The Footsteps of the Stranger in the Context of Zygmunt Bauman's Liquid Modernity Theory: The Picture Of Dorian Gray *and* Aylak Adam *

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde's only novel, and *Aylak Adam*, Yusuf Atılgan's award-winning work, through the lens of sociological criticism, specifically within the framework of Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, focusing on the theme of self-alienation. Alienation as a concept, branches into various categories; however, this study primarily concentrates on self-alienation. The protagonists of both works undergo transformations within the axis of modernity, and their alienation from society and themselves is examined in relation to identity construction and the sense of belonging. Bauman defines modernity as an unstable system built on uncertainty. In this context, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Aylak Adam* emerge as literary representations of self-alienation. The protagonist of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian, isolates himself from society under the influence of hedonist teachings, turning his physical beauty into his persona while concealing the traces of his shadow within his portrait. The unnamed protagonist in *Aylak Adam*, C., deliberately severs his ties with society, refusing to conform to any structured order. In this regard, Bauman's concept of liquid modernity, along with his perspective on liquid love, offers a broad framework to explain how and why both C. and Dorian Gray remain in a perpetual state of search yet fail to reach any destination or establish a stable connection with anyone. In both works, the relationship between modernity and alienation is explored in a multidimensional manner.

Keywords: Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Modernity, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Aylak Adam

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of alienation is a deeply rooted concept that dates back perhaps as far as human history itself and branches into multiple subcategories. With the advent of modern thought, this concept has become more perceptible, representing the weakening or rupture of an individual's connection both with themselves and with society. Tracing the origins of alienation reveals an intellectual tradition embedded within modernity, ranging from Karl Marx's theory of alienation concerning labour to Georg Simmel's metropolitan type of individuality. However, this study's primary theoretical foundation is Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modernity.

With the onset of the 'modern' era, societies underwent profound transformations. Industrialization led to mass migrations from rural areas to cities, as individuals sought better living conditions or employment with higher salaries. This shift altered people's perception of space and redefined their social environments. Additionally, traditional ways of life were gradually replaced by an individualized and anonymous urban existence. The transition to a capitalist mode of living brought significant economic changes, which, in turn, reshaped the social structure (Stearns, 2013: 1-6). Particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries, modernity's impact on alienation was examined extensively by Marx, who primarily approached it from an economic and social perspective, arguing that the laborer becomes alienated from both their labor and the process of production.

"Marx begins with the alienation of the results of man's labor, alienation of objects produced by man. The realization of labor is its objectification, and this objectification is for the laborer at the same time the loss of object, alienation" (Petrović, 1963: 421).

The turmoil brought about by modernity and its acceleration of social change have led individuals to develop a sense of alienation both from the society they live in and from themselves. The capitalist system, which has

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become stronger in the modern period, -along with shifts in social roles, the transformation of traditions and customs, and the transition to urban life -has prompted individuals to question their sense of belonging to both society and themselves. That's why alienation and the search for identity have deepened.

Bauman examines the phenomenon of alienation brought about by the rapid transformation of societies through modern and post-modern societies, explaining these transitions with the concept of liquid modernity. Through this term, Bauman analyzes self-alienation in relation to sociological dynamics. He explains the reason for naming the concept of 'liquid modernity', which is referred to as post-modernism in terminology, by drawing a comparison between solid and liquid structures. While solid structures can be shaped with relative ease, liquid structures are resistant to fixed forms. For this reason, he likens the rapid transformations within societies to liquid structures, emphasizing that societies must constantly adapt to ever-changing times, traditions, customs, and norms (Bauman, 2012: viii-x). In other words, the only constant is uncertainty, and the permanence of anything depends solely on its functionality.

Bauman argues in his sociological philosophy that the rapid transformation of modern societies, along with the expectation that social structures and individuals must adapt to this pace of change, weakens their ties to both themselves and their surroundings, thereby affecting their sense of belonging and security. Consequently, this leads to alienation. According to Bauman, individuals are continually compelled to redefine their identities, which in turn fosters a pervasive sense of rootlessness. As individuals gradually sever their ties with society, this process culminates in increased individualization, wherein people prioritize their personal interests over their connection to the broader community. In parallel, as individuals become estranged from the society they inhabit and drift away from the collective consciousness, they inevitably experience self-alienation as well. In this context, "the other side of individualization seems to be the corrosion and slow disintegration of citizenship" (Bauman, 2000: 36). That is to say, self-alienation is not merely a consequence of individuals' internal conflicts; rather, from a broader perspective, it emerges as a result of societal, cultural, and social factors.

Beyond the transformation of social norms and doctrines, modernity also renders interpersonal relationships increasingly transient. As a result, the subject struggles to establish stable and reliable connections, ultimately losing their sense of belonging. In addition to these factors that trigger self-alienation, individuals find it increasingly difficult to adapt to the society they live in and to the collective consciousness. On the one hand, they feel obliged to adapt, on the other hand, they feel that they are not understood and accepted by society, which further deepens their sense of self-alienation. "The groups who consider themselves and are considered by others to be alienated from society suffer either from the fact that some of their personality traits cannot be actualized in the existing social system or from the fact that they are not even allowed to actualize the personality traits which conform to the value system of their society. In both cases it is self-alienation which underlies alienation from society" (Weisskopf, 1971: 32). The dilemma arising from the desire to belong to a community while simultaneously preserving individual freedom and identity leads to alienation—not only from society but also from oneself.

For an individual alienated from society, initially the other consists only of external subjects within the community. However, over time, the individual becomes the other himself/herself. Within the collective consciousness, individuals define themselves not as an 'I' but as a 'we', and accordingly, those who differ from this collective identity are perceived as 'the other/others'. Consequently, the person who is categorized as the other may become subject to discrimination. Bauman also emphasizes that the phenomenon of othering leads to problems such as alienation and loneliness in societies.

This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Yusuf Atılgan's *Aylak Adam* within the framework of sociological criticism, revealing the projection of Bauman's concept of liquid modernity in these texts. In this context, the alienation processes of the protagonists will be examined through both individual and societal dynamics, to analyze the relationship between modernity and identity. It is thought that examining these two works together will help to understand how the theme of self-alienation is treated in different cultural and historical contexts and the effects of this theme on the identity and social position of the individual. Although Wilde and Atılgan lived in different geographical and temporal settings, they both explore the individual's conflict with their own selves and their sense of alienation through distinct yet thematically similar narratives. Dorian Gray's moral corruption and subsequent loss of self, alongside C.'s endless existential questioning, allow for a universal examination of the individual's position in the modern world, thereby deepening the discussion of self-alienation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This part will address the theoretical foundation of the study, the theory of sociological criticism, which forms the theoretical basis of the study, along with Zygmunt Bauman and his concept of liquid modernity.

Sociological Criticism

The theory of sociological criticism was born out of the idea that literature is not only 'reading for pleasure' or 'creativity', but that it is also in a relationship with society. It should not be overlooked that both the author and the work are part of society subjected to sociological examination. Accordingly, it can be said that the author is influenced by the societies they belong to or observe, their social environment, cultures, history, and the political circumstances of the time while creating their work, and that these influences are reflected in their writing.

We might say that the primary aim of sociological criticism theory is to establish a connection, examine, and analyze the different dynamics between the work, the author, the reader, and society through reading. Additionally, within the context of sociological criticism theory, it is possible to gain insight into the period of the work itself. "Basically, the novel, for the first part of its history, was a biography and a social chronicle and so it has always been possible to show that the social chronicle reflected to a greater or lesser degree the society of period" (Goldmann, 1977: 6). When considered from this perspective, it can be said that the sole function of literature is not to provide pleasure to the reader; rather, literature sometimes illuminates the hidden points of history.

The emergence of sociological criticism dates back to the 18th century. The first traces of sociological criticism can be found in the book *La scienza nuova (The New Science)* published by the Italian scholar Giovanni Battista Vico in 1725. In his work, Vico examined Homer from sociological and psychological perspectives, thus laying the foundations of sociological criticism theory. The development of the theory occurred through the approaches and publications of Johann Gottfried Herder in Germany and Germaine de Staël[3] in France. Particularly with the publication of de Staël's *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales (The influence of literature upon society)* in 1800, sociological criticism became a widely used method in France. However, it is said that the person who fully realized and applied this theory was Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (Moran, 2002: 83).

In his work *History of English Literature*, he says "in a civilisation, religion, philosophy, the organisation of the family, literature, the arts, make up a system in which every local change induces a general change, so that an experienced historian, studying some particular part of it, sees in advance and half predicts the character of the rest" (Taine, 1889: 29). Therefore, we may easily say that he saw a link between literature and history. Additionally, it can be said that Taine believed in an inseparable connection between the author and the work. He argued that the author, whether consciously or unconsciously, is influenced by their surrounding environment and reflects this influence in their work (Taine, 1889: 213-214).

Considering that Taine's lifetime coincided with the 1800s, i.e., the 19th century, it is not surprising that sociological criticism theory gained momentum during this period. Indeed, the 19th century was home to many historical events and scientific developments. One of the most notable events of this period was undoubtedly the Industrial Revolution. In the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution was at the heart of the rapid changes that took place, and with the advent of this revolution, significant changes emerged both in the lives of communities and in literature.

Robert C. Allen, a professor of economic history, explained the Industrial Revolution through a literary example, using the characters of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. From Dr. Jekyll's perspective, production technology underwent a revolution; with the invention of machines for cloth weaving and spinning during that period, efficiency increased, and the construction of railways made development inevitable. With the shift from agriculture to industry, cities grew, and significant prosperity was experienced in the West. These are the positive aspects brought about by the Industrial Revolution itself. However, Mr. Hyde represents the malevolent side of the Industrial Revolution. With the changes that occurred, filthiness in the cities, long working hours and the low wages received in return became the new normal for the people (Allen, 2017: 2-3). The excessively long working hours (12 hours or even longer in some cases) and living in poor conditions while being distanced from socialization led people to become alienated from both themselves and their surroundings. This example can be seen as an illustration of the bridge between literature and history, as it tells the history of the 19th-century industrial revolution through literature.

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[3] Also known as Madame de Staël.

Zygmunt Bauman and Alienation

The Polish/British sociologist and thinker Zygmunt Bauman was born in Poland. Dennis Smith, who wrote a biography about Bauman, described him by saying "He is one of the most interesting and influential commentators on these aspects of our human condition" (Smith, 1999: 3). The most striking part of Bauman's thought is his critical approach to modernity. To understand this approach, it would be useful to first briefly mention the definition of modernity. The first thing to note here is that modern and modernity are not the same thing. 'Modern' is an adjective that means contemporary, present time, or up to date, while 'modernity' means "the condition of being new and modern" (Lea et. al., 2020: 1006-1007). In this context, it can be said that modern is a dynamic concept. Modernity, on the other hand, refers to the replacement of traditional ways of thinking with rational thought.

Accordingly, it can be said that modernity represents not only a process of transformation but also an ethos. It should not be forgotten that modernity has both pros and cons that it has brought with it to human life. With its emergence, modernity has paved the way for new boundaries. While it is based on rationality and individualism, it has also led to a new process of alienation due to the bureaucratic structures and consumer culture it has created. This, in Weber's terms, results in the emergence of the 'iron cage' (Weber, 2005: 123-124). Weber explains the concept of the iron cage with the following words:

"In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the 'saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment'. But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. Today the spirit of religious asceticism—whether finally, who knows? —has escaped from the cage" (Weber, 2005: 123-124).

According to Weber, the rationalization occurring in modern societies and its widespread influence have led to significant changes in individuals' lives. Even though he thought that industrialization was progress, he feared that capitalism, bureaucracy, and the economic problems that accompanied modernity could restrict individual freedom and eventually turn into an "iron cage" that entraps them (Slattery, 2003: 2).

Bauman analyzed both the constraining and liberating aspects of modernity, examining the alienation process of the modern individual. While modernity promises freedom to the individual, it also simultaneously creates unstable identities by forcing them to keep up with constant change. To better understand and convey Bauman's sociology, it is necessary first to discuss his skepticism toward the concept of modernity, which he describes as "liquid," and the criticisms he directs at it. Bauman argued that modernity continuously compels individuals to change, preventing them from ever being complete (Bauman, 2012: viii).

In this context, it is possible to say that Bauman stands at a similar point as thinkers like Karl Marx and Erich Fromm. Nevertheless, Bauman's criticisms of modernity gain significance when historical events are considered. Bauman, who lived from 1925 to 2017, witnessed Nazi Germany and the Holocaust as a Jewish. In his work *Modernity and the Holocaust*, he holds modernity, modernism, and the modern era responsible for the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilization and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason, it is a problem of that society, civilization, and culture. The self-healing of historical memory which occurs in the consciousness of modern society is for this reason more than a neglect offensive to the victims of the genocide. It is also a sign of dangerous and potentially suicidal blindness (Bauman, 2008: x).

It can therefore be said that Bauman, influenced by his own experiences, is one of the critical thinkers of his time. He emphasizes that modernity and also post-modernity are not a completed process but a state of 'being'. At the center of Bauman's criticisms of modernity, a fundamental perspective lies: Modernity is not only about progress and rationality, a return to science by moving away from dogma, but also destruction. The Holocaust is not merely a historical anomaly but rather a result of the destructive power that modernity has unleashed through control and domination.

"Postmodernity is the human condition of trying to construct a viable and meaningful existence when modernity has been undermined by its own contradictions. This involves coping both with the void left by the disruption of the old mechanisms of social reproduction and the challenges posed by the new mechanisms, which only partly fill this void" (Smith, 1999: 137-138).

It is noteworthy that Bauman, who once defended postmodernism, later became anti-postmodernist. In fact, he no longer refers to postmodernism by its name; instead, he prefers the term "liquid modernity." The term "liquid" here essentially signifies change itself. Bauman describes society and the understanding of society as constantly changing, which he refers to as liquid modernity. He explains the concepts of being modern and liquid modernity as follows:

"To 'be modern' means to modernize – compulsively, obsessively; not so much just 'to be', let alone to keep its identity intact, but forever 'becoming', avoiding completion, staying underdefined. Each new structure which replaces the previous one as soon as it is declared old-fashioned and past its use-by date is only another momentary settlement – acknowledged as temporary and 'until further notice'. Being always, at any stage and at all times, 'post-something' is also an undetachable feature of modernity. As time flows on, 'modernity' changes its forms in the manner of the legendary Proteus… What was some time ago dubbed (erroneously) 'postmodernity', and what I've chosen to call, more to the point, 'liquid modernity', is the growing conviction that change is the only permanence, and uncertainty the only certainty." (Bauman, 2012: viii).

According to Bauman, it would not be wrong to say that "modernizing" leads to a state of alienation. In Bauman's understanding of modernity, being modern means constant change and staying in the process of becoming rather than being. The individual, caught in constant change and forced to adapt, may struggle to conform to uniformity.

Bauman's Proteus analogy in this quote is important. Proteus, also known as the Old Man of the Sea, is a sea deity. He resides on Pharos Island near Egypt and possesses the ability to change his form at will (Seyffert, 1895: 523). Bauman's likening of modernity to this shape-shifting mythological figure can be interpreted as follows; modernity continuously renews itself, never remaining in the past, and instead evolves toward the new, yet, this evolution is not a quest for a final wholeness but rather an endless process of construction. The foundation of Bauman's concept of liquid modernity lies in this very idea. That is, rather than a process of progress, modernity is itself uncertainty and transience, forcing subjects to adapt to change, creating a lack of stability and confidence. For this reason, modernity becomes the root of existential anxiety. Life, under the influence of modernity, is condemned to a state of perpetual flow and transformation—just as the philosopher Heraclitus expressed: The only constant in life is change.

According to him, liquid modernity, under the illusion of freedom, forces individuals into constant change and adaptation, estranging them from their familiar surroundings and even their own identities. Bauman explains this hyper-individualized society through the example of urban life. In cities, strangers encounter other strangers without reflections of the past. These encounters have neither a future nor a past—they are singular events, and it is desirable for them to remain as such. In these contemporary cities, Bauman identifies two broad categories. The first are places that excite but do not inspire the desire to spend more time there, and the second are places where consumers can buy/consume things. The individuals occupying these spaces lack any collective essence; however, the illusion of belonging to a community suffices. Yet, the sense of belonging felt in these spaces is superficial and misleading. The crowds filling these locations momentarily overlook each other's otherness (Bauman, 2000: 94-100).

Bauman also draws attention to Lévi-Strauss's approaches to dealing with the other in his example of the city and space. These approaches are divided into two categories: anthropoemic and anthropophagic. Bauman summarizes these two strategies as follows:

"The first strategy consisted in 'vomiting', spitting out the others seen as incurably strange and alien: barring physical contact, dialogue, social intercourse and all varieties of commercium, commensality or connubium (…) The second strategy consists in a soi-disant 'disalienation' of alien substances: 'ingesting', 'devouring' foreign bodies and spirits so that they may be made, through metabolism, identical with, and no longer distinguishable from, the 'ingesting' body" (Bauman, 2000: 101).

Accordingly, the first strategy is to socially and physically exclude the other. The second strategy is to digest the other, to render their differences 'invisible' by making them a part of the digester's self. In other words, while the anthropoemic strategy represents physical erasure, the anthropophagic strategy represents cultural erasure. Thus, it can be said that modern societies approach the Other through notions of assimilation and exclusion. In this way, the other becomes 'manageable'.

In postmodern societies, marginalization and alienation are frequently observed phenomena because modernity has inherently brought about ambiguity. This rapid change fosters insecurity, leading to the marginalization of others or being marginalized oneself—and, consequently, a deepened sense of alienation.

"But there is little chance of things getting transparent and simple for us, the residents of modern cities. Since the beginning of modern times cities have been gatherings of anonymous crowds, meeting places of strangers – genuine 'universal otherhoods', as Benjamin Nelson called them. Strangers mean a lack of clarity: one cannot be sure what they will do, how they would respond to one's acts; one cannot tell whether they are friends or enemies – and so one cannot help but view them with suspicion" (Bauman, 2001: 88).

The elements of modernity, such as the culture of consumption that modernity brings with it and the pressure to be successful and to adapt to the community in which one lives, also trigger self-alienation. The individual begins to experience a lack of belonging, becoming alienated from both society and themselves. Bauman emphasizes that with postmodernity, societies have also become 'liquid'.

In summary, Zygmunt Bauman's perspective on modernity provides a significant foundation for understanding the concept of alienation. According to Bauman's liquid modernity, the individual exists solely in a state of "becoming" and can never be fully complete; the constant exposure to change makes it difficult for them to establish a connection with themselves. The anthropoemic and anthropophagic strategies that Bauman refers to are processes that shape the individual's relationship with both the outside world and with oneself because these approaches are about excluding or assimilating the other, the foreigner. As a result, the way an alienated individual perceives and defines themselves is also affected. As soon as the modern individual fails to keep up with the dynamics of change, he/she becomes a stranger—not only to society but also to themselves, questioning their own essence and becoming the "other" within. Bauman's critiques of modernity reveal the fractures in the modern individual's identity and relationships within society. The foreigner is the manifestation of the ambiguity brought by modernity. In this context, Bauman's concept of liquid modernity represents a paradoxical process in which the individual's quest for liberation intensifies while their alienation from their own essence becomes inevitable.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY* AND *AYLAK ADAM*

Oscar Wilde's novel, titled *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was published in 1890, while Yusuf Atılgan's novel *Aylak Adam* was published in 1959. Both works highlight significant points regarding the modern individual's process of self-alienation in the context of family relationships, social ties, and the individual's struggle for self-definition. In this part of the study, the processes of alienation will be examined comparatively through the protagonists of the works, Dorian Gray and C., and how these processes are shaped by the dynamics of the characters' environments will be evaluated in the context of Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity and liquid love, which is an extension of liquid modernity.

Firstly, the element of the family is prominent in the processes of self-alienation experienced by the main characters in both works. C. and Dorian Gray suffer from identity crises due to their fractured relationships with their families. Dorian lost his parents at an early age and was raised under the guardianship of his grandfather, Lord Kenso, who showed almost no interest in him. In this context, it can be argued that the lack of familial support and love created a void in Dorian's identity construction.

Significantly, Dorian is characterized as a subject with almost no familial ties in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Coming from an aristocratic family, Dorian's mother, Margaret Devereux, married a low-ranking officer from the lower class and gave birth to Dorian. However, Dorian's father was killed in a duel just a few months after their marriage, and it is rumored that his grandfather, Lord Kenso, was behind this death. Dorian's mother also died shortly after his father's death, leaving him to be raised by Lord Kenso. Considering this information, it can be said that the emotional manifestations of the loss of his parents at an early age emerge later and Dorian feels a disconnection from his origins. Dorian's contradiction between the personalities of his mother and grandfather is felt throughout the work. Margaret married a lower-class man without considering social norms and class differences, while Lord Kenso killed his daughter's husband in line with his own interests and desires. At this point, it can be argued that Dorian is in a dilemma about which legacy he should embrace. "So that was the story of Dorian Gray's parentage (…) A beautiful woman risking everything for a mad passion. A few wild weeks of happiness cut short by a hideous, treacherous crime. Months of voiceless agony, and then a child born in pain. The mother snatched away by death, the boy left to solitude and the tyranny of an old and loveless man" (Wilde, 1964: 43). Growing up under the shadow of a figure who disregards moral values and conscience has led Dorian to learn how to silence his own conscience.

C. from *Aylak Adam* lost his mother at a noticeably early age and was forced to live with his father, whom he never loved. The first step of his alienation, and perhaps the biggest reason for it, is also his father. "Everything you see in me starts with my father. When I was very young, would I feel that same mixture of fear and disgust at the man's black moustache as he leaned in to kiss my cheeks, or did I think of that later? I

do not know"[4] (Atılgan, 2022: 149). The character does not have a healthy relationship with his father, and towards the end of the book, the reader is informed of the reasons for his dislike of his father. In this case, the absence of a paternal figure has contributed to his upbringing and has fueled the process of alienation.

"Almost every night, as soon as my father entered the house, he would take me away from the games I played with my aunt, from the happiness of fairy tales. 'Put the child to bed!' he would say. I was learning to shift suddenly from great joys to great sorrows. Because when I was in her lap, I would forget my father's presence (…) My father had a terrible weakness for women. I must have made the decision not to be like him as I witnessed these abominations. I would provoke him just to disturb his comfort. He would slap me. If only you knew how much I wanted those beatings! They freed me from the torment of 'not loving my father'" (Atılgan, 2022: 150-151).

The absence of father and mother figures in C.'s life has caused the character to have difficulties in issues such as work, order, and adaptation, and to have problems with authoritarian structures. The lack of shaping by these figures has also resulted in problems for the character in constructing his own identity. For C., the closest figure to a mother is his aunt, who took care of him.

"Sometimes my aunt would ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up. 'I don't know,' I would say. 'I won't be a broker.' She would laugh. Shaking her head, she would say, 'You will suffer because of this bad man.' I did not know then that she was the mistress of this man she called a villain. We think that those we love share our feelings" (Atılgan, 2022: 151). When he learned about the relationship between his father and his aunt, C. was sent to a boarding school and his aunt died a month later. Although he claims to have forgiven his aunt, the absence of a maternal figure and the actions of his idealized aunt, whom he had placed in that role, contribute to C.'s inability to maintain healthy relationships with women. He is not indifferent to women or relationships; however, before starting a relationship, he tends to idealize them in his mind, and when he realizes they are not as he expected, he withdraws. As a result, he has been unable to establish a long-lasting, healthy bond in any of his relationships. The lack of a meaningful connection with his family has led to C. not having a root from which he can define himself, which, in turn, has resulted in his alienation from himself and his origins.

Bauman argues that in the modern world, children have become emotional objects of consumption. "Objects of consumption serve the needs, desires or wishes of the consumer; so do children. Children are wanted for the joys of the parental pleasures it is hoped they will bring – the kinds of joys no other object of consumption, however ingenious and sophisticated, can offer" (Bauman, 2008: 42). A connection can be established between Bauman's view and the family lives of C. and Dorian. When we look at their family lives, it becomes apparent that both C. and Dorian were raised as unwanted children, and their families failed to fulfil even the function of emotional consumption. Lord Kenso, who raises Dorian, does so within a completely cold aristocratic system, while C.'s father sees him as an obstacle. As a result, Dorian attempts to camouflage his emotional deficiencies by transforming his physical beauty into a sort of consumption object. In contrast, C. begins to view women solely as consumption objects, idealizing them without forming genuine connections. Ultimately, the lack of a sense of belonging and love in the upbringing of both Dorian Gray and C. has made them distanced from society and, subsequently, from themselves. Dorian Gray tries to silence his conscience by covering his portrait with a large cloth, while C. finds himself lost in a constant search.

Although the characters' processes of alienation begin as an internal journey, certain events must serve as turning points for them to understand this condition and recognize its reflections in their lives. Dorian's alienation from himself, as depicted by Wilde, begins with the painter Basil Hallward creating a portrait of him and his encounter with Lord Henry. Dorian is so enamored with his portrait that he effectively sells his soul to the devil, wishing for the portrait to age instead of himself.

"'How sad it is!' murmured Dorian Gray with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait. 'How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young (…) If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that – for that – I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!'" (Wilde, 1964: 34).

However, he is not yet aware of the destruction that this wish will bring about. Due to his obsession with beauty and youth, he begins to gradually isolate himself from both society and himself. It is essential to remember that self-alienation and alienation are mutually reinforcing points.

In literature, the theme of "selling one's soul to the devil" is considered an ancient motif that readers encounter in many literary works. On one hand, this theme, rooted in an old legend, has also found a place in mythology,

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[4] All quotations from this book were translated from Turkish to English by Hilal Nur Erden.

illustrating the chaotic consequences of defying the gods. The experiences of characters such as Sisyphus, Atlas, and Prometheus from Greek mythology can be interpreted in connection with Dorian's fate. For example, Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods to give to humanity, was chained to rocks by Zeus, and his liver was presented to an eagle to be eaten, enduring this punishment for all eternity (Chen&Chen, 1994: 754). Prometheus's brother Atlas, having lost his battle against the Olympian gods, was condemned to carry the celestial sphere on his shoulders for all eternity (Dougherty, 2006: 15-16). King Sisyphus of Corinth descended to the underworld twice. During his first death, he chained Thanatos, the personification of death, and during his second death, he managed to persuade Hades himself to let him return to the surface, where he continued his life on Earth until he grew old and died (Cartwright, 2016). When he finally died, he was condemned to roll a huge rock to the top of a hill, but every time he got close to the summit, the boulder rolled back down (Homer, 1963: 204-105).

Dorian's attempt to attain immortality through art/object can be interpreted as a form of hybris[5]. Just as Prometheus, Atlas, and Sisyphus were punished, Dorian too is condemned to the curse of his portrait—an object that ultimately marks the beginning of his downfall. For C. in *Aylak Adam*, the catalyst for his alienation is not as explicitly defined, yet deep wounds have been inflicted on his soul since childhood. Due to the distant and absent parental figures in his life, his sense of rootlessness has progressively intensified. As a result, he cannot feel a sense of belonging anywhere. The closest thing to maternal affection he has experienced comes from his aunt, but even this bond is eventually tainted by betrayal, and her sudden death leaves him utterly alone.

His father, on the other hand, has never served as an authoritative figure or a source of belonging, and no strong bond has ever been established between them to guide or shape C.'s identity. As a result, he carries the internal burden of not belonging anywhere, of always being a stranger. This is why he remains in a constant state of search. Among the most prominent objects of this search are women.

C.'s choice of women typically leans towards those with blue eyes. This preference stems from his mother; "I don't know my mother. She died when I was one year old. Maybe it's because my aunt talked about her beautiful blue eyes that I think I've seen those eyes. I have always liked blue eyes. Perhaps the reason I could tolerate that girl I told you about for three months was because she had blue eyes. I don't know." (Atılgan, 2022: 150). C.'s reaction upon witnessing the relationship between his father and his aunt, whom he loves and idealizes, brings to mind Freud's Oedipus complex. According to Freud's Oedipus complex, after the end of the auto-erotic phase, the first love object for children is the parent of the opposite sex. Thus, during infancy, the Oedipus complex develops: the male child begins to see the mother as a sexual object of desire while harbouring hostile feelings toward the father and perceiving him as a rival. (Freud, 2013: 46).

"My father had one arm wrapped around my aunt's skirt, lifting it up, while his other hand caressed her bare legs. '-Zehra, don't you have these legs?' he said. Everything around me seemed to darken. I sprang forward. When I threw myself at them, her legs were still bare.'-Let go of her, let go!' I shouted… I bit his hand. 'Uyy, my mother!' he cried out. My teeth hurt. Suddenly, he grabbed my left ear. I felt a filthy, burning pain. My aunt was saying, 'Ah, what have you done?' 'His ear is torn! You wretch, you tore his ear! His ear is torn.' She was crying. Then I fell. The voice in my head kept repeating, 'His ear is torn. His ear is torn, his ear is torn, his ear is torn…'" (Atılgan, 2022: 151-152).

C.'s conflict with his father goes beyond a mere Oedipal rivalry; it also forms the foundation of his self-alienation process. Having lost the battle against his father, C. is compelled to acknowledge his father's absolute power and, in turn, begins to question his own existence. His struggle to avoid resembling his father represents his desire to break free from his father's shadow. However, paradoxically, this struggle becomes the primary force shaping his life. The leitmotif of scratching his left ear throughout the novel is a bodily manifestation of the emotional trauma he experienced in the past. The fact that he scratches his ear particularly when he is drawn to women or confronted with situations that remind him of his father demonstrates that his desires and past traumas have merged into a single experience. As a result, desire is not a completely free experience for C.

Towards women, C. feels not only passion but also unease. For C., a woman represents the security and warmth embodied by his aunt, but at the same time, she becomes a symbol of betrayal and loss. When analyzed through the lens of the Oedipus complex, it can be argued that C.'s rivalry with his father continues, even on an unconscious level, and that the traces of the anger he felt upon losing this battle are still present in his body, and mind, and soul. "In a patriarchal society the son is subject to the father's will; he is owned by the

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[5] "The transgression of the boundary line is always called 'insolence ' (ὕβρις); man must not be so presumptuous as to strive to raise himself above his mortal lot" (Nilsson, 1949: 227).

father and his fate is determined by the father" (Fromm, 1981: 29). The itching left ear, and his fear of women's legs are not merely reminders of the past; rather, they indicate that C.'s connection to his past remains unbroken and that the traumatic cycle is triggered every time he meets a new woman. This situation has turned into an identity crisis for C.

In both works, it is possible to analyze the relationships of the characters engaged through the lens of modernity. Throughout the novel, C. develops an emotional interest in three women—Güler, Ayşe, and the woman in the blue coat—while also going after or thinking of numerous other women, including those he encounters on the streets or in buses, into objects of desire. Among these relationships, the most substantial one is with Ayşe. C. and Ayşe were together in the past but separated, only to reunite after some time had passed. However, this relationship, too, eventually came to an end. In the framework of modernity, consumption is not limited to material goods with monetary value; emotional relationships are also rapidly consumed. Throughout the novel, C. is depicted as being in a state of emotional and existential crisis. One of the dilemmas of the modern individual—an inability to feel a sense of belonging—manifests itself in C.'s relationships.

When evaluated in the context of his relationships, C. is seen as being distant from the sense of belonging that traditional relationships provide while also failing to find meaning in the individuality and freedom brought by modernity. Only during the two-month period he spent with Ayşe did he briefly conform to the model of a traditional society member. However, this transformation led him to feel disgusted with himself.

"I was comfortable. I had no separation from those who were fond of comfort, from those who were well-off. Even when I shouted at her, 'There are no others; there are just the two of us,' I was like the others. Why are you laughing? Didn't I carry grapes home every evening for a month? Didn't I always buy the grapes from the same greengrocer? Wasn't I glad when that day this thick-browed greengrocer handed me a huge paper bag and said, 'You love Razaki. It looked like it was going to run out, so I put some aside'? When I paid the man, I felt ashamed seeing myself in the shop mirror with the bag in my arms. It was as if I was not the one in the mirror. At night, this was someone who was happy that could eat the razaki grapes." (Atılgan, 2022: 163).

C.'s emotional relationships exemplify this situation. Although he feels discomfort with the transience offered by the modern world, he also avoids forming attachments. In this context, C. has become disconnected from the deep sense of belonging provided by the community but has also failed to find meaning in the individuality and freedom that modernity offers. C.'s loneliness can be interpreted as an inevitable consequence of modernity.

Dorian Gray's physical and emotional relationships are also transient. In fact, he initially falls in love with a girl. However, he causes her death and subsequently chooses not to assign much significance to it. It is essential to remember that Lord Henry is the person who leads Dorian to this state. Therefore, it is necessary to first discuss the relationship between Lord Henry and Dorian. "Before encountering Henry, Dorian is as clean as a piece of white paper. Henry successfully conveys his ideas to Dorian with beautiful language and guides him to pursue a kind of life which exacerbate his alienation and destruction" (Zhang, 2016: 379). Lord Henry, who enters Dorian's life parallel to the moment the portrait is first completed, gradually instils in Dorian everything he wishes to do but has not accomplished in his own life, playing a vital role in Dorian's process of alienation. "In adopting a sensationalist philosophy of curing the soul by means of the senses and the senses by means of the soul, Lord Henry exhibits the circular and contradictory logic of an asceticism achieved by self-titillation rather than self-denial, by wakening rather than deadening the senses" (Manganiello, 1983: 27). *It can be said that* there is a teacher-student relationship between Lord Henry and Dorian Gray. Their conversations revolve around topics such as beauty, aesthetics, love, pleasure, and sin, through which Lord Henry changes and educates Dorian. Lord Henry saw Dorian as a test subject and subjected him to what he considered a scientific experiment.

"It was clear to him that the experimental method was the only method by which one could arrive at any scientific analysis of the passions; and certainly Dorian Gray was a subject made to his hand, and seemed to promise rich and fruitful results (…) What there was in it of the purely sensuous instinct of boyhood had been transformed by the workings of the imagination, changed into something that seemed to the lad himself to be remote from sense, and was for that very reason all the more dangerous" (Wilde, 1964: 65). Lord Henry Wotton, from the moment they first met, glorified the concepts of youth and beauty so profoundly that Dorian's life gradually began to revolve around these two notions. Throughout the novel, these concepts are intricately interwoven, much like two sides of the same coin. In this context, the notion of youth, which is frequently referenced in the novel and serves as the catalyst for the transformation of Dorian's life, is portrayed as an elegant representation of beauty. Lord Henry foreshadows the destructive consequences his influence

will have on Dorian by saying, "Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed" (Wilde, 1964: 26). Especially Lord Henry's obsession with beauty and his tendency to position beauty and intellect as opposing concepts become one of the factors that influence Dorian and drive him toward his downfall.

"You smile? Ah! When you have lost it you wont smile. … People say sometimes that beauty only superficial. That may be so, but at least it is not so superficial as thought is. To me, beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible. Yes, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away" (Wilde, 1964: 30-31).

It is obvious that one of the elements that prepare Dorian's end is Lord Henry and his discourses. Lord Henry, who is portrayed as a hedonistic character, transforms Dorian into a hedonist over time. Dorian, who has lost his purity and detached from moral values, has become a different person, and started to live for his own pleasure without thinking about the price of his sins. While he refers to his portrait as 'fatal,' in reality, the portrait bears the cost of Dorian's rotting and corrupt sins, making it clear that the one truly decaying is Dorian himself.

Lord Henry's approach to other people, women, and emotions also offers an intriguing perspective to the reader. It is precisely due to these views and the conversations he has with Dorian within this framework that Dorian gradually begins to alienate himself—not only from society, his friends, and his surroundings but also from his own self and self-awareness.

"'Never marry at all, Dorian. Men marry because hey are tired; women, because they are curious: both are disappointed.' 'I don't think I am likely to marry, Harry. I am too much in love. That is one of your aphorisms. I am putting it into practice, as I do everything you say.'" (Wilde, 1964: 53-54).

The interaction between Dorian and Lord Henry symbolizes the contradictions that the modern individual encounters in life. Although the hedonistic philosophy that Lord Henry teaches Dorian appears to be a pursuit of freedom and a path toward liberation, it actually triggers the onset of dependency and alienation. As Dorian embraces this philosophy, he falls into an inner void, increasing his detachment from the external world. Over time, he begins to perceive his relationships with women solely as elements of experience and objects of consumption, like C.. For him, these relationships are not emotional bonds in a traditional sense but rather fleeting satisfactions that suppress desire and serve as a pursuit of aesthetic pleasure.

His relationship with Sibyl Vane, from its inception to its tragic end, reveals that Dorian has become a member of a consumerist society. In fact, the sequence of events leading to Dorian's introduction to Sibyl foreshadows the inevitable downfall of this artificial love.

"I felt that this grey monstrous London of our, with its myriads of people, sordid sinners, and its splendid sins, as you once phrased it, must have something in store for me (…) I don't know that I expected, but I went out and wandered eastward, soon losing my way in a labyrinth of grimy streets and black grassless squares" (Wilde, 1964: 55).

The color "gray" in the quotation symbolizes evil, negativity, and the unknown. It is neither black nor white, representing an in-between state and uncertainty. Additionally, the gray color here can also be interpreted as a representation of gender identity. Wilde was never 'black' because he did not want to be, nor could he be 'white' due to societal pressures. From a philosophical perspective, Dorian's movement toward the "east" represents a Dionysian approach. Apollo and Dionysus symbolize two opposing forces: Apollo represents reason, boundaries, and order, while Dionysus embodies ecstasy, passion, and pleasure (Nietzsche, 1923: 21-28).

For Dorian, who falls in love with Sibyl, a lower-class theatre actress, Sibyl is nothing more than a work of art. His love for her is based not on her individuality but on her presence on stage. In summary, although Dorian believes he loves Sibyl, what he truly admires is the aesthetic beauty she represents. When Sibyl gives up acting for Dorian and presents herself not as a work of art but as a real person, she loses all her splendor and aesthetic value in his eyes, leading him to abandon her. "He flung himself down on the sofa and turned away his face. 'You have killed my love,' he muttered" (Wilde, 1964: 91). In this context, for Dorian, love is as superficial and fleeting as a work of art.

With Sibyl's suicide, Dorian completely detached himself from emotional responsibility, basing his relationships with women solely on pleasure. This can be seen as an example of the emotional detachment

experienced by the modern individual: avoiding commitment and perceiving all emotional relationships merely as objects of consumption.

"Then, suddenly, some night he would creep out of the house, go down to dreadful places near Blue Gate Fields[6], and stay there, day after day, until he was driven away. On his return he would sit in front of the picture, sometimes loathing it and himself, but filled, at other times, with that pride of individualism that is half the fascination of sin, and smiling with secret pleasure at the misshapen shadow that had to bear the burden that should have been his own" (Wilde, 1964: 142).

At this point, even if Dorian is unaware of it, what he is trying to escape is neither the society he belongs to nor the people who make up that society; he is trying to escape from himself, from the person he has become.

According to Bauman, modern individuals "need to be only loosely tied, so that they can be untied again, with little delay, when the settings change – as in liquid modernity they surely will, over and over again" (Bauman, 2008: vii). C. and Dorian Gray fundamentally share the same fate: modern individuals who have been shaped by the liquid nature of modernity. The disappearance of the stable forms of belonging and relational norms provided by traditional societies has turned love into merely a tool for the individual's self-realization, becoming a consumable object. Modern individuals fear attachment because it constitutes a commitment that jeopardizes individual freedom and the infinite possibilities of choice (Bauman, 2000: viii).

Firstly, C. completely fits Bauman's concept of the "modern individual." Influenced by not having experienced a happy family structure in his childhood, he generally avoids romantic attachment styles, viewing love not as a realm of belonging but as a quest. His relationships with women, while never aligning with his ideals, are always short-lived. "In lasting commitments, liquid modern reason spies out oppression; in durable engagement, it sees incapacitating dependency. That reason denies rights to bindings and bonds, spatial or temporal" (Bauman, 2000: 47). Therefore, love is a risk factor for the modern individual, and the most reliable way to avoid that risk is to make it temporary. Due to his fear of forming an emotional bond, C. seeks an ideal that is not reciprocated in any woman, but this ideal he searches for can never reach a satisfying point in the world of infinite possibilities that modernity offers. Alienation is also a fundamental motif in C.'s love life.

Bauman's concept of liquid love is most clearly embodied by Dorian Gray. Following his acquaintance with Lord Henry, he transforms into a hedonistic character, and love becomes merely an image of consumable pleasure for him. For instance, his love for Sybil is meaningful only as long as she appears as a manifestation of art; however, when Sybil presents herself as a flesh-and-blood, the love Dorian feels completely extinguished. This is because what Dorian predominantly experiences is not love but desire. According to Bauman, desire and love are not entirely identical but resemble two siblings that sometimes stand side by side and sometimes apart. Desire represents an instinctual call and is an element of consumer culture. When desire reaches fulfillment, the object disappears, as desire annihilates its object while also annihilating itself. Love, on the other hand, is the antithesis of desire. In contrast to the destructive impulse of desire, love aims to protect, nurture, and foster. However, love also has its own dilemmas. It establishes a hidden power within submission, ruling and limiting secretly (Bauman, 2000: 9-11).

According to Bauman's views, C. is alienating himself with each non-continuous love relationship, losing a piece of himself each time, while Dorian Gray sees love merely as a playground where youth and beauty are commodified, thus failing to attain awareness of his own reality.

These narratives can also be observed in contemporary society. In the modern world, love has swiftly transformed into a consumable desire, becoming a temporary consumption tool that is not based on long-term commitments. The most concrete examples of this today are online dating applications. Through these platforms, individuals access multiple options, avoiding the obligation of making an emotional investment in any relationship. The key nuance here is that relationships have become based on the principle of interchangeability. Through such applications, relationships have effectively turned into a shopping catalog. This is the contribution of modernity to the present; in every sense, in every area, there is a hysteria of both material and spiritual consumption.

To summarize, the protagonists of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Yusuf Atılgan's *Aylak Adam* are figures who have experienced the damaging effects of liquid modernity on individual identity. We

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[6] "Generally, the name "Bluegate Fields" was used to refer to one of the worst slum areas that once existed at the east end of London (just north of the old London docks) during Victorian times (the 1800's) - specifically, the name had also been used to designate at least two actual roadways or streets in the general area. The wretchedness that existed in the Bluegate Fields slum area is well documented - also associated with the general wretchedness are two additional measures of infamy in that (1) some of the opium dens that were in existence at the time were located at or near the Bluegate Fields area and (2) the legend on the 1889 Booth poverty map describes the general condition of the local inhabitants as "lowest class, vicious, semi-criminal" - not the best of ratings" (Fisher, n.d.).

may say that these characters are manifestations of the alienation created by the modern world. The result of this spiral of alienation has been a final annihilation. In a moment of madness, Dorian has destroyed his portrait in an attempt to escape from a being he can no longer recognize and that has become irreparably corrupted; however, this act has led not only to the destruction of the portrait but also to his own. Thus, all the ugliness and decay of the sins the portrait has borne for years has permeated Dorian's appearance. On the other hand, C., in his search for meaning, has followed the woman in the blue coat he saw on the street with one last hope, but like everything else he tries to capture, possess, and internalize in the liquidity of the modern world, the woman slips away like a shadow. For him, the truth has become the inability to grasp not just a woman but also the meaning of his own existence. Accepting everything he has, wishes to be, and cannot be, he merely states: "He knew. They would not understand" (Atılgan, 2022: 190).

CONCLUSION

In this study, Yusuf Atılgan's *Aylak Adam* and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are examined comparatively within the framework of Zygmunt Bauman's approach to modernity and the concept of liquid modernity, focusing on the individual and social dimensions of self-alienation. On the axis of modernity, the changes, transformations, and attitudes experienced by the main characters, C., and Dorian, are interpreted through the lens of individual alienation.

Wilde and Atılgan's works provide an opportunity to evaluate the manifestations of modernity on individual existence from a universal perspective. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* addresses the alienation of the individual within the context of aesthetic and moral corruption, while *Aylak Adam* focuses on the socially and existentially alienated modern individual who simultaneously seeks meaning and attempts to escape from it. Both Dorian and C., as defined in Bauman's concepts of liquid modernity and love, represent modern individuals lost in the lack of belonging, unable to establish connections with any social structure, individuals, or even themselves.

When evaluated within the theoretical framework developed by Bauman, Dorian's portrait, which changes while carrying his sins, and C.'s characterization as a rootless flaneur wandering through the city can be interpreted as reflections of the liquidity of modernity on individuals. The false freedom and discourse of individualization presented by modernity prove to be mere illusions for both characters, ultimately alienating them from their surroundings and, subsequently, from themselves. The breaking of traditional ties, the superficiality of relationships and the continuous pressure for individuals to transform render the alienation of the modern individual inevitable.

In this study, the individual and societal dimensions of alienation have been examined through sociological criticism and Bauman's philosophy. Although *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Aylak Adam* are works from different cultures and historical periods, the alienation of the modern liquid individual and its manifestations have been addressed with similar themes. This situation shows that alienation arises not only as a characteristic of a specific society or historical period but also as a universal and inevitable result of modernity. As a result, Bauman's sociological thought and the liquid modernity concept he has shaped provide an important framework for understanding the reasons behind the disruption of the sense of belonging in the modern individual and the development of the process of self-alienation.

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