

# UNVEILING THE NEGATIVE FATHER IMAGE IN OĞUZ ATAY'S NOVELS

*Bu makale Ulusal Tez Merkezi'nde 87598 tez numarasıyla yer alan "Modernizm ve Postmodernizm Bağlamında Oğuz Atay Romanı" isimli doktora tezinden üretilmiştir.*

**Abstract:** The father image exerts a profound influence on the identity formation of fictional characters within their narrative worlds. The interaction between paternal authority and individual identity has been a pivotal theme in literature, art, and science since the time of Sophocles. This interaction, especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward -an era where the effects of modernity became markedly pronounced- has been intricately and often negatively portrayed in the works of towering modernist figures such as Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, Franz Kafka, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, D.H. Lawrence, and James Joyce. Based on this context, this study meticulously examines the negative father image in Oğuz Atay's novels, situating this phenomenon within an expansive socio-psychological framework. Employing Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories as a foundation, the analysis delves into how these adverse paternal images resonate with the fragmented and atomized reality of modern or 'late-modern' periods. This scholarly analysis is further enriched by incorporating Ihab Hassan's perspectives, which are fundamental in the discourse of modernist and postmodernist literature. In this regard, the study comprehensively analyses the primary characters in Atay's novels.

**Keywords:** Modernity, Literature, Turkish Literature, Oğuz Atay, Psychoanalysis.

## Oğuz Atay'ın Romanlarında Olumsuz Baba İmgesini Açığa Çıkarmak

**Öz:** Baba imgesi, kurgusal karakterler ve onların kurgusal evren içerisindeki kimlik oluşumlarında belirleyici bir etkiye sahiptir. Baba otoritesi ile bireysel kimlik arasındaki etkileşim Sophocles'ten bu yana edebiyat, sanat ve bilimin konusu olmuştur. Bu etkileşimin özellikle 19. Yüzyıldan itibaren, yani modernitenin etkilerinin iyice belirginlik kazandığı dönemin ardından, karmaşık bir şekilde edebiyata yansdığı ve özellikle de Fyodor M. Dostoyevski, Franz Kafka, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce gibi modernist edebiyatın anıtsal örneklerinde olumsuz bir biçimde işlendiği bilinmektedir. Bu olgudan hareketle bu çalışma Oğuz Atay'ın romanlarındaki olumsuz baba imgesine odaklanmakta ve bu olguyu geniş bir toplumsal ve psikolojik çerçevede ele almaktadır. Olumsuz baba imgeleri bu makalede Sigmund Freud'un psikanalitik yaklaşımları merkez alınarak incelenmekte, bu olumsuz imgelerin toplumsal alanla da (kişiliğin parçalandığı ve gerçekliğin adeta atomize edilen alanlara sıkıştırıldığı modern yahut 'geç modern' bir dönemle) bağlantılarından ötürü modern-postmodern edebî tartışmalarda son derece önemli bir yer tutan Ihab Hassan'ın yaklaşımlarından yararlanılmakta ve bu çerçevede Atay'ın romanlarındaki ana karakterler kapsamlı bir biçimde analiz edilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Modernite, Edebiyat, Türk Edebiyatı, Oğuz Atay, Psikanaliz.



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### Sorumlu Yazarlar Corresponding Authors

Dr. Zeynep ÇOLAK

Uluslararası Kıbrıs Üni.  
Fen-Edebiyat Fak.  
Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Böl.

zeyneptext@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-9501-0727

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## Introduction

The father image is a pervasive archetype in literature, embodying authority, control, and often, the moral compass within familial structures. In the modernist context, this figure evolves to symbolize the tension between traditional authority and the emerging individualism characteristic of the modern era. This figure frequently represents a source of conflict, psychological tension, and profound influence on identity formation. The exploration of these dynamics is crucial in understanding the broader cultural and existential crises that define modernist thought. Oğuz Atay, one of the seminal figures in Turkish literature, deftly explores these themes through his complex portrayals of paternal relationships. Atay's work is deeply rooted in the modernist tradition, where the negative father image not only reflects individual psychological struggles but also critiques the socio-political structures of his time. This paper seeks to delve into the negative father image in Atay's novels, focusing on how these characters reflect broader societal and psychological dynamics. Oğuz Atay's literary work is deeply intertwined with his personal experiences and the socio-political context of his time. Born into a period of significant transformation in Türkiye, Atay's narratives often grapple with the tensions between tradition and modernity, authority and rebellion, and the individual's quest for identity amidst societal expectations. His depiction of father figures, particularly those that are negative or flawed, serves as a critical lens through which these broader themes are explored.

In modernist literature, the father figure often embodies both the stability of traditional values and the authoritarianism that can stifle individuality and creativity. This duality is central to the modernist exploration of identity, as characters often navigate the pressures of conforming to societal norms while seeking personal autonomy. Atay's novels, such as *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] vividly illustrate these dualities. The father figures in these works are not merely background characters but central to the protagonists' struggles and psychological landscapes. These characters often serve as metaphors for broader societal tensions, reflecting the struggles between modernity and tradition, individual freedom, and collective responsibility. Oğuz Atay's personal history is pivotal in understanding his literary exploration of the father image. Atay's own strained relationship with his father is mirrored in his fiction, where paternal characters often embody authoritarian control and emotional distance. This biographical element adds a layer of authenticity and intensity to his portrayal of familial conflicts, making his exploration of these themes particularly resonant. In *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] the character of Selim Işık is deeply affected by his father's expectations and failures. The father's inability to provide emotional support and his rigid adherence to societal norms create a psychological battleground for Selim, who struggles to carve out his own identity. Similarly, in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] Hikmet Benol's

interactions with paternal figures reflect a broader critique of authoritarianism and the quest for personal freedom.

The methodology of this study involves a comprehensive literary analysis of Atay's major works, with a specific focus on the characterization of father figures. The analysis will be informed by Ihab Hassan's theoretical frameworks on modernism and postmodernism, particularly his delineation of "genital/phallic" and "polymorphous/androgynous" elements. Hassan's perspectives provide a valuable lens for understanding the representation of gender and authority in Atay's work, particularly how these elements intersect with the broader existential concerns of modernist literature. This study will employ a multi-faceted approach, incorporating psychoanalytic theory, particularly Freudian concepts such as the Oedipus complex, to unpack the psychological dimensions of Atay's father figures. Additionally, a comparative analysis will be conducted with other modernist authors, such as Franz Kafka, Fyodor M. Dostoevsky, and William Faulkner, whose works similarly engage with the complexities of paternal authority and identity formation. Ihab Hassan's distinction between "genital/phallic" and "polymorphous/androgynous" categories serves as a foundational framework for this analysis. In modernist literature, "genital/phallic" elements often symbolize the rigid structures of authority and traditional gender roles. Atay's depiction of father figures aligns with this framework, showcasing the tensions and conflicts arising from such rigid structures. Freudian psychoanalysis further enriches this study by providing insights into the psychological underpinnings of Atay's characters. The Oedipus complex, a central Freudian concept, is particularly relevant in understanding the dynamics between Atay's main characters and their fathers. This complex, which involves the child's unconscious desire for the opposite-sex parent and rivalry with the same-sex parent, manifests in Atay's works through characters' struggles with paternal authority and their own emerging identities.

Within this perspective, the detailed literary analysis will focus on key episodes and character interactions in Atay's novels that highlight the negative father figure. For example, the emotional turmoil and existential crises faced by Selim Işık in *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] are exacerbated by his father's authoritarian demeanor. The father's rigid and controlling nature symbolizes the collapse of patriarchal authority, against which Selim must define his own path. In *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games], Hikmet Benol's existential struggles are intertwined with his complex relationship with paternal figures. His father's emotional distance and lack of understanding drive Hikmet's rebellion and quest for personal freedom, reflecting broader societal critiques.

Building upon these observations, before proceeding to the analysis of the negative father image in Oğuz Atay's works, the concept of the father figure as it is approached in modern literature and how the negative father image

is constructed within this literary tradition will be elucidated through well-known examples from world literature. Subsequently, the negative father image in Oğuz Atay's novels will be comprehensively analysed.

### **1-The Father Image in Literature: A Modernist Perspective**

The negative father figure, often depicted as tyrannical, neglectful, or abusive, has deep roots in literature and reflects broader societal and psychological concerns. This archetype can be traced back to ancient texts and has evolved over time, influenced by cultural, philosophical, and psychological developments. Greek tragedies, in particular, provide early examples of tyrannical and flawed paternal figures. In Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, for instance, King Laius exemplifies the negative father figure through his actions and the resulting familial curse. This act of abandonment motivated by fear and self-preservation serves as an early literary exploration of the disastrous consequences of flawed paternal authority, a theme that would resonate throughout the ages, highlighting the inherent dangers of unchecked power and parental neglect. His lack of compassion and responsibility, as Kirkwood (137) stresses, underscores his role as a negative father, whose actions have dire consequences for his family. Laius's negative influence underscores themes of hubris, moral failure, and the profound impact of paternal actions on the familial and societal levels. Through Laius, Sophocles explores not only the consequences of flawed paternal authority but also the intricate balance between fate and free will, offering a timeless reflection on these themes that continue to be relevant in modern interpretations of paternal roles.

During the medieval and Renaissance periods, literature continued to explore complex familial dynamics, often highlighting the flaws and failures of paternal figures. Shakespeare's works provide notable examples of negative father figures who contribute to familial and societal discord. These figures are often portrayed as monarchs or leaders whose personal failings have widespread consequences, further emphasizing the significant role of paternal figures in shaping not just familial outcomes, but also societal structures. For instance, "King Lear" in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. In Shakespeare's "King Lear," as Bloom (481) highlights, the titular character represents a deeply flawed father whose hubris and poor judgment lead to his downfall and the destruction of his family. Lear's tragic journey reflects the devastating consequences of a father's inability to see beyond his own ego, leading to a cascade of betrayal, madness, and ultimately, tragedy. Goneril and Regan's treachery and subsequent power struggle contribute to Lear's descent into madness. Their betrayal not only underscores the theme of ingratitude but also serves as a stark reminder of the destructive potential of familial treachery, a theme that resonates deeply within the broader narrative of the play. Lear's descent into madness as Kott (152) stresses symbolizes the complete unravelling of his identity and authority. Kott (189) examines Lear's madness as a reflection of his internal turmoil and the broader themes of chaos and disorder in the play.

The 19th century saw a significant exploration of the negative father figure in the context of industrialization, changing family dynamics, and emerging psychological theories. This period's literature often critiques the patriarchal authority and its impact on individual identity and family structures. The rapid social changes of this era, particularly the rise of individualism and the questioning of traditional family roles, provided fertile ground for authors to dissect the complexities of paternal authority, leading to a deeper examination of the father figure as both a product and a perpetrator of societal norms. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, although Mr. Rochester is not a father figure to Jane, he represents a complex and morally ambiguous patriarchal figure. His deceit regarding his existing marriage and the hidden presence of his wife, Bertha Mason, in Thornfield Hall create a moral conflict that deeply affects Jane. Rochester's actions -particularly his concealment of Bertha and his attempt to marry Jane despite this- highlight the dangers of patriarchal secrecy and moral ambiguity, illustrating how these elements can corrode trust and stability within personal relationships. This portrayal critiques the patriarchal structures that allow such deceit to flourish, undermining the integrity of familial and romantic relationships. In this century another highly renowned author whose works feature a prominent negative father figure is Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky often explored the complexities of family dynamics and the psychological depths of his characters. His portrayal of negative father figures is particularly noteworthy, reflecting broader societal and existential themes. "Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov", the father in *The Brothers Karamazov*, epitomizes the negative father figure through his selfishness, moral corruption, and neglect of his paternal duties. His character is a central element in the novel, driving the plot and the psychological development of his sons. Fyodor Pavlovich's character serves as a microcosm of the disintegration of traditional moral values, highlighting how the absence of ethical leadership within the family can lead to broader societal decay. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky presents another negative father figure through the character of "Marmeladov". A minor official and an alcoholic, Marmeladov's character sheds light on the themes of guilt, responsibility, and redemption. Marmeladov's failures as a father are not just personal but also social, illustrating the broader implications of individual moral decay in a rapidly changing society. Through characters like "Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov" in *The Brothers Karamazov* and "Marmeladov" in *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky explores themes of selfishness, neglect, and moral corruption, highlighting the deep and often destructive impact of flawed paternal authority.

Modernist literature delves deeper into the psychological dimensions of the negative father figure, influenced by Freudian theories and the existential crises of the 20th century. The portrayal of paternal figures often reflects the disintegration of traditional values and the ensuing identity conflicts. This period marked a shift from external conflicts to more introspective explorations

of character, with the negative father figure serving as a catalyst for the protagonist's internal struggles, often representing the fragmented nature of modern identity. In this context, noteworthy examples that come to mind are Franz Kafka and William Faulkner. The negative father figure is a recurring motif in Kafka's works, most notably in his novella *The Metamorphosis* and his personal correspondence, *Letter to His Father*. These texts provide profound insights into Kafka's own troubled relationship with his father and the broader implications of paternal authority and psychological trauma. In *The Metamorphosis*, "Mr. Samsa" is the father of the protagonist, "Gregor Samsa". "Mr. Samsa" is depicted as an authoritarian and abusive figure whose treatment of Gregor exacerbates the latter's sense of alienation and despair following his transformation into an insect. Kafka uses "Mr. Samsa" to embody the crushing weight of authoritarianism within the family illustrating how paternal dominance can suffocate individual identity and lead to profound psychological alienation. *Letter to His Father* is an autobiographical letter from Franz Kafka to his father, Hermann Kafka. This letter, which was never actually sent, details Kafka's feelings of inadequacy, fear, and resentment towards his domineering father. It serves as a direct exploration of the negative father figure in Kafka's life. In many ways this letter is Kafka's attempt to reconcile with the shadow of paternal authority that loomed large over his life and work. In William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, "Jason Compson III" exemplifies the archetype of the negative father figure through his inefficacy, moral degradation, and inability to offer emotional support. His detachment and cynicism precipitate the family's fragmentation, emblematic of the decline of Southern aristocratic ideals. This exploration of the psychological and existential dimensions of paternal figures in modernist literature is further enriched by the critical perspectives of scholars like Ihab Hassan.

Ihab Hassan, one of the foremost scholars in defining the aesthetic contours of postmodernism, in his seminal schema ("The Dismemberment of Orpheus", "The Postmodern Turn"), situates 'genital/phallic' elements within the domain of modernism. Contrarily, in the postmodernism column, he posits 'polymorphous/androgynous' categories. These dichotomous terms epitomize the quintessential differences in the artistic and intellectual paradigms of the two epochs. Hassan employs these terms to underscore the divergent approaches to gender and identity inherent in each era. This distinction is crucial for understanding how modernist literature grapples with the tensions between fixed identities and fluid, evolving conceptions of self. The concepts delineated in these two columns are almost antithetical. However, prior to contemplating 'opposition', it is imperative to consider the notion of 'ambiguity', a concept Hassan frequently foregrounds in his discourses on postmodern aesthetics.

Hassan's perspectives provide valuable insights into the representation of various themes including the father figure in modernist literature. In modernist literature, the father figure frequently embodies authority and power. This representation aligns with Hassan's view of modernism, which often grapples with hierarchical structures and authoritative figures. The father's authority is depicted through his control over the family, his influence on societal norms, and his role in shaping the protagonist's identity. For instance, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* presents Simon Dedalus, the protagonist's father, as an authoritative figure whose failures and traditional values significantly impact Stephen Dedalus's development. Simon's downfall represents the disintegration of the old order, forcing Stephen to navigate the complexities of forging his own path in a rapidly changing world. Simon's financial irresponsibility and moral decline symbolize the collapsing authority of the older generation, against which Stephen must define his own identity. Joyce uses Simon Dedalus to highlight the generational conflict and the struggle for self-definition, central themes in modernist literature. Stephen's relationship with his father, marked by the latter's authority and societal expectations, epitomizes the Oedipus complex. His father's financial failures and authoritative demeanour fuel Stephen's desire to carve out his own path, underscoring the inherent rivalry. This rivalry is not just personal but also emblematic of the larger cultural and generational shifts occurring during the modernist period. Stephen's exploration of his sexual desires is compounded by the repressive influence of religion, reflecting his internal struggle against both religious authority and the patriarchal structure represented by his father. His sexual awakening and associated guilt resonate with the themes of the phallic stage within a modernist framework. Freud's Oedipus complex is a pivotal concept in understanding the father figure in modernist literature. According to Hassan's perspectives, modernist texts often incorporate Freudian psychoanalysis to explore the psychological depths of their characters. The Oedipus complex, which involves the child's unconscious desire for the opposite-sex parent and rivalry with the same-sex parent, is a recurring theme. During this period, male children are expected to shape their identities through their rivalry with their fathers and their attachment to their mothers. Modernist literature and art explore the individual's quest for identity and internal conflicts through such phallic symbols and figures of authority. Another exemplary case that can be cited within this framework is D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Freud's influence on Lawrence's work is particularly evident in the intense psychological depth with which these familial relationships are portrayed, reflecting broader modernist concerns with the inner workings of the human psyche. *Sons and Lovers* delves into the life of Paul Morel whose relationships with his mother and father vividly illustrate Freud's theory of the phallic stage and the Oedipus complex. Paul's intense attachment to his mother, Gertrude Morel, exemplifies the Oedipus complex. His emotional dependency on her impedes his ability to form healthy relationships with other

women. Lawrence uses this dynamic not only to explore individual psychological conflict but also to critique the societal constraints that shape and distort familial roles. Paul's relationship with his father, Walter Morel, is fraught with conflict. He views his father as a failure and competes with him for his mother's affection, a dynamic that mirrors the quintessential father-son rivalry central to Freud's phallic stage. This rivalry underscores the modernist preoccupation with the fractured self and the search for identity amidst conflicting familial and societal expectations. Lawrence uses these dynamics to explore the psychological conflicts that shape Paul's identity and his struggles with love and authority.

A further significant example is William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. It illustrates the decline of patriarchal authority through the character of Jason Compson III. As the father of the Compson family, Jason's ineffectiveness and moral decay reflect the broader disintegration of Southern aristocratic values. Faulkner's portrayal of Jason Compson as a symbol of the decaying South is deeply embedded in the cultural and historical context of post-Civil War America, where the collapse of traditional Southern values mirrors the personal disintegration of its characters (Bleikasten 175). Faulkner uses Jason's character to depict the fragmentation and instability of modern life, themes that resonate with Hassan's exploration of modernist literature's existential concerns. The character of Jason Compson III serves as a powerful example of how modernist literature often employs the father figure not just as a character, but as a metaphor for larger societal and existential anxieties, reflecting the transition from a stable past to an uncertain future. This depiction of the father figure as a symbol of decay and instability leads us to a broader understanding of the role of such figures in modernist literature.

In modernist literature, the father figure often serves as a source of internal and external conflict for the protagonist. These conflicts are not merely personal but are often representative of larger societal struggles, such as the tension between tradition and modernity, or the individual's quest for autonomy in the face of authoritative structures. Hassan's dichotomous approach to modernism and postmodernism reveals how these conflicts drive the narrative and character development. Following this exploration of conflict and authority, we turn to Virginia Woolf's work, which offers a critical perspective on the father figure within the modernist tradition. Woolf's engagement with paternal authority in her writing is particularly nuanced, reflecting both her personal experiences and her broader feminist critique of patriarchal society. Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* features Mr. Ramsay as a domineering and intellectual father figure whose presence creates tension and conflict within the Ramsay family. His demanding nature and need for intellectual validation impact his children and wife, leading to emotional and psychological struggles. Woolf uses Mr. Ramsay to explore themes of authority, creativity, and familial



dynamics, reflecting the complex role of the father figure in modernist literature. This nuanced portrayal of Mr. Ramsay invites a deeper examination of how Woolf reimagines the father figure within the broader context of modernist literature, particularly in relation to the feminist reworking of traditional patriarchal narratives (Bowlby 12-13, 165, 183). Woolf's approach to modernist narrative, particularly regarding the male gaze and patriarchal structures, offers a significant departure from traditional depictions of authority and power. Unlike her male contemporaries, Woolf does not merely depict the father figure as an emblem of authority; rather, she critiques and deconstructs this image, revealing its inherent flaws and the psychological toll it imposes on characters, particularly women. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mr. Ramsay is not just an intellectual force within the family; he is also a source of emotional and psychological distress. Woolf presents him as a figure who embodies the anxieties of modernist masculinity—his relentless pursuit of intellectual validation often results in emotional neglect and a lack of empathy towards his family. This portrayal reflects Woolf's broader critique of the patriarchal structures that dominate both society and literature, challenging the reader to reconsider the role of authority figures in shaping identity and experience.

Woolf's narrative technique also plays a crucial role in subverting the traditional male gaze. By employing stream-of-consciousness and shifting perspectives, Woolf allows her female characters, particularly Mrs. Ramsay, to occupy central positions in the narrative, thereby decentralizing the male perspective. This technique not only disrupts the traditional narrative form but also serves as a feminist critique of the male-dominated literary canon, offering a more inclusive and complex portrayal of female subjectivity (Showalter 9-10).

This narrative approach enables Woolf to explore the inner lives of her characters, particularly the women, in ways that reveal their complexities and resist simplistic, patriarchal categorizations. Mrs. Ramsay's character, for instance, while deeply connected to traditional roles of wife and mother, is also portrayed with a rich inner life that challenges the constraints imposed by her husband and society. Woolf's exploration of Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts and emotions provides a counter-narrative to Mr. Ramsay's intellectual dominance, highlighting the emotional and psychological dimensions that are often overlooked in patriarchal narratives. By focusing on the interior lives of her characters, Woolf expands the scope of modernist literature to include the often-marginalized experiences of women, challenging the reader to engage with these perspectives on their own terms (Leaska 137). Building on this, Woolf's critique extends beyond individual characters to the very structure of the narrative itself.

Furthermore, Woolf's modernist critique extends to the very structure of the narrative itself. In *To the Lighthouse*, the novel's fragmented structure,

with its emphasis on time and memory, mirrors the instability and fragmentation of the patriarchal order. This fragmentation is emblematic of Woolf's broader critique of modernist themes, particularly the disintegration of coherent identities and stable societal structures in the face of changing cultural landscapes. The passage of time in the novel, marked by the deterioration of the Ramsay family and the eventual destruction of their home, symbolizes the decline of patriarchal authority. Woolf uses this temporal fragmentation to underscore the transient nature of power and authority, suggesting that the male-dominated structures that govern both family and society are not as immutable as they seem. This modernist narrative technique not only challenges the traditional representations of the father figure but also reflects Woolf's broader feminist critique of the gender dynamics within both literature and society. Through her innovative narrative strategies and her nuanced portrayal of characters, Woolf dismantles the traditional patriarchal structures that have long dominated literary narratives, paving the way for a more inclusive and diverse representation of identity and experience. Woolf's approach aligns with the broader modernist project of questioning established norms while simultaneously positioning her as a pivotal figure in the evolution of feminist literary critique. Her exploration of narrative and thematic fragmentation challenges patriarchal norms and resonates with the broader existential concerns in modernist literature, as articulated by Ihab Hassan. This exploration of narrative and thematic fragmentation not only challenges patriarchal norms but also aligns with the broader existential concerns in modernist literature, as articulated by Ihab Hassan.

The father figure in modernist literature, analysed through Ihab Hassan's perspectives, embodies authority, power, and traditional values, while also representing conflict, psychological depth, and the decline of patriarchal structures. Works by James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf illustrate how the father figure shapes narrative and character development, reflecting the broader existential and psychological concerns of modernist literature. In examining these works it becomes evident that the modernist portrayal of the father figure is not monolithic but rather a complex and multifaceted symbol of the anxieties and contradictions of the modern age. Hassan's theoretical frameworks provide a nuanced understanding of these dynamics, highlighting the father figure's central role in the modernist exploration of identity and authority. This exploration of modernist literature sets the stage for examining contemporary Turkish literature, particularly the works of Oğuz Atay, who adeptly navigates both modernist and postmodernist elements.

Drawing upon all these examples and examining contemporary Turkish literature closely, particularly concerning postmodern fiction, Oğuz Atay stands as the preeminent author adeptly harnessing the attributes of postmodern fiction. Atay's work, while deeply embedded in postmodern aesthetics,

frequently revisits modernist themes, particularly in its portrayal of paternal authority and its psychological implications. His oeuvre encapsulates a significant array of postmodern motifs and exemplifies the hallmark traits of post-modern aesthetics. Atay's novels, in particular, are heralded as consummate examples within this literary paradigm. However, within the theoretical and practical limits of this article, we will focus on the modernist elements in his novels, specifically the "genital/phallic" aspects.

## **2- The Negative Father Image in the Novels of Oğuz Atay**

Through a closer examination of Atay's novels, it becomes evident that they embody both modern and postmodern characteristics. A dual structure consistently emerges in Atay's works, as he frequently employs modern elements alongside postmodern ones. Through these varied perspectives, Atay crafts a unique narrative structure. When these elements are analysed from the perspective of Ihab Hassan, a pivotal figure in the debates on modernism and postmodernism, they present intriguing modern implications within the framework of "Genital/Phallic" elements. These implications manifest in a decidedly modern context, reflecting the masculine perspectives inherent in modernism.

Modernism typically advocates for the centrality of the individual as a subject, the quest for order and form, and the centralization of meaning. In the modern era, art and literature often strive to express a singular meaning or reality. The term 'genital/phallic' in this context symbolizes modernism's approach to issues of gender and identity. These terms seem to be borrowed from Freud's psychoanalytic theory, where sexual identity is perceived as dominant and fixed, with masculinity and femininity assuming distinct and different gender roles. In modernist works, the male perspective is often predominant, and sexuality is portrayed within specific and rigid norms. Postmodernism, on the other hand, challenges the fixed structures, central narratives, and rigid gender roles of modernism. The term 'polymorphous/androgynous' reflects postmodernism's perception of gender and identity as more fluid, flexible, and multifaceted. Postmodern thought acknowledges that gender and identity are not fixed but are constantly in flux and multidimensional. This approach emphasizes the existence of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations, bringing them to the forefront. As mentioned earlier, Hassan's "genital" approach is influenced by Freud's theory. The term describes the final stage in Sigmund Freud's psychosexual development stages. This stage typically begins after puberty and continues throughout an individual's lifetime (Freud 195). During the genital stage, an individual's sexual interest extends beyond their own body to include mature sexual relationships with the opposite sex (or the preferred gender). Gender in this stage is associated with reproduction, and the individual's sexual impulses are oriented towards mutual, balanced, and mature relationships (Freud 198).

The genital stage signifies an individual's sexual maturity and the healthy integration of sexuality into social relationships. The term “phallic” refers to an earlier stage in Freud's theory (163-171), approximately between the ages of 3 and 6. Known as the “Oedipal” period, during this stage, a child's sexual interest is centred on their own sexual organs (the phallus) (168). The phallic stage is closely associated with the “Oedipus complex” and “Electra complex” where children develop an intense interest in the opposite-sex parent and enter into competition with the same-sex parent (Freud 172). According to Freud's theory, in the “Oedipus Complex”, a male child experiences sexual rivalry with the father figure, while in the “Electra Complex” a female child experiences similar conflict with the mother figure. This stage is crucial for the development of the ego and the formation of sexual identity. According to Freud (196-204) the phallic stage is a period when individual awareness increases, and gender roles begin to be learned. As the individual progresses to the genital stage and the maturation of gender roles and identity occurs, they form their sexual identity.

The modernist era can be viewed as a period in which masculine perspectives and narratives were predominant. The majority of notable works from this time were penned by male authors and shaped through their viewpoints. Modernist literature frequently explores themes such as individual loneliness, alienation, and the quest for identity, typically from a male experience and a masculine perspective. This approach can be seen as a reflection of societal gender roles. For instance, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, regarded as one of the seminal works of modernist (late modern) literature, is written from such a perspective. Joyce's narrative, set over the course of a single day in Dublin, provides glimpses into the life of its protagonist, Leopold Bloom. The story, told from Bloom's viewpoint, embodies the traits of a modernist masculine perspective, illuminating gender roles and social dynamics. *Ulysses* focuses on the inner lives, thoughts, and experiences of male characters like Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus. Female characters are typically portrayed within the framework of these male characters' thoughts and experiences. One notable deviation from this masculine perspective is the monologue of Leopold Bloom's wife, Molly Bloom, at the novel's conclusion. Molly's soliloquy offers an intricate look into a woman's sexual and emotional world within a male-dominated society. However, this section is an exception within a broader narrative where the female experience is often marginalized, and the masculine perspective dominates. While Joyce's male characters are deeply explored, female characters are generally less complex and are often confined to roles defined by the male gaze. This characterization reflects not only the gender biases of the era but also parallels the general trends in modernist literature.

Male characters and perspectives are frequently prominent in modernist literature, as clearly observed in the works of authors like James Joyce. Oğuz

Atay's novels *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] (2017) and *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] (2015) can also be considered as works reflecting this modernist stance. In these novels, Atay delves into the inner worlds of his characters, intricately exploring the mental and emotional labyrinths of his male protagonists from a masculine perspective, structuring the narrative accordingly. Moreover, Atay's novels often portray Freud in a critical light, indirectly challenging Freud's tendency to explain nearly everything through sexual phenomena. For instance, in the "Songs" section of *The Disconnecte d* under the title "Line 14 and after: To him... it's an important date" the following is written:

He sucked his thumb; at home there was commotion, To him just hunger; Freud would call it passion. It can be noticed here that he could not quite come to terms with Freud. He felt closer to Jung. 'I cannot accept that the libido should be the only explanation for feelings which I find disturbing without being able to put into words,' he used to say (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 204).

Upon a closer examination of Atay's oeuvre, one might posit that his vehement critiques of his father, bordering on profound indignation, are evocative of Freud's concept of the phallic stage and the "Oedipus Complex." The 'father' figure in Atay's narratives emerges as a potent and 'problematic' symbol. Influential authors on Atay's intellectual perspective and writings, such as Kafka, Dostoyevsky, and Shakespeare, similarly grappled with 'troubled' paternal relationships, engaging in a symbolic contestation with their fathers. Notably, Dostoyevsky centralizes the theme of parricide in his magnum opus *The Brothers Karamazov*. It is hardly coincidental that Freud ("Dostoyevsky and Parricide") wrote a significant essay on this subject.

Renowned Turkish literary critic Nurdan Gürbilek when examining the protagonists' confrontations with the father figure in Atay's texts, draws attention to the pervasive presence of Atay's literary forebears within the narrative. She highlights that these confrontations invariably involve a reckoning with prominent figures such as Dostoyevsky, Kafka, and Shakespeare:

One of Atay's literary forebears was Dostoyevsky, the author of 'The Brothers Karamazov,' which revolves around patricide; another was Kafka, who struggled with the specter of his father throughout his life. Atay had read Kafka's "Letter to His Father", a document that, although never sent, transcended its personal origins to become a literary artifact. We also know that Atay regarded other sons contending with the ghost of the father -such as Hamlet, the son of the King of Denmark, and Jesus, whose life ended on the cross while fighting for his father- as fundamental motifs in his novels (Gürbilek 58).

The common thread among these sons is their struggle with or on behalf of their fathers. In these conflicts, except for Hamlet's relationship with his father and his efforts on his father's behalf, they leave behind incomplete lives

marked by the impossibility of living despite the overshadowing presence of the father.

According to Freud's (207) theory, during the phallic stage, children (particularly boys) begin to perceive their fathers as role models, sources of competition, and authority figures. Boys harbour the fear that their close relationships with their mothers will be punished by their fathers (castration anxiety) (Freud, 207). These anxieties, however, also facilitate the child's internalization of gender roles and societal norms. Consequently, the phallic stage plays a crucial role in the development of the child's sexual identity and superego (moral consciousness). According to Freud's (219-222) views, if this process is not managed healthily and the moral consciousness is not internalized, the individual may encounter difficulties in forming healthy relationships and developing empathy with others. A stern and rigid father figure exacerbates castration anxieties in the child (especially in boys), triggering deep fears and anxieties. These profound anxieties and fears can influence the child's later attitudes toward authority, resulting in either a compliant or rebellious stance. A rigid and emotionally inaccessible father image profoundly undermines the child's abilities for emotional expression and bonding.

Undoubtedly, Oğuz Atay's personal biography plays a decisive role in shaping the masculine representations, sexual orientations, and character dynamics in his works. The strained communication between Atay and his father is palpably evident in the negative references to father figures and the distinctly unfavourable father images portrayed in his works. This is particularly pronounced in his novels *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d], *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] as well as in the short story collection *Korkuyu Beklerken* [Waiting for Fear] which includes the confessional piece "Letter to My Father", and in his diary entries concerning his father. Numerous studies on Atay's life and works have meticulously analysed his complex relationship with his father and its impact on his creativity. These studies, which also delve into biographical details, reveal that Atay, as a creative individual, found himself caught between his father's professional and personal expectations and his own interests and passions. The echoes of this conflicted situation are deeply felt, particularly in the "Letter to My Father" section of *Korkuyu Beklerken* [Waiting for Fear] and in *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] through the relationship between Selim and his father. The novel, in many respects, carries autobiographical elements, especially in its explicit articulation of an internal reckoning with the father-son relationship. According to Ecevit (31) *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] is often more autobiographical than fictional, aligning closely with the author's life in several aspects. As will be evident below, Atay's relationship with his father, Cemil Atay, and its influence on his identity and authorship is intricately woven into the narrative through the characters of Selim and his father.

In “Letter to My Father,” the conflicts, longings, and disappointments experienced with the father intertwine in an emotionally charged manner.<sup>1</sup> As Ecevit (24) notes, the image of Cemil Atay, as reflected in Oğuz Atay’s writings, embodies the characteristics of an Anatolian-rooted advocate of societal values and a representative of an era where ideals were held above material concerns. The heavy social obligations imposed by his father’s profession<sup>2</sup> impeded his ability to fulfil his paternal duties adequately, resulting in a stronger bond between Atay and his mother, Muazzez, and a lack of paternal affection. This dynamic is evident in Atay’s writings as an expression of the anger and disappointment stemming from the unestablished deep emotional connections with his father and brother.

The father’s inability to establish a strong emotional bond with his children and his subsequent neglect of their interests and needs resulted in Atay’s educational process being largely overseen by his mother. This circumstance contributed to the strengthening of the emotional relationship between mother and son. Atay candidly acknowledges his feelings about his relationship with his father, confessing in a letter to him that he inherited the ‘romantic’ aspects of his emotions from his mother: “...because, my dear father, I inherited a portion of the ‘romantic’ part of my emotions from my mother, which you will be

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<sup>1</sup> Acclaimed for her monographs and insightful analyses on Atay, Nurdan Gürbilek (22) compares Atay’s “Letter to My Father” with Kafka’s “Letter to His Father”. In this comparison Gürbilek highlights the striking similarities between Atay and Kafka, but she also notes that, unlike Kafka, Atay harbored more nuanced feelings towards his father. While Atay criticizes his father in certain respects, he views him more positively than Kafka did and even feels a need for his father’s empathy. Both Herman Kafka and Cemil Atay struggled to communicate with their sons. Just as Herman Kafka dismissed his son’s literary interests as “frivolous”, “crazy”, or “pretentious”, Cemil Atay criticized his son for engaging in “nonsense” in an “imaginary” world. The father’s lack of understanding significantly contributed to the son’s persistent feeling of being wronged despite his maturity. The father’s death further complicated the son’s unresolved conflict. With the father deceased, the son could no longer blame him, yet the sense of injustice lingered. The difference between Kafka’s accusatory “Letter to His Father”, laden with reproach, and Atay’s more affectionate and understanding “Letter to My Father” is significant. Whereas Kafka’s formidable father is replaced in Atay’s narrative by a weaker, more subdued figure-one that is not terrifying but in need of empathy, seeking not respect but understanding. The fundamental reason for this shift is that the towering figure that once loomed over the world map is now deceased. No matter how intimidating he once was, he can no longer stand before us, block our path, or interrupt our speech (Gürbilek 68).

<sup>2</sup> Cemil Atay, a lawyer by profession, served as a CHP Member of Parliament for Sinop in two terms between 1939 and 1949. Although he was elected as a Member of Parliament from his hometown of Kastamonu in 1946, he soon resigned and was appointed as a judge to the newly established National Protection Court. His decade-long tenure as a parliamentarian led Oğuz Atay to spend his primary, secondary, and high school years in Ankara (Ecevit 47).

displeased to hear” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 180). This admission clearly delineates the distant and challenging relationship he had with his father. Atay’s mother, Muazzez, passed on her interest in music and artistic sensitivity to her son, Oğuz Atay, which, due to Cemil Bey’s critical and disparaging attitude, occasionally led to conflicts within the family (Ecevit 30). Atay expresses this situation with words full of reproach in his letter:

I always felt a sense of injustice within me: I believed that you were always unfairly scolding me; despite being a diligent student, you would grumble, 'This child never opens a book,' you dressed me in poorly fitted clothes, sent me to schools I did not want to attend, and never listened to my complaints. Today, perhaps because you are no longer alive, I cannot believe you were unjust to me, yet the sense of being wronged has grown so deeply within me that I now blame the entire world for it. This sense has led me to places I did not wish to go, and now I slam doors in the face of the whole world. (*Waiting for Fear* 183).

The letter gradually paints a portrait of a rather stern father figure. At one point, he recalls his father as “generally harsh, unfeeling, and selfish” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 179). He feels compelled to write about the reactive and conflictual relationship between them: “You dismissed Classical Turkish Music as ‘nonsense’; your reaction to Western Music was simply 'turn it off,' which made me feel it was my duty to love both” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 180). From Atay’s writings, we understand that his father had a rigid demeanour: “In short, you divided everything around you with strict lines. (I must confess that I resemble you in this regard)” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 180). The father is also depicted as an uncompromising individual: “We -my mother and I- would object to you; however, without realizing it, I adopted your merciless classifications that allowed no middle ground, dear father” (Atay, *The Disconnect* 180). He is aware of the gaps that formed between him and his father, a realization that came after he began questioning his own life and reading books: “Especially after reading certain books, becoming more aware of these abject contradictions within me, I find myself staring blankly into the void in a way you could never understand” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 180). He laments the lack of communication with his father, noting that this communication gap left him unable to understand the world due to not learning things in a timely manner: “Nor did you ever feel the need to sit down and explain things to me. As a result, I never knew many aspects of the world because I didn’t learn the reasons for many events when I should have. I only understood the causes of certain events much later” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 182). He expresses regret over never having a typical father-son relationship: “There was never the usual father-son relationship between us” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 182). He recounts frequent conflicts with his father, often slamming doors in frustration: “You know I used to clash with you a lot, slamming doors and leaving” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 182). He notes that others called his father “selfish”, a label that



he now finds applied to himself: “They used to say you were ‘selfish’; now they say similar things about me.” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 183).

Despite the melancholic reflections he frequently expresses about his father, it can be argued that the issue lies much deeper, originating from the archaic experiences of consciousness. This is akin to Freud’s analysis of the “Oedipus Complex” where the male child desires to take the father's place. Indeed, Atay grapples with this struggle and addresses his father in the letter, saying: “If you had asked me, ‘Son, do you have an Oedipus complex?’ I don’t think I would have known how to respond” (Atay, *Oyunlarla Yaşayanlar* 185). In fact, Atay wanted to be like his father in many ways. He often lamented that he could not occupy a place in the world as his father did, describing how this led to his irritability, impatience, and petulance (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 182). Freud (207) posits in the “Oedipus Complex” that the male child develops unconscious sexual urges and feelings toward his mother and perceives his father as a rival within this emotional-unconscious turmoil. According to Freud, the child, driven by the impulses of his id, seeks to make his interest in his mother permanent by competing with his father to take his place. This manifests in the id as a desire to kill the father and marry the mother. Freud (211) asserts that through the “Oedipus Complex” during the phallic stage, the male child acquires his sexual identity and forms the superego, or the moral component of his mind. In Freudian psychoanalysis, it is understood that for a male child to establish a balanced relationship between his id and superego and to form a stable ego, it is necessary to resolve this complex. Psychoanalysis emphasizes the importance of timely and reconciliatory transitions among the three constitutive elements of the human psyche- id, ego, and superego.

“Letter to My Father” continues. Atay expresses his desire to live like his father and to fully embody his father's essence: “But now, when I think of you, my dear father, I keep smiling. I want to live you as you are” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 184). It is no coincidence that he mentions his mother immediately after this statement. Reconciliation with the father signifies successfully overcoming the “Oedipus Complex.” Failure to reconcile can result in the male child experiencing authority issues and displaying violent tendencies in later life: “I want someone like my mother to be at home, and for me to be able to go to the kitchen and call out, “Something is boiling here again, Muazzez,” and to be told, “You see it’s boiling, turn it down, Cemil Bey, and for me to leave the kitchen without doing anything” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 184). “But in reality, I am like you, father” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 185). It becomes evident that Atay, in many respects, aspired to live like his father, to be like him, to possess his image, and to embody him. There are notable similarities between the figure he seeks to emulate and his own destiny, as both experienced failures in their relationships and marriages: “When I separated from my wife and sought refuge with you, you would unsettle me with remarks like, ‘You come home late at night,’ things that should have been said years before. Yet,

my dear father, I had been married, divorced, and even had a child; in a sense, I was in your position” (Atay, *Waiting for Fear* 182).

The profound impact on Oğuz Atay's personal life and the themes in his works can be traced to the loss of his mother, Muazzez Hanım, in 1964 due to cancer, followed by his father, Cemil Bey, remarrying in 1966 to a woman named Necmiye Hanım, unable to bear the solitude. Muazzez Hanım, who had always been protective and nurturing, especially towards the sensitive and fragile Oğuz Atay, played a significant role in his life, attempting to fill many voids, including the lack of paternal affection. His mother's death and his father's swift attempt to move past this loss are at the root of the individual and familial conflicts frequently explored in Atay's works.

Ecevit (167) considers the new family dynamic established with Cemil Bey's new wife Necmiye Hanım, who was from a village in Kastamonu, had only completed primary school, cooked well, and was hardworking, as a critical factor shaping the emotional development of Atay's characters and their perception of the family concept. The presence of Necmiye Hanım, who replaced the sophisticated Muazzez Hanım, caused discomfort in the immediate circle. These changes are among the significant factors that enriched Atay's writing perspective and themes. In light of these facts, the introduction of the father's new wife to the son Hikmet in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] is handled in a highly significant manner:

HAMIT BEY: This is our new lady. (Smiles shyly.) My dear, say welcome to Hikmet. (He nudges the woman to the centre of the stage.)

SAFIYE HANIM (Coyly): Welcome, Hikmet, my son. From now on, I will take care of your father. I will wash his shaving kits, cook his *börek*, remind him to change his shirts, take out the trash, help him solve riddles, call him “my clever husband” and scold him by saying “enough, Hamit Bey.” All rights have transferred to me.

HIKMET I: I want *börek* tomorrow. But don't be coy. My mother never was.

SAFIYE HANIM (With a coy smile): I make *börek* better than your mother. Your father says so too. New brides are naturally different.

HIKMET I (Murmurs): If I hadn't given up on everything in life, I wouldn't have come to your house.

HAMIT BEY: Everyone came, my child. Even the deceased's relatives came. You were the last to come. Thank you. (His eyes fill with tears.) Didn't I grieve the day your mother died? Didn't I drink the soup sent by the neighbours in tears? Didn't I only take two spoonfuls of my favourite pilaf? Didn't I wait a year for the formalities to be completed? Didn't I perform all the religious ceremonies?

SAFIYE HANIM: Don't argue with him, Hamit Bey; your blood pressure will rise. Did you forget what the doctor said? (She gets up and closes the window.) I found the doctor for your father.

HIKMET I: You did well.

SAFIYE HANIM: Your pocket is torn, Hamit Bey. (Turns to Hikmet.) Your father's tears are now immediately mended.

HAMIT BEY (Shyly smiling): Safiye is good at sewing.

HIKMET (Without looking up): The *börek* is good.

SAFIYE HANIM (Proudly): We always welcome you for a meal; it's no trouble for me. Isn't that right, Hamit Bey?

(The door opens. Mukadder Hanım appears in a white dress.)

HIKMET I (Drops his spoon): Mother!

HAMIT BEY: There must be a mistake. What is your mother doing here?

HIKMET I (Picks up the spoon from the table and puts it in his jacket pocket): We were just sitting, mother. We weren't doing anything. (He lifts the tablecloth, puts the plate underneath, and covers it. Noticing the bulge on the table, he reaches for a vase on the sideboard, places it on the bulge. The vase topples, falls, and breaks.)

MUKADDER HANIM: That was my favourite vase. (Looks at the broken pieces on the floor.) It was my most beloved vase.

HIKMET I: Father, didn't I tell you that you were in a hurry?

HAMIT BEY: So, we misjudged the timing.

HIKMET I: Is it easy, father? You should have waited much longer. Every day, billions of people live under the threat of endless conflicts and countless intersections. One must be very careful. One might fall victim to a bus accident, or encounter his deceased wife.

SAFIYE HANIM: I never showed any sign of your absence, sir: I washed the lace curtains without bleaching their color. After you died, new cleaning powders were released. They are advertised on the radio every day. Hamit Bey and I sit in our armchairs placed to the right and left of the radio.

HIKMET: (Shouts.) Father! How quickly did you forget my mother, Mukadder Hanım, to be with this simple woman? (Atay, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* 366-74).

One of the destinations Atay arrived at, against his will, was the engineering department he had to study in. Atay needed to work very hard to perform well in the university entrance exam, as his father's expectations were high. This situation also applies to the fictional world of Selim: "As I was a good student in high school, I had to choose a difficult profession. Hence, I am compelled to become an engineer" (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 399). However, being a good student was never sufficient for his father; he had to read more and study harder. In the thirteenth chapter of *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] Turgut reflects on Selim's conflict with his father as recounted by Günseli regarding her relationship with Selim: 'His father's words always echoed in his ears. Numan Bey would constantly grumble, saying, "This child is not studying; this child never opens a book"' (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 452). According to Ecevit ("*Ben Buradayım*" *Oğuz Atay'ın Biyografik ve Kurmaca Dünyası* 61-62), the primary goal of Atay's father, as well as the family, was

for their children (Oğuz and Okşan) to receive an education at the best schools and in prestigious fields. Engineering was one of the most sought-after professions; at that time, a student entering the Technical University was considered to have secured their financial future. University years marked the peak of the father-son conflict. In “Letter to My Father,” Atay introspectively and sincerely questions the subconscious world of his father, whom he believed was incapable of emotional communication: “I wonder, did you even have a subconscious, father? It seems to me that such things had not been invented in your time” (Atay, *Korkuyu Beklerken* 184). Despite the lack of emotional closeness, the father’s dominant role was decisive in his son’s career choice. The conflicts Oğuz Atay experienced regarding his career choice during and after his university years hold a significant place in his works. The author reflects this conflict in his two major novels. In both novels, no one can pursue their desired profession, either due to the dominant father figure or other reasons. This situation is reflected in the novel *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] as follows:

Everyone will choose the profession they desire. Those who want to be painters will become advertisers, those who want to be writers will become engineers, those who want to be architects will become economists, those who want to be tavern owners will become lawyers, those who want to be lawyers will become clerks, those who want to be men will become servants, and those who want to live as they wish will not be disgraced. (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 241).

In *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] the conflict is examined through Selim Işık, reflecting the author’s own life experiences. Selim Işık’s questioning of his profession and place in life can be read as a reflection of Atay’s own experiences and his relationship with paternal authority: “He did not like university. He did not like to talk about the time he spent there: ‘Once we started, we will finish,’ he would say” (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 399). “He fought with his father every day. He blamed him for entering the university” (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 399). According to Selim’s father, “There are three types of professions: engineering, medicine, and law” (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 362). Selim, who was studying civil engineering, “hoped, like Dostoyevsky, to resign after becoming an engineer. From which position would he resign? He did not know” (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 399). Furthermore, Selim addresses those who, especially his father, do not trust him:

He quarrelled with his father every day. He held his father responsible for his being at university. He shouted: ‘I shall run away to the mountains. I will show you all that I can get through university, I shall get through using nothing but a few crumbs of myself. I shall show you and I shall show them.’ (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 521).

Selim’s outburst towards his father clearly reveals the deep disappointment and anger he experiences:

(...) Selim's tirade of desperate complaint fills the stage as he says to Turgut father I do not want to live any longer in this house for many years in this house you have been killing our souls you have not read a single novel you have never felt excitement at the cinema you imprisoned me and my mother surrounded by this ugly furniture you thought of nothing except your food and your sleep the reason that I feel so much is that you were so stubbornly unfeeling you have parched us with your dry logic I am ashamed of those parts of me in which I resemble you ashamed of my hands and feet I am terrified of growing to be like you when I become old your head too sterile to devise any wickedness kept only a register of the things you did for us you recorded everything from the first set of clothes you bought for me to the last time you gave me pocket money to the number of your sleepless nights during my illness you did not allow me to lighten the atmosphere of this gloomy house with music or with books you watched with close the window I am cold open the window I am hot death is the only thing that excites me I am afraid of it in order to prolong my life for each time I breathe out I breathe in twice (...) (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 658-59).

Crushed under the cold logic and emotional detachment of his father, Selim rebels against his father's reduction of him and his mother to mere lifeless objects, devoid of any artistic or emotional expression. This passage powerfully conveys his profound anger towards his father for ignoring the elements of vitality and humanity in the household, focusing solely on material and practical concerns. Feeling a spiritual and emotional void in this corrupt domestic atmosphere, Selim questions his father's attitude, expressing a desire for a more meaningful and sensitive existence. Selim's anger and emotional conflict with his father parallel similar themes explored in Atay's novel *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games]. Drawing from his personal experiences, Atay intricately examines emotional voids and the complex dynamics of human relationships through his characters. In *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] although the father figure does not present as pronounced a father-son conflict as in *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] it remains problematic and noteworthy. Oğuz Atay introduces the character of Hamit Bey with the phrase, "With his portable barber kit and brazen smile, the esteemed father..." (Atay, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* 15), presenting the father figure as someone outside societal norms, ordinary, and somewhat unsettling with his smile. Hamit Bey, referred to by Hikmet's relative, Naciye Hanım, who we understand is staying at his house temporarily, as "Who knows where that drunkard who is supposed to be your father has passed out?" (Atay, *The Disconnecte d* 18), appears in another scene displaying his barber kit and shaving tools:

(A barber's kit appears; Hamit Bey approaches the kit. He takes out a white cloth from the kit and places his striped pajamas into the kit. He ties the cloth around his neck. He takes out a mirror from the kit and props it against the edge of the kit on the table in the hallway. From a blue-painted

tin box, he takes out a bowl and a razor. The sound of the metal razor in the metal box; Hikmet shudders.)

HIKMET: You're going to dirty the table; mother will be angry.

(Hamit Bey, without responding, takes a newspaper and spreads it over the table. As he pushes the paper under the barber's kit, the mirror topples. The hot water from the kettle spills onto the shaving soap and the newspaper; wet letters appear among the black-haired foam. Suddenly, the doorbell rings. Hamit Bey, with his foamy face, opens the door and brings the guests into the front room. Hikmet throws off the quilt in frustration. While sitting with the guests, Hamit Bey suddenly gets up; he opens his kit, takes out all the shaving tools, and begins to shave at the center table, placing the tools among the crystal frames and vases. Hikmet covers his face with his hands.) (Atay, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* 18-19).

In this passage, Hamit Bey's manner of displaying and using his shaving tools reveals his tendency to violate personal boundaries and those of others. Simultaneously, Hikmet's fear of his mother's reaction and his father's disregard for this concern can be interpreted as indicative of the authority vacuum and communication breakdown within the family as portrayed in the novel.

Hikmet's discomfort towards his father is actually indicative of a deeper existential unease. Hamit Bey's sudden decision to start shaving while conversing with guests can be seen as another manifestation of his ordinariness and his defiance of social norms. Hikmet's internalization of this situation and his act of covering his face highlight his inner conflicts and the profound nature of his problematic relationship with his father. By presenting the father figure as both ordinary and non-conformist, Atay skillfully explores the deep-seated conflicts within familial relationships and their impact on the individual in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games]. Another notably negative father figure in this context is Süleyman Turgut Bey, the father of the character Sevgi in the novel.

In episodes 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the second part of *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] the narrative focuses on the marriage of Sevgi's parents, the reasons for their separation, and her father's departure from the household. The subsequent involvement of Selim Bey, a distant relative and acquaintance known as 'Uncle Selim,' in the lives of Sevgi and her mother is also explored. The text details the introduction of Nursel Hanım to Sevgi, Sevgi's marriage to Hikmet, their expectations from life, and the dynamics involving Hikmet's friends, whom Sevgi struggles to warm up to. The differing value systems of Hikmet and Sevgi, alongside these events, are depicted with a rich sense of irony. Sevgi is the daughter of Süleyman Turgut Bey, an electrical engineer, and her family resides in what is referred to as a provincial area. Süleyman Turgut Bey met and married Leyla Nezih Hanım, a teacher, in the provinces and completed part of his education in Berlin (Atay, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* 167).

Sevgi is born from this marriage; for her, who will continue her life in a divided family, the warning signs of danger manifest through her father's behaviour:

Süleyman Turgut Bey was about to embark on one of his nightly outings to meet with one of the street women when he saw the expression in his daughter's eyes through the mirror. She had a sad and scornful look, knowing exactly where her father was headed. He sensed that his adornment, his perfumes, and his silk shirts were being mocked with a calm and silent derision: She looked at her father with eyes that said, 'You are a laughable philanderer under the guise of a serious man.' (Atay, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* 171).

In the novel, Sevgi's observation of her father Süleyman Turgut Bey's infidelities is depicted within a context rich with phallic symbols. Sevgi witnesses her father's nocturnal excursions and his relationships with women by observing moments such as "tying his tie in the mirror" and "wearing silk shirts." Due to her mocking gaze, Sevgi received "her first slap from her father while watching Süleyman Turgut Bey tie his tie in the mirror" (Atay, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* 171).

According to Sevgi, "her father was a moral degenerate" (Atay, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* 171), and her mother, Leyla Nezihi Hanım decided to end the marriage. Leyla Nezihi Hanım's decision to separate from Süleyman Turgut Bey was based on her husband's immoral behaviour and the impact of these actions on the family:

Leyla Nezihi Hanım separated from Süleyman Turgut Bey two years later. With her parents deceased, she packed her suitcases one night and had to endure hours of arguments in Süleyman Turgut Bey's house, facing his scornful, angry, and mocking demeanour. Sevgi listened to them from a corner of the living room, without raising her eyes. "Where can you go, how can you live?" Süleyman Bey belittled his wife. She couldn't cook, she didn't know how to manage money.' 'You'll freeze to death,' he mocked her. 'You will disgrace me for no reason,' he said. 'You will ruin yourself for no reason, trying to follow that little mind of yours...' (Atay, *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* 178-79).

From a genital and phallic perspective, Süleyman Turgut Bey's behaviours and rhetoric can be interpreted as the actions of a man driven by the fear of losing his power and control, demeaning his wife through phallic symbols and questioning her sexual and social competence. This situation can be explained by the man's effort to maintain his authority and suppress the woman's quest for independence. The phrases in the passage, such as "you can't cook, you can't manage money," can be seen as Süleyman Turgut Bey's attempts to belittle Leyla Nezihi Hanım and undermine her abilities. These statements im-

ply, by referencing traditional gender roles, that the woman cannot fulfil domestic and economic responsibilities, thereby demeaning her capacity for independence. In this context, Süleyman Turgut Bey's words reflect an attitude that questions the woman's competence in both household functionality and economic skills, suggesting that she will fail to meet the societal gender roles assigned to her. His remarks, such as 'you will ruin yourself for no reason' and "trying to follow that little mind of yours," while commenting on Leyla Hanım's decision to leave, further demonstrate a dismissive and derogatory critique of her reasoning abilities, highlighting the conflicted nature of their marriage and the challenges faced by Leyla Hanım. Sevgi's silent observation of this argument underscores the psychological impact of familial dynamics and conflicts on her. The relationships depicted in Atay's *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] involving characters like Fikriye Hanım, Sevgi, Sevin Seydi, and Bilge, as well as Günseli in *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] closely mirror the author's own experiences of loneliness and inner turmoil. Considering the scope and constraints of this article and acknowledging that it may be further explored in subsequent studies, this discussion will now be concluded.

### Conclusion

This study examines the nuanced portrayal of the negative father image in Oğuz Atay's novels, elucidating how these characters encapsulate broader socio-psychological themes. The research highlights the complex interplay between paternal authority and individual identity within the context of modernist literature, drawing parallels with the works of other prominent modernist authors. By applying Freudian psychoanalysis and Ihab Hassan's theoretical frameworks, the study provides a comprehensive literary analysis of Atay's major works.

In Atay's novels, the father figure is not merely a character but a symbol of authoritarian control, emotional detachment, and societal expectations. This portrayal is intricately linked to the protagonists' struggles with identity formation, mirroring Atay's own strained relationship with his father. The characters of Selim Işık in *Tutunamayanlar* [The Disconnecte d] and Hikmet Benol in *Tehlikeli Oyunlar* [Dangerous Games] exemplify this dynamic where the father's failings and rigid adherence to norms create a psychological battleground for the protagonists. The methodology of this study involved a detailed literary analysis of key passages and character interactions, focusing on the negative father figure's role. This approach revealed how Atay's protagonists navigate their existential crises, shaped by their complex relationships with paternal figures. The comparative analysis with works by Kafka, Dostoevsky, and Faulkner further enriched this understanding, showcasing the universal relevance of these themes in modernist literature. The findings underscore the significant influence of paternal authority on the protagonists' quest for iden-



tity and autonomy. Atay's depiction of father figures aligns with Freud's Oedipus complex, where the child's unconscious rivalry with the father shapes their psychological development. This dynamic is evident in Selim Işık's emotional turmoil and Hikmet Benol's rebellion against authoritarianism, reflecting broader critiques of societal and familial structures.

The study also explores the broader socio-cultural implications of these paternal figures, revealing how historical and cultural factors influence their portrayal. Atay's novels, set against the backdrop of a transforming Türkiye, encapsulate the tensions between tradition and modernity, authority and rebellion. This context adds depth to the analysis, highlighting how Atay's personal experiences and the socio-political environment shape his literary exploration of father figures. At this point a key finding of this study is the parallel between Atay's personal life and his literary themes. Atay's own strained relationship with his father is mirrored in the tumultuous relationships his characters have with their paternal figures. This personal dimension adds authenticity and intensity to the narratives, making the exploration of fatherhood in his novels particularly poignant and impactful. This research not only enhances the appreciation of Atay's work but also offers a valuable perspective on the broader implications of paternal figures within the socio-cultural context, revealing how historical and cultural factors influenced the portrayal of father figures in modernist narratives.

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