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THE LOSS OF VALUE OF MODERN HUMAN OR MODERNIST MANIFESTO THREE FLANEURS: THE MAN WITHOUT QUALITIES, THE USELESS MAN, THE IDLE MANⁱ

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ABSTRACT

There is no doubt that human's search for adding value to his own being is the most important among the main reasons for the existence of literature as an art. Literature, as well as all fine arts, has made a great contribution to human's efforts to find out and make sense of his own or the life he lives, and to the determination of the values that exist in life from morality to aesthetics or directing them. Western-based modern literature has been basically built on the greatness of human value. However, on the contrary, the tendencies that emerged after World War I and became stronger with World War II are filled with doubts about the greatness of human value. It is possible to see the questionings on this value more closely in the novel type with significant opportunities in terms of representing the individual within the life he/she actually lives. It is not possible for Turkish literature to be not influenced by crisis era. This influence can be seen in all types of literature as far as poetry and novel.

In this article, the first volume of **The Man Without Qualities (Niteliksiz Adam)**, which was published by the Austrian author Robert Musil (1880-1942) in 1930 and was translated into Turkish in 1999, **The Idle Man (Lüzumsuz Adam)** written by Sait Faik in 1947, and **The Useless Man (Aylak Adam)** published by Yusuf Atılgan in 1959, that emphasize the questionings on the value of human by their names, will be discussed in terms of central people with a flaneur characteristic as a critique of the modern human's value perception.

Keywords: Value, Flaneur, The Man Without Qualities, The Idle Man, The Useless Man.

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MODERN İNSANIN DEĞER KAYBI VEYA MODERNİST MANİFESTO ÜÇ FLANEUR: NİTELİKSİZ ADAM, AYLAK ADAM, LÜZUMSUZ ADAM

ÖZ

Edebiyatın bir sanat olarak temel var oluş nedenleri arasında hiç şüphesiz ki insanın kendi varlığına bir değer katma arayışı önde gelir. Bir değer olarak insanın bizzat kendisini veya yaşadığı hayatı anlamada veya anlamlandırmada; ahlaktan estetiğe hayatın içinde var olan değerleri tespit etme veya bunlara yön vermede, bütün güzel sanatların olduğu gibi edebiyatın da büyük katkısı olmuştur. Batı merkezli modern edebiyatlar, temelde insan değerinin yüceliği üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Ancak I. Dünya Savaşı sonrasında ortaya çıkan ve II. Dünya Savaşı ile daha da güçlenen eğilimler, aksine insanın değerinin yüceliği konusunda şüphelerle doludur. Bireyi bizatihi yaşadığı hayat içerisinde temsil etme bakımından önemli imkânlarla sahip olan roman türünde, bu değer üzerindeki sorgulamaları daha yakından görmek mümkündür. Küresel etkilenmelerin gittikçe yoğunlaştığı bir çağda Türk edebiyatının da bundan etkilenmemesi mümkün değildir. Şiirde olduğu kadar romanda ve edebiyatın diğer türlerinde de bir buhran çağı etkisinin kendisini Türk edebiyatında da gösterdiğini görmekteyiz.

Bu yazıda isimleri itibariyle de insanın değeri üzerindeki sorgulamaları vurgulayan, Avusturyalı yazar Robert Musil'in(1880-1942) 1930'da yayımladığı **Niteliksiz Adam**'ının 1999'da Türkçeye çevrilen birinci cildi ile Sait Faik'in 1947'de yazdığı **Lüzumsuz Adam**'ı ve Yusuf Atılgan'ın 1959'da yayımlanan **Aylak Adam**'ı modern insanın değer algısının bir eleştirisi olarak flaneur özelliği gösteren merkez kişileri bakımından ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Değer, Flaneur, Niteliksiz Adam, Lüzumsuz Adam, Aylak Adam.

In the novel and story that emerged during the 20th century in Europe but developed especially during the stressful atmosphere of World Wars I and II, a character that is different from the ordinary appears intensely. The origin of this character whose ideals have been rasped and passivized may actually date back to the ancient Greek theatres. However, this character with the characteristic of a rebellion against the urban life that emerged with modernization and accordingly its life-styles, and the value judgments draws attention in Robert Musil's novel entitled **The Man Without Qualities(Niteliksiz Adam)**, which is one of the most known western novels although they are numerous. Two examples of this type representing a weakened and passivized person who has been made aimless instead of a person who has undertaken great ideals or tasks in the novel appear in Yusuf Atılgan's novel entitled **The Useless Man(Aylak Adam)** and in Sait Faik's story entitled **The Idle Man(Lüzumsuz Adam)** in the Turkish literature.

Musil, who is among the authors who founded the 20th century novel with the names such as Kafka, Joyce and Proust in the Western literature, tells, in the first volume of **The Man Without Qualities(Niteliksiz Adam)**, the collapse of the country that he named İmpkralyaⁱⁱ but that is actually the Austro-Hungarian Empire in a process covering the years 1913-1914 around 32-year-

old intellectual, educated Ulrich. In this novel in which there is no obvious action, aristocrat Ulrich who somehow gave up all the things related to life and went on a holiday in time entered into the high society in Vienna. Some of those in this vicinity were planning a nationalist organization, the presence of which was a little bit funny, that they called the *Parallel Action*, which was the product of a Quixotic attempt against the cultural and political influence of their German neighbours in Prussia. While the social structure was going towards modernization, it was actually maintaining its feudalism characteristics. The frequently-criticized criminal system and Ulrich's sexual passions are the other remarkable aspects of the novel.ⁱⁱⁱ

In this novel, while the author conveys the experiences of World War I, on the other hand, he also reveals the current situation and the collapse of the European culture, and the deformation of modernism on the social structure and the individual. However, the person who observes this collapse is the individual. Just as modern Europe has risen along with the rise of the individual, the person who is collapsing here is the individual. However, this is now the individual who is not in the centre of the world, and "to be a valuable person" promoted by modernism has been opened for discussion. Now, the individual has no qualities, has been bastardized and is the other.

In fact, the origins of the novel character with these traits date back to the mid-19th century. In other words, in a sense, the modernization process in the western novel also began to develop its criticism within itself. In response to the equipped individual of modernism, this character now gives an insignificant, worthless and ineffective appearance against the fate and the world instead of exhibiting a great and strong personality (Abrams 1981:204). One of the earliest examples based on this person, who is distinguished from the character in the traditional sense the origin of which dates back up to the epics and tales and from the human understanding that modernization revealed and idealized in the novel and story, within the Western literature is **Oblomov** published by the Russian author Goncharov in 1857.

Oblomov is very lazy although he is a well-intentioned aristocrat, and he continuously postpones his works and never does them. He has no ambition related to the world; in a sense, he has drawn away himself from the ongoing routine life, but he is an isolated person who has not been able to develop an alternative life. However, this situation does not include a senseless self-desorption; on the contrary, it includes a state of conscious laziness, an ontological anti-socialness, and freedom beyond what the modern human understands. In addition to this line in the novel, it is possible to base the adventure of this individual in the poem and story upon up to Hoffmann, Edgar Allen Poe and Baudelaire. As it is seen, this character has a very long development line in the western literature. Within a framework reaching the present day, especially before and after Second World War, it is possible to encounter many examples of existentialism depending on the platform on which it questions the meaning of the human and the world. In the novels of philosopher authors such as Kafka, Sartre and Camus, this character would go further and would emphasize not only the meaninglessness of modernism but also the meaninglessness of human

and the world as a whole. It is observed that the emergence of this character occurred later compared to the western literature when the Turkish literature is considered. This was affected by the facts that the Turkish modernization process started later and that it took a plenty of time for the novel type to attain a place in the Turkish literature. In particular, the acceptance of the absolutized perception of modernism in the Turkish literature so that it would not allow for an anti-judgment, and its development in a way to embrace the entire literary life resulted in the emergence of the criticism of modernism much later in the Turkish cultural life.

One of the examples of a kind of anti-character, which we have attempted to express within the frame of above mentioned Oblomov and Ulrich, in the Turkish literature appears in Sait Faik's story entitled **The Idle Man (Lüzumsuz Adam)**(Abasıyanık 2004) and in Yusuf Atılgan's novel entitled **The Useless Man (Aylak Adam)** (Atılgan 2004).

In Sait Faik's short story entitled **The Idle Man(Lüzumsuz Adam)** that was firstly published in Varlık journal in 1947, the central character Mansur did not go out of his neighbourhood for seven years and spent all his days in the streets of this neighbourhood that were also numbered by him, and in the bars and coffee houses of this neighbourhood. He went out of the neighbourhood for two days only at the end of seven years.^{iv}

The second example we will discuss in the Turkish literature is Bay C. (Mr. C.) who appears in **The Useless Man(Aylak Adam)** published by Yusuf Atılgan in 1959. Bay C. (Mr. C.) lives without needing any work with the heritage from his father, whom he never loves, and spends his days searching for the woman in his dream and by idling. Bay C. (Mr. C.) lives in an environment in which there are artists, painters and university students. He often buys books, has his portrait made and collects records. He mostly goes after the women that he considers as the women in his dream, and he meets them. Although he has made various attempts, these are not the women he is looking for. He could not meet B., who was implied to be exactly compatible with Bay C. (Mr. C.) by the narrator, although he had various opportunities. The novel ends with the fact that Bay C. (Mr. C.) missed the opportunity to meet once again with B. The striking point at first in these three characters is that they are urban people. Both Ulrich, Mansur and Bay C. (Mr. C.) have gained their individuality or non-individuality in a social structure dependent on the city. In this sense, the point that gathers these three characters at one point is that they are "flaneurs". This urban identity that we can define as idle, useless and wasteful is "...a socio-cultural character that emerges as an important unit in the analysis of modern everyday life and as a historical-social phenomenon. Flaneur, who firstly found his qualities within the context of a certain time (the 19th century), a certain place (Paris) and a certain space (passages, streets), was adopted as a type of public human by his actions and was defined by being associated with the public space."(Tester 1994: 4'den Alver 2004: 323) The passages, streets and avenues are the house of this idle man, and accordingly, they also have important clues regarding the structure of modern life and modern human relations. In another sense, this idler is a symbolic identity (or the lack of identity)

given to the modern life. He is in the position of a mirror that allows him to examine the whole social phenomena he visits and studies. This idler is sometimes a painter, sometimes a journalist, sometimes a writer, sometimes a social scientist, and ultimately an amateur detective wearing all kinds of costumes who will satisfy the pleasure of looking. The idler is the man of the crowd, he is in the crowd, but he is not one of the crowd. (Alver 2004: 323) The crowd is "they" for him, and he is the "other" for the crowd.

In an article of Walter Benjamin on Baudelaire, the poet of *The Trouble of Paris*, he draws attention to flaneur's adventure in big cities such as London and Paris.(Benjamin 2002: 202-252) At the very beginning of *The Man Without Qualities*, the author begins by describing an urban identity:

"Someone who has come back after years of separation is able to realize blindfolded from this noise, the quality of which is impossible to describe completely, that he is in Vienna, the capital city and administrative centre of the empire. Cities are also recognized by their walks like people. Someone who had returned here could catch the individuality that was reflected from the vibration of the movement on the streets, long before he could get it from any other detail when he opened his eyes."(Musil 2006: 78), "So, a specific value should not be given to the name of the city. Like all big cities, this city was also composed of disarrangement, change, progression, nonconformity, conflicts of objects and problems, bottomless points of quietness between them, roads and congestion, big rhythmic strike, the infinite inconsistencies and displacements of all rhythms across one another; as a whole, it looked like a bubble boiling in a ware made of durable materials of buildings, laws, regulations and historical traditions..." (Musil 2006: 78)

This emphasis of the city that Musil made before he got *The Man Without Qualities* is meaningful. Although it is a requirement of positioning the individual he discusses, in a sense, it is actually the presentation of the environment to be criticized by Ulrich and the whole of meanings. Indeed, the author who gradually turned from the outer frame towards the centre, in other words, towards *The Man Without Qualities*, would then turn back with it and would question the whole structures that a modernized human established in a synchronic and diachronic dimension at the level of the individual and the social structure:

"The Man Without Qualities stood behind a window, was staring at the brownish-green street from a thin green filter covered with air of the garden, was counting the automobiles, cars and tramways that filled his field of view with a warming rush and the pedestrians whose faces seemed obscure from a distance by keeping time for ten hours, was measuring the speeds, angles and alive powers of the masses that were coming and going; and these masses attracted attention to themselves with lightning speed, they held it tight, and they were releasing it again..."(Musil 2006: 82)^v

This emphasis on the city and the city's crowd is presented to the attention immediately at the beginning of *The Useless Man* of Yusuf Atılgan. Bay C. (Mr. C.) stepping on the streets and avenues in pursuit of his anima places all views of Istanbul from interior spaces to large districts as a city in this anima: while Bay C. (Mr. C.), who said " Suddenly, it came to my mind that I could be in the crowd overflowing from the sidewalk. The trouble inside of me was resolved..."(Atılgan 2005: 9), makes an in-depth critique of the texture of the city, his search for his anima serves as a kind of guide to him. This depth even reaches the level of searching for where the street names have originated from. Although this has a symbolic part of idleness, on the other hand, there is a process dependent on both space and time in which the individual is scattered and fragmented. In *The Idle Man*, which is a rather short text when compared to these novels, the communication between the part of the space dependent on the city and the flaneur, or with a more accurate expression, the lack of communication is presented in the first plan:

"I am very satisfied with my neighbourhood. It wouldn't be wrong to say that I have not gone out of there for seven years."(Abasıyanık 2004: 9) "My neighbourhood is composed of three parallel streets, another street crossing these streets vertically, and my street that is completely independent of these streets but it is too narrow and short to be considered as a street. I have assigned numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 to these streets according to their importance. My street is unnumbered. I have been unable to number it." (Abasıyanık 2004: 9)

The striking point here is that the man without qualities, the useless and idle man touched on a point bearing the implication of his lack of identity in his communication with the avenue or the street. His street among all of the streets is too narrow and too short to assign it a number. The whole seven years of *The Idle Man* passed by walking around these streets every day in the same order, spending time in the places such as a coffee house, tavern, restaurant and greengrocer located there and desiring for a number of women. However, this is not because he had a self-sufficient world but to emphasize the meaning of the order, need and "meaninglessness" that find their meaning in a whole city. The parts of the spaces in these streets and his relationship with the people have a characteristic that implies a routine and a monotony rather than communication.

"I have not gone anywhere in the city of Istanbul apart from this street for seven years. I am appalled. I am surprised because it seems as if they would beat, lynch or steal my money, I don't know, they would ask for something. An oddity gets me in another place. I am afraid of every person. Who are these men who fill these streets? This huge city is full of foreigners. Why did people establish interweaving cities unless they could make love? I am unable to understand. Is it for looking down each other, slaughtering or deceiving? How do people who are so separated and do not know each other so well live in a city?"(Abasıyanık 2004: 14-15)

The explicit attack against the city and the crowd of the city here is actually against modernism and system in the background, the real lack of communication in communication view that alienates people from each other, the lovelessness in the view of togetherness, and the crowd

that condemns individual to individuality, foreignness and loneliness. In a sense, Ulrich makes a philosophy of loneliness in this city, the foreignness in the crowd:

"The fact that the human had an extreme lack of confidence in people living outside their own surrounding, in other words, the fact that a German not a Jewish, but a footballer takes a pianist for an incomprehensible and worthless creature is one of the basic characteristics of the culture. Because, ultimately, the object can acquire entity only with its limits and thus with a certain amount of hostile action against its environment, it was impossible to imagine the existence of a Papa without unbelievers, Luther without papa, therefore, it is not a possibility to be disregarded that the fact that the human ignores his fellow lies behinds the fact that the human relies on his fellow most intensely." (Musil 2006: 101)

In a sense, the attributes of these three characters defining their individuality that we have chosen are their aspects that also reveal their flaneur characteristics and bring them into a critique of the modern human and life. The human perception of modernism that does not give credit to being without qualities, to being useless and idle has now been disproved, invalidated and rejected in the personality of these three characters because modernism that positions the individual in the centre by targeting the freedom of human against the sense of divine existence has, on the contrary, restricted the meaning of the existence of human and also intended to keep human in a reverse "unfreedom". Therefore, this is the rebellion against the face of modern life manifesting itself in the city and all kinds of a values system that also emerged in three idle men. In fact, this is a rebellion in a reverse inertia instead of a rebellion in action. Being without qualities turns into a quality, being idle turns into a way of being, and being useless turns into a great need.

In *The Man Without Qualities*, the author uses the noun phrase "The Man Without Qualities" for the central character for a while, he later explained his name. In other words, the quality of being without qualities gains a value that comes before who the person is: "The Man Without Qualities said by himself that 'No matter what the human does', 'this has no importance at all inside this ball of string consisting of various powers' by shaking his shoulders" (Musil 2006:83) Or, the author's title of *A Man Without Qualities consists of the Qualities Without Man* in chapter 39 shows that he distinguishes the individual and the qualities. In this chapter, the author also touched on this point once more by saying that "... the human-centred attitude that regarded the human as the centre of the universe for a long time but has now begun to disappear within the flow of centuries"(Musil 2006: 271-272).

The same situation is also true for the character of **The Useless Man**. The fact that his name was only mentioned as Bay C. (Mr. C.) is the emptying of the modern thought that defines, assures and ossifies.^{vi} Or, it is the fact that the idea of probability which is frequently emphasized in *The Man Without Qualities* is brought to the forefront. Now, the themes that have been especially revealed by modernism depending on urban life, such as alienation, corruption and loneliness are not only a subject of psychological analysis in them. Rebellion against social values, turning back on

morality, extremism or perversion in sexual emotions, cultural alienation, rebellion against the established order, quitting having great ideals and purposes for life are a new consciousness that modernity cannot understand.

Ernst Fischer who addressed a long essay on Robert Musil and *The Man Without Qualities* says that "The passion of human to destroy the walls and reach a new unity is strengthened as the alienation of human and the blurring of objects and conditions surrounding him increase, whether in the form of devoting himself to either collective or an individual "Unio Mystica". The individualist human who becomes doubtful in the face of the "reality" of a society that has evolved into a ghost looks for a deeper and more real reality and the meaning, integrity and richness of life beyond the normal state that has now been exhausted behind it."(Fischer 2006: 63) " In contrast to the narrow-minded petit-bourgeois style withdrawal from society the slogan of which is 'let me go', the point here is the pathetic, over-sensitive, passionate thirst for the world... In this desire for smooth *absolute integration*, the 'other situation', selfishness is hidden at the end point; The thing declared as the melting of the "Self" in the world is, on the contrary, the melting of the world inside the self; ... Therefore, the separation of object and human has been wiped away." (Fischer 2006: 63).

The continuous search of Bay C. (Mr. C.) for his anima is not only the search for this other state, his mother that he lost when he was a child, but it is also an action for absolute integration piercing the system, social structure and the world. In this respect, the fact that Mansur, who had not gone out of his neighbourhood for seven years and also had never had a bath during these seven years, thought that he wanted to have a bath when he saw a destroyed hammam, and consequently, his sentences "...I'm surprised that human beings have such wastes...We have formed such as scab.. (...) Do you know what I thought for a moment? I would sell our house and shop. That nightclub with a stringed instrument I have mentioned, there was a girl dealing with the outdoor orders, I would take her as my mistress. I would die a year later. " evoke the orientation towards the same other state and absolute integration.

In conclusion, these three men, *The Man Without Qualities*, *The Useless Man* and *The Idle Man* who emerged in the midst of the "isms" of modern times that are intermingled with each other, within the urban life that emerges as the reflection area of modern thought appearing with a complete order and a passion for progress, attempt to show that the passion for a complete order may actually be the destruction of all progress and happiness. Contrary to the modern life and the modern man which/who are trying to produce all value and meaning, these three men rebel against modern values in all ways, by finding meaning in the meaninglessness of modern man and life.

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ⁱ In this article, the paper entitled "**Three Men: The Man Without Qualities, The Useless Man and The Idle Man**", which was presented at 2007 UNESCO Mevlana Year Symposium on Language, Literature and Stylistics held on 02-05 May 2007 in Konya, was reviewed and extended for English version.

ⁱⁱ This name is actually at the disposal of Ahmet Cemal who translated the book into Turkish. Instead of the name **Kakanien**, which is actually a combination of German words *empire* and *kingdom*, the translator adapted it into Turkish and used İmpkralya.

ⁱⁱⁱ These characteristics appear in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's novel entitled **The Time Regulation Institute (Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü)** on the one hand, and in Oğuz Atay's novel entitled **The Disconnected (Tutunamayanlar)**, on the other hand.

^{iv} In a study written on Sait Faik, it is stated that "...the fact that a person isolates himself from society and assumes an attitude with his own values has traces." in Mansur, and this is interpreted that "Maybe a search and escape. Looking for unique values in a place and people in that place, in a sense investigating". (Çelik 2002: 65-66).

^v In a review written on The Man Without Qualities, it is stated that Musil also continued his lessons in this regard and was affected by Simmel's work entitled **Metropolis and Mental Life**(Baudelaire'de Bazı Motifler Üzerine).(Harrigton 2004: 58).

^{vi} In a book written on Yusuf Atılğan's novelist characteristic, this situation was interpreted as "...it suggests the existence of an expansion that would unavoidably be integrated and fulfilled with the life" (KOLCU 2003: 48).