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Different Images of the Ontological Break in *The Fall* and *After a Long Way Down*

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Abstract

Existentialism, which problematizes the existence, is one of the philosophies that characterize the 20th century. Human beings are at the centre of this philosophy along with the notions such as meaning, absurdity, suicide and revolt. In this respect, Camus is one of the prominent thinkers associated with the existential philosophy. His main books are *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*, which focus on the suicide phenomenon, revolt and the absurd.

The literature is also a means for Camus to convey his philosophical ideas. In this context, *The Fall* reflects his existential philosophy on absurdity and suicide. Like *The Fall*, Bıçakçı's *Bir Süre Yere Paralel Gittikten Sonra* (*After a Long Way Down*) can also be evaluated as a text with existential motifs and ideas influenced by Camus. In this sense, both texts are open to criticism in the light of existential philosophy because they revolve around absurd hero/heroine who challenges the expectations of society.

This study presents an attempt to clarify, in a comparative way, the existential themes and motifs in *The Fall* and *After a Long Way Down*, focusing on how the suicide event is shaped culturally.

Keywords: Absurd, Suicide, Revolt, Meaning, Existentialism

DÜŞÜŞ VE BİR SÜRE YERE PARALEL GİTTİKTEN SONRA ADLI ROMANLARDA ONTOLOJİK KOPUŞUN FARKLI TEMSİLLERİ

Öz

Varoluş durumunu sorunsallaştıran varoluşçuluk, 20. yüzyılı resmeden akımlar arasındadır. Anlam, absürd, intihar ve başkaldırı gibi kavramlarla anılan bu akımda, insan temel sorunsal olarak ele alınır. Bu anlamda, Camus varoluşçulukla özdeşleşen önemli düşünürler arasındadır. *Sisifos Söyleni*, *Başkaldırı* gibi eserleri olan Camus bu çalışmalarında intihar olgusunu, başkaldırıyı ve absürdlüğü ele almıştır.

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Edebiyat, Camus için aynı zamanda felsefi düşüncelerini ifade etmek için bir araç olmuştur. Bu bakımdan onun *Düşüş* adlı romanı absürd ve intihar olgularına dair görüşlerini yansıtmaktadır. *Düşüş*'e benzer şekilde Barış Bıçakçı'nın *Bir Süre Yere Paralel Gittikten Sonra* adlı romanında da varoluşçulukla ilgili motifleri ve Camus'nün felsefesini görmek mümkündür. Bu açıdan yaklaşıldığında her iki eser de varoluşçuluk felsefesi bağlamında toplumla çatışma içinde olan absürd kahramanlar barındırır.

Bu çalışma *Düşüş* ve *Bir Süre Yere Paralel gittikten Sonra* adlı romanlardaki varoluşçu izlekleri karşılaştırarak intiharın kültürel olarak nasıl şekillendirildiğini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Absürd, intihar, başkaldırı, anlam, varoluşçuluk

CAMUS'S VIEWS ON ABSURDITY AND SUICIDE

Camus is an existentialist whose ideas and views on absurdity and suicide are found in his work titled *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which revolves around the mythological figure sentenced by Zeus to roll up a boulder onto a hill even though the boulder falls back down again. Camus uses this myth to show the meaninglessness of the world which is like a vicious circle reminding the constant challenge of Sisyphus who is condemned by Zeus. Although Sisyphus is like a slave who submits to his master, he is happy, says Camus. As he faces the absurdity of life, he accepts the order of his master although he lives without faith and hope. He explains why Sisyphus is happy;

Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He, too, concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy (Camus 1979: 111).

In this respect, one of the key words in Camus's philosophy gains importance; it is absurdity. The absurd is at the centre of his ideas on life and meaning. For him, the man longs for "happiness and for reason" (Camus 1979: 31). It is obvious that Camus stresses the paradox of the human condition and questions the validity of happiness. He also explains the reason of this paradox and says; "The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world" (Camus 1979: 31). On the other hand, most people live without having knowledge of absurd and run after the meaning of life. Camus defines the everyday life and the way people keep it as follows:

Before encountering the absurd, the everyday man lives with aims, a concern for the future or for justification (with regard to whom or what is not the question). He weighs his chances, he counts on 'someday', his retirement or the labour of his sons. He still thinks that something in his life can be directed. In truth, he acts as if he were free, even if all the facts make a point of contradicting that liberty (Camus 1979: 56).



Albert Camus

It is obvious from the passage that people just wear the mask of *freedom*. On the other hand, recognizing the absurd shatters this kind of feeling and makes the individual absurd. What is essential for Camus is living because “living is keeping the absurd alive. Keeping it alive is above all contemplating it” (Camus 1979: 53).

Camus’s approach to life has a strong link with the notion of suicide because he also argues how ineffective suicide is in the face of a senseless life. According to him, suicide is not a solution. That is why he does not offer committing suicide. Instead, he suggests a constant recognition of absurdity of life, in spite of the fact that it pushes people to the edge of suicide. What is needed for the human is revolt but “suicide does not follow revolt” (Camus 1979: 54) because absurd requires “constant confrontation between man and his obscurity” (Camus 1979: 53). When suicide is prevented, the “revolt gives life its value” (Camus, 1979: 54). Intending to kill himself/ herself means submitting to the rules of masters and this means that life is meaningful or rational.

All things considered, Camus’s views on absurdity and suicide are portrayed in the image of Sisyphus myth which provides us with a radical way of looking at life and objects. Then, it can be argued that the absurd hero/heroine reflects the individual in our age and his enemies the conventional bourgeois people, totalitarian or fascist regimes which force people to think or behave in the way they command. On the other hand, the recognition itself is the revolt against the masters who give countless futile tasks to men such as keeping a wealthy life, having a good job, being an honest and virtuous person. It is the only way to keep a happy life.

THE FALL OF CLAMENCE IN *THE FALL* AND BAŞAK IN *AFTER A LONG WAY DOWN*

Modernization is a term which is generally associated with rapid changes technologically, economically, scientifically and socially. Steven Best and Douglas Kellner

draw attention to the definition of modernization and describe it as a “term denoting those processes of individualization, secularization, industrialization, cultural differentiation, commodification, urbanization, bureaucratization, and rationalization which together have constituted the modern world” (Best & Kellner 1991: 3). Here, as was noted, modernization has certain consequences which implicit some troubles in view of the individual. First and foremost, it causes alienation. Moreover, the separation between the self and objective world becomes sharper in our age which is defined by Sleasman as “the age of absurd,” which denotes “a tension between the way one desires the world to appear and the harsh truth of the human existence” (Sleasman 2011: 1). According to Sleasman, Camus’s idea of absurdity is relevant to postmodern age, “which lacks an overriding meta-narrative to guide both public and private communication” (Sleasman 2011: 160). Basically, it is the tragic condition of the individual whose ideals such as reaching the ultimate meaning creates a tension. In that case, according to Camus, the absurd refers to a life which has no meaning. The absurd is essential part of the everyday life that one is confronted with. In this sense, Camus’s novel, *The Fall* is a unique work that provides us with a better understanding of the human existence in the face of the absurdity of life.

In the novel, a famous Parisian lawyer, Clamence is a character who sheds light onto the absurdity of life confessing the hypocrisy of both himself and the society he lives in. The confessions are an important part of the novel as they represent a struggle to communicate with the listener because the reader himself/herself is in the position of the listener while Clamence sits in a pub in Amsterdam talking about his past, and most importantly, the changing moment of his life which was spent with an ignorant attitude to all existence. As a lawyer representing justice he adopts a lot of roles far away from being authentic and sincere although he seems an outspoken man for the sake of his job. For instance, he always tries to behave virtuously, helps a blind woman or does charity. He explains the reason why he adopts such kind of attitude and says; “Let’s pause on these heights. Now you understand what I meant when I spoke of aiming higher. I was talking; it so happens, of those supreme summits, the only places I can really live. Yes, I have never felt comfortable except in lofty places. Even in the details of daily life, I needed to feel above.” (Camus 1956: 10). It is understood from his explanation that he tries to create a heroic image of himself and even calls himself a “superman” (Camus 1956: 10). Also, he tries to relieve himself not to be judged by people around him. At this point, the role of the society in shaping one’s character becomes clear because the expectations or standards of life are measured by the norms of the society. However, what makes something the ‘standard’ or ‘reality’ is the question addressed by Clamence who gains awareness of the absurdity of life after an event that triggers a reversal of values in his/her life. This event is the suicide of a woman who throws herself

from Royal Bridge. Clamence shares the most crucial experience of his life with the listener and says;

On the bridge I passed behind a figure leaning over the railing and seeming to stare at the river. [70] On closer view, I made out a slim young woman dressed in black. The back of her neck, cool and damp between her dark hair and coat collar, stirred me. But I went on after a moment's hesitation. At the end of the bridge I followed the guys toward Saint-Michel, where I lived. I had already gone some fifty yards when I heard the sound—which, despite the distance, seemed dreadfully loud in the midnight silence—of a body striking the water. I stopped short, but without turning around. Almost at once I heard a cry, repeated several times, which was going downstream; then it suddenly ceased. The silence that followed, as the night suddenly stood still, seemed interminable. I wanted to run and yet didn't stir. I was trembling, I believe from cold and shock. I told myself that I had to be quick and I felt an irresistible weakness steal over me. I have forgotten what I thought then. "Too late, too far ..." or something of the sort. I was still listening as I stood motionless. Then, slowly under the rain, I went away. I informed no one (Camus 1956: 23).

As it is understood from what he witnesses, he feels a deep regret about his passive attitude toward the suicide of the young woman. This experience changes the direction of his life. The *superman* no longer flies high, thus, the climax of the novel leads to his fall. After that, he tumbles from his previously assumed ideal position and gives up being a "superman" who wears the social masks of a virtuous man. Moreover, after witnessing the possible suicide of the woman, he begins to search for the meaning, and at every corner, he confronts with the absurdity, that is, the meaninglessness of the world. For instance, he understands that everybody tends to judge people as if they were the ultimate judge like God. The young woman's suicide is given as an example of the judgement of people who suppose that they can get the ultimate reality of the facts. He says:

Ah, cherami, how poor in invention men are! They always think one commits suicide for a reason. But it's quite possible to commit suicide for two reasons. No, that never occurs to them. So what's the good of dying intentionally, of sacrificing yourself to the idea you want people to have of you? Once you are dead, they will take advantage of it to attribute idiotic or vulgar motives to your action. Martyrs, cherami, must choose between being forgotten, mocked, or made use of. As for being understood—never! (Camus 1956: 25).

From the passage we may confidently conclude that human's everlasting passion to find a meaning is ridiculed through Clamence. As a matter of fact, it is like a vicious, tragic circle of people who try to find a suitable and a hard base to keep their feet firm on the ground. On the other hand, the individual is doomed to fall and lose the innocence while he/she is judged consistently by the hierarchical system which is imposed upon him/her

from the very beginning of the existence especially by the religion as the god is absent and signifies nothingness in a world devoid of meaning. It is obvious as in the case of Clamence. While he tries to make sense of the world, he finds himself in a deep solitude which devours him slowly. In this respect, the fall metaphor serves to understand the psychology of the character although he is not the person who threw himself from the bridge and committed suicide. The fall does not mean a physical but a psychological process reflecting the ontological break of the individual who contradicts himself/herself with the life. The wars, poverty, Nazi massacre of Jews mentioned in the novel, all contribute to accelerate this process while Clamence begins to isolate himself from the standards of the society. Leaving his ideals after the actual fall of the young woman from the bridge opens the gate of the absurd to him. Although he likes “supreme summits,” which are “the only places [he] can really live” and feels the need of being *above* (Camus 1956: 10), he begins to fall after witnessing the young woman’s suicide.

Up to this point, the reason of the young woman’s suicide is vague and doesn’t seem to have an important place although it changes the direction of Clamence’s life and triggers a search to see what is beneath the surface. The conflict between the depth and the surface resonates in the novel with the ontological fall of Clamence after gaining insight into the predominance of the social factors that leads a person to commit suicide due to lack of communication. The lack of communication is not stated as a reason that motivates the young woman to commit suicide, but, it can be inferred that absolute desperateness and unsatisfying contradictions of the individual who cannot make himself/herself heard are at the core of life. What makes communication problematic between the individual and the society is the tension between expectations and stipulated realities. When a person exhibits a deviant behaviour from the norms of the society, then he retreats from people and experiences the *fall*.

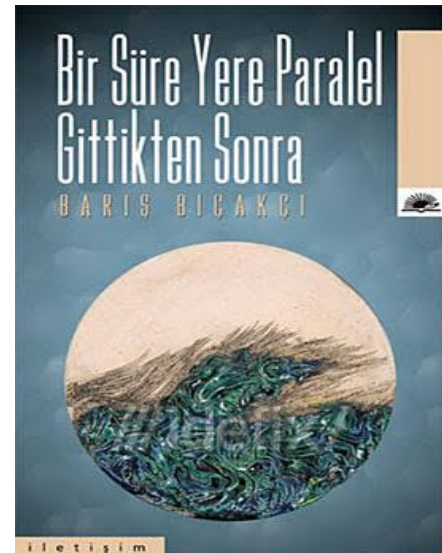
On the other hand, it can be argued that the fall implies the mental freedom not only from the constraints of the society but also from the moral codes of a religious system. In the novel, it is observed that Clamence has broken connection with God and religions by *falling*. His criticism of God, who stands for the “Last Judgement” and religions, highlights the point that people believe the existence of it to feel innocence. Moreover, religions are no more than “*laundering venture*” (Camus 1956: 34). According to Clamence, the human being is in a desperate situation and cannot escape judgements. Then the individual, who confronts both the guilts defined by society and with the ontological guilt, experiences a fall like Adam who is judged by the god, loses Eden and ideal values granted to him. Adam’s everlasting fall is repeated everyday not only by the judgement of the God but, also the judgement of the domineering masters like Nazis who applied “vacuum cleaning” (Camus 1956: 6) method

toward Jews, according to Clamence. The reason behind this method is the need of having “slaves like a fresh air” (Camus 1956: 16). Clamence makes it clear to the reader as follows ; “Commanding is breathing- you agree with me?” (Camus 1956: 16).

This kind of routine relationship highlights the master-slave relationship which is a primitive way of gaining superiority on the slave who represents the dependant consciousness and whose essential role is to *feed* the master that responds with pure enjoyment to the service of the slave. Then, the power relations are everywhere in the world, where they are implicitly exercised especially in our age. The smiling slaves, who serve for the well being of man and subordinate “this is the truth” motto of the modern age, reflect the general panorama of our times. What is needed to overcome the obstacles put in front of humans? This question is also answered in *The Fall*. Clamence suggests the acceptance of both guilt and innocence and instead of avoiding his mistakes, he pushes forward confessing the mistakes one has done through his life. Thus, a constant way of recognizing absurd and accepting it resolves the tragedy of individual in the novel.

Almost all of the philosophical ideas of Camus resonate in the novel *After a Long Way Down*.¹ The novel’s suicidal character is Başak who is a painter and lives with her mother Türkan and brother Umut. As a child of a divorced family, it is understood that she does not have contact with her father and feels his absence in her life. She isolates herself from life like other family members. After a brief explanation of her childhood which is devoid of a father figure, it is assumed that she ended her life because of the problems in family relations. However, as the novel proceeds, the ontological dimension of Başak’s suicide gets clearer. Her most eye-catching confession is stated in the novel as follows; “Something presented to me, the fruit as a gift but I couldn’t taste it. The plum is left in my hand like the world. Now, I am sleepless, barefoot, involved in myself...” (Bıçakçı 2014: 98)

Seen in this light, it is possible to interpret Başak’s feeling of failure as a result of ontological guilt as she points out it as follows; “The shame splits us in two. The intolerable side of splitting in two is to see that both parts are still alive. Most probably, the man attempts to commit suicide. He says “let one part go” (Bıçakçı 2014: 98). From Başak’s statement related to the feeling of shame, the psychological aspect of her suicide gets clearer. She feels no authenticity in her being. This is to say that her psychology cannot be evaluated independently from her ontological state. Her emphasis on the existence of two selves can be



¹ The passages from this novel were translated by the writer of this essay.

linked to “ontological insecurity” which is a term suggested by Laing whose views were heavily influenced by existentialists. According to him, a person who feels ontological insecurity may feel

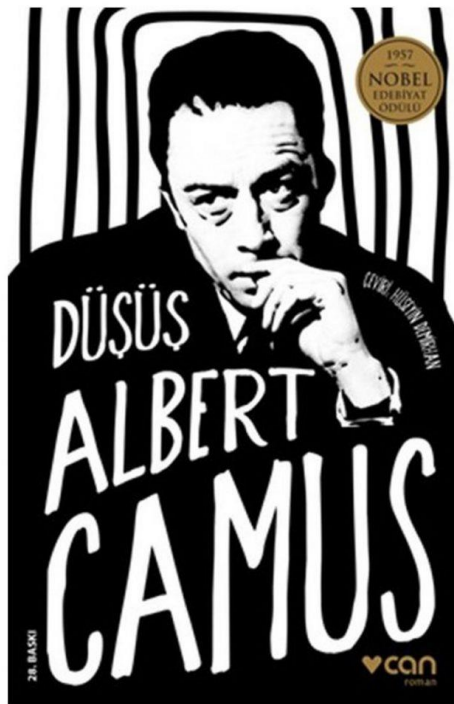
more unreal than real, in a literal sense, more dead than alive, precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity autonomy is always in question. He may not possess an over-riding sense of personal consistency or cohesiveness. He may feel more insubstantial than substantial, and unable to assume that the stuff he is made of is genuine, good, and valuable. And he may feel his self as partially divorced from his body (Laing 1990: 42).

Laing’s description of the individual who has the problem of ontological insecurity is consistent with Başak’s problem because she is also absorbed in two selves and tries to eliminate one of them by committing suicide.

Başak’s views on life also highlight a religious turmoil in her mind as she feels a great sorrow and ontological guilt as a result of not being able to reach the “knowledge tree.” As she cannot eat the “fruit” of life which has a reference to religious texts, she is frustrated and disillusioned. Like Adam, he cannot gain the ultimate truth and meaning. What kinds of conditions create such feelings? First of all, both political and social upheavals force her to fall and revolt against all forms of power. It is implied that the society she lives in goes through a violent political process and there is a rising political polarization among people, although, time or place is not stated in the novel. Başak resists the symbols of both religious and political authorities as follows; “In spite of everything, some people have been giving voice to opinions that must be written or- if there is no writing, to ideas that must be drawn on the walls from the very beginning of human history. “NEITHER GOD NOR MASTER” (Bıçakçı 2014: 78). While Başak shows her anarchist attitude, she also criticizes people whose ideas differ from hers and shout different slogans giving prominence to nation, flag and other political expressions. She identifies what type of slogans on the wall are preferred by most people as follows: “Something related to nation and flag, for instance, some expressions announcing some of us as enemies and also something about the inescapable end of treacherous people who are irreligious” (Bıçakçı 2014: 78).

How Başak positions herself in society can be inferred from this passage. It is suggested in the novel that she is against the masters of our age who wear ideological apparatus and appear with different masks unlike the masters living in the past. On the other hand, all the ideological discourse is suspended and replaced by another slogan “Neither god nor Master.” What lies again beneath this attitude is the frustration at the boundaries created by God from the very existence of human being and god-like people. She

does not want to become part of a mechanical system which suggests a relationship far away from being sincere and frank dialogue. In one of the chapters of the novel titled, “Heavy Duty Vehicle”, her desperate situation as a result of mechanical life which is controlled and manipulated by the masters of our age can be observed. The son of one of Umut’s friends named Can, hears the sounds of a machine coming from outside the house and asks his father Abidin, Türkan Hanım, Umut and Başak to imitate the machines. They begin to carry out their duty not to disappoint the child. Although the act of the characters seems pointless, what Foucault describes as disciplinary method has a link with Camus’s idea of tragic fate of man who is transformed into docile bodies. According to Foucault “individuals are transformed into docile bodies because they normalize these rules and regulations which seek to control them” (Cited in Costa 2012: 387). In this context, Başak’s revolt against master-slave relationship can be understood better. How she responds to the hierarchical system in the society remains quite problematic because her reaction becomes suicidal which is not offered by Camus himself. Camus suggests that a person should lead an absurd life and resembles the world to a desert and says; “The real effort is to stay there, rather, in so far as that is possible, and to examine closely the odd vegetation of those distant regions” (Camus 1979: 17). On the other hand, she explains why she *does* commit suicide in her suicide note and writes: “And I will approach the hand rail by taking a step, hanging my hair down from the balcony, and let myself fall into emptiness. If I meet a friendly person who asks the reason of committing suicide, I will show the people down there, say “I told them something beyond understanding after a long way down” Let it be” (Bıçakçı 2014: 79).



Başak’s strive for communication in a world which is full of symbols of power that dominate the individual at every phase of life deepens. This power is so overwhelming over Başak that she is annihilated from the society because she can’t conform to the norms of a society which create unbearable pressure on her. Society sets ground for the annihilation because of its judgemental nature. People are prone to judge each other even in the case of suicide. That is to say, the individual always feels the threat of losing his/her authenticity. For instance, when Başak throws herself off the balcony of her house, people adopt an insulting attitude toward this event or try to cover up it, considering it as a disgraceful act. One of Başak’s old neighbours, Canan’s brother, mocks the possible

reason of Başak's suicide. He approaches the suicide by a sarcastic smile, winks and asks, "Why does that girl commit suicide?" (Bıçakçı 2014: 11). Although he doesn't find a certain answer to the death of Başak, he implies triviality of this suicide with his scornful gesture. Moreover, Başak's own father is also among the people who cannot sympathize with her. In a dialogue with his own wife, it is understood that he does not want a burial procedure. Türkan responds to him, "The dead belongs to the relatives" (Bıçakçı 2014: 16). Even after Başak's death, it is obvious that she is exposed to judicial attitudes of the others. Although people who come after Başak's suicide try to sympathize with her mother and brother, their hands reveal the banality of condolence. For instance, they say; "You are not alone, I am with you," "I am sorry for your loss" "Life is going on" (Bıçakçı 2014: 66). However, these expressions are found "senseless" in the novel just like people's hesitant hands, which hold up to say goodbye while leaving the house. Thus, Başak's need for communication via suicide, although she does not suppose that she will be understood by people around herself, comes to light. People are not expected to have an insight into this suicide because they prefer conforming to the regulations of society. Therefore, how Başak differs from society is conveyed through her suicide. The act of falling is regarded in the novel as a revolt against social norms which call for a hierarchical system positioning god-like masters on the top and slaves at the bottom.

When Başak's crisis reaches an ontological dimension, it is clear that she isolates herself from people and breaks her connection with life. She understands that the world is full of fictive things like mothers' repetitive words such as "we will sleep and wake up, sleep and wake up..." (Bıçakçı 2014:79) to their children who wait impatiently for a dream to come true. On the other hand, Başak knows that it is not the dream itself but, the everyday routines are unavoidable circumstances. Başak cannot cope with this reality and says "the reality is always embarrassing" because "as soon as it is found, we try to change it in the way we dream" (Bıçakçı 2014:98). In this respect, Başak's dream of obtaining ultimate reality comes to the foreground. Unlike Clamence, Başak wants to be a wise person, assembling the parts of reality and reach the ultimate truth. This fact also creates a huge gap between herself and other people because people, who look at shop windows, do shopping, and wait for the bus, direct their way to other roads when compared to Başak. It should be stated clearly that there is huge gap between Başak's worldview and that of others. Başak can't mingle freely with the crowd and she cannot direct herself in the way people look at 'reality' and 'meaning'. When she fails to reach the ultimate reality, she volunteers to fall and die. It can be said that she exhibits an absurd attitude until she commits suicide. Esin Pervane also attracts attention to the absurd aspect of Başak and explains that her suicide stems from discrepancy between the real world and herself (Pervane 2015: 122). As a result, Başak's fall ends on the ground

and she dies. Up to that point, the absurdity of life is emphasized through Başak's communication problem. On the other hand, suicide itself undermines absurdity which is elevated by Camus.

What causes Başak to commit suicide instead of living? In this sense, it can be observed that the attitude towards Turkish intellectuals plays a crucial role in understanding Başak's suicide which has roots in traditional assumptions and cultural expectations about the intellectual's death. As many studies show, suicide has social and cultural dimension. It takes many forms in terms of its causes. For instance, as Cannelto and Sakinofsky (1998) indicates, in some countries such as the USA masculinity is associated with suicide while nonfatal suicide is associated with femininity. In the case of Turkish literary world, a similar assumption exists about intellectual characters. Generally, intellectual characters are considered suicidal and depicted within deviant behaviours. A lot of novels can be given as examples marking this case. Suat in Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's *A Mind At Peace*, Aysel in Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Lying Down to Die, Wedding Party and No*, Kenan in Vedat Türkali's *One Day Alone*, Mehmet in Selim İleri's novel *the Queen of the Hell*, Selim in Oğuz Atay's *The Disconnected*, Ayhan in Mehmet Eroğlu's *The Middle of Nowhere and Overdue Deceased*, the narrator in Tezer Özlü's *Journey to the End of Life*, Cahide Hanım in Buket Uzuner's *Two Green Otters*, the narrator in *Three Headed Dragon* are the intellectual characters who are in conflict with the norms of the society. Also, it should be noted that most of these writers like Adalet Ağaoğlu, Oğuz Atay, Tezer Özlü and Leyla Erbil were under great influence of existentialism.²

Turkish literature was under influence of existentialism especially after 1950s like many other literatures. Svetlana Uturgauri explains in her work *On Turkish Literature* why most of Turkish writer embraced existential philosophy and says; "Popularization of existential philosophy among Turkish writer stems from their opposition of bourgeois ethic norms and support of a rebellious ethic against bourgeoisie" (Uturgauri 1989: 18). Uturgauri also makes a comparison between existential Turkish and Western literature and focuses on what makes Turkish literature different from others. She emphasizes the fact that "existentialism was born out of Turkey's distinctive conditions of history" (Uturgauri 1989: 45). According to Uturgauri, in the works of writers, who were influenced by existentialism and depression literature, "realistic images" and "ideological sensitivity of Turkish intellectuals is not abandoned" (Uturgauri 1989: 44). Moreover, "anti-imperialist attitudes are reflected" (Uturgari 1989: 44). In this context, all the works mentioned previously put the intellectual character at the centre of the novel and make use of existential motifs and terms

² For a detailed discussion see Şeyma Karaca Küçük. *Türk ve İngiliz Romanlarında İntihar (İkinci Dünya Savaşı Sonrası)* (Suicide in Turkish and British Novels (After World War II)). Ardahan: Ardahan University.

to criticize society. Another factor that makes Turkish writers influenced by existentialism different from western writers is the way they handle suicide. One of the efficient ways of criticizing society is creating suicidal intellectual characters in most of Turkish novels and it is clear in many examples. In this context, the suicide in the novel *After a Long Way Down* plays an important role to criticize society who condemns the absurd heroine Başak following the suicide. Başak's suicide reveals Turkish cultural assumption about the intellectual and makes her a different absurd character from Clamence. She abandons the logic and social codes which oppress and enslave the individual by committing suicide although she knows that she will not be understood by anyone. The communication problem is solved in *After a Long Way Down* with suicide whereas Clamence acknowledges the absurdity of life witnessing the suicide of the young woman jumping from Golden Bridge. Different images of falling serve different aims in the novels. In *The Fall*, it is presented as a chance to recognize the absurdity while in *After a Long Way Down*, it is used to communicate with society, in spite of the fact that it is impossible.

CONCLUSION

The textual examination of *The Fall* and, *After a Long Way Down* shows that both novels aim at focusing existential crisis of the individual. Başak experiences a kind of crisis implying her incapability of gaining a full insight of the world's meaning and feels a great shame and guilt of not being able to eat the fruit of knowledge tree. Like her, Clamence always feels the sense of guilt. On the other hand, his feeling does not stem from being incapable of reaching the meaning but from judgements of people at every moment of his life. Moreover, Clamence accepts both guilt and innocence and even judges himself and believes the importance of this practise to gain awareness of the absurdity of life. Both characters revolt against some kind of ideological apparatus. For instance, in *The Fall*, "the Last Judgement," that is, God and god-like institutions which enslave men are criticized. In a similar way, in *After a Long Way Down*, the sloganized expressions written on the walls which aim at separatism among people are scrutinized. In both novels, the mechanized world and relationships create annihilation. The human body is not regarded different from a machine in *After a Long Way Down*. Likewise, Clamence does not behave different from a machine within his social environment. He wears a different mask in his job or private life. However, the act of falling suddenly transforms his life although he likes high places, in other words, favourable spaces to dominate people; he puts a distance between himself and society by falling from this kind of place. Seen in this light, a crucial difference between Clamence and Başak attracts attention. Başak is unlike Clamence as she is not a character who is exposed to a transformation. There is not a change in her view of life from the very beginning of the

novel. She is reflected as a hopeless and unhappy person till the end. Most probably that is the reason why she commits suicide. The author cannot prevent himself from giving much of his attention to the social and political conditions of novel's setting, which implies the polarization between right and left wings politically and reflected on the walls of streets. Başak's suicide seems an inescapable end. The tendency of Turkish writers is to associate intellectual people with suicide in literary world. Most probably, the majority of Turkish writers find such a death acceptable to reflect the conflict between the intellectual and authoritative institutions. The contrast between the expressions such as "faithless people" "nation and flag", and Başak's slogan "Neither God nor Master" convey an implicit way of ultra-nationalistic discourse and a challenge to that kind of idea objecting to the right-wing authorities that oppressed people.

Taking these points into consideration, Başak's suicide turns into strive for communication as she emphasized in her suicide note. Alternatively, Clamence chooses to communicate through life not suicide. Başak reaches the edge of the life as soon as she understands the split between world's reality and her expectations and she decides to commit suicide. On the other hand, Clamence embraces the absurdity and goes on living. Although both Clamence and Başak reflect the universal tragedy of people who always try to attain a meaning to life, they differ from one another in terms of their view on the act of falling. In *The Fall*, falling means keeping the absurd alive while in *After a Long Way Down*, it means suicide which denotes seemingly slight but big difference.

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