" denoting that "God, as master of times, could bring about the planned end of the world earlier than scheduled and, in fact, would do so for the sake of the elect whose suffering would be alleviated" (p. 245). This doctrine underscores the main expectation propelling the apocalyptic yearning for the compensatory justice to come, namely, "the wish of the suffering and the oppressed to exchange misery as fast as possible for paradise" (Koselleck, 2002, p. 245).

However, what are the significations of the relationship between the tragic thought and apocalyptic thought understood as such? In the critical engagement of Atay's tragic thought with the apocalyptic thought, it is underlined that the exchange

of misery and suffering with the redemption and closure through a progressive and eschatological foreshortening of time as a way out of human plight never takes place. This brings forth a truly tragic point "offer[ing] an agonic confrontation that holds out no necessary promise of rescue or reconciliation or redemption" (Scott, 2008, p. 201).

This antagonism between tragic thought and apocalyptic thought –which crystallizes the tragic dimension of the failure of the advent of compensatory justice promised by the apocalyptic discourse– is expressed in Hikmet's play by a brilliant paradox. As I have discussed above, Hikmet Benol fashions himself as a self-stylized bringer of divine compensatory justice in the apocalyptic personification of Death itself. However, he fails to uphold the work of death, feeling over-satiated at the face of his own acts of extermination. Indeed, in the last instance of the play, it is seen that Hikmet the Horseman of Death cannot "keep up with all this destruction" and resigns from the apocalyptic horde (p. 159). By this brilliant paradox, situated in the tension between tragic thought and apocalyptic thought, Atay underlines the idea that one's designs, projections, and actions are limited. That is to say, they fall short of bringing any sense of closure and fail at arriving to satisfying conclusions in the face of the unmasterable and uncontainable ambiguity and contingency of the affairs of the world.

Understood in this way, the critical engagement of Atay's tragic thought with the apocalyptic thought presents a series of tensions, antagonisms, and conundrums characterizing the human experience of being present in the world. Indeed, it captures the tensions between the promise of salvation from suffering through divine compensatory justice and the inevitable encounter with the actuality of failure and

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error inscribed in the immanency of the world. It underlines the clash between the hope for a radical transformation of the self and the world and the impotency of historical-teleological narratives of redemption to provide a framework for the fulfillment of such hope. In the context of staging a radical change, it emphasizes the antagonism between the desire for change projected into future and the haunting possibility of being crushed under the burden of the past or becoming paralyzed into resignation in the face of the contingencies of the present.

This is how Atay employs the critical gesture of tragedy and goes beyond merely reiterating or reflecting the issues of his own time. Instead, he reinterprets them under scrutiny as problems regarding human struggle for transformation by presenting a series of fundamental tensions, aporias, and antagonisms pervading human experience of being present in the world. Atay's thought gains its tragic overtones within this plethora of indeterminacies, conflicts, and conundrums, in which the labyrinthine nature characterizing the human experience of strife and questioning is fleshed out.

3.4 The question of crisis and the experience of groundlessness: To think is to fall
The current discussion in this chapter hitherto presented a series of contradictions, ambiguities, shortcomings, and tensions. They range from the impotency of teleological narratives of progressive world history and the fictive character of foundation narratives as myths of origin to the unattainability of exchanging misery, destitution, and suffering with reconciliation, redemption or closure as a way out of the direness of human condition. I claim that the unceasing restlessness and agitation in the face of these failings eventually culminate in the state of crisis.

Atay's tragic thought brings forth the question of crisis in its most acute expression towards the end of the novel, with a pun on *düşmek* (falling) and *düşünmek* (thinking) in the penultimate chapter titled *Düşüş* (The Fall). Although this is the penultimate chapter of the novel – it is followed by the ultimate chapter where Colonel Hüsamettin writes an obituary for Hikmet – it marks the end of Hikmet's strenuous pursuit of self-understanding. In this penultimate chapter, Hikmet falls from the balcony of his two-stored wooden house, or as he himself likes to call it, his *gecekondu*. Admittedly, it remains ambiguous whether Hikmet deliberately jumps to commit suicide or stumbles and falls down. However, if one looks at the preparatory sketches of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* in Atay's *Günlük* (1987/2014), it can be seen that this ambiguity is carefully and deliberately designed (p. 66, see Appendix B, 2). Why Atay intentionally makes use of such ambiguity? The obvious answer would be that Atay playfully employs this ambiguity in sort of a post-modernist fashion to upset the established polarities between reality and fiction, thus undermining the traditional expectation of dénouement.

While this might be an apt interpretation, I would like to argue that there is more to this use of ambiguity than a literary technique of blurring the dividing line between actuality and fictiveness. Accordingly, then, one should ask the following question instead: What does this ambiguity entail? I take this ambiguity as a sort of open-endedness in the sense that it provides a space for different interpretations. It is in this space of interpretation that I aim to discuss what is at work in Atay's pun on thinking and falling by means of exploring its possible associations and significations from the standpoint of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*.

The scene of the fall of Hikmet is gradually prepared by giving accounts of his last strolls on the streets that gradually turns into a long wandering. Hikmet leaves his *gecekondu* to walk around the streets of his neighborhood. He reflects upon his own life, his plays, his "crowd of Hikmets", his relationship with Bilge, Sevgi, and Colonel Hüsamettin for the last time. Yet this reflection does not remain as a serene pondering. Immersed and lost in his thoughts in seemingly endless monologue, Hikmet experiences bouts of disarming confusion, dread, fatigue, and anxiety. Soon he expresses a reluctance to return to his *gecekondu*. There is, however, more to his unwillingness than fear of loneliness and isolation. The night stroll that has gradually turned into a wandering into ambiguity is tragically experienced as the reluctance of going back to home as a place of dwelling. That is to say, this thinking through wandering becomes a sort of sojourn, an exile from the interiority of the familiar place (a home, an origin) to which one belongs into the exteriority that comes across as unfamiliarity, namely, homelessness.

Indeed, when Hikmet finally returns to his *gecekondu* after his stroll, at the height of his sense of bewilderment and destitution, it is not a homecoming anymore. Instead, it is a moment of returning to a place that could not provide any abode of dwelling for a man like Hikmet, who has wrestled with himself for a very long time in the course of his pursuit of self-understanding. In this struggle, he is left with a shattered sense of identity in his exposure to the radical ambiguities, differences, otherness, and contingency assailing his own self. Recall that Hikmet has initially set himself upon this path by undertaking the stern task of self-understanding through radical self-criticism. As I have discussed throughout this work, the tragic experience of the quest for self-knowledge uproots one from that which is selfsame and familiar

by throwing him into difference and otherness of that which is unfamiliar, leaving the self naked, defenseless, and exposed to the ambiguity and contingency of the world. In the absence of familiarity and sameness, the place of dwelling also withdraws itself, that is, the sense of identity, belongingness, and meaning established by one's prior interpretation of the self and the world becomes ruined.

As such, Hikmet finds himself again in a state of disorientation, overwhelmed by a sense of being entrapped in a state of tragic in-betweenness; he can neither go forward nor come back. Then comes the fall of Hikmet from the balcony of his *gecekondu*:

> Should I walk around a bit more? It's still early. But I'm tired Colonel. . . I don't want to do anything anymore. I really don't want to do anything. I'm afraid. . . I have to go upstairs slowly. Colonel shouldn't see me. I'm afraid, Colonel. Will you hold me? No, Colonel shouldn't know. Will he cry after me? . . . You'll play this play on your own colonel. I can write it down for you beforehand with all the details if you wish. That would be the last chapter of the rise and the fall of Hikmet. . . Colonel, will you not hold me? I'm leaning on the balustrades, Colonel. . . Well, it's too late now, I can't look back. . . Why can't I go back? I can't look down either. Close your eyes. I'm stuck here. Can't you hear me? Can't you do something? I am thinking. (pp. 462-463, own translation, see Appendix A, 35)

In the last instant of the moment he falls from the balcony, Hikmet does not utter, "I am falling" (*Düşüyorum*) but instead he says, "I am thinking" (*Düşünüyorum*), which is the last sentence that concludes the chapter. How to understand this pun? In the penultimate chapter titled *Düşüş* (The Fall), the experience of falling is articulated as the experience of thinking. That is to say, the experience of thinking entails the experience of falling. This is what lies at the heart of the pun, namely, the idea that the experience of thinking is inseparably bound with the experience of falling. Yet what does this experience entail from the standpoint of the pun on thinking and

falling at work in the question of crisis, and, ultimately, from the vantage point of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*?

As I have stated above, Hikmet's night stroll around the neighborhood in the penultimate chapter of the novel is experienced as a wandering into ambiguity. As the sameness supporting his sense of identity slowly withers away into otherness and difference, he loses his sense of belonging, namely, his place of dwelling along with any chance of stability and attachment concerning his self and identity. In this respect, the tragic experience of Hikmet's pursuit of self-understanding as a venture into the labyrinth of his own identity, where Hikmet carries his radical self-questioning as far as it can go with a fierce obstinacy befit to his characterization as a tragic protagonist, ultimately leads to a sort of ontological and epistemological crisis. That is to say, Hikmet loses the ground upon which one constructs his sense of identity, establishes his framework of meaning, and constructs his relation and interpretation with regard to the self and the world. Accordingly, the pun on thinking and falling that opens up the question of crisis articulates this experience of the loss of ground. I will elaborate on the relationship between the pun and the experience of groundlessness below.

I claim that the sense of crisis in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, gains its fullest articulation in this tragic experience of groundlessness. Yet what does exactly this experience entail? A crucial remark by Friedrich Nietzsche might illuminate what is at stake here. In his discussion of ancient Greek thought, Nietzsche touches upon a "tragic insight" concerning the experience of "the vanishing of the metaphysical ground as tragic event" (cited in Cowan, 1998, p. 16). The disappearance of ground is tersely expressed in one of the well-known themes of Nietzsche's thought – the

death of God. Nietzsche (1882/2007) articulates this idea in *Gay Science* by telling a haunting story of a madman wandering around with a lantern in his hand in the bright morning, looking for God. Met with ridicule of the crowd, the madman announces the "tremendous event" of the death of God: "The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes: 'Where is God?' he cried; 'I'll tell you! *We have killed him* – you and I! We are all his murderers" (Nietzsche, 1882/2007, pp. 119-120).

While elucidating Nietzsche's parable of madman, Heidegger (1950/2002) remarks that the theme of the death of God is not only concerned with the Christian God, but refers to the total exhaustion of a certain way of being and thinking oriented and conditioned by the premises of Western metaphysics and morals (pp. 162-163). Nietzsche's remark, in other words, crystallizes the point of consummation and bankruptcy concerning one's relation to and interpretation of the self and the world. How to interpret this vanishing of ground that comes across as the exhaustion, consummation, and bankruptcy concerning one's relation to and interpretation of the self and the world that articulates the sense of crisis opened up by the pun on thinking and falling? What is at stake in this crisis and the experience of groundlessness?

In the wake of the vanishing of ground that comes across as the death of God, the madman asks: "Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sidewards, forwards, in all directions? . . . Aren't we straying as though through and infinite nothing?" (Nietzsche, 1882/2007, p. 120). Heidegger (1950/2002) underlines that what is ultimately expressed in the event of the death of God and the vanishing of ground in Nietzsche's thought is that "there is nothing left which men can rely on

and by which he can orient himself" (p. 163). This is precisely the experience entailed in Hikmet's wanderings that eventually lead to the state of crisis that marks the culmination point of the tensions, contradictions, and antagonisms throughout the novel. Indeed, recall the aforementioned failures at establishing a historical and cultural foundation as well as the shortcomings of the historical and cultural narratives of progression in terms of providing a proper sense of identity and belongingness. These failures ultimately crystallize the point of exhaustion, consummation, and bankruptcy of a way of being and thinking that defines one's relation to and interpretation of the self and the world. It articulates, in this sense, the tragic experience of restless and ceaseless wanderings in one's pursuit of understanding oneself and the world without any certitude, fixed points reference, and attachment.

It is in this way that the tragic event of the vanishing of ground comes across as the total exhaustion of that which determines one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world. As I have mentioned above, this event of consummation is entailed in the sense of crisis that articulates the culmination of the significations of tensions, contradictions, and shortcomings that has been discussed throughout this work with respect to Atay's tragic thought at play in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. Indeed, Hikmet Benol's venture into the labyrinth of his identity for self-knowledge and his fierce debate with the tradition and heritage of his country ultimately culminate in the state of crisis.

I would like to pose a series of questions at this point that bring together the diverse aspects of my discussion throughout this work in order to flesh out how Atay's tragic thought articulates this sense of crisis pervading *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*.

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Bereft of the unshakable ground provided by Reason and self-conscious subject for indubitable knowledge and certainty regarding the self and the world, what becomes of human condition? In the failures of the teleological and progressive historical and cultural origins, foundations, structures and discourses that claim to provide a coherent narrative of meaning, belonging, and identity, what becomes of one's pursuit of understanding the self and the world? What defines the state of human circumstance if the exchange of misery and suffering with the redemption and closure through a sure promise of salvation as a way out of human plight is ultimately an unattainable fantasy, a wishful thinking? What characterizes the human experience of being present in the world in the prism of past, present, and future, if the ground upon which one interprets the self and the world vanish? These questions born out of the tremors of the sense of crisis articulated as the vanishing of ground that comes across as the bankruptcy of a way of being and thinking, are not to be definitively solved or complacently answered, but to be experienced and traversed.

However, what is at stake in this traversal? What does this experience entail? Here it is imperative to recall the pun on *thinking* and *falling* that initially prompted the question of crisis as the culmination of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. As I have remarked, the pun articulates the experience of thinking as the experience of falling. To experience means to go through, that is, to traverse and undergo; to fall is to descent, namely, it is a downgoing. Understood in the context of the discussion at hand hitherto, I interpret Hikmet's fall as an act of *going down* into the vanishing ground, that is, as an act of *undergoing* the disappearance of ground as the tragic event that comes across as the consummation of a way of being and thinking. The relegation of *thinking* and *falling* in Atay's playful pun, then,

articulates a sort of demand placed upon thinking and questioning in form of experiencing of and descending into the vanishing of ground, namely, *undertaking* the questions, contradictions, and conundrums singled out in the crisis through traversing the ambiguities, contingencies, and contradictions characterizing the self and the world.

This is ultimately captured in the challenging question that pervades Atay's oeuvre, which is asked both in his major novels *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* and *Tutunamayanlar*: "What is to be done?" (*Ne yapmalı?*) This question is an active interrogation with respect to what is at stake in the state of crisis that articulates the vanishing of ground as the bankruptcy of a way of being. The questioning and thinking that might venture into the stakes of the crisis articulated by Atay's question entails straying from secure and familiar paths. Indeed, from the vantage point of tragic thought, as it is underlined in the tragic experience of Hikmet's quest for self-understanding through self-criticism, thinking and questioning, taken to their ultimate limits, lead to wandering off the beaten tracks.

Atay's tragic thought, in this sense, calls for taking leave of that which is familiar and selfsame and venturing into the unknown, unfamiliar, and enigmatic. To say that to think is to fall, as it is articulated in Atay's pun, is to assert that thinking comes across as undergoing the groundlessness. That is to say, it marks the descent into the abyss to traverse the uncertainties and to undertake what is singled out in the crisis of the consummation. It is no wonder that thinking and questioning *de-rails* Hikmet; he loses his sense of belonging and is thrown off the tracks as the world is not a sedate residence of unperturbed dwelling, but a strenuous site of searching and wandering through ambiguity, tension, and strife.

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Let me come to a close now. As I have stated throughout my discussion, Hikmet Benol as a tragic character is in a constant search for understanding himself and the world. His pursuit comes across as a grand questioning that every turn confronts with ambiguity, tensions, and contradictions instead of definitive solutions and clear answers. In this arduous path, Hikmet's search finally reaches into a point of ontological and epistemological crisis that leaves him face to face with his own riddle-like identity, enigmatic self, and the contingency and ambiguity of the world. His relentless pursuit does not end in fulfilling resolutions that might save him from his grueling running around in circles.

Indeed, the circle is broken in the end, but what Hikmet encounters in the wake of this breaking-down is not a satisfying closure that can soothe his restless mind. Instead, he experiences the tremors of the crisis in his wanderings. Ultimately, his self-imposed task of self-understanding through radical self-criticism leads to a point where Hikmet loses the ground upon which one constructs his sense of identity, establishes his framework of meaning, and situates his relation and interpretation with regard to the self and the world. This encounter with the experience of groundlessness marks the culmination point of the event of the crisis.

I wish to conclude my discussion by saying that Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* ultimately culminating in the question of crisis does not counsel despair or fall back into resignation, pessimism or fatalism. Likewise, it does not promote naïve optimism and self-complacency. Rather, it is concerned with situating the reader right in the midst of tensions, uncertainties, and antagonisms assailing the human experience of being present in the world. As I have remarked, Atay's tragic thought calls for taking leave of that which is familiar and selfsame. It calls for

venturing into the unknown, unfamiliar, and enigmatic. That is to say, it articulates a demand for confronting the stakes of the crisis by means of undertaking the task of thinking and questioning. This undertaking is undergoing the experience of groundlessness that comes across as the consummation of that which has been defining the possibilities and significations of one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

> But concerning the times and the
> seasons, brothers, you have no need to
> have anything written to you. For you
> yourselves know very well that the day
> of the Lord will come like a thief in the
> night. While people are saying, 'there is
> peace and safety,' then sudden
> destruction will come upon them as
> labor pains come upon a pregnant
> woman, and they will not escape.
>
> –1 Thess. 5:1–3

In this last chapter, I wish to map out the main arguments, underline significant

moments, evaluate crucial points, and discuss the findings that I have extracted in my

work. Throughout my discussion, I have explored how the tragic thought is at play in

Oğuz Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*. In the course of my reading, I have concentrated

upon the various ways the tragic thought calls the notions of identity, culture, and

history into question by situating *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* amidst a dialogue with a wide

scope of perspectives ranging from classical literature to modern philosophy and

literary criticism. In this fruitful dialogue, I have focused on how the various

contradictions, conundrums, double binds, tensions, and antagonisms so dear to

tragic thought are at work in Atay's novel.

In Chapter 2, I have introduced the characteristics of the socio-cultural and

historical background of the formation of tragedy in ancient Greece during the late

sixth and early fifth-centuries B.C. in Athens. By drawing from the works of Jean-

Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, I have claimed that tragedy is not a literary

genre for leisure and entertainment, but rather, at its core, a form of critical thinking that submits human beings and human action into an active interrogation. I have coined the term "critical gesture of tragedy" to designate this critical core of tragic thought on two interrelated dimensions. First, tragic thought continually questions what it means to be human by means of articulating a human experience of being present in the world where one's relation to the self and the world is interpreted as an enigmatic journey traversing ambiguities, contingencies, and contradictions defying conclusive solutions. Second, tragic thought engages in a debate with the past and the present by questioning historical, cultural, and political narratives that determine one's relation, interpretation, and appropriation regarding the self and the world in the prism of the past, present, and future. I have discussed the first dimension at length in Chapter 2 while I have elaborated on the second dimension in detail in Chapter 3.

In my discussion in Chapter 2, I have stated that the question of identity comes across in tragic thought as a pursuit of self-understanding. Greek tragedy presents the quest for self-knowledge as a problem –*problēma* in Greek means facing with an obstacle– that challenges one, just as the famous Greek inscription "know yourself", for self-understanding. Thus, we see Oedipus wrestling with the riddle of Sphinx, which is, eventually, nothing but his struggle with himself for self-understanding. Indeed, the obsessive drive characterizing Hikmet Benol and Oedipus's search for self-knowledge is a response to this agonistic challenge to understand their identity, namely, unriddling their own riddle. When they pursue their self-questioning as far as it can go, however, we come across Oedipus and Hikmet not as triumphant riddle-solvers but precisely as men in shape of riddle, as

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defying question marks of a problem to which there is no definitive solution or satisfying answer.

Yet, at the bottom, what does self-understanding entail in tragic thought? I have claimed that self-understanding consists of a sort of hermeneutical self-interpretation, in which one's pursuit of self-knowledge comes across as tragic experience. What I have discussed as tragic experience of self-understanding is fundamentally concerned with the unfolding of this hermeneutical interpretation. In the course of the pursuit of self-knowledge, from the vantage point of tragic thought, one's self-interpretation undergoes a radical shift through the twists and turns of the events that one encounters by being exposed to the contingency and ambiguity of the affairs of the world. The experience of tragic reversal (*peripeteia*), through a shift in one's relation to self and world, opens one's eyes to the otherness of reality that has been ignored, kept at bay, or passed over. However, tragic thought entails that the recognition (*anagnōrisis*) brought about by this shift through reversal, that is, the illumination of what is revealed and noticed by the shift of interpretation, is attained through a traversal of one's blindness and oblivion with respect to oneself and the world.

As I have elaborated via Ricoeur and Hegel, tragic experience entails a form of radical transformation through encounters with otherness and difference that dismount, in Ricoeurian terms, the sameness (idem) of identity and exposes the self (ipse) to the ambiguity and contingency residing within the self and the world. As I have remarked, in Ricoeur's reading, especially in what he termed as "limit cases" pushing the question of identity to its utmost limits, the sameness providing intelligibility, constancy, selfsameness, coherence, and unity to identity is reduced to

a point of nothingness, which reveals the self in nakedness, that is, as an enigma and an open-ended question. Indeed, in the tragic experience of self-understanding, the breaking down of the economy of sameness paves the way for the surfacing of otherness and difference assailing the self, which is ultimately entailed in what Ricoeur termed "the nothingness of identity". The "nothingness" in question here, however, does not refer to the total effacement of identity and self, but rather corresponds to their negative modulation. In this negative modulation, the notion of self and identity are not characterized by self-identity and selfsameness. Instead, they are situated in constant mediation through difference and otherness. The experience of this transformation as a tragic phenomenon ultimately leads one to a state of epistemological and ontological crisis, where the ground upon which one interprets the self and the world vanishes.

The tragic experience of the pursuit of self-understanding, in this sense, is a violent process. What is at work here, as I have elaborated via Hegel's conception of experience as *Erfahrung*, is a sense of doubt and despair that constantly push consciousness characterized by the drive towards self-knowledge to move beyond its limits, a process that is characterized by unceasing tension and restlessness. I have further elaborated on the negative modulation at work in Ricoeur's term "nothingness of identity" corresponding to the disqualification of the support of sameness (idem) and exposure of the self in nakedness (ipse) by the emphasis of negativity in Hegel's *Erfahrung*.

In the simplest sense, negativity has two interrelated operations in Hegelian dialectics of self-consciousness. First, the negative modulation of the self means that the self is not posited as self-identical and selfsame, but rather entails a peculiar

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asymmetry where the self is never identical to itself. Second, since this asymmetry posits the self as something non-identical, there occurs a necessity for mediation through the other/otherness. That is to say, the self can only gain self-knowledge by positing itself as something what it is not, namely, as the other that it needs to mediate to turn back itself. The otherness of the other, that is, the very existence of the other is not exterior to self, but rather constitutes its very core. This is the reason why Hegel defines the experience of acquiring self-knowledge as a return from otherness, where the self is defined by what it is not, namely, via its mediation through the otherness. As such, the affinity I have attempted to point out between Ricoeur and Hegel, in effect, articulates that the process of self-understanding is not a tautological self-affirmation, but entails an indispensible mediation through otherness and difference.

These are the major points defining the conception of self and identity in tragic thought. Befit to the antagonisms and tensions preserved and explored in the critical gesture of tragic thought, I have argued that, following Bruns, tragic understanding of self and identity entails a sort of critique of the subject. Atay structures this critique with an antagonism between Hikmet Benol as a tragic character and Colonel Hüsamettin as the embodiment of a discourse acting as a mouthpiece for modern subjectivity conceptualized on the basis of Cartesian metaphysics.

Hikmet's curious endeavor "to create a new Reason through play of words" and his parody anthem "Our Greatest Treasure is our Reason", which are discussed in Chapter 2, constitute the culmination point of the agonistic confrontations between Hikmet Benol and Colonel Hüsamettin. I have argued that the subversive quality of

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the anthem finally creates a play-space through which Reason and Unreason comes

to stage. Here the play of Unreason rends Reason against itself by means of exposing

Reason to otherness and difference residing within its discourse. In this exposure,

Unreason comes across as the self-undermining of Reason. Thus, Hikmet's creation

of new Reason through play of words becomes a de-creation of Reason, that is, the

dissolving of Reason into Unreason in a form of what might be called an auto-

deconstructive gesture. Ultimately, by means of this critical contrast, I have claimed

that Atay's tragic thought underlines that the notion of Reason and self-

conscious/self-identical subject formulated in Cartesian *Cogito* are simultaneously

bound with their own dissolution by what they harbor, that is, Unreason whose

playfulness in Hikmet's satirical anthem crystallizes the contingency, ambiguity and

paradox assailing the formulation of *Cogito*.

What is emphasized at this point, in effect, is a tension between two

conflicting views with regard to self and world. I maintain that what lies at the core

of Cartesian thought, and to that extent modern subjectivity in general, is a sort of

will-to-certainty. That is to say, Cartesian thought entails a will to gain indubitable

knowledge of the world, to have it absolutely present in one's senses and mind

without any equivocality, to conceptualize it as an object of one's knowing, hence to

bring it or keep it under the control of the subject's will and cognition. In contrast,

tragic thought continually haunts this discourse of certainty by fleshing out an

understanding of human being inevitably exposed to the disorienting contradictions

and contingencies assailing the self and the world, which are, at the bottom,

ungovernable. Atay's tragic thought, understood on the basis of this antagonism,

thoroughly undercuts the rational conceptualization of Cartesian subject as an

isolated self sealed off from the contingency of the world and Reason as the primary source providing transparent and indubitable knowledge of the world consigning a form of ontological security to subject.

Thought on a more fundamental level, the core of Cartesian thought shaping modern subjectivity can be interpreted as a project of laying a new ground for the interpretation of the self and the world in the wake of the rejection of dogmatism and orthodox religious faith by the rise of sciences and rational thought. Indeed, against the foundational authority of divine revelation as the ground principle set by church doctrines, Descartes set out to assert the primacy and supremacy of Reason and self-consciousness of the subject of *Cogito* as "the unshakable ground" (*fundamentum inconcussum*) that determines one's ontologico-epistemological relation to the self and the world. In this sense, Hikmet's subversive engagement with the notion of Reason and the "I" of *Cogito* does not connote a resignation into irrationalism or obscurantism, but rather comes across as a gesture undermining the idea that Reason and self-conscious/self-identical subjectivity can be established as the fundamental ground upon which one interprets the self and the world.

In Chapter 3, I have concentrated upon the second dimension of the critical gesture of tragedy mentioned above, which marks an engagement in a debate with the past and the present through bringing cultural, social, and political narratives that characterizes one's interpretation, relation, and appropriation with respect to the self and the world into question. To this end, I have situated *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* in the socio-political and historico-cultural background of Turkey roughly from 1950s to 1970s. I have chiefly aimed to discuss how the particular ideas and narrations from this background shaped Atay's tragic thought, and, in turn, how the tragic thought at

play in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* submits its era into substantial questioning. Understood in this way, I have discussed at length how Atay's tragic thought engages in a debate with notions such as history, historiography, origin/foundation, cultural identity by questioning the dominant narratives and structures that characterize these notions, which play an undeniable role in defining one's relation to the self and the world.

For Hikmet Benol, the past is something spectral that haunts the present by determining its conditions and possibilities from the outset. Indeed, as I have discussed, in Hikmet's attitude towards history, it is seen that he is not able to concordantly appropriate the heritage and tradition of the past. Thus, he feels crushed under the burden of the history or one might say that history becomes a nightmare from which he is trying to awake, a dreadful sentiment shared by Stephen Dedalus of Joyce's *Ulysses*. As a reaction to this sense of entrapment, that is, as an act to gain mastery over a narrative of historical past that comes down to him and determines the possibilities and conditions of his present and future from the outset, Hikmet attempts to rewrite Turkey's history. This hyperbolic and impossible attempt is expressed as a parody of rewriting the beginnings of creation as it is told in the story of Biblical Genesis, which brings up the question of origin and foundation.

I have argued that Hikmet's engagement with the question of origin has two interrelated dimensions. First, since the question of origin as *genesis* –meaning "source, beginning" in Greek– is inherently an onto-theological question, Hikmet's parody, on a broader level, raises the question of origin/foundation as a concern for beginnings and ends, which traditional thought inscribes into logic of ontologico-historical progress and teleology. Second, considered on the background of the socio-cultural and historical context of Turkey, Hikmet's parody of origin is interpreted as

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an allegory of republican era's endeavors to produce narratives of foundation/origin such as the Turkish History Thesis, the Sun-language Thesis and Blue Anatolianism. I have argued that republican era's endeavors to produce narratives of foundation/origin primarily aimed at providing a stable ground and encompassing framework. The main idea was to lay the foundations for the formation of an authentic cultural identity and the definition of various ways through which the Turkish community could appropriate the heritage/tradition of its past, intelligibly interpret its present turbulences, and configure the possibilities of its own historical continuity in the future.

With regard to the question of origin/foundation in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, I have discussed that Hikmet's parody targeted Blue Anatolianism as one of the dominant foundation narratives shaping the social, cultural and political atmosphere of Turkey during 1950s. Blue Anatolianism, as I have remarked, is based on the organicist and pastoralist idealization of the peasants as the indigenous Anatolian people whose cultural essence could fulfill the heroic-romantic role of establishing an authentic folk culture. However, the socio-political sphere of Turkey in 1950s was also marked by a series of paradoxes that undercut the idealization of Blue Anatolianists. On the one hand, there was Democrat Party's immense modernization program (substantial investments in agriculture, industrial developments, NATO membership, encouragement of foreign investments) aimed at incorporating Turkey into the global capitalist system among the Western nations to be accepted on equal terms. On the other hand, as the foreign investments, entrepreneurship, and newly structured industries created new opportunities, Turkey witnessed a mass internal migration of villagers from countryside to the major cities in search for jobs. Because of these two

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contradictory trajectories, I have stated that "the Anatolian renaissance" so fervently

idealized and dreamed by Blue Anatolianists ended in failure, as it resulted in the

emergence of illegal housing (*gecekondu*)*,* overpopulation, and unemployment.

The main idea at work here is that the ontological and theological schema of

the question of origin, underlined in the first dimension above, is always already

present and at work in the historico-cultural narratives of origin and foundation,

discussed in the second dimension. Considered on the basis of this interrelation,

Hikmet's parody of origin articulates that narratives of foundation/origin fall short in

their claim to singularity, unrepeatability, and coherence as discourses that define the

possibilities of one's historico-cultural relation to the world. Hikmet's rewriting of

Blue Anatolianists' foundation narrative, along with the rewriting of origin as

Genesis, as I have discussed via Hutcheon, employs parody as a gesture of repetition

that marks out the difference and otherness at the heart of coherence and sameness at

work in such narratives. Understood in this way, Hikmet's parody concludes that any

claim for a single, coherent and unrepeatable origin/foundation that situates a

community in the historico-cultural realm is always already characterized by

multiplicity, alterity, and contingency destabilizing and decentering the discourses of

foundation narratives. In this subversive engagement, foundation narratives come

across as myths of origin, that is, as fabrications impotent to establish a framework of

meaning or a stable ground that might sustain one's historico-cultural relation and

interpretation with respect to the self and the world.

Another layer of my discussion with respect to the engagement of Atay's

tragic thought with a debate concerning history and historiography has focused on

the history play about Battle of Austerlitz written by Hikmet Benol and Colonel

Hüsamettin. Here, one cannot help but think that it is as if history is an immense theatrical play performed to be on stage and that the reader is welcomed into the backstage of the writing process of this play, being offered a change to see the configuration of characters and events in the plot that eventually comprise history itself. However, in no time, Hikmet's attempt to write a history play with Colonel Hüsamettin turns into a debate over history and historiography.

I have aimed to unpack this curious debate based on an antagonism between Hikmet and Colonel Hüsamettin on a theoretical level as a clash between two perspectives on history and historiography, namely, Hegelian conception of progressive history and teleological historiography and the critique of this understanding of history and historiography from different perspectives via Derrida and Foucault. I have claimed that Colonel Hüsamettin's discourse on history and historiography, articulated in the parody personification named the Voice of History, acts as a mouthpiece for a sort of Hegelian conception of world history as an over-arching universal and rational progress and its narrativization through teleological historiography. In contrast, Hikmet's role in the play, designated by an hyperbolic focus on particularities and details concerning events and characters in the history play and his frequent digressions from the plot into his own private affairs with Bilge and Sevgi, acts as an interruption of Colonel Hüsamettin's (Voice of History) discourse.

I have interpreted this interruption as a subversive gesture operating on two levels. First, Hikmet's attempt at writing a history play eventually turns into a subversive interruption/disruption in the sense that it employs the act of writing as a sort of Derridean sphere of difference, play, parody, repetition, and duplication

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without any reserve, origin, or fixed center. Hikmet's playful digressions from the plot of history play transgress the discursive restrictions imposed by traditional writing of historiography. Likewise, his exaggeration in attention to the details of events and characters in the play are rhetorical diversions upsetting the very structure of teleological continuity and coherence claimed by the traditional history and historiography embodied in the Hegelian discourse of Colonel Hüsamettin/Voice of History. Second, Hikmet's very attempt to write history plays eventually turns into an imitation of historiography as a parody. That is to say, Hikmet doubles/duplicates historiography's original/singular account of writing history as it is and disrupts it in such a way that his writing (re)appropriates history as play in the course of writing history plays.

Hegelian conceptualization of world history and its historiographical narrativization as an encompassing teleological progress, as I have argued, aim to establish a coherent historico-cultural narrative of identity built upon sameness and continuity. I have further examined this through Foucault's genealogical approach to history and historiography, which states that claims to progress, coherence, and continuity are, at the bottom, constantly haunted by repressed disjunctions and contingencies. Considering Hikmet's writing of history plays as parody from this Foucauldian standpoint, I maintain that the subversive gesture of Hikmet's parody undermines the whole edifice of the over-arching narratives of Hegelian world history as teleological progress.

Understood from this Foucauldian-Derridean standpoint, the interruption/disruption at work opens up a space of difference and otherness defying claims of sameness and coherence. This brings up the question of identity that I have

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introduced and discussed via the tragic characterization of Hikmet Benol in Chapter 2, again in Chapter 3. This time, I have interpreted the plethora of layers defining the tragic characterization of Hikmet Benol's identity and corporeality as sphere of cultural difference evading the sameness/coherence ascribed to it by socio-culturally and historically defined frameworks, teleological narratives, and pre-given essences. Indeed, Hikmet's identity and corporeality becomes a bearer of tensions and antagonisms frustrating the culture and society into which he was born. With this interpretation, I have underlined that the question of identity defining Hikmet's tragic quest for self-knowledge (who am I?) simultaneously comes across as a question of cultural identity (who are we?). That is to say, Hikmet experiences his pursuit of self-understanding in the doubling of the question of narrative identity and cultural identity, that is, as the inseparability of "who am I?" and "who are we?".

In this respect, the tragic conception of self is far from being a unified, self-identical, and isolated entity sealed off from the contingencies of one's historical and cultural relation to the world. Instead, tragedy articulates that human being, in his pursuit for understanding himself and the world, actually traverses and, in turn, is being traversed by the ambiguity of the world and the other through and through. I maintain that Atay's tragic thought preserves and underlines the ambiguity, contradiction, and tension assailing historico-cultural realm precisely by means of articulating the interrelation between narrative and cultural identity and keeping this relation actively open to interrogation from the standpoint of the critical gesture of tragedy as a social phenomenon.

As can be seen, under the scrutiny of Atay's tragic thought, the frameworks established by teleological narratives of progressive history or foundation narrations

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as myths of origin are exposed in their failure to provide a sense of meaning and ground for stability to human beings and human action. In *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, this is expressed as a constant state of distress and restlessness on part of Hikmet Benol, who is haunted by feelings of incompleteness and failure. I have interpreted this state by means of drawing a parallel between Turkey's constant failure to properly situate itself between the past and the present in the modernization process experienced as belatedness and Hikmet's characterization as a tragic protagonist assailed by antagonisms, tensions, and contradictions. In this respect, the suffocating sense of being stuck in a state of in-betweenness dominating Turkey's experience of modernity as belatedness is also at work in the characterization of Hikmet Benol as a tragic protagonist. Indeed, Hikmet is born into culture torn between its past and present, and situated in the horizon of an ambiguous future. Analogously, he is a tragic man stuck between antagonisms and tensions of not being able to appropriate the heritage and tradition of the past or to find himself a place in the narrations of his time that might give him a sense of belonging, identity, and stability.

I have stated throughout my discussion that instead of merely depicting or repeating the ambiguities, tensions, and turbulences of his time, Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* calls the fundamental concerns of his era into question by transforming them into problems. Understood in this way, the tensions and conundrums marked out in Hikmet Benol's struggle and frustration concerning this state of in-betweenness interpreted on the basis of Turkey's experience of modernity as belatedness is configured as a problem to be explored. I have claimed that this problem is taken up in Hikmet's play "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse",

which is based on the Biblical theme of the Last Judgment and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

I have argued that Hikmet's role as the Horseman of Death in the apocalyptic horde rests on a great paradox. On the one hand, Hikmet's frustration and struggle concerning the circumstances of the society and culture into which he was born are expressed as an aspiration to bring about a substantial transformation including himself and his milieu. As the Horseman of Death, one of the bringers of the Last Judgment, Hikmet is characterized here as a self-stylized –indeed, almost in the guise of a divine and otherworldly savior– bringer of ultimate justice that can compensate all suffering and corruption. As I have discussed, this desire for radical change and unyielding hope for future is expressed by the idea of compensatory justice at the heart of apocalyptic thought, which defines an expectation of a divine justice that will compensate all wrongdoings and shortcomings by eschatologically bringing history and time to an ultimate standstill. On the other hand, as the self-stylized Horseman of Death that wreaks havoc to bring ultimate justice, Hikmet fails to uphold the work of death, that is, he cannot stomach all the destruction and death, thus resigns from the apocalyptic horde.

I have argued that by this playful paradox, Atay's tragic thought crystallizes the limits of one's designs, projections, and actions in the face of the unmasterable and uncontainable ambiguity of the world. This limitation marks out the antagonism at play between tragic thought and apocalyptic thought. That is to say, tragic thought undercuts apocalyptic discourse on the grounds that there is no over-arching historical narrative or teleological framework that could provide a basis for the fulfillment of the expectation of the divine compensatory justice. In this antagonism,

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it is seen that Atay's tragic thought undermines any transcendental or eschatological exchange of suffering and misery with a sure promise of salvation and denouement that could provide an easy way out of human plight. Therefore, as I have argued, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* stands true to the critical core of tragic thought that preserves tensions and antagonisms without striving after disambiguating or definitively solving them. That is to say, it preserves the conflicting viewpoints in their peculiar tensions and expresses their conundrums without pursuing to disqualify them.

As I have argued towards the end of the Chapter 3, double binds, conundrums, antagonisms, and tensions pervading Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* culminate in the question of crisis. The question of crisis is brought forth with a pun on *düşmek* (falling) and *düşünmek* (thinking) in Chapter 17 titled *Düşüş* (The Fall). Although this is the penultimate chapter of the novel –it is succeeded by the ultimate chapter where Colonel Hüsamettin writes an obituary for Hikmet– it marks the end of Hikmet Benol's strenuous pursuit of self-understanding. In this penultimate chapter, Hikmet falls from the balcony of his two-stored wooden house, or as he likes to call it, his *gecekondu*.

Admittedly, it is ambiguous whether Hikmet deliberately jumps to commit suicide or stumbles and falls down. As I have stated, the preparatory drafts of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* found in Atay's *Günlük* demonstrate that this ambiguity is intentionally constructed. While this might be taken as a sort of post-modernist play blurring the dividing line between fiction and reality and undermining the traditional expectation of dénouement, I have approached to this ambiguity in a different way. In this respect, I have posed the question "What does this ambiguity entail?" instead of asking "Why Atay intentionally uses this ambiguity?". In other words, I have

explored and interpreted the significations of the pun on thinking and falling in the opening provided by the ambiguity itself.

In the last instant of the moment he falls from the balcony, Hikmet does not utter, "I am falling" (*Düşüyorum*) but instead he says, "I am thinking" (*Düşünüyorum*), which is the last sentence that concludes the chapter. I have argued that in this penultimate chapter that bears the title *Düşüş* (The Fall), the experience of falling is articulated as the experience of thinking. That is to say, the experience of thinking entails the experience of falling. This is the core of the pun on falling and thinking, namely, the idea that the experience of thinking is inseparably bound with the experience of falling. Yet what does this experience entail from the standpoint of the pun on thinking and falling at work in the question of crisis, and, ultimately, from the vantage point of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*?

I have argued that Hikmet's tragic experience of self-understanding through self-questioning entails a wandering into uncertainty and unfamiliarity that dissolves the sense of sameness and familiarity into otherness and difference. Indeed, as it is discussed, in this penultimate chapter Hikmet strolls around the streets of his neighborhood while reflecting upon his life. Yet this reflection does not remain as a serene pondering, but slowly gains the overtones of anxiety and dread. Lost in his thoughts, Hikmet's stroll turns into a wandering in which he slowly loses his sense of self, identity, and belonging. Gradually, he expresses a reluctance to return to his home as his sense of belonging and identity are dispersed into otherness and difference, greatly shaking his sense of stability and coherence. His reluctance to return to his home entails an experience of homelessness understood as a radical separation and estrangement from the familiar abode of dwelling.

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Indeed, when Hikmet returns to his home, at the height of his sense of bewilderment and destitution, his home does not provide a sense of belonging and familiarity as a place of dwelling anymore. For Hikmet has undergone the trials and tribunals in the course of searching for self-knowledge, where the tragic experience of radical transformations has shattered the sameness supporting his sense of identity and has left his self exposed to the contingency, ambiguity, otherness, and difference assailing the self and the world. All these culminate, ultimately, in the final scene where Hikmet falls from the balcony.

Understood in this way, the tragic experience of Hikmet's pursuit of self-understanding as a venture into the labyrinth of his own identity ultimately leads to a sort of ontological and epistemological crisis. This is because Hikmet carries the inquiry into who he is as far as it can go with an unstaunched persistence and obstinacy befit to his characterization as a tragic protagonist. That is to say, Hikmet loses the ground upon which one constructs his sense of identity, establishes his framework of meaning, and constructs his relation and interpretation with regard to the self and the world.

The question of crisis, as I have argued, reaches its apex in this experience of groundlessness crystallized by the pun on thinking and falling. I have elaborated what the experience of groundlessness entails with the tragic insight expounded by Nietzsche concerning the tragic event of the vanishing of ground. What is articulated in the vanishing of ground as a tragic event, as I have pointed out, is the consummation of a way of being and thinking that determines one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world. The question of crisis, understood in the context of the pun on thinking and falling, entails the vanishing of

ground that comes across as the consummation of a way of being and thinking that determines one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world.

I have claimed that the sense of crisis entailing this experience of groundlessness constitutes the culmination point of the conundrums, antagonisms, and tensions hitherto marked out in the discussion at hand. To elaborate what is at stake here, I would like to draw five major points that could serve as the rubrics of my discussion of Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* throughout this work. It should be noted beforehand that each of these discussions eventually lead to a point of crisis concerning the displacement and vanishing of ground approached from different angles and perspectives. After outlining the major points of my discussion, I will take up the question of crisis, experience of groundlessness, and the pun on thinking and falling once more to conclude my discussion.

Firstly, as I have expounded in Chapter 2, to go all the way in one's self-questioning, just as Oedipus and Hikmet does, brings one out into the open in the region of the question of the identity, where the self remains naked as an enigma and an open-ended question without fixed qualities. Indeed, the tragic experience of self-understanding, in Ricoeurian terms, disqualifies the superimposition of sameness (idem) and self (ipse) by means of breaking down the economy of sameness and leaving the self exposed to the contingencies, ambiguities, otherness, and difference residing within the self and the world. In the course of one's pursuit of self-understanding, the radical transformations and exposures ruin one's former interpretation of the self and the world. This eventually leads to a sort of threshold-experience, that is, an ontological and epistemological crisis where the ground upon

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which one establishes one's relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world disappears.

Secondly, I have argued in Chapter 2 that the critical engagement of Atay's tragic thought with the question of modern subjectivity, shaped by the *Cogito* of Cartesian metaphysics, marks out a clash between the Cartesian conceptualization of the self and the world and the tragic thought's inquiry into the human experience of being present in the world. Within the Cartesian discourse, human being is conceptualized as self-identical, unified, and isolated entity that is sealed off from the contingency of the self and the world, and endowed with capacities to gain mastery over himself and the world. Tragic thought, on the other hand, undercuts this Cartesian conceptualization by defining human experience of being present in the world primarily as an exposure to otherness, contradiction, and ambiguity, in which the self becomes what it is by mediating and traversing these uncontainable characteristics as well as undergoing transformations. Atay's critical engagement reaches its apex with the playful anthem "Our Greatest Treasure is Our Reason." The subversive gesture at work in the playful anthem, as I have discussed at length, ultimately displaces the primary definition of the self-conscious/self-identical subject and Reason of *Cogito* as the unshakable ground upon which one interprets the self and the world.

Thirdly, I have discussed in Chapter 3 that the concern of Atay's tragic thought with the question of origin eventually exposes that the unrepeatability, singularity, and coherence claimed by historical and cultural narratives of foundation/origin are already characterized by multiplicity, alterity, and inner contradictions. In this sense, narratives of foundation come across as myths of origin,

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that is, as fabrications impotent to establish a framework of meaning or a stable

ground from which one can intelligibly interpret one's historical and cultural relation

to the self and the world.

Fourthly, I have expounded in Chapter 3 that Atay's tragic thought submits

the Hegelian teleological historiographies narrativizing history as world history that

unfolds itself as rational and coherent progress into questioning. Under scrutiny, it is

revealed that such understanding of history and historiography falls short of

providing a sustainable framework and a ground for the construction of historical-

cultural identity. Likewise, teleological over-arching narratives eventually fail in

their attempt to fashion an encompassing framework or lay a firm foundation for

providing intelligibility and meaning in terms of properly defining one's ontological,

historical, and cultural appropriation, relation, and interpretation with regard to the

self and the world.

Fifthly, in Chapter 3, I have marked out a paradox at work in Hikmet's play

based on the Biblical theme of the Last Judgment and the Four Horsemen of the

Apocalypse. This brilliant paradox –the resignation of the Hikmet Benol as the

Horseman of Death from the apocalyptic horde– crystallizes the limits of one's

projections and designs in the face of the uncontainable and unmasterable ambiguity

and contingency of the self and the world. Furthermore, I have expounded that, in the

tension between tragic thought and apocalyptic thought, the promise of exchanging

suffering and misery with reconciliation and redemption as a way out of human

plight remains, at best, a wishful thinking. Understood in this way, any narration

promising a definitive solution for the tensions and paradoxes assailing the human

condition is thoroughly undercut by tragic thought, thus such narrations cannot

constitute a proper ground for a sense of ontological security, and hope for unruffled and satisfying closure. Instead, as is seen in Hikmet's agitating state of tragic in-betweenness, it gives birth to a state of unceasing tension, frustration, and restlessness.

These are the five major rubrics map out the discussion at hand and ultimately culminate in the state of crisis. Indeed, as can be seen, each discussion eventually leads to a state of crisis concerning the failure of establishing firm foundations, constructing over-arching frameworks from which one can derive a sense of identity, belonging, meaning, and consistency – in short, the experience of groundlessness. In the question of crisis, the experience of groundlessness comes across, as I have mentioned above, the bankruptcy of a way of being and thinking that has reaches into a state of total collapse. Atay's pun on thinking and falling, understood as a peculiar translation of the experience of falling as the experience of thinking, entails a confrontation with the experience of the vanishing of ground in the state of crisis.

Accordingly, towards the end of my discussion in Chapter 3, I have interpreted Hikmet Benol's fall as an act of *going down* into the vanishing ground, namely, *undergoing* the crisis brought about by the disappearance of ground that comes across as the consummation of a way of being and thinking. By relegating thinking and falling, the pun functions in Atay's tragic thought as a sort of call that places a demand upon questioning and thinking. It is this call that one hears in Hikmet's fall – the quest for understanding oneself and the world takes the form of an experience of descending into the vanishing of ground, that is, *undertaking* the conundrums and questions singled out in the crisis by means of traversing the ambiguity, contingency, and the enigma of the self and the world.

As I have argued, this call is articulated in a single question that pervades Atay's oeuvre, including his two major novels *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* and *Tutunamayanlar*: "What is to be done?" From the standpoint of the pun on thinking and falling opened up the question of crisis crystallized by Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, the peculiar nature of the tragic experience of thinking and questioning articulated in this call demands an undertaking that traverses the enigma of the human condition by bringing it to a substantial questioning. However, since the sphere of human thought and action, from the standpoint of tragic thought, is characterized by tensions, antagonisms, and equivocality, heeding the call voiced in Atay's question and articulation of the crisis becomes unremittingly arduous.

Throughout this work, I have argued that tragedy principally underlines and preserves an understanding of the self and the world assailed by double-meanings, antagonisms, ambiguities, and contingencies that cannot be definitively settled and answered. Oğuz Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* stays faithful to such understanding. Indeed, instead of inscribing itself in the security of habituating a stable ground, it eschews the will-to-certainty by traversing paths of error, doubt, and destitution, where wanderings are bound to inevitable and bewildering encounters with otherness and difference. It crystallizes that the tragic experience of the quest for self-understanding through radical self-questioning entails undergoing transformations and exposures that substantially upset and shift one's interpretation of the self and the world to the point of ontological and epistemological crisis. Characterized by its orientation towards proximity, chance, risk, and equivocality, Atay's tragic thought wanders off the beaten track. As such, it carries the extreme tensions, antagonisms, and paradoxes while marking out and traversing the

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conundrums and shortcomings haunting one's relation and interpretation with respect

to the self and the world. Ultimately, it calls for a confrontation with the crisis of the

vanishing of ground that comes across as the bankruptcy of a way of being and

thinking conditioned by the weary past and the exhausted present.

Let me conclude and come to a close by stating that instead of breeding

despair and counseling resignation or encouraging hope and promising fulfillment,

Atay's tragic thought in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* situates one right in the midst of the

searing tensions between possibility and impossibility, necessity and contingency,

hope and destitution, certainty and ambiguity assailing the self and the world. By

preserving this antagonistic and enigmatic outlook on human condition, it interprets

life as a harrowing ordeal where each doing goes hand in hand with its own undoing.

Bearing this cross himself throughout his life, Atay wrote the following in his

Günlük (1987/2014) nearly a year before his death:

> Is it possible to tell the story of the incomplete ones [*yarımyamalaklar*]
> throughout one's life? Perhaps one can accomplish it by living in an
> unbearable tension until death. How long one can endure such frustration? Is
> it possible to live while constantly tearing yourself apart, giving away your
> flesh and blood? Is this the search for truth? (pp. 258-260, own translation,
> see Appendix B, 3)

This is the apotheosis of tragic consciousness. If to think is to fall, as Atay's pun

articulates, then this tragic consciousness crystallizes an acute awareness of an

exigency and imperative to undertake and endure the weight of this burden of

thinking and questioning, that is, to descend into the tragic event of the vanishing of

ground. This descent, however, is not self-immolation or surrender to obscurity and

oblivion as shying away from venturing the region of the troubling questions.

Instead, it marks out the tragic obstinacy to go all the way in undergoing this abyss

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so as to confront the tremors of the crisis that comes across as the consummation and total collapse of a way of being and thinking that determines one's ontological, epistemological, historical, and cultural relation and interpretation with respect to the self and the world.

To follow the wanderings of Atay's tragic thought and to be attentive to the questions he pose in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar*, one has to let the work resituate him in the world by disorienting his sense of identity, disintegrating his conceptual defenses, and tempting him to go astray into uncertainty and contradiction. Indeed, one must let the work expose him to the contingency of the world where the experience of what it is to be human is lived as a restless and ceaseless questioning in a state of unbearable tension.

APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL QUOTATIONS FROM *TEHLİKELİ OYUNLAR*

1. "Bu ülkede eksikliğini duyduğum 'insanın kendisiyle hesaplaşma meselesi'ni bizzat kendime uygulayarak bu meselenin ilk kurbanlarından oldum." (p. 335)

2. "Ellerimi de yeni gömülmüş bir adamdan aldılar; bu ölünün kim olduğunu bir türlü anlayamadık . . . bir ressam mıydı? Yoksa bir yazar mıydı? . . . Bana kalırsa bu zavallı da, benim gibi, birçok insanın üstüste yamanmasından meydana gelmişti.

Bazı iç organlarımın da mezbahadan alındığı hakkında sinsi söylentiler dolaşıyor doktor . . . Biliyorum doktor, en çok merak ettiğin organdır kalbim. Onun bana ait olduğunu söylüyorlar doktor. İşte buna dayanamıyorum. Ayrıca, bu kadar çok parça içinde artık 'Ben' diye bir şey söz konusu olabilir mi? Hepsi dışarıdan alınmadı mı bunların? Peki o halde ben kimim? Hangi parçanın esiriyim? . . .

Bir de içimdeki karışıklığı bilseniz. Parçalarımı bir araya getirerek Hikmet olmakta çok zorluk çektim doktor. Denildiğine göre bu parçalar, aynı yüzyılda yaşamış insanlardan da alınmamıştı; üstelik ırk, dil ve din ayrılıkları da vardı aralarında. Bu yüzden değişik duygu ve düşünceler arasında bocaladım, kaderin oyuncağı oldum . . . Şimdi anlıyorum doktor: Demek ki Doğudan alınan parçalarım Batıya isyan ediyor. . . kalbim de bu çelişkilere dayanamıyor." (pp. 336-337)

3. "Şimdi ben hükümdarım. Bütün Hikmetler öldü, yaşasın Hikmet VI!" (p. 380)

4. "HİKMET III: Susturun şu deliyi. Bütün Hikmetleri birbirine düşürecek."

5. "Bütün mesele kelimelerse, kelimelerle istediğim gibi oynayacağım. Kelimelerle yeni bir akıl kuracağım." (p. 381)

6. "Dünya artık ikiye ayrılmalı. Yeter derecede bir arada yaşandı. Descartes'ın kurallarına göre yaşamak isteyenler ayıklanmalı artık. Bu düzmece oyun sona ermeli. Kendi benliğimizi bulmalıyız." (p. 352)

7. "Albayım, benim gibi telâşa kapılmadı. Her şeyi yeni baştan nasıl ele alacağımızı anlattı 'Bütün bildiklerini unut,' dedi bana." (p. 411)

8. "Albayım sakindi, 'Her şeyin birden unutulmasına çok ihtiyacımız var' diyordu." (p. 413)

9. ". . . bir endişemi daha açıkça belirttim [Albay Hüsamettin'e]. 'Her şeyden önce soğukkanlı olmalısın,' dedi." (p. 413)

10. "'Düşüncelerini olgunlaştırıncaya kadar beklemelisin Hikmet,' dedim kendime." (p. 413)

11. ""Kant elliiki [sic] yaşına kadar sabretmişti: Ben sabredemediğim için, onun yazdığı bir kelimeyi bile anlayamıyordum." (p. 413)

12. "'Kendimize acıyacağımıza kendimizi tanıyalım albayım', dedim. 'Kendini tanı derler ya; bu sözün gerçek önemini kavrayalım.' (p. 414)

13. "'Bize acımayın. Bize kendimizi tanıtın . . . Kendimize gelmemiz, kendimizi tanımamız için bizi iyice hırpalayın. Artık kaybedecek durumda değiliz. Bu ülkenin artık kaybetmeğe tahammülü yok. Kendimizi tanıyalım da sonunda yok olalım, zarar yok.' (pp. 414-415)

14. "Albayım itiraz etti, 'Bir uçtan öteki uca geçme hemen,' dedi. 'Kendini aşırı uçlar arasında kaybetme.' (p. 415)

15. "'Orta yol' değil mi albayım?'"

16. "Ayrıca, bir odanın içinde, kendi başımıza ve yardımsız çabalamanın da korkusu vardı. Ülkede kimse bizi desteklemiyordu. Kimse, ne yaptığımızı bilmiyordu." (pp. 417-418)

17. "'Bizi tanıyacaklar mı albayım? Sesimizi duyurabilecek miyiz? Yoksa bir tecrübe tavşanı ya da bilinmeyen bir bilim adamı gibi, kendimizi kendi üzerimizde deneyerek yok olup gidecek miyiz?' Giriştiğimiz işin altından kalkılabilir miydi?" (p. 418)

18. "'Giriştiğimiz işin temelleri sağlam,' diyerek endişelerimi dağıttı albayım. 'Aklın temelleri üzerinde oturuyoruz.' (p. 418)

19. "Ben heyecanlandım. Akıl sözünü duyunca heyecanlanıyordum. Aklı çok seviyordum." (p. 418)

20. "İkimiz de heyecanla ayağa kalkarak 'En Büyük Hazinemiz Aklımızdır' marşını hep bir ağızdan söylemeye başladık. Bu marş Akıl Cumhuriyetinin millî marşıydı . . . Hep bir ağızdan söylüyorduk:

> En büyük hazinemiz aklımızdır
> Aklımıza güvenmek hakkımızdır
> Hayatta aklımızdır en güzel şey
> Akılsızlar bize kulak verin hey!
>
> Biz bu aklı bulmadık sokaklarda
> Görevimiz onu korumaklarda
> Kurtulduk, başka akıllar bize yük
> Aklımızdır hazinemiz en büyük." (p. 418)

21. "Ne olur albaylarım, biz tarihin kölesi olmayalım; gerekirse, dünya tarihini yeni baştan yazalım. Bütün olayların yeni yorumlarını yapalım. Bunun için neyimiz eksik sanki?" (pp. 70-71)

22. "Albaylarım! Size bir piyes oynamayacağım. Sizlere, sizlerin tarihini okuyacağım. Her şeyi tarih sırasına göre anlatacağım." (p. 77)

23. "Önce hiçbir şey yoktu. Bütün evren, kelimesiz bir tekdüzelikten ibaretti. . .Tanrı, bir süre sonra, tekdüzelikten sıkıldığı için durgunluğu yarattı. Sonra durgun yaratıldı. Bu sıfat tek başına var olmadığı için, durgun denizler ve durgun havalar ve

durgun karalar ortaya çıktı. (Sadece bir dilbilgisi zorunluluğu yüzünden.) Durgunluk bulut getirmediği için denizler her zaman mavi ve durgunluk havayı karıştırmadığı için dalgasızdı. Hareket olmadığı için büyüme yoktu. Ne yükselme vardı ne genişleme. Kimse kimseyi geçmiyordu. Yarışma icaat edilmemişti. Ve Tanrı, Hüsamettin Tambay'ın ilk atasını, insanı yarattı." (p. 77)

24. "Ve Adem Albay, şark hizmetinin ikinci yılında Zühtü'yü doğurttu. Adem Tambay, Zühtü'nün tevellüdünden sonra, daha otuz ve dörtyüzaltı yıl yaşadı; başka kızları ve oğulları oldu . . . Ve albaylığının dört ve yetmişbeşinci yılında, bir bildiriye imza koyduğu için, sağlık sebebiyle erken emekli oldu." (p. 78)

25. "Ülkemizde, eski çağlardan beri birçok medeniyet yetişmiştir; ülkemiz, birbirine benzemeyen birçok medeniyetin beşiği olmuştur. Bu beşikte birçok medeniyet sallanmıştır, birçok medeniyeti uyutmuşuzdur . . . Fakat ülkemizde en çok yetişen, köylüdür. Köylü, bütün iklimlerde yetişir . . . Köylü bozkırda yetişir, yaylada yetişir, ormanda yetişir, dağda yetişir, kurak iklimde yetişir, ovada yetişir, sulak iklimde yetişir. Çabuk büyür, erken meyve verir. Biz köylüleri çok severiz. Şehre gelirlerse onlardan kapıcı ve amele yaparız." (p. 111)

26. "HEİNE: Bilmiyorum. İçimde garip bir önsezi var. Karşı tarafın ne yaptığını bilemiyorum. Bizi bir kuyuya doğru çekiyorlar sanki.

HROBOVİÇ: (Heine'nin sırtına vurur): Biz Ruslar da sizin gibi romantik bir milletizdir azizim. Fakat bu soğuk fransızları [sic] yeneceğiz, göreceksin. Millî karakterlerimiz bunu gerektiriyor.

Albay Hüsamettin itiraz etti: 'Oğlum Hikmet, burada romantizmin ve millî karakterin ne yeri var?' Hikmet durdu: 'Daha sizin gibi albay olamadıkları için karıştırıyorlar albayım.' Hüsamettin Bey yatışmadı: 'Muhabere [sic] öncesinde bir yüzbaşıyla bir binbaşı böyle sohbet etmez.' 'Fakat albayım,' dedi Hükmet, 'Muharebe usulleri el kitabı yazmıyoruz.' Albay kızdı: 'Nerede kaldı senin gerçekçiliğin?' 'Çok geride kaldı albayım,' dedi Hikmet." (p. 266)

27. "HROBOVİÇ (Güler): Aslında ben de senin [Heine] kadar bağlıyım saplantılarıma. Bir aydır metresimden mektup almıyorum." (p. 267)

28. "Hüsamettin Bey kaşlarını çattı: 'İzaha çalıştığımız vaziyet zaten kâfi miktarda karışık, bir de hususi vaziyetlerimizi araya sıkıştırmayalım.'" (p. 277)

29. "Bir Austerlitz kaybetseydi ne çıkardı bu Napolyon?" (p. 281)

30. "Fakat olmadı işte, Heine her yerde kaybetti . . . Heine'ye geride hiçbir şey kalmadı albayım; ölmekten başka, ölmekten başka. Bir de tarihin sesi kaldı geriye albayım, tarihin sesi kaldı." (p. 281)

31. TARİHİN SESİ: Heine gibilerden, bütün günahlarının hesabı birer birer sorulur. İlâhi adelete karşı ayıp olmaması için, en küçük faturaları bile çok fazlasıyla ödetilir böylelerine . . . Kader ve alın yazısı böyleleri için vardır. Benim, bu akıllara durgunluk veren akışım içinde adalet, sadece bu kavramdan korkanın karşısına çıkar. Heine de ümitsiz bir aşkın acısıyla, genç bir subaya yakışan şekilde, muharebe günü en öne atıldı ve kaybeden bir ordunun, ölen bir savaşçısı oldu." (pp. 281-282)

32. "Hiç bir [sic] yere ulaşamıyordum. Başarısızlığın yarattığı öfke yüzünden hayallerimin düzeni bozuluyordu: Pusuda bekleyen kötü hayaller, eziyet eden görüntüler birden saldırıyordu üstüme." (p. 156)

33. "Yarım kalmış hayaller gibi, yarım kalmış insanlar, tekerlekli kutularının içinde sahaya çıkıyorlardı. Bellerinden aşağısı olmayan bu işkence insanları, tahta sandıklarının küçük demir tekerleklerini elleriyle çevirerek yeşil çimenlerin [futbol sahasının] üstünde geziniyorlardı." (p. 156)

34. Apokalipsin Dört Atlısı da neredeyse sahaya çıkacakmış. Hem de gerçek atlılar. Atilla, Cengiz, Hülâgü ile birlikte, amerikan kovboylarının uzun bacaklı atlarına binerek hışım gibi sahaya fırlayıp dağıttık hepsini [yarım adamları]. Öyle Apokalipsin İkinci takımı olarak değil, millî takım olarak yer aldık sahada. Atlarımızın kenarından sarkıttığımız büyük süpürgelerle polo oynar gibi sahadan süpürdük onları. Portakal sandığından arabalarıyla, arabalarının üstüne kurdukları dört direkli meşin gölgelikleriyle, rozetleri-ayakkabı bağları-telefon jetonları-bir liralık kararmış aynaları-çakmaklara benzinleri-karamelaları-file içinde sayı hesabıyla sattıkları portakalları-nazar boncukları-kibritleri-filtreli sigaraları-müstehcen resimleri-plâstik topları-pal traş bıçakları-hediyelik kartpostalları-piyango biletleri-prezervatifleri-İsveç çelik madeninden jiletleri-ilâveli gazeteleri-yazmaz dolmakalemleri-bir bardak içine doldurulmuş silgili kurşunkalemleri-sağır dilsiz kör

levhaları-güvercinlere atılan mısırları-titreyen ellerindeki karanfilleriyle birlikte 'bu kadar acıma bu dünyaya çok' diyerek sildik hepsini. Çimenlerin üzerinde tekerleklerinin izi bile kalmadı . . . Oldu bitti. Her şey eski durumuna geldi. Ben hızımı alamadım . . . Çoktandır özlemi çekilen bir yönetime kavuşturdum dünyayı. (Altı ayda memleketi adam ettim.) . . . İki yanı keskin kılıcımı iki yana da salladım. (Hürriyet ve istibdadı birlikte yürüttüm.) . . . Yıkmakla başa çıkamayacağımı anlayınca büyük kumandanlara istifamı verdim." (pp. 159-160)

35. "Biraz daha dolaşsam mı acaba? Daha erken. Fakat yoruldum albayım. Artık hiçbir şey yapmak istemiyorum. Gerçekten hiç bir [sic] şey yapmak istemiyorum. Korkuyorum . . . Yavaşça yukarı çıkmalıyım. Albaya belli etmemeliyim. Korkuyorum albayım. Beni tutacak mısınız acaba? Hayır, albayıma belli etmemeliyim. Acaba ağlar mı? . . . Bu oyunu kendi başınıza oynayacaksınız albayım. İsterseniz ben daha önce yazarım size bütün ayrıntılarıyla. Hikmet'in yükselişi ve düşüşünün son kısmı olur bu . . . Albayım beni tutmayacak mısınız? Parmaklığa dayandım albayım . . . Artık çok geç, geriye bakamam . . . Neden geriye dönemiyorum? Aşağı da bakamıyorum. Gözlerini kapa. Buraya takıldım kaldım. Beni duymuyor musunuz? Bir şey yapamaz mısınız? Düşünüyorum." (pp. 462-463)

APPENDIX B

ORIGINAL QUOTATIONS FROM *GÜNLÜK*

1. 7 November 1970

"Ya çocuksu gururumuz! Beğenilmezsek hemen alınıyoruz, Batılılara iftiralar ederek kendimizi temize çıkarmak için didiniyoruz. İyi aile çocukları arasında, onlara çamur atan mahalle çocuğu gibiyiz. Ben buna saflık diyorum ve genel anlamda bir sempati duyuyorum. İçinde yaşarken de öfkeyle tepiniyorum. Hikmet de aynı duyguları taşıyabilir içinde." (p. 26)

2. 24 November 1970

"[Hikmet] Hüsamettin Bey'in katına çıkar. Onu evde bulup bulmadığı belli değildir. Kalbi sıkışır, balkona hava almaya çıkar ve balkondan düşer, ya da atlar. Bu da belli olmaz." (p. 66)

3. 5 September 1976, nearly a year before Atay's death on 13 December 1977:

"İnsan yarımyamalakların hikâyesini ömür boyunca anlatabilir mi? Bu belki de dayanılmaz bir gerginliği ömür boyunca yaşamakla mümkün olur. Böyle bir sinirliliğe ne kadar katlanılabilir? İnsan her an kendini parçalayarak, kendi etinden kanından vererek yaşayabilir mi? Gerçeği aramak bu mudur?" (pp. 258-260)

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