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TRAGIC IRONY ON TANPINAR'S NOVELIZATION*

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Abstract

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962) is a prominent name in the 20th century Turkish literature with his academic and artistic identity. His interest from positive sciences to social sciences, his curiosity to many branches of art such as music, art, etc and especially to literature and and his feature of following all kinds of innovations belonging to the age in these fields show themselves in his artwork.

An important feature emerging in art and literature from the second half of the 20th century is the tragic and ironic appearance of the general depression of the age. In this article, the relationship between these two concepts related to especially, Peace and Clocks Adjustment Institute, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's novels, how they reflected to the other important novels of the age and how they are discussed in these two novels in more detailed.

Key words: A. H. Tanpınar, Huzur, Clock Adjustment Institute, tragic, ironic

TANPINAR ROMANCILIĞINDA TRAJİK İRONİ

Öz

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901-1962) 20. yüzyıl Türk edebiyatı içerisinde gerek akademik ve gerek sanatkar kimliğiyle ön plana çıkan bir isimdir. Pozitif bilimlerden sosyal bilimlere kadar pek alana olan ilgisi; edebiyat başta olmak üzere müzik, resim vb. sanat dallarına olan merakı ve bu alanlardaki çağa ait her türlü yeniliği takip etme özelliği, eserlerinde de kendisini gösterir.

20.yüzyılın özellikle ikinci yarısından itibaren sanat ve edebiyat eserlerinde ortaya çıkan önemli

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bir özellik ise çağın genel bunalımına bağlı, trajik ve ironik görünümdür. Bu yazıda özellikle Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar'ın Huzur ve Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü romanları bağlamında bu iki kavramın birbiriyle bağlantısı, dönemin önemli diğer romanlarına nasıl yansıdığı ve daha detaylı olarak söz konusu bu iki romanda nasıl ele alındığı tartışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: A. H. Tanpınar, Huzur, Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü, trajik, ironik

The tragic existence of men is a matter that especially 20th century Europe has begun to debate in the field of thought as a more serious problem than the previous centuries. The tragic irony has been shaped with "the existential conflict between the aspiration of a final meeting and the power of mental enthusiasm which motivates man to seek the truth and the discovery of the fact that there is no truth to be found."² With deepening of the clash between endlessness and absolute, paradox results in irony. "Irony is a meaningful form of the doubt that the life is basically meaningless."³ So, 20th Century's European literature shows an ironic landscape with the expression of Frye as well as being tragic⁴. Because this creative initiative is the culprit of 'silence assassination'⁵. Because the art of being absurd in life makes a paradox at the same time, and irony arises from here⁶. In fact, the tragic existential irony with a rather ancient history in western culture is that even though the human being is mortal, they say yes to the life of this world as if they were immortal. For this reason, the tragic irony

is sometimes called as the irony of fate. All of them are the product of the crisis in the philosophical, political, social, psychological framework that emerged before and after World War I, and in the process of going to World War II and it becomes a rich material in the hands of the famous novelists of the time. Some writers such as Franz Kafka, James Joyce, Woolf, Robert Musil, Camus, and Sartre, who were also thinkers at the same time, point to this contradictory side of human existence in their novels in the Latin expression of *Complexio Oppositorum*.

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, one of the leading writers of the 20th century Turkish novel which follows his own agenda and comprehends universal problems with the problems of the countries he lived in, also holds an important place in this subject. As many close friends and colleagues around him have stated, the ironic feeling of him is as important as the tragic feelings. It is impossible for Tanpınar to reflect this form of perception on his poetry and novels since he

* It has been revised for its English version.

² Charles Glicksberg(2006), "Ironic View in Modern Literature", (Cited by: Yunus BALCI), **Searching-Human Sciences Investigations**, No:15, p.23.

³ A.g.e., p.30.

⁴ Northrop Frye(1963), in **Myth and Symbol**, University of Nebraska Pres, Nebraska p.11.

⁵ Charles Glicksberg, a.g.e., p.30.

⁶ Charles Glicksberg, a.g.y.

is a writer who transmits the things he experienced, read and saw in an aesthetic frame. Actually, it is possible to see the unity of these opposites in the tragic-ironic context when we put *Peace*⁷ on one side and *Clocks Adjustment Institute*⁸ on the other side. Considering that the "tragic sense of poetry and life" is dominant to one and "kind and deep irony" is dominant to another and in fact, both novels touch the same point, we can see that how strong is his perception based on tragic irony as in Western contemporaries.

The modernist background in the European novel that originated in the *Peace* and *Clocks Adjustment Institute* – we can understand¹ that Tanpınar has read them for many times from his various writings- is nourished by the psychological and philosophical collapse of man-⁹ after World War I and the disappearance of believing in mind. This collapse is the result of the opposite situation that the individual has emerged of nihilist meaning that has been discovered on not having a final meaning which is now slowly begun to be accepted. That is to say, the existence of a person is meaningless, but this is the person himself. The tragic ironic landscape in which this perception resides comes across in the form of situations in which the individual of the novel is led astray by idleness, laughter, play, irony or some sort of anarchism by eliminating the mind. This sharp breakthrough created by the universal depression brings together a heroic anti-hero, a sense of character from romance to unheard. In other words, it inclines from the character who pursues high ideals to the ideal destructor, and from there to the man who is objectless, hollowed out and whose existence is uncertain.

In all these modernist works, the dark comedy, irony and the passive and ironic rebellion of the resistance against the tragedy caused by the exhaustion of the promise of progressive modernization begins to prevail. The collapses in places in these works and behind them, that are inevitable and a passive reaction in a sense actually find itself in Camus's *Sisyphos Legend*. Sisyphos, whom the gods punished by bringing a rock to the top of a this mountain, does the same work every day, even if he know that this rock will roll down again. Camus here gives a complete example of a man of tragic-ironic context in the age. The fact that "Love your fate; maybe yours is the best" expressed by Nietzsche in his example of rock sculptor old man example means that Sisyphos likes his own destiny and is peaceful on this path. When man begins to think about his own tragic reality, he becomes himself. But this has also an ironic appearance. Here the "yes" of the individual who says all the punishment and the suffering yes is actually in a bigger "no". The fact that the hero has returned from the world to himself, and that he discovered himself due to the fact that he is the existence itself even if it is nonsense and the inevitable ending that he finds

⁷ This press is based in this notification. **Peace**, Interpreter 1001 Main Pieces, no date, Istanbul.

⁸ This press is based in this notification. **Clocks Adjustment Institute**, Dergâh Press, İstanbul 1992.

⁹ İnci Enginün-Zeynep Kerman(2008), **Privately with Tanpınar in the Light of Diaries**, Dergâh Press, İstanbul, p.129, 140.

here is the irony of fate. The complexio opposite form of tragic irony or irony of destiny encourages some modernist novel heroes to intensify their attention to their lives and to exhibit their own painstaking realities to the foreground day by day and hour by hour.

There is no doubt that this modernization has an effect on the reification of modernization, that is to say, to objectize, to objectify and to mechanize. For modernist novelists, who oppose a human understanding of chronological phenomena and turn their backs on classical realism, hours that have become images of chronological plane in particular are a serious obsession. As well as Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway,¹⁰ in *Orlando and the Waves*, in *Women in Love* by Lawrence, in the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by Joyce as well as his *Ulysses*, *Under the Surveillance of Western Eyes*, in *Nostromo*, *Lord Jim* and *Secret Agent* by Conrad, in *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald and in *Time and Anger* by Faulkner, hours takes a significant place.¹¹

From all these angles, it is seen that there is a deep connection between the *Peace and Institute of Clocks Adjustment*. The hours of the Clock Adjustment Institute and a shattered day corresponding to the disintegrating individual of Peace constitute the top and bottom of the same perception. There are hours, minutes and days at the top but undeniable minds and memories at the bottom. Therefore, in a great deal of modernist novels in 20th century have been given special importance for hours, minutes and days, and the novels that a day is told about have been noted. The greatest example of this is accepted as *Ulysses*, but beforehand, the novel named *From Nine-to Nine* by Leo Perutz pressed in German in 1918 narrates a day of Stanislaus Demba, a poor student, in Vienna. In *Ulysses*, published in 1922, Joyce deals with the day of June 16, 1904 in Dublin, that was had been named as *Hours* previously. Woolf narrates a day of Septimus and Mrs. Dalloway in Paris, first in the novel *Mrs Dalloway*, whose name is *Hours*. Again, Malcolm Lovry, a British modernist writer who also committed suicide as Woolf, describes a day of an alcoholic British consul in a small city of Mexico in his novel *Under the Volcano*, written in 1947. Besides being published after *Peace*, there is a daily train journey between Paris and Rome in the *Change of Butor*. In all of these, in using time as a preliminary object, there is the effect of a perspective opened by the existentialist philosophy that Nietzsche and other followers of philosophers love their agony and being aware of this as well as Bergsonian understanding, a new sense of time that does not depend on the the order of events, but the anachronistic order of phenomena, and the escape from the time of mind to consciousness and subconscious flattening. Besides new important being published after *Peace*, there is a daily train journey between Paris and Rome in the *Change of Butor*. In all of these, the

¹⁰ It is a striking point that Dalloway named this novel as **Hours** previously.

¹¹ Randall Stevenson(1992), **Modernist Fiction: An Introduction**, University Press of Kentucky-USA, p.83-87.

preliminary planning of the time, with a perspective that Nietzsche and other followers of philosophers love and be aware of the existentialist philosophy that led to the thought of existentialist thought, is not a new sense of time, Bergsonian understanding, not the order of events, but the anachronistic order of phenomena, , There is also the effect of escaping consciousness and subconscious flattening.

On the other hand, *Unqualified Man*, written by Robert Musil between 1930-32 who is again among the important modernist novelists giving this broken and dropped human profile of the age and *Trip to the End of Night* written by Louis-Ferdinand Celine in 1932, *Nausea* by Sartre in 1938, *Foreigner* by Camus in 1942 are the different faces of the same tragic-ironic context. For example, Ulrich who is the unqualified of the *Unqualified Man* is a reversed mirror like Hayri Irdal. In *Trip to the End of the Night*, Ferdinand Bardamu, the main character, in his character, and in *Nausea*, Antoine Roquentin in his character and in the *Foreigner*, writers with Meursault reflect the individual who is crushed, creeped, drifting, and madness under the collapse that develops in the course of World War II. after World War I.

When we return to the *Peace* and *The Institute of Clocks Adjustment*, all of them shows us that Tanpınar is a writer who has not read all of these things, but has a profound understanding of his age. Considering in terms of the agony of the people of 20th century and desperate quests about its individual, social and universal origins, and when we think together with the novels we talk about, Tanpınar can not be judged only in the frame of Turkey, but in the same universal collapse as the above mentioned novels. This piece in *Peace* is one of the typical examples of this:

"Only human beings are solid and the absolute time is separated into two and this small night light inside us separates life and death from each other because we have our own magical rhyme with these bright lights, fluttering, simple things and our thought is coming and going between these two poles we created like a clock balance-wheel. Mankind, this prisoner of time was a wretched trying to get out of it. He was trying to watch him from the outside, where he would be lost in it, where it would be with everything in the wide and endless river. It was a suffering machine for her. A pushing, we are on the verge of death; everything is over. If we broke the whole of the zero and we are willing to accept to be piece, we have to accept it. But the speed spontaneously leads us to the other extreme; we are in the midst of life, we are full of it, we are the toy of our speed again; but this time the scales were absolutely leaning towards death. All agonies would have risen with their own reigns (...) But man did not stay with it, he was inventing the luck from the beginning, with this great, unchanging necessity. He was creating other deaths because he was alive. In truth, these were always the children of existence fantasy. Because the real death was not suffering, it was salvation; I leave all of them, I'm into eternity. I

was the great pearl itself that is shining in the place where the mind ended; not a piece of it. I'm a large water daffodil that is bright in it and shining from within itself where there is no light in the border of the mind. But no, instead of saying this, he says this, 'I think, therefore I am. I hear, therefore I am, I fight, therefore I'm. I am a fool, I'm, I am!' (H., p. 61-62).

In fact Bergson, Bachelard and Proust-like quest on the upper level is seen to have a deep perspective on Sartre and Camus. The decline of Camus and Sartre of the Bergson-Bachelard-Proust supporter individual who wants to stand up from being an individual to being a universal entity, from the beginning to the end in *Peace* is resulted from almost the same universal suffering as the above-mentioned novel heroes. We encounter the imaginary sense formed by the fact that the deaths in individual sense at the beginning of the novel is getting to be universal, Mumtaz begins to lose his mental health towards the end of the novel and has fallen in the middle and has broken his medicine bottle, in all the fictitious characters who experienced almost the same collapse above. It is possible to say that the universal collapse of an entire humanity of the state of "They collapse, never mind"¹², which expresses the view of mankind that emerged in the novels we are talking about, is the national framework image.

Existentialism and intuitive thoughts are brought in confrontation in the presence of the characters in *Peace*, while Mumtaz wants to be fixed in the animations he regards as eternal love between his two extremes and his instrument. But the dilemma Mumtaz has and which contains actually these two opposites within itself, synchronic and diachronic existence from the individuality to universal, a search for exit with a sense of personality are the search of protagonists of the age that we all talk about¹³. But this is a desperate search. On the other hand, the ironic background view of this tragic perception automatically creates a human destiny position. In that case there is no escape now, no more solutions of the mind. The death of the hero in Mumtaz's personality is revived in Hayri İrdal this time as a reflection of a shift from "hero" to "anti hero" and from there to "unhero" as in the novels we are talking about. The victory is your destruction; at this point there is no meaning of existence of a mind that can not produce a solution, and the result is nonsense and thus the final image emerged by the *Peace* is actually the dominant landscape of Clocks Adjustment Institute. So now the mind is out of order; irrationality is everywhere. In fact, the "desperate love" leitmotiv loaded into Mahur Beste in the novel *Peace* carries tragic irony from the beginning. Again in response to the idea of eternity in the nature of love in Tanpınar's conception¹⁴, the idea of desperate destiny that Tanpınar

¹² This expression has been used by the existentialists in the sense of that the men are abandoned by the God.

¹³ This expression is mostly used for modernist fictitious characters.

¹⁴ Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar(2000), "About Love", **As I live**, Dergah Press, İstanbul, p.132.

releases again creates an ironic contradiction and at the same time serves the destiny of the tragedy and thus feeds the complex oppositism in the novel. A different inner and outer contradiction is created by having no peace in the novel although the name of the novel is Peace.

The fact that it is never found in return for the peace of the name of the name creates a separate inner and outer tezd. The social tragic, background novel created by the conjuncture of a mosque image inherited from the synagogue with the secular character with the holy centered temporal perception of the institute transformed into Kafkaesque¹⁵ image that is "referring to silly and schizophrenic organization with labyrinthine bureaucratic and totalitarian meandering, methods".

On the other hand, this extraordinary character formation forming a direction of this couple develops a strong ironic image on the same complex opposite situation this time when the secrets of Seyit Lütfullah, Abduselam Bey and Aristidi have been emptied out of the other side and the secular members are also emptied by Halit Ayarcı and Hayri İrdal. Thus, the double-headed view, which is both tragic and ironic in the same context can be argued that Tanpınar puts the social tragic irony which is unique to us in addition to the universal individual perception in the European novel. In addition, it seems that the Clocks Adjustment Institute is strong in common with modernist novelists around the clock. But Tanpınar also loaded a social meaning to all these things besides the individual meaning.

In addition, in the novel Peace, the author is a reaction to the same chronological discipline in which Mümtaz has split a day in his mind, and the mind of man based on the perceptions images the concept of time. Mümtaz meets two colleagues in Eminönü at about 5 pm and he heard that one of them, Nuran would married to Fahir from whom she was divorced before and the first part ends here. In the 2nd and 3rd episodes, their relationship with Nuran whom he had met and loved in a May morning on the island ferry a year ago. This relationship, which ends in Suat's suicide in the house where Mumtaz and Nuran planned to sit together after marriage, includes one-year period. Returning to the 4th division, it was still twenty past five.

In other words, past one year is compressed into a 20-minute actual time. This can be read as the continuous fragmentation of the moment and the step-by-step approach of destruction from the dominant existentialist perspective, just as it can be read in Bergsonian perspective as being fed by the past continuously. From this point of view, the fact that the Clock Adjustment Institute is organized as memories of Hayri İrdal, who is around 60 years old, and the fact that there are very few sentences in the current time point to a post-demolition era where the mind is

¹⁵ Michael Löwy(2008), **Franz Kafka –Insubmissive Dreamer**, (Cited by: Işık Ergüden), Versus Book, İstanbul, p.122.

completely eliminated.

One of the points that constitutes the main tragic irony is the establishment around the father issue. That Abdüsselam Bey is an abandoned father, the illness of Hayri İrdal diagnosed by Dr. Ramiz is a "father problem", the invention of an epistemic father in the past called Ahmet Zamani for a real-time, non-existent clock sensation only produces a rich content in this sense. Moreover, in terms of the opening of the clock-loving society in different parts of the world includes an ironic landscape in view in terms of universalization of absurd, at the point of being forgotten of staircase between the floors in the new building of the institute and the fact that all the officers are now assigned to the institution's permanent liquidation committee after the institute is closed also has a tragic view indirectly sent to the social realism at the point of continuation of the absurd.

As a result, in Tanpınar's novelty, that follow moderns as well as modernist novelists very closely and by comprehending all kinds of creator and founder practice from science to philosophy, art and life in the background of them together with the world and the country in which he lived and turned it to his own practice, although country's problems apparently are given together with the individual's problems in a time-wise perspective, actually the atmosphere determining all of them is the spirit of the age beginning to perceive his own existence and meaning over absence and meaningless.

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