A GENEALOGY OF ANTIHERO[*]

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Abstract

"Antihero", as a literary term, entered literature in the nineteenth century with Dostoevsky, and its usage flourished in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the antihero protagonists or characters have been on stage since the early Greek drama and their stories are often told in the works of the twentieth century literature. The notion of "hero" sets the base for "antihero". In every century, there are heroes peculiar to their time; meanwhile, antiheroes continue to live as well, though not as abundant as heroes in number. The gap between them in terms of their personality, moral code and value judgements is very obvious in their early presentation; however, the closer we come to our age, the vaguer this difference becomes. In contemporary literature, antiheroes have begun to outnumber heroes as a result of historical, political and sociological facts such as wars, and literary pieces have tended to present themes of failure, inaction, uncertainty and despair rather than heroism and valour. This study argues that Second World War has the crucial impact on the development of the notion of modern antihero. As a consequence of the war, "hero" as the symbol of valour, adventure, change and action in the legends and epic poems has been transformed into "antihero" of failure and despair, especially in realist, absurdist and existentialist works written during/after the Second World War.

Keywords: *Antihero, Hero, Heroism, Protagonist, Romantic Hero, Second World War, Post-war*

Öz

Anti-kahramanın Soykütüğü

Edebi bir terim olarak "anti-kahraman" ya da "karşı-kahraman", on dokuzuncu yüzyılda Dostoyevski ile edebiyata girmiştir ve kullanımı yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısında doruğa ulaşmıştır. Ancak, anti-kahraman başkişiler veya karakterler erken Yunan tiyatrosundan beri sahnede görülmekte ve öyküleri yirminci yüzyıl edebiyat eserlerinde çokça anlatılmaktadır. "Kahraman" olgusu "anti-kahramana" temel oluşturur. Her yüzyılda, zamanına özgü kahramanlar bulunurken, aynı zamanda, sayıca kahramanlar kadar çok olmasa da anti-kahramanlar da varlıklarını sürdürür. Kişilikleri, ahlaki kuralları ve değer yargıları bakımından aralarındaki fark ilk temsillerinde oldukça belirgindir. Fakat günümüze geldikçe bu fark belirsizleşir. Çağdaş edebiyatta anti-kahramanlar savaşlar gibi tarihsel, politik ve sosyolojik durumların sonucu olarak kahramanlardan sayıca üstün olmaya başlamış, edebi eserler kahramanlık ve cesaretten çok başarısızlık, eylemsizlik, belirsizlik ve çaresizlik temalarını içermeye başlamıştır. Bu çalışma, İkinci Dünya Savaşının çağdaş anti-kahraman olgusunun gelişiminde can alıcı bir etkisinin olduğunu tartışır. Savaşın sonucu olarak, destan ve epik şiirlerde cesaretin, maceranın, değişimin ve eylemin simgesi olan "kahraman", özellikle İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında/sonrasında yazılan gerçekçi, absürt ve varoluşçu eserlerdeki yenilgilerin ve ümitsizliğin "anti-kahramanına" dönüşmüştür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Anti-kahraman, Kahraman, Kahramanlık, Başkişi, Romantik Kahraman, İkinci Dünya Savaşı, Savaş Sonrası*

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Introduction

"Antihero" is a difficult, ambiguous and contradictory term to explore, and thus it is a concept that evokes many possible interpretations. The reason for this is not only the puzzling nature of the term; the problem could also be attributed to the perception of another constantly changing term, namely the "hero", from which "antihero" derives (Antihero/hero will be used without quotation marks from now on). The perception of antihero, then alters in accordance with the transfiguration in hero or "heroism" and the term gains multiple meanings and connotations. Therefore, though antihero is considerably used for contemporary figures in plays, novels or movies, its origin dates back to a long time ago just like the hero, and it requires a close look at the idea of hero for an analysis. Once it is done, it is observed that the hero has given its place to antihero in many contemporary works, especially those produced during or shortly after the Second World War. The war is a turning point to produce *antiheroic protagonists* in literature, and it has encouraged critical studies examining previous works in terms of "antiheroism". Therefore, this paper attempts to argue the role of the war and present a genealogical analysis of antihero by displaying the usages of antihero in different ages and the discussion on the definition, giving a list of antiheroes and pointing the transformation of hero into antihero at the end.

Definition and Examples

There are various definitions and sources which explain the term and mark its first known usage. To begin with, there are two variations of the term: antihero or anti-hero, which have no difference in meaning. In this paper, the former is preferred as it is more frequently used. Antihero is first used in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *Notes from Underground* (1864) in place of hero or protagonist (Brombert, 1999: 1). In the final part of the book, the underground man who is the narrator and the protagonist points out that he made a mistake by writing his memoirs because there is no point in showing how he had spoiled his life. He confesses that "a novel needs a hero, and all the traits of an antihero are expressly gathered together here" (2008: 152). With underground man, Dostoevsky portrays a contrary example of a hero who does not satisfy the expectation of readers, but still dominates the novel as the main character.

On the other hand, as an expression, the date for the first known use of antihero goes back to eighteenth century. Two accomplished dictionaries, *Merriam-Webster* and *Oxford English Dictionary* note that the word was first used in 1714 (antihero, 2012). Oxford English Dictionary offers a list of early works in which the earliest source is *The Lover* by Sir Richard Steele. In this work, the author, who is complaining about his profligate age discusses how the notions of gallantry have changed as men chasing after women are insensible of love and do not respect females. He calls them brutes and

continues: "I shall enquire, in due time, and make every Anti-Heroe in Great Britain give me an account why one woman is not as much as ought to fall to his share; and shall show every abandoned wanderer, that with all his blustering, his restless following every female he sees, is much more ridiculous" (Steele, 1715: 13). The same dictionary also provides the first derivative, that is antiheroic, stated in J. E. Hopkins' book *Rose Turquand* (1876). In this book, one of the characters is weeping like a child, which the narrator depicts as "a lame and impotent conclusion...altogether antiheroic" (qtd. in Lovesay, 2011: 37). Another notable dictionary, *Collins*, dates the first idiom for antihero as 1876 (antihero, 2012), the same date for the publication of *Rose Turquand*, but there is no specific work cited.

Another point regarding the timeline of the frequency of term's usage is that it has begun to be used more frequently in 1970s in literary works according to two dictionaries (*Oxford* and *Collins*, antihero, 2012). It is also significant to note that antihero as an entry is included in some of the dictionaries in 1970s. It enters *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary I* in 1972 as "one who is the opposite or reverse of a hero; esp. a chief character in a poem, play, or story who is totally unlike a conventional hero" (antihero, 2012). It first entered *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* in 1973: "a protagonist who is notably lacking in heroic qualities (as courage or unselfishness)" (*Merriam-Webster's*, 1973: 50). Given that the policy in selection of an entry in dictionary is based on a wide usage in published materials, it is not surprising that the term enters dictionaries in the 1970s. According to dictionaries cited above, the decade for the entry of antihero in dictionaries coincides with the acceleration of the extensive practice in written world, which might indicate some period-specific effects, namely the effects of the war, on literature giving birth to a new idea of hero.

In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, literary critic M. H. Abrams defines antihero as "the chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that which we associate with the traditional protagonist or hero of a serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, ineffectual or dishonest" (11). In *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, the author and dictionary writer J. A. Cuddon states that the history of literature is full of fictional heroes who have been granted noble qualities and virtuous characteristics. However, the antihero is usually the one who is given the ability of failure (43). An antihero might not have high moral standards, and might be indecent unlike the traditional principle character of mythology, folklore or legends. Lacking valour, he is sometimes a coward. As a result, he is not honoured as a saviour or a leader. He can attempt to claim a war medal with his so-called brave actions, but he does not actually deserve it, or he simply cannot achieve it. He is a "cowardly, weak, inept, or simply unlucky" (Quinn, 2006: 28-29) type that springs from ancient literature. *The Iliad*, which puts forth a parentage for many works of literature, is the oldest source for heroic mode and the hero in Western tradition (Miller, 2000: 87). Similarly, the antiheroic mode, as a

conversion of heroic mode, has a lineage that links antihero to ancient Greek literary tradition. Cuddon puts forward that the New Comedy contains the antiheroic type who is "cack-handed, clumsy, stupid, buffoonish" (1998: 43). On the other hand, the comic character in the Old Comedy is also the opposite of the hero, not in the sense of being the central character but perceived as a ridiculous yet amusing person. In line with this, the antihero can be regarded as a character who tends to have a comic nature in origin and like many theatrical devices, dates back to ancient drama.

Later in the Middle Ages, it is observed that there is an abundance of antiheroes along with chivalric heroes of that age such as Sir Gawain in *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight* and Roland in *Chanson de Roland*. One of the great talents who satirised and mocked heroism, Geoffrey Chaucer also provided some antiheroes such as the courteous Diomedes of "Troilus and Criseyde" (Mann, 2002: 80), Arcite of "Analida and Arcite" (Battle, 2004: 97) and girlish knight Sir Thopas of *The Canterbury Tales*[1] who display some traits of the antiheroic type. Among them, Sir Thopas is akin to the late stock antihero, Don Quixote, for they are both parodies of chivalric heroes of the romances. In "Sir Thopas", contrary to an exaltation of chivalric/heroic idealism, "chivalric values are a facade" (Wetherbee, 1989: 105). Sir Thopas can be regarded as the archetypal antihero in English literature because of its association with mock-heroism and the comic antihero.

In his *Glossary,* Abrams notes that the use of a non-heroic protagonist dates back to the picaresque fiction of the sixteenth century (1999: 11), but in his discussion, Abrams does not give specific examples of any sort of writing from that period. Nearly fifty years before *Don Quixote*, there was another novel, *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* (*The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes,*1554) published anonymously in Spain. This could be considered one of the earliest texts that offered a portrayal of the early prototype of antihero, the "picaro", and introduced the picaresque genre (Turner and Martinez, 2003: 15). *Lazarillo de Tormes* – also the first modern European novel – is the earliest narrative about the low culture of a wanderer who became a protagonist (Maiorino, 2003: 17). Lazaro is the ancestor of the antihero in terms of a protagonist who is the master of the art of survival,[2] and it might be inferred that the European novel has an antiheroic temper in its origins.

The antihero in the picaresque tradition has its roots much earlier. Written in the seventeenth century, *Don Quixote* (1605) is a parody of chivalric quest, and according to Chris Baldick, a scholar in the field of literary criticism and terminology, the antihero Don Quixote is regarded as the exemplary figure for the rogue antihero. One of the unheroic characteristics of this picaresque novel is

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[1] *Literary Terms and Definitions* of Carson-Newman College (antihero. (2012). In *Carson-Newman College.* Retrieved March 14, 2012, from http://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/lit_terms_A.html#antihero_anchor)
[2] William Walker defines Hasek's Schwejk (*Good Soldier Schwejk,* 1923) as a comic antihero. He suggests that Schwejk's chracaterization originates from picaresque novel and states that "the primary quest of the protagonist is that of physical and moral survival in an oppressive social climate" (1985: 19).

that the author displays the picaro's subjected idealistic heroism in a parodic manner (2001: 13). As the antihero of the mock-heroic novel, Don Quixote has a unique sense of heroism which lacks the decency, nobility and aristocracy of romances and epics. However, this is not the only picaresque novel that can be considered exemplary for antihero. There were also some picaresque novels that were published in other countries at the same time as *Don Quixote*. The French novelist Honore d'Urfe's Hylas in the pastoral novel *L'Astree* (1607-1627) can be taken as one of the early typologies of antihero (Cuddon, 1998: 43). D'Urfe's novel, which is a key text, a source-book of situations, characters and themes, has a "new" tone of pastoral tradition of a time when myths of chivalry were still current (Coward, 2004: 101).

Like seventeenth century literature in which examples of an unconventional model for a hero could be found, the eighteenth century picaresque fiction also sets many examples for the antihero. Contrary to ancient protagonists who are of noble rank, Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), for instance, is an anti-example for a hero/protagonist in the conventional sense, since the main character is a thief and a prostitute (Abrams, 1999: 11). According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (*Tom Jones,* 1749) is also one of the prototypes of antihero that belongs to the tradition of picaresque narration of the eighteenth century (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, antihero, 2012).

The nineteenth century, on the one hand, has set the ground for the twentieth century's solitary characters through a fictional idealisation of alienated individuals. Dostoevsky's Underground Man, who cannot overcome his inconsistencies, resolves that "we are so alienated from it [life] that we feel at once a sort of loathing for real life, and so cannot bear to be reminded of it" (Dostoevsky, 2008: 152). The paradoxes and dilemmas of the nineteenth century alienated individuals are artfully conveyed in this epoch's fiction. On the other hand, according to Ihab Hassan, this century has created "embarrassing" female antiheroes such as Emma Bovary (*Madame Bovary*, 1857) as well as those such as Charles Dickens's antihero Mr. Pickwick (*The Pickwick Papers*, 1936) (Hassan, 1995: 56), who served as the mouthpieces of their writers who were discontented with the conditions of their own life. Another writer, Thackeray, who is critical about the bourgeois society of his time, draws, in his famous novel *Vanity Fair*, a successful picture of a non-heroine, Becky Sharp, who is a member of a social circle where there is hardly a hero endowed with passions and virtues of the hero or heroine of an epic or a romance (56).

Antihero has "unheroic" qualities in meaning and function; however he is still the chief character in the technical sense. His story might be told elaborately. However, one might not be sure if it is worth reading or listening to the story of an indolent person. Sometimes it is difficult to trace a prevailing story as there is hardly a significant action by the protagonist. In *The Unheroic Hero in the Novels of Stendhal, Balzac, and Flaubert*, Raymond Giraud suggests that the "unheroic heroes" of

Stendhal, Balzac and Flaubert are the prototypes of heroes of inaction as Proust's Swann (*In Search of Lost Time, 1913-1927)* and Joyce's Leopold Bloom (*Ulysses*, 1922) (qtd. in Brombert, 1999: 2). They do not bear semblance to mythological figures such as Odysseus or heroes of epic poems such as Beowulf, in terms of appearance, character or image. Brombert adds that "nineteenth and twentieth century literature is moreover crowded with weak, ineffectual, pale, humiliated, self-doubting, inept, occasionally abject characters — often afflicted with self-conscious and paralyzing irony [...] Such characters do not conform to traditional models of heroic figures" (1999: 2).

Although the term has gained acceptance with Dostoevsky's Underground Man in the twentieth-century, its application has flourished in writings after the Second World War with such protagonists as in, for example, Kingsley Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954), Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961) and Samuel Beckett's plays (Abrams, 1999: 11). The twentieth century – the age of dehumanization – embraces many kinds of antiheroes: such as, in general terms, Absurd Man, Invisible Man, Mass Man and Existential Man, who are a kind of response to this age (Walker, 1985: 11). For instance, antiheroes of the theatre of absurd – notably those of Beckett's – the invisible man (*Invisible Man*, 1952) of Ralph Ellison, isolated and alienated characters of Faulkner and Arthur Miller or existential (anti)heroes of Sartre's fiction can be defined as "unheroic" protagonists whose actions do not resemble that of a conventional hero, especially in their attitude towards themselves and towards life.

There are two crucial points which should be clarified: first, the difficulty of any specific definition for antihero; second, the interchangeable use of hero/protagonist or antihero/protagonist. At the beginning of the essay "Unheroic Modes", Victor Brombert asserts that the title of his study (*In Praise of Antiheroes*) has been inspired by Dostoevsky's self-appointed antihero. However, he continues:

> The plural "antiheroes" is meant to suggest that Dostoevsky's protagonist is not the only counter-model, and that my aim is not to define a single type, but rather to explore a widespread and complex trend in modern literature. Clearly, no single description or definition will do...No single theoretical formulation, however ingenious, can possibly accommodate the specific thrust and quality of a given work. Wary of preformatted definitions, I have preferred to be an attentive reader and interpreter of the works under discussion, to remain flexible in any approach, and to tease the theme of "antiheroism" out of the individual texts (1999: 1,2).

As Brombert says, the concept of antihero is a modern trend which is, first of all, very wide and complex. That is why he deliberately avoids a definitional scheme or an approach method (1999: 9). However, his avoidance results from a necessity more than an intentional aim. It is reasonable for such a term to be inexplicable or hard to be expressed. As shown before, it dates back to ancient times and has lived through various periods of different philosophical, scientific, economic and historical developments and literary movements. This argument is not just appropriate for antihero; there is a great deal of concepts and terms that cannot be accepted universally and hence that are rejected and reconstructed in twentieth century literary criticism. For instance, same charges can be brought against the ancestor of the comic antihero, the picaresque rogue. William Walker observes that "the difficulties encountered in an investigation of the picaresque rogue involves the lack of a universally accepted definition of the type, especially in terms of the rogue's defining characteristics within the twentieth-century fictional tradition...no English word can render the exact meaning of the term" (1985: 20). The picaresque novel has gone through fundamental changes since its origin with *Lazarillo des Tormes*, while keeping certain universal patterns (21) such as adventures of a lower class antihero. Therefore, there can be numerous meanings for such a term. For another example, in the article "The Anti-hero in Eighteenth-Century Fiction", Percy G. Adams states that the more we read what is thought to be good literature, the more cautious we become with generalizations, and the more we are aware of other nations' histories, we eventually reject certain standard terms: such as baroque, naturalism, the *nouveau roman* and picaresque (1976: 29). "Baroque", an invention of the sixteenth century architecture, signifies the early years of the eighteenth century for musicians while for German literary historians, it is a term associated with the seventeenth century. Correspondingly, any affirmation of a picaresque novel other than *Lazarillo de Tormes*, *Huck Finn* or *Moll Flanders* will be rejected. Adams concludes that antihero is one of those terms passing through the same approvals and refusals as terms like baroque and picaresque (29), essentially in twentieth century literary criticism. Bearing some peculiar contrast to hero and heroism in all ages, the antihero was more buffoonish in picaresque literature while he became more sophisticated and introverted within the romantic writings. For modern readers, he is the "angry young man" who has lost his cause or the "absurd man" in futile search of an identity and meaning. Therefore, putting a name to antihero with a general definition by basically depending on its contrast with hero will create indefinite meaning or only lessen its deep meaning.

Hero/Antihero as the Protagonist

As for the second point indicated earlier, hero is used as an alternative to "protagonist" which means the principle character, the main person in a literary work. This usage is in a technical sense rather than a qualitative or attributive significance. In some cases, hero is used for both meanings: a protagonist who is known for his valour and great achievement. Dictionaries, for example, provide

both these explanations. Generally, the first definition for hero in dictionaries is the mythological and legendary references: a strong, courageous man of divine legacy. For the last definition, hero is the principle character in a novel, poem, or dramatic presentation (*American Heritage*, antihero, 2000). For another definition, hero is "1. a: a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability b: an illustrious warrior. 2. a: the principal male character in a literary or dramatic work b: the central figure in an event, period, or movement (*Merriam-Webster*, hero, 2012). As a result, referring a character as a hero includes two possible interpretations: the central character and the brave person.

In her article "Romantic Hero or Is he an Antihero?", Lilian Furst asserts that "the hero [is] also in the technical sense of the chief protagonist in a work […] He stands squarely in the centre of works that exist primarily for the presentation of this character who overshadows others almost to the point of exclusion. Characterization is concentrated on him" (1976: 55,56). For instance, Thackeray's Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*: *A Novel without a Hero* is the protagonist and she takes this position as a heroine in merely a technical sense. In fact, many Victorian novels, for Harry Levin, a literary critic, have such *a technical hero* (italics mine) of unheroic deeds, whose "bourgeois environment affords little scope for exploits and passions on the epic or the romantic scale" (qtd. in Hassan, 1995: 57). For that reason, characters such as Becky Sharp and Mr. Pickwick are protagonists that should more appropriately be regarded and named as antiheroes. They do not conform to the two meanings of hero at the same time: the brave or courageous person and the leading character in the novel. They lack the passions of a hero in an epic poem, but still their characterization is in the centre.

The antihero, like the hero, has complex notion of being both unheroic and protagonist. If the protagonist does not comply with the traditional heroic traits, according to some views, then he is called antihero. Quinn's explanation confirms this. For him, antihero is "the principle character in a play or novel who exhibits qualities the opposite of those usually regarded as 'heroic'" (Quinn, 2006: 28-29). However, this explanation is not sufficient to determine who an antihero is and who is not. With such a generalization, a villain also becomes an antihero. It is obvious that the problem results from the interchangeable use of both terms hero/antihero and protagonist. The motivation and need for regarding a main character as a hero goes back to literature of ancient period.

From ancient times to our age, there has always been a notion of hero and heroism, and our own conception of heroes and heroism are derived from ancient Greek times (Bowra, 1952: 2). Aristotle, who gave an account of comedy, tragedy and epic poetry in his *Poetics*, defined heroes as "better than the ordinary men" (Aristotle, 2005: 15). They are courageous, honourable, and ready to go for any dangerous mission. According to two writers of literary terms, Childs and Fowler, after the appearances of such characters in Homer's epics their status has changed and they have turned into

aspects of literary structure, whose existence is just for the sake of the literary whole. From that time, the hero has always played the leading role and preserved his mythic status (2006: 106). However, this heroic diction was shattered with John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and the question of "unheroic" hero (meaning protagonist here) emerged. Dryden says that in *Paradise Lost*, Satan is "technically" a hero. On the other hand, Joseph Addison argues that Milton had no hero in the classical sense (106). Romantics, later, had a different point of view. Blake and Shelley declared that Milton was favouring Satan, meaning he was the hero of the work. However, romantic "heroism" differs from it in the archetypal sense (106). At this stage, we have the Romantic Hero and Byronic Hero whose thoughts and feelings become more important than his action - as opposed to Aristotle's view that action determines character (Aristotle, 2005: 27). As a consequence, it can be concluded that the early debate for antihero shows itself with Milton's protagonist. The romantic poets saw Satan as their hero. Since then, a protagonist who has nothing to do with heroic conquests continues his existence in literature as an antihero. This discussion is of the utmost importance because the concept of "protagonist" in the modern sense has gained acceptance. Dryden, who argued that Satan was a technical hero, is probably the first to use the term "protagonist" in English: he uses it in the preface to *An Evening's Love* (1671), and since Dryden, many writers have used the term 'protagonist' to mean the leading characters in a play, story or novel (Burchfield, 1996: 634). In Dryden's time, there occurred an urge to distinguish between hero and non-hero, a main character who lacks heroic qualities and this urge still continues. Today, while "some critics prefer the word 'protagonist' to describe the main character in a modern novel" (Quinn, 2006: 195) in order to abstain from the confusion of a hero with no heroic allusions, some others prefer the deceptive term "character" in order that they can overcome the barrier to understand literary structures more comprehensively (Childs and Fowler, 2006: 106). Like protagonist and character, antihero is another term employed for many protagonists and secondary characters (Honore d'Urfe's Hylas, Shakespeare's Fallstaff), but the expectation that a protagonist should follow good deeds of courage and virtue is controversial for an antihero.

From Hero to Antihero

In order to have a better understanding of the complex essence of the term antihero, an observation of the concept of heroism from which it derives will be useful. The oldest work concerning the hero and heroic tradition is the Sumerian legend *The Epic of Gilgamesh* which is believed to belong to the seventh century B.C. (Hourihan, 1997: 10). In Western literature, Homer's *Iliad* is the first source of heroic mode (Miller, 2000: 70). It tells the story of last years of the Trojan War, between two great commanders, Agamemnon and Achilles. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell point outs that "the standard path of mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation - initiation - return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (2004: 28). A hero, for him**,** passes from the

common world into a sphere of supernatural wonder. He encounters some forces but he wins in the end. He comes back home from this adventure with the power to give blessings to his fellow man (28). The heroic quest he goes through is thus completed and at the end, he returns as a mature wise man ready to lead his society.

A similar pattern is designed by David Leeming. In his book *Mythology: The Voyage of The Hero,* Leeming indicates that the hero is born and so begins his "high adventure". Childhood is the following stage when he learns the forces outside. Later, he begins his quest and faces death, which he overcomes physically. At the end, the hero ascends to heaven and is saved spiritually (1998: 7,8).

The model of hero, however, is displayed in a different pattern in *The Hero* by Lord Raglan. According to this, the hero is the son of a royal mother and father, who are often near relatives. When he is born, an attempt is made to kill him, but he is saved and reared by foster-parents in a far country. Without any account of his childhood, he returns home on reaching manhood. After defeating the giant or the king, he marries a princess and becomes king. He rules his country for a time until he falls from grace in the eyes of God or his subjects. He leaves the throne and the city, and has another journey upon which he encounters a mysterious death. His body is not buried, but still he has a tomb (Raglan, 1956: 174,175). The heroic tradition narrates how the story of the central character's/hero's adventurous, fearless and glorious life begins, proceeds and comes to an end.

There are more meanings beneath the depiction of life span of a hero. For these critics who wrote on hero/heroism, the hero of epic poetry is the central figure who leads the action in the work. For that reason, centrality of his depiction in the play attributed important meanings to his character (meaning personality here), his actions and his objectives or *vice-versa*. In fact, it was his objectives, and according to objectives, his actions that were the measure to place him in the focal point of the story. Aristotle states that tragedy is not the imitation of human beings but of the actions and of life itself. The objective is any kind of action. Human beings are of a certain sort according to their characters, but they become happy or the opposite in regard to their actions as happiness or the opposite depend on action. Thus, human beings attain their character through their actions, which are the objective of the tragedy, and the objective is of most importance (Aristotle, 2005: 27). Therefore, many critics, who wrote on hero and heroism consider hero's actions – setting off for his quest, killing the evil, winning wars etc. – as the determining factors of this typology. For this typology, heroism is "the ideal one, not of supreme moral perfection, but of supreme functional efficiency" (Raglan, 1956: 146) that lightens the path of human kind.

Heroic poetry is the story of man's concern in life, and the hero as the main initiator functions as the medium to teach us a lesson of how to live and die. Campbell defines the hero as "the man or

woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms" (2004: 18). In this regard, the hero's actions symbolise "man's ambition to pass beyond the oppressive limits of human frailty to a fuller and more vivid life" (Bowra, 1952: 4). He is stimulated by the belief that honour is owed to superiority in natural qualities, which is not enough unless he puts them in action (4). The story of the hero is the story of each individual who is concerned to take the trouble to recognize his place in universe, learn the significance and meaning of life and have a goal. While accomplishing his goal, the action he takes is for the elevation of man's character. The heroic story is about the "oppressive limits of human frailty": it is about human existence.

Heroism is a reflection of our vision and "an image of ourselves" (Brombert, 1999: 2). The hero's quest metaphorically reveals the fact of having a reality – a reality independent from or dependant on other existences (natural forces) – of man's existence and its mysteries. Campbell signifies that "myth is a directing of the mind and heart, by means of profoundly informed figurations, to that ultimate mystery which fills and surrounds all existences" (2004: 148). By taking actions to solve this "existential mystery" and taking lesson from the reality of his existence, the hero also warns mankind. For instance, Sir Gawain, the hero of *Sir Gawain and The Green Knight*, an example of medieval romance of heroic journey, achieves a "self-discovery [...] important lesson about the realities of human existence and the frailties of his own knightly code" (Bloom, 2009: 204). At the end of his book Campbell proclaims that "today all of these mysteries ["that ultimate mystery which fills and surrounds all existences"] have lost their force; their symbols no longer interest our psyche [...] man himself is now the crucial mystery" (Campbell, 2004: 341). Based on this argument, antihero establishes himself/herself firmly at a time when there are no mysteries. The incentive entrapping the antiheroes' actions and wills renders life unnecessary: an open empty box, such as for Beckett's characters. Action loses its ground; antihero is born more speechless and ineffectual again unlike the hero of great deeds.

The discourse of the antihero – that is who he is and how he is – is produced around perceiving the nature of his existence. Literary "hero protagonists" of action and the "antihero protagonist" of inaction diverge from each other in the fact that the hero protagonist is the one who is capable of doing something – trying to grasp and control his life by fighting against external forces, though he might fail and die – while the latter is the one who does not possess the ability to act and struggle against any external conflicts that shape his destiny. In literature, antihero "appears primarily in the guise of the victim, not acting but acted upon by the world" (Hassan, 1995: 59). He is not the actor, but more like a puppet ruled by cruel authorities and policies. Twentieth century philosophy and literature has bred many such inert alienated characters who are the victims isolated from the society they live in.

11

The antiheroic tradition set by Dostoevsky portrays the condition of the alienated individual struggling to fit the world. Before Dostoevsky, there was also a time of upheavals that frustrated poets of the time and these poets, uneasy by their social condition, illustrated their view of human kind by means of portraying deviant characters (antihero protagonists of non-heroic tradition). These poets' works contain our modern, alienated, solitary antiheroes. The early romantic poets Wordsworth and Coleridge were two of those estranged figures who were disappointed by the political and social advances of their time, and lost reliance on heroism.

> They both became alienated by the excesses of the revolutionaries, both passed through a period of emotional stress and turmoil before they found faith and values in nature and the inspiration of poetry [...] To express passionate beliefs these poets turned back to lyrical forms of poetry. They condemned the heroic couplet of Pope's day and the conventional poetic diction in which it was written" (Mulgan and Davin, 1964: 94).

Many thinkers of that time experienced the same conflict. The great hero who was worthy of emulation at that time was Napoleon without a doubt. However, "the living model of the hero, Napoleon soon proved a bitter disappointment to many" (Furst, 1976: 53). Romantics were so disillusioned that they thought "no good could come of mankind on earth" (Mulgan and Davin, 1964: 95). Their poetry changed course towards a non-heroic spirit, and the romantic hero or the romantic protagonist continued to live as a hero just in a technical sense. To some extent, he has characteristics of the traditional role model of heroism. He has an attractive appearance, is a gentleman and member of the upper class. However, there are some traits that brought him closer to antihero. As Furst notes, the romantic protagonist is more committed to a cause not outside, but a cause of himself. With literature in romantic period, the hero's old sense of mission is replaced by a new feeling rested upon instincts and impulses of the heart (1976: 55,56). The protagonist in literature has gained a new characteristic of heroic code, which was not heroic entirely, and the priorities and values of the leading man of these narratives have taken a turn from outer world to inner world. Furst argues that the new "values of society leads him [romantic antihero] not to energetic opposition but to withdrawal to a realm of his own" (1976: 62). The alienated romantic antihero (there is probably no need to use "alienated" here as modern antihero's position of being "anti" is already created by the feeling of isolation and alienation) becomes a passive character. However, there are still some indications that distinguish him from the twentieth century antiheroes:

In contrast, however, to his twentieth-century counterpart, who accepts the hopelessness of his life with an ironic smile for the very reason that he already stands beyond hope, the Romantic hero, at least at the outset, still tends to cherish certain dreams. He believes as yet that salvation may come from communion with the beauties of nature, from the true love of a fine woman, from commitment to art (58).

The romantic hero heralds the antihero of contemporary life with his "extreme self-consciousness, disillusioned questioning, in his confrontation of nothingness, in his destructiveness and self-destructiveness, in the whole trend towards the dissolution of values and forms" (67). The turning point for the emergence of such antiheroes was the Napoleonic wars which led the literary figures to portray disillusioned individuals for their period. In a similar effect, the outbreak of World War II after a recent great war, WWI, created disillusioned and discouraged authors who were themselves the real sources for their literary illustrations of alienated and disintegrated antihero protagonists.

Walter Kaufmann, an author who wrote on alienation in his article "The Inevitability of Alienation", claims that there are two groups of alienated men who come out from the conditions of society where the individual cannot productively integrate (qtd. in Walker, 1985: 15): "...the few, being creative, can cope with it; and the many, who not being creative, cannot cope" (15). Kaufmann speaks for the alienated individual, the modern antihero, who takes activity or passivity as his solution. Generally those who cannot cope with the external oppressions are close to the antihero who naturally does not or cannot act. Primo Levi's antihero in *If This is a Man* (1947) is a good example of antiheroes of inaction, who is not seized by the illusion of heroism and does not boast of gallant stories of rescue attempts or escapes. In his book written shortly after WWII, he gives "survival" accounts of the war which deserve neither praise nor admiration. Therefore, he does not abstain from illustrating the human condition in its most degraded form, and portrays the cruel practices of the Nazi regime in Auschwitz. Secondly, for those who can cope with it, there is still an antiheroic vein in them. Some try to act against the oppressions in a heroic way but cannot succeed in overcoming them. Sergeant Musgrave in *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* (1959) by John Arden, and Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* (1956) by John Osborne are examples of such "political" and "realist" antiheroes. On the other hand, some attempt to do it not in a traditional heroic way but choose an implicit method. For instance, the protagonists and antiheroes of literature of passive resistance can be classified as such individuals who conform to the repressive time and resist the tactics of cruel authorities. Herman Merville's

Bartleby in "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853), one of the early examples of passive resisters, Albert Camus' Meursault in *The Stranger* (1942) and Jaroslav Hasek's Schwejk in *Good Soldier Schwejk* are the passive resisters and antiheroes. Schwejk is one of the best hybrid antiheroes presenting the combination of idiocy and ingenuity with a comic resistance that causes dysfunctions in the system. Similar to the rogue in picaresque tradition, "*Schwejk* is a representative novel in which elements of the picaresque situation and strategy are incorporated into a new fictional situation as one way for modern alienated man to preserve his value system intact by means of wit and deviousness" (Walker, 1985: 21).

Heroism and antiheroism are large topics which can be analyzed in sociological, historical, political, ethical and psychological perspectives. At first glance, every character in opposition to hero seems unheroic or like an antihero. Many critics have named different protagonists as antihero, though they reach an agreement on a great deal of them. Although this modern term had initially appeared in the nineteenth-century novel of Dostoevsky, many examples given for the antihero range from the post-modern time to the ancient age, and many works of different genres and forms in connection with the idea of antiheroism can be mentioned. The modern antihero, however, who is the recent interpretation of "romantic" antihero also called "The Romantic Hero" hails the contemporary readers and gains his unique voice in the works written during and after the Second World War. While epic poets narrated the victories of the hero over the evil men/forces, the war writing after the two great wars revealed how invaluable the human life was, and that there was neither a victory nor a defeat or a hero nor a villain/giant. It is man who kills and is killed. There is no Humbaba (the giant in *Gilgamesh*) or Grendel (in *Beowulf*) today. Man is against man, which complicates the clear role of the hero and the evil, and those who fight question the purpose of fighting and draw their own conclusions. Some justify their cause, some find it meaningless: the "heroic death" cannot go beyond being a paradox. For that reason, the period after the Second World War has an abundance of accounts of the antiheroic type, and that being so, an antiheroic model not as evident as heroic model has been shaped vaguely in literature. Its vagueness originates from our time and temporal perceptions. We are not living in mythological or heroic times of universal moral laws. As George Roche indicates in his book *A World without Heroes*, ours is a world of relative moral laws where "there are no absolutes" (Roche, 1987: 15). Owing to strict and brutal authorities justifying their cause as the ultimate, such as the Nazi regime, the disillusioned antihero might lack in courage, will or the wit to bring order or to be a saviour of his own or a community, but he is still virtuously responsive to injustices in the society. Sergeant Musgrave lacks that wit and power to react against the misdoings of the system, though he tries. On the other side, Jimmy Porter loses his cause to fight back. Some like Vladimir and Estragon are incapable of doing anything, except waiting. In other cases, antihero might resist against the control. In Heller's *Catch-22*, Yossarian always finds a way to get released from the

obligation of the missions, though he is a successful soldier doing his military service. For this reason, he is "portrayed by some critics as an antihero and by others as a hero for the modern age" (Cusatis, 2010: 125). The good warrior/hero in myths becomes the passive soldier/antihero in modern writing who is still considered to win some sort of heroic victories, but now by "not fighting". In post-war literature, that is why "the hero whose vices outweighed his virtues...[is now called the modern antihero who is] a flawed but morally conscious character who becomes disillusioned with authority" (13). Considering this relation between duty and individual ethics, the hero in legends and epics which can be considered as a medium that set some role models in the society has gradually given way to antihero who stresses the futility of heroism, and fits better to the uncertainty and futility of the war time when there is an individual antiheroism which is the main theme that prevails the individual's life in many post-war works. Antihero is a new model for a new unheroic age.

As there are different types of heroes in different ages – just like in the age of epics and age of romances, there are various antiheroes that can have certain traits in the time they were created. Each antihero is unique and should be identified in relation to the time span in which he speaks and acts. The twentieth century, especially post-war period, has given birth to a new personage having a world view ensued from a different emotional and mental process formed by antihero's negative view of life.

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