

**THE ARTIST UNDONE: EXISTENTIAL TRAUMA, DIVINE AGENCY, AND
SUICIDAL COMPULSION IN KISAKÜREK’S *CREATING A MAN***

**YIKILAN SANATÇI: KISAKÜREK’İN BİR ADAM YARATMAK ADLI ESERİNDE
VAROLUŞSAL TRAVMA, İLAHİ İRADE VE İNTİHAR DÜRTÜSÜ**

Sami AKGÖL* - Asım AYDIN**

ABSTRACT

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek’s intense drama *Creating A Man* meticulously charts the harrowing psychological disintegration of its protagonist, Hüsrev, an esteemed playwright whose artistic creation tragically and violently irrupts into empirical reality, thereby instigating a profound and uniquely configured existential trauma. This study argues that Hüsrev’s pronounced suicidal ideation and his calamitous descent into a state socially identified as madness are not merely the esoteric manifestations of artistic temperament or creative exhaustion. Instead, they are posited as direct, devastating consequences of a catastrophic collapse of the ontological boundaries between his artistic creation and empirical reality, specifically when his art violently and fatally irrupts into the lived world. Employing a trauma-informed critical methodology, this analysis engages with foundational theorists such as Cathy Caruth (1996), concerning the literal and insistent return of the traumatic event, and Judith Lewis Herman (1992), regarding trauma’s symptomatic triad. Crucially, it also foregrounds the imperative articulated by Stef Craps (2013) for acknowledging the cultural specificity of trauma. The analysis anatomizes how the accidental killing of Hüsrev’s cousin, Selma—a chillingly precise reenactment of a pivotal scene from his own play, *Death Anxiety*—functions as the critical traumatic stressor. Hüsrev’s subsequent torment revolves around unbearable guilt and the crushing weight of artistic-moral responsibility, compelling him into an agonizing interrogation of his agency vis-à-vis divine will, a conflict resonant within an Islamic theological framework. The symbolic significance of the fig tree, his father’s suicide, the shattered window, and his mimetic fusion with his fictional character are explored as manifestations of his trauma. Hüsrev’s ‘madness’ is reinterpreted not as a clinical category but as a desperate response to an unassimilable existential crisis, his suicidal thoughts a compulsive drive towards pattern completion. By illuminating the theological dimensions of Hüsrev’s suffering, this study underscores Kısakürek’s distinctive contribution to the literary portrayal of trauma, offering a culturally nuanced exploration of a mind undone by its creative power.

Keywords: Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Creating A Man*, Trauma Theory, Existential Trauma, Turkish Modernist Drama, Islamic Theology, Suicidal Ideation, Meta-theatrical Trauma, Artistic Guilt.

ÖZ

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek’in draması *Bir Adam Yaratmak*, saygın bir oyun yazarı olan oyun kahramanı Hüsrev’in, sanatsal yaratıcılığının trajik ve şiddetli bir şekilde deneysel gerçekliğe girmesiyle, derin ve benzersiz bir varoluşsal travmaya yol açan, yürek parçalayıcı psikolojik

Bu makale 10.02.2025 tarihinde dergimize gönderilmiş; 15.02.2025 tarihinde hakemlere gönderilme işlemi gerçekleştirilmiş; 20.05.2025 tarihinde hakem raporlarının değerlendirilmesi sonucu yayın listesine dâhil edilmiştir.

This article is an outcome of Sami AKGOL’s MA thesis entitled “Suicidal Impulses in William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek’s *Creating A Man*” with the supervision of Assist. Prof. Dr. Asım AYDIN

Makaleye atıf şekli; Sami Akgöl- Asım Aydın, “The Artist Undone: Existential Trauma, Divine Agency, and Suicidal Compulsion in Kısakürek’s *Creating A Man*”, *Müellif Uluslararası Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi*, S. 3, (Haziran 2025), s. 36-47.

* Öğr. Gör., Karabük Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, Yabancı Diller, Karabük/Türkiye, E-mail: samiakgol@karabuk.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-0073-2119.

** Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Karabük Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü, Karabük/Türkiye, E-mail: asimaydin@karabuk.edu.tr, ORCID: 0009-0007-2557-4659.

çöküşünü titizlikle anlatır. Bu çalışma, Hüsrev'in belirgin intihar düşünceleri ve sosyal olarak delilik olarak tanımlanan bir duruma düşüşünün, yalnızca sanatsal mizaç veya yaratıcı tükenmişliğin ezoterik tezahürleri olmadığını savunmaktadır. Bunun yerine, bunlar, sanatçının sanatsal yaratımları ile deneyimsel gerçeklik arasındaki ontolojik sınırların felaketle sonuçlanan çöküşünün, özellikle de sanatının şiddetli ve ölümcül bir şekilde yaşanmış dünyaya girmesiyle ortaya çıkan doğrudan ve yıkıcı sonuçları olarak ortaya konmaktadır. Travma odaklı eleştirel bir metodoloji kullanan bu analiz, travmatik olayın kelimenin tam anlamıyla ve ısrarla geri dönüşü konusunda Cathy Caruth (1996) ve travmanın semptomatik üçlüsü konusunda Judith Lewis Herman (1992) gibi temel teorisyenlerle ilgilenmektedir. Önemli bir şekilde, Stef Craps (2013) tarafından travmanın kültürel özgülüğünü kabul etmek için dile getirilen zorunluluğu da ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Analiz, Hüsrev'in kuzeni Selma'nın kazara öldürülmesinin -kendi oyunu Ölüm Korkusu'ndaki önemli bir sahnenin tüyler ürpertici bir şekilde yeniden canlandırılması- kritik travmatik stres faktörü olarak nasıl işlediğini inceler. Hüsrev'in ardından yaşadığı ıstırap, dayanılmaz suçluluk duygusu ve sanatsal-ahlaki sorumluluğun ezici ağırlığı etrafında döner ve onu, İslam teolojik çerçevesi içinde yankı bulan bir çatışma olan, ilahi iradeye karşı kendi iradesini sorgulamaya zorlar. İncir ağacının sembolik anlamı, babasının intiharı, kırılan pencere ve kurgusal karakteriyle mimetik birleşimi, travmasının tezahürleri olarak incelenir. Hüsrev'in "deliliği", klinik bir kategori olarak değil, asimile edilemeyen bir varoluşsal krize karşı çaresiz bir tepki olarak yeniden yorumlanır; intihar düşünceleri, kalıbı tamamlama yönündeki kompulsif bir dürtüdür. Hüsrev'in acılarının teolojik boyutlarını aydınlatarak, bu çalışma Kısakürek'in travmanın edebi tasvirine yaptığı ayırt edici katkıyı vurgular ve yaratıcı gücüyle mahvolmuş bir zihnin kültürel açıdan incelikli bir incelemesini sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Bir Adam Yaratmak, Travma Teorisi, Varoluşsal Travma, Türk Modernist Draması, İslam Teolojisi, İntihar Düşüncesi, Meta-tiyatro Travması, Sanatsal Suçluluk.

Introduction: The Perilous Genesis of Art and the Traumatized Creator

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's 1938 play, *Creating A Man*, occupies a significant and challenging space within the canon of Turkish modernist drama. It is a work that plunges with unflinching intensity into the abyss of artistic responsibility, the torturous terrain of existential crisis, and the harrowing spectacle of psychological disintegration. The play's protagonist, Hüsrev, a playwright of considerable renown and intellectual prowess, is violently propelled into a profound state of suffering. This suffering emanates not from conventional external assailants such as societal persecution or overt malevolence, but from an almost unimaginable catastrophe rooted deeply within his own creative endeavors: the accidental, yet devastatingly real, fatal enactment of a critical scene from his own dramatic creation.

This paper advances a central argument: Hüsrev's subsequent and progressively deepening psychological unraveling, his descent into a state readily identified by those around him as 'madness,' and his potent, recurrent, and increasingly specific suicidal impulses are direct and devastating manifestations of a uniquely configured and profoundly existential trauma—the trauma born from unintended, yet culpably experienced, destructive creation. By integrating the critical and analytical insights of contemporary trauma theory—drawing particularly from Cathy Caruth's influential conceptualization in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) of trauma as an "unclaimed experience" marked by its literalness, its intrusive insistence, and its resistance to normative narrative assimilation—this analysis endeavors to dissect the complex, interwoven layers of Hüsrev's profound suffering. Judith Lewis Herman's comprehensive delineation in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992) of the symptomatic expressions of trauma, including the crucial triad of hyperarousal, intrusion, and constriction, provides a valuable framework for understanding Hüsrev's behavioral and psychological shifts. Furthermore, with particular emphasis, this study acknowledges Stef Craps's vital call in *Postcolonial Witnessing* (2013) for scholarly attention to, and respect for, the cultural and historical specificity of traumatic experience and its diverse modes of representation.

The accidental killing of his young cousin, Selma, during a demonstration where he meticulously re-enacts a fictional shooting from his play *Death Anxiety*, serves as the undeniable and catastrophic traumatic fulcrum. His ensuing torment, as this paper will meticulously demonstrate, revolves around an unbearable burden of guilt, a crushing sense of artistic-moral responsibility, and a terrifying blurring of the lines between fiction and reality. This internal crisis propels him into an agonizing and unresolvable confrontation with the fundamental nature of his own agency, the inherent limits and potential dangers of human creative power, and the inscrutable, often overwhelming, workings of divine will—a spiritual and philosophical conflict that is deeply embedded within, and articulated through, an Islamic theological framework. Through a close examination of key recurring symbols (such as the ominous fig tree), the intergenerational haunting of his father's suicide, Hüsrev's evolving and increasingly fragmented linguistic expressions, his progressively compulsive suicidal ideation, and his ultimate, disturbing fusion with his own fictional character, this study will reinterpret his perceived 'madness'. It is posited not as a simple clinical pathology but as a profound, albeit ultimately disintegrative, psycho-spiritual response to an unassimilable existential crisis. This reinterpretation aims to highlight Kısakürek's distinctive and culturally rich exploration of a creative mind tragically undone by the formidable power, and perceived sacrilege, of its own imaginative faculty.

The Meta-Theatrical Wound: When Fictive Death Becomes Irreversible Reality

The singular, catastrophic event that serves as the genesis of Hüsrev's profound trauma and subsequent psychological unravelling occurs with chilling precision in Act 1, Scene 11 of Kısakürek's *Creating A Man* (2023). In this pivotal scene, Hüsrev, intending to demonstrate the dramatic veracity and psychological plausibility of an accidental shooting sequence from his acclaimed play, *Death Anxiety*, meticulously re-enacts the scene for his assembled guests, including his young cousin Selma. The text underscores his detailed, almost obsessive, attention to the mechanics of the supposed accident, creating a mounting sense of dramatic irony as he assures himself and others of the weapon's safety:

HUSREV: (...) "He takes out the magazine to empty the bullets." [Removes the magazine from its place with his right hand and gives it to Mansur] [...] "He empties the bullets from the magazine." [Dumping the bullets from the magazine held in his right hand onto the table one by one with the thumb of the same hand] "Now the magazine is empty of bullets." [Leaving the magazine on the table] "The purpose is to check if a bullet remains in the barrel." (...) "Look, when you pull this lever, if there's another bullet, it ejects." [As no bullet ejects] "Since nothing ejected, it means there isn't one. Now he's sure. No bullet. He releases the mechanism." [Releasing the mechanism and passing the gun to his right hand with a sharp mechanism sound] "However, a bullet remained in the barrel. How would I know? Maybe it didn't come out because it was swollen or rusted. Couldn't that happen? (...) Now the gun is set, supposedly empty. The trigger needs to be pulled." [Turning the gun towards Ulviye.] "He unknowingly turns the gun towards where his mother is. He doesn't see his mother." (...) [Voice suddenly rising while the gun remains in the same position] "He pulls!" [Hüsrev doesn't pull the trigger upon saying the last word. He places the gun on the table.] "...And his gun fires. At that exact moment, his mother stood up from where she was bent over. Suddenly, she became the target for the bullet. That's all..." (Kısakürek, 2023, pp. 47-48).

It is at this critical juncture, agitated by the skepticism of another guest, Zeynep, and in a fateful attempt to definitively prove his artistic point regarding the horrifying plausibility of such an accident, that Hüsrev impulsively grabs the gun again. He aims it towards the empty space where his mother, Ulviye, is notionally positioned according to his theatrical demonstration, and pulls the trigger. In that exact, horrific instant, Selma, moving to clear a cup from a nearby table, steps directly into the path of the discharged bullet and is killed (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 48).

This horrifying convergence of meticulously crafted fiction and brutal, irreversible reality constitutes the meta-theatrical wound that lies at the very core of Hüsrev's ensuing trauma. It is, in Cathy Caruth's evocative terms, an event "not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it" (Caruth, 1996, p. 4). The

trauma inflicted upon Hüsrev is particularly insidious and psychologically devastating because it directly implicates his own agency and his very identity as an artist; he is not merely a passive victim of an external force but the direct, albeit unintentional, agent of a fatal outcome that has sprung horrifyingly to life from the wellspring of his own artistic imagination and intellectual pride. His anguished, almost blasphemous, questioning later in the play, in Act 3, as his psychological state deteriorates—"Because I attempted to create a man... To fashion a head, a pair of eyes, a nose, a mouth for him... This man also needs a destiny drawn for him... [Shouts] Am I God?" (Kısakürek, 2023, pp. 132-133)—powerfully reveals the depth of his existential torment. He grapples with an overwhelming sense of having usurped or misused a creative (or, in its tragic outcome, destructive) power that has now irrevocably overwhelmed him, a power that, in his theological framework, properly belongs only to the Divine.

The "crisis of agency" and the profound challenge to representation that Ruth Leys identifies in *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000) as inherent characteristics of certain traumatic experiences are acutely pertinent here. Hüsrev is plunged into an unresolvable quandary concerning an event whose origins lie disturbingly within his own creative volition, his artistic choices, and his very act of dramatic mimesis. The play forces a confrontation with the terrifying possibility that the artist's creation can escape the bounds of fiction and inflict real-world, irreparable harm, thereby implicating the creator in a unique and deeply personal form of culpability.

This primary, catastrophic trauma is further complicated, its psychological impact significantly amplified, and its symbolic resonance deepened by a pre-existing layer of profound familial tragedy: the suicide of Hüsrev's own father thirty years prior. As revealed through conversations in Act 1, Scene 3, and confirmed by Ulviye, Hüsrev's mother, his father had hanged himself from the large, ancient fig tree situated in their family garden (Kısakürek, 2023, pp. 21-27). The significance of this biographical detail is immense and cannot be overstated, as this is the exact method and specific location of the suicide of the father figure in Hüsrev's own play, *Death Anxiety*. This disturbing instance of "traumatic doubling," or what might be termed a pre-scripted tragedy, establishes a haunting, almost preordained pattern of self-destruction that Hüsrev feels increasingly, and terrifyingly, drawn into as the play progresses. This dynamic resonates with the theoretical explorations of intergenerational trauma advanced by psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (1994), particularly their concept of the "intrapsychic phantom"—an encrypted, unresolved trauma or unspoken secret from a previous generation that continues to exert a powerful, often unconscious, and sometimes destructive influence on the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the living (Abraham & Torok, 1994, p. 171).

The fig tree, therefore, transcends its mere physical presence in the garden; it becomes a potent, multi-layered, and overdetermined symbol within Hüsrev's psyche. It is a constant, visceral reminder of paternal loss, unresolved grief, and perhaps even inherited despair. It is also a key symbolic element within his own artistic creation, now imbued with a horrifying prescience. And, most ominously, it transforms into the increasingly obsessive focal point for his own burgeoning suicidal preoccupations, the imagined site of his own potential self-annihilation. Hüsrev's trauma, consequently, is not a singular, isolated incident that can be neatly demarcated or understood in isolation. Instead, Kısakürek reveals it as a terrifying, complex, and tragically interconnected nexus where past familial grief, present artistic mimesis, the burden of creative genius, and a catastrophic, fatal accident horrifyingly converge. This convergence irrevocably blurs the ontological boundaries between life and art, self and other, past and present, intention and outcome, in a manner that proves psychologically unendurable for Hüsrev, setting the stage for his profound descent into what others perceive as madness and his own tortured contemplation of suicide as a means of escape or, perhaps, a perverse form of pattern completion. The very act of "creating a man" in his play has, through a horrifying turn of fate, led to the unmaking of a woman in reality, and ultimately, to the unmaking of Hüsrev himself. His initial discussion with the journalist Turgut about the fig tree in Act 1, Scene 1, where Hüsrev deflects direct questions about its significance by attributing its choice in his play to the mysterious obsessions of those with "fixed ideas" (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 18), already hints at an underlying unease and a complex,

perhaps partially repressed, connection to this potent symbol, long before it becomes explicitly linked to his own suicidal crisis.

The Suicidal Current: Compulsion, Symbolism, and Deepening Theological Despair

Hüsrev's emergent and progressively intensifying suicidal impulses in *Creating A Man* present a stark and instructive contrast to the more philosophically deliberated and rhetorically framed contemplations of self-annihilation found in a character like William Shakespeare's Hamlet. For Hüsrev, the profound psychic pull towards suicide manifests less as a reasoned weighing of existential options or a debate concerning the abstract pains of existence versus the fear of an unknown hereafter. Instead, it increasingly takes on the disturbing characteristics of an overwhelming, almost magnetic, psychological compulsion—a terrifying and seemingly irresistible drift towards a specific, symbolically preordained, and almost ritualistically conceived end. This compulsion is inextricably and fatally intertwined with the dual traumatic legacies that haunt him: the unresolved grief and potential inherited burden of his father's suicide, and the catastrophic, unforeseen, and guilt-laden consequences of his own artistic creation, which has resulted in Selma's death. His obsessive fixation on the fig tree—the precise site of his father's self-destruction by hanging and a prominent, ominous symbol within his own fictional play, *Death Anxiety*—as the designated locus for his own potential self-annihilation becomes a recurring and increasingly dominant motif throughout the drama, signaling the deeply compulsive nature of his suicidal ideation.

Even before the catastrophic accident involving Selma, his conversation with the journalist Turgut in Act 1, Scene 1 reveals a pronounced, almost defensive sensitivity and a degree of avoidance when questioned directly about the significance of this particular tree in his garden and its connection to his father's death. This early exchange hints at an already existing psychic vulnerability, a partially repressed or at least unarticulated complex of meaning surrounding this potent symbol, long before it becomes explicitly and terrifyingly linked to his own acute suicidal crisis. Following Selma's death, an event that Hüsrev experiences as a horrifying confirmation of his art's destructive potential, this underlying preoccupation with the fig tree erupts with full, devastating force. In a pivotal and chilling exchange with his actor friend Mansur in Act 2, Scene 8, Hüsrev articulates this profound sense of an almost predetermined, inescapable fate, a tragic script he feels compelled to enact:

HÜSREV: My father hanged himself from a fig branch. Should I hang myself from the same tree, the same branch? I will. Whatever else they want, I will do. Do you understand, Mansur? To be forced to defend against them feels too ugly to me (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 89).

This is not the language of choice, rational deliberation, or philosophical inquiry; it is the stark, almost resigned, articulation of a deeply internalized and terrifyingly compelling script, a compulsive desire for a tragic reenactment that promises a horrifying form of pattern completion. This psychological state reflects what Judith Lewis Herman, in *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), identifies as a potential consequence of severe and prolonged trauma: the profound "constriction of future possibilities", where the traumatized individual may perceive themselves as irrevocably trapped in an inescapable pattern of suffering, repetition, and doom (Herman, 1992, p. 47). This can lead to a desperate, almost ritualistic seeking of pattern completion, even if that completion means self-destruction, as a perverse form of regaining control or achieving a final, albeit tragic, resolution to otherwise unendurable psychological conflict. The act of suicide, in this distorted psychic economy, can become imbued with a sense of terrible necessity or even a dark aesthetic symmetry.

The symbolic weight of the fig tree is further amplified by its deep intertextual and cultural resonances, including biblical associations with knowledge, shame, and the fall from grace, themes that subtly underscore Hüsrev's own sense of transgression and existential crisis. The tree functions as what the French psychologist Pierre Janet might have termed a "condensation symbol"—a physical object onto which multiple layers of traumatic meaning, personal history, artistic preoccupation, and existential dread become concentrated and dangerously cathected (Van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1989). Its branches, in Hüsrev's tormented

imagination, seem to offer not shade or sustenance but a fatal embrace, a pathway to an oblivion that mirrors his father's and which seems to be demanded by the very narrative logic of his own art.

The act of his mother, Ulviye, in having the fig tree cut down in Act 3, Scene 7, becomes a critical and paradoxically intensifying turning point in Hüsrev's trajectory towards self-destruction. Intended as a desperate maternal intervention, a practical measure to remove a potent and visible symbol of death and thereby alleviate her son's increasingly morbid fixation, this action, ironically and tragically, exacerbates rather than diminishes his suicidal crisis. Hüsrev's reaction upon discovering the tree's absence is one of profound desolation, existential disorientation, and an intensified sense of inescapable despair. He confronts his mother with an anguish that reveals the depth of his psychological investment in this object:

HUSREV: (Suddenly seeing the empty space of the fig tree in the garden, he stops. With a strange calm) Who cut down the fig tree in the garden? (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 122) ... (To Ulviye) Mother, when I looked at that tree, it was as if I saw my father... Because that was my father. That was me. That was my childhood. That was my everything... Now you cut it down. Right at the base, level with the ground. Thus you cut down my world. Now I understand that my world disappeared from its very roots, from the ground level. (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 125)

The fig tree, in Hüsrev's traumatized psyche, had clearly functioned as more than just a tree; it was a profound "traumatic object cathexis," a focal point for his unmourned grief, his overwhelming guilt, his artistic anxieties, and his meticulously, if morbidly, constructed suicidal plans. Its physical removal deprives him of his specifically chosen, symbolically resonant, and ritualistically conceived method of suicide—the one that would have provided a horrifying, yet somehow psychically necessary, symmetry by completing the perceived tragic pattern established by his father and so eerily mirrored in his own artistic creation. This thwarted compulsion does not, however, extinguish his underlying suicidal drive. Instead, it appears to redirect it, stripping away the symbolic meaning he had attached to a specific act and leaving him with a more diffuse, yet perhaps even more desperate, yearning for annihilation. This ultimately contributes to his eventual passive acceptance of institutionalization—a form of symbolic death, a surrender to social erasure, a different kind of self-annihilation, where his internal world of torment is simply exchanged for the external confinement of an asylum. His final, haunting utterance as he is led away, a lamentation directed at his mother, "What shall I do, mother! You cut the fig tree!" (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 147), powerfully encapsulates this sense of thwarted compulsion, profound despair, and the ultimate foreclosure of his chosen, symbolically laden path to oblivion. This denouement resonates with Julia Kristeva's profound explorations in *Black Sun* (1989) concerning the deep connections between melancholia, an impossible or failed mourning process, the loss of meaning, and a pervasive yearning for dissolution or a return to an inanimate state. Hüsrev's will to live is extinguished when the symbolic means of his chosen death is removed, leaving only the bleakness of an unpatterned despair.

The 'Madness' of Unbearable Truths: Existential Disintegration as a Traumatic Response

Hüsrev's progressive and undeniable psychological deterioration throughout the course of *Creating A Man*, a state readily and repeatedly labeled as 'madness' by the other characters who interact with him, can be more productively and insightfully understood through the critical lens of trauma theory. It is presented not as a descent into clinical insanity per se, or as a purely endogenous psychiatric condition, but rather as a series of complex and increasingly desperate symptomatic responses to an overwhelming, unintegrable, and profoundly existential crisis. His noticeably altered perceptions of reality, his growing detachment from conventional social interactions and norms, and the increasing fragmentation and peculiarity of his speech and expressed identity are all consistent with Judith Lewis Herman's (1992) detailed clinical descriptions of how severe trauma can profoundly disrupt normative cognitive and emotional processing. This disruption can, in extreme cases, lead to a significant disintegration of the

cohesive self when the traumatic experience and its psychological aftermath exceed the individual's innate or developed integrative capacity.

Early in Act 2, Hüsrev's charged confrontation with Şeref, the pragmatic and worldly newspaper owner who is concerned about the scandal surrounding Selma's death, starkly reveals this growing break from, and even contempt for, established social norms and conventional understandings of sanity:

ŞEREF: Mr. Hüsrev, you are literally insane. You will make me forget how an excused person you are.

HUSREV: I wish I would make you forget! Tell me one more time, my dear fellow. I cannot grip to be that unfortunate in emotional sense (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 83).

His almost defiant embrace, or at least his lack of resistance to, the label "insane" signifies not necessarily a delusional state in a strictly clinical sense. Instead, it suggests a profound and painful alienation from a world whose conventional realities, social expectations, and established categories of thought can no longer contain, explain, or provide meaning for the extremity of his internal experience. This resonates with Cathy Caruth's (1996) assertion that trauma can precipitate a fundamental "crisis of representation", a state where the established boundaries between internal psychological reality and external consensual reality are catastrophically breached, leaving the individual unmoored and adrift in a sea of incomprehensible suffering. Hüsrev himself articulates this terrifying sense of psychic and existential unmooring with painful clarity in a conversation with Nevzat, a doctor who is also a family friend, and his increasingly worried mother, Ulviye:

HUSREV: My equilibrium is slipping, is that it? It feels to me as if certain veils are lifting from my eyes. I see you all differently. I'm afraid of all of you. I'm terrified of all my relationships... My world is slipping away. An hand is pulling something out from under me. Like a tablecloth from a table. They're pulling it. Everything is toppling. Everything is sliding along with it... My world is slipping from my hands. Another world is taking its place. What kind of world, I cannot explain. Let them tear my flesh fibre by fibre with tweezers, may I not see this world. (Kısakürek, 2023, pp. 67-68)

This vivid and harrowing description of a disintegrating phenomenal world perfectly illustrates what the pioneering French psychologist Pierre Janet termed "dissociative splitting" (Bessel A. Van der Kolk & Onno van der Hart, 1989, p. 1532). This refers to a profound fragmentation of consciousness that can occur when the intensity and nature of traumatic experience utterly overwhelm the individual's capacity for psychological integration and coherent self-perception. Hüsrev's 'madness,' viewed from this perspective, emerges as an externalization of this unbearable internal conflict, a desperate, albeit ultimately failing, attempt to live with, or give tangible form to, an unbearable, world-shattering truth about his own culpability and the perilous nature of his art. His perception of "another world" taking the place of his own signifies the intrusion of the traumatic reality, a reality so alien and horrifying that it eclipses ordinary experience.

The manner in which Hüsrev's language transforms under the pressure of his trauma is particularly revealing and significant. His speech becomes increasingly saturated with potent, often visceral, and deeply disturbing metaphors. Furthermore, he displays a growing tendency towards a disturbing literalization of abstract concepts, particularly concerning his creative work and his perceived relationship with his fictional characters. He speaks of his tormented thoughts as if they were physical entities, graphically describing his brain as "bleeding" these thoughts:

Osman, can blood not flow from where the knife has pierced? My brain is bleeding too. I am not thinking, my brain is bleeding. I see, when I close my eyes, I see. On the fleshy globe of my brain, every thought rolls like a drop of black blood. I don't want it Osman! But can blood not flow from where the knife has pierced? (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 110).

This powerful somatic expression of intense mental anguish underscores the deeply embodied nature of his trauma, where psychological pain manifests with perceived physical force, aligning with Bessel van der Kolk's emphasis in *The Body Keeps the Score* (2014) on how "the body keeps the score".

More critically, and central to his psychological unraveling, he begins to fuse his own identity inseparably with that of his fictional creation, the protagonist of his play *Death Anxiety*. He chillingly tells his friend Mansur, "I wrote his words. Now he is writing my words" (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 115). This sense of being authored by his own character culminates in the terrifying assertion:

I attempted to create a man. To find a face and a destiny for him... Where could I find them? I found myself. The faceless and destiny-less man reared up. Broke his chain. Escaped from my hand. I am human. He struck me from behind. The faceless and destiny-less man put on my face. Wore my mold. Lay down inside my destiny. So, this was my destiny too (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 134).

This profound and pathological blurring of the boundaries between self and artifact, creator and created, where Hüsrev experiences himself as being scripted, inhabited, and ultimately consumed by his own fictional character, represents a deeply mimetic engulfment in the traumatic dynamic. This state, as described by Ruth Leys (2000), involves a terrifying loss of the critical distance necessary for processing experience, leading to a compulsive identification with, or reenactment of, the traumatic scene or its symbolic equivalents. Hüsrev's declaration that *he* is now playing the lead role in *Death Anxiety* exemplifies the "Alterations in self-perception" that Judith Lewis Herman (1992, p. 121) describes as a feature of complex trauma, which can involve profound fragmentation or a persistent sense of fundamental difference from others.

The climactic and visually arresting scene in Act 3, Scene 9, where Hüsrev confronts his distorted reflection in the mirror, reviling his own physical appearance with savage self-loathing "Look at this face! It resembles a stale piece of meat pounded on an oak block in a butcher's shop with an oak mallet! ... And look at this head! ... It looks like the carcass of a rooster run over by a truck!" (Kısakürek, 2023, pp. 95-96), and then, in a paroxysm of despair and rage, violently smashes his manuscript of *Death Anxiety* through the library window "Here is the creation!... [With all his strength, he hurls it at the middle window. The window shatters with a crash. An sudden howl of wind. Curtains fly.]" (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 135), serves as a powerful physical enactment of his complete internal implosion. The shattering window is far more than a mere symbolic portal for suicidal contemplation as might be initially assumed; it represents the violent, definitive rupture of the last vestiges of psychological containment, the terrifying point at which his psychic fragmentation becomes overwhelmingly and destructively manifest in the external world. This act symbolizes the catastrophic collapse of all mediating boundaries—between art and life, self and creation, subjective experience and objective reality, and ultimately, between what is perceived as sanity and its terrifying opposite. It is the dramatic and visual apotheosis of his traumatic crisis, a stark and unforgettable metaphor for the "unmaking of the world" that the literary theorist Elaine Scarry describes in *The Body in Pain* (1985) as being characteristic of profound, embodied pain and suffering. The window, a fragile barrier between interior and exterior, here signifies the collapse of Hüsrev's own mental boundaries.

The reactions of other characters within the play, particularly the pragmatic Dr. Nevzat, who consistently advocates for Hüsrev's institutionalization based on a conventional clinical assessment of his deteriorating mental state, effectively highlight the societal tendency, critically examined by thinkers such as Michel Foucault in *Madness and Civilization* (1965) and R.D. Laing in *The Politics of Experience* (1967), to medicalize, categorize, and thereby attempt to contain forms of profound existential distress that fundamentally challenge conventional understandings of reality, reason, and normative behavior. Hüsrev's 'madness,' therefore, far from being presented as a simple or easily definable pathology, emerges within the play as a tortured, complex, and ultimately tragic conduit for radical philosophical and theological questioning—questions that arise with such unbearable force precisely because the conventional psychic and social constraints of reason and behavior have been irrevocably shattered by the force of his unique and devastating trauma.

Theological Dimensions of Trauma

A defining and crucial characteristic of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's *Creating A Man* is its profound and pervasive engagement with the theological dimensions of Hüsrev's trauma. Unlike many Western literary portrayals where psychological suffering might be explored through primarily secular, psychoanalytic, or existentialist lenses divorced from overt religious frameworks, Kısakürek deliberately and consistently situates Hüsrev's agonizing psychological disintegration within an explicitly Islamic conceptual and spiritual framework. This approach compels an examination of his crisis not merely as a matter of individual psychopathology or artistic angst, but as a deep spiritual malady, a confrontation with divine power, human limitation, and the terrifying moral responsibilities inherent in the act of creation itself. This theological engagement reflects precisely what the trauma theorist Stef Craps (2013) identifies as the necessity for culturally specific trauma processing, wherein existential questions arising from catastrophic experience emerge from, and critically engage with, the particular religious, philosophical, and moral traditions of a given culture. Craps (2013) argues compellingly for a recognition of the specific historical, material, and cultural contexts in which trauma takes place and is given meaning, moving beyond universalizing Western psychological models.

The play's central theological concern, which becomes increasingly dominant as Hüsrev's crisis deepens, emerges with particular force in his tortured monologues and intense dialogues, especially in Act 3, where he grapples directly with the overwhelming implications of human creativity in relation to divine omnipotence and decree. His powerful, almost delirious monologue in Scene 9, where he explicitly compares his own flawed and ultimately destructive act of artistic creation to the absolute and perfect creative power of Allah, establishes this theological framing with undeniable clarity:

HUSREV: Because I attempted to create a man... To fashion a head, a pair of eyes, a nose, a mouth for him... This man also needs a destiny drawn for him... [Shouts] Am I God? ... We, everything in this world, are Allah's possessed ones. He, Allah, is the perfection of perfections. Captivated by that point, knowingly or unknowingly, we want that from Him... Knowingly or unknowingly, we journey towards Allah, there is no arriving... Can one ever measure oneself against infinity? Can numbers, millions and billions, ever compete with infinity? ... I climbed the rock I wanted to climb and fell. It seems I went too far. I entered forbidden lands... I recognized the God in the attempt of my creation. The pseudo-God recognized the original. The shadow artist recognized the real artist. I also know the God now. My mind explodes like an ammunition storage. (Kısakürek, 2023, pp. 132-134)

This extraordinary passage reveals Hüsrev wrestling with the core Islamic concept of *khalq*—the understanding that true, origination creation is the exclusive prerogative of God (Allah), while human creativity, however inspired or skillful, is necessarily derivative, secondary, and ultimately answerable to divine creative power and moral law. As scholar Abdul Hafeez El-Zein (1977) discusses, within Islamic tradition, while humans may “fashion” or “form,” the act of breathing life or decreeing destiny is God's alone. Hüsrev's torment stems precisely from his terrifying realization, born from the catastrophic consequence of Selma's death, that in his artistic ambition to “create a man” and to script destiny, he has, in his perception, transgressed this sacred boundary. His “attempt to create a man” is now seen by him as a failed, hubristic, and ultimately sacrilegious imitation of divine power, an act of a “pseudo-God” or a “shadow artist”. His psychological breakdown, therefore, becomes a form of unwilling, terrifying, and destructive recognition of divine supremacy “The pseudo-God recognized the original”. This profound crisis of meaning, where his artistic identity is shattered by theological implications, reflects what Judith Lewis Herman (1992) identifies as a common outcome of traumatic experience—the fundamental challenge to, and often collapse of, established frameworks for understanding suffering, responsibility, and one's place in a moral or cosmic order. Herman (1992, p. 51) notes that trauma often “violates the victim's faith in a natural or divine order” and calls into question basic human relationships and assumptions about meaning.

Furthermore, Kısakürek's play deeply explores the complex Islamic theological concepts of *qadar* (divine decree, predestination) and its intricate relationship with *ikhtiyar* (human free will, choice, and agency). While Hüsrev feels an overwhelming sense of personal guilt for Selma's death, his language simultaneously reveals a terrifying sense of being trapped in a preordained pattern, a destiny set in motion by his father's suicide and seemingly fulfilled through the fatal agency of his own fictional character. His chilling assertion, "The faceless and destiny-less man [his character] put on my face. Wore my mold. Lay down inside my destiny. So, this was my destiny too" (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 134), encapsulates this torturous ambiguity. Is he a responsible agent who made a fatal error, or a pawn in a larger, divinely scripted tragedy? This unresolved tension between perceived culpability and perceived fatedness is a hallmark of his psychological unraveling. This dynamic reflects what the scholar Michael Rothberg (2009), in a different context, terms "multidirectional memory", where contemporary concerns (in Hüsrev's case, his artistic responsibility and psychological breakdown) become articulated and processed through established, historically deep cultural and theological frameworks (such as Islamic concepts of destiny and creation) (Rothberg, 2009, p. 3). Hüsrev processes his unique, meta-theatrical trauma through the specific theological concepts and existential questions available within his Turkish Islamic cultural tradition, demonstrating precisely what Stef Craps (2013) argues for: the critical importance of recognizing culturally specific resources and idioms for the articulation and integration (or, in this case, mal-integration) of traumatic experience.

The play also implicitly engages with the Islamic concept of *sabr* (patience, fortitude, faithful endurance in the face of suffering and adversity), primarily through its conspicuous absence in Hüsrev's response to his trauma. He lacks the capacity for such faithful resilience, instead succumbing to overwhelming despair, existential terror, and progressive psychological disintegration. When Mansur attempts to encourage him, suggesting his inner strength will allow him to overcome this crisis ("Hüsrev, you are one of the strongest people in the world. You will overcome this depression. I am sure you will save yourself."), Hüsrev rejects this, his response laden with self-loathing and a sense of absurd degradation ("Were I not so ridiculous, I could not pour out my troubles... I've become a figure of fun") (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 69). This inability to access or embody *sabr* further highlights the depth of his spiritual crisis, where traditional religious virtues offer no solace against the magnitude of his perceived transgression and its horrific consequences. His suffering is experienced not as a divine test that might lead to spiritual growth, but as a mark of ultimate failure and condemnation. The potential for suffering to be meaning-giving within certain religious frameworks, as explored by the anthropologist Talal Asad (2003) when contrasting different cultural conceptualizations of pain and affliction, is here catastrophically foreclosed for Hüsrev.

Kısakürek's engagement with Islamic mystical traditions (Sufism), though perhaps more indirect, also informs the portrayal of Hüsrev's extreme psychological state. Hüsrev's feeling of merging with his creation, losing his own distinct identity, and his pronouncements about "knowing God" through his failed creation, echo, in a terrifyingly distorted and negative form, certain Sufi concepts such as *fana* (annihilation of the self in the divine) or *wahdat al-wujud* (the unity of being). However, where Sufi mysticism aims for spiritual enlightenment and union with the Divine through self-negation, Hüsrev's experience is one of self-obliteration into chaos and madness. His claim, "I also know the God now. My mind explodes like an ammunition storage. Wait, in a very short time" (Kısakürek, 2023, p. 134), suggests a horrifying, destructive, and involuntary form of "annihilation" rather than a transcendent spiritual awakening. This perversion of mystical concepts, where the path towards divine understanding leads not to illumination but to psychic explosion, underscores the depth of his spiritual pathology. As the Islamic scholar Annemarie Schimmel notes in *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975), Sufi tradition does explore mystical states that can involve the temporary annihilation of ordinary consciousness, which might appear externally as a form of madness but are understood within the tradition as pathways to higher insight. Hüsrev's state, however, represents this dynamic inverted: it is annihilation without spiritual gain, madness without higher sense, a terrifying journey into a spiritual void. This underscores how trauma can warp even potentially sacred frameworks into instruments of self-destruction if the foundational psychological injury is too severe or the individual's spiritual

framework becomes a source of torment rather than solace. Hüsrev's trauma, rooted in his act of "creation," leads him to a theological dead end where his artistic hubris is met not with divine mercy or understanding, but with what he perceives as an annihilating divine judgment. The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's (1969, p. 98) concept of "infinite responsibility" for the Other, exceeding one's capacities, also resonates with Hüsrev's crushing burden towards his character and Selma, a responsibility he cannot bear.

Conclusion: The Artist Consumed, The Spirit Unmoored

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's *Creating A Man* stands as a profound and deeply unsettling dramatic exploration of existential trauma, specifically the unique and devastating trauma that can arise when an artist's creation catastrophically intersects with empirical reality. Hüsrev's tragic journey from celebrated playwright to a man psychologically undone by the horrifying, albeit accidental, fatal consequences of his own imaginative work offers a compelling and culturally resonant lens through which to examine the multifaceted nature of profound psychological suffering. This analysis has argued that Hüsrev's descent into what is perceived by his society as madness, and his potent, increasingly compulsive suicidal ideation, are not mere manifestations of artistic temperament or abstract existential angst. Rather, they are depicted as the coherent, if terrifying, sequelae of a meta-theatrical wound that shatters his ontological foundations, his sense of self, and his relationship with his art.

The play meticulously charts how Hüsrev's trauma is inextricably intertwined with, and profoundly shaped by, a specific Islamic theological framework. His agonizing confrontation with concepts of divine creation (*khalq*), human agency (*ikhtiyar*) versus divine decree (*qadar*), and the unbearable weight of perceived artistic-moral responsibility distinguishes his crisis from more secular Western portrayals of similar themes. Kısakürek masterfully demonstrates how these theological dimensions provide the very language and conceptual terrain for Hüsrev's suffering, leading to a spiritual unmooring where traditional religious virtues like *sabr* offer no solace against the magnitude of his perceived transgression and its horrific, tangible consequences.

The potent symbolism of the fig tree, the haunting legacy of his father's suicide, the violent shattering of the window, and Hüsrev's ultimate, pathological fusion with his fictional alter ego all serve as powerful textual markers of this progressive disintegration. Ultimately, *Creating A Man* offers a chilling testament to the unbearable weight of unintended consequences, the precarious nature of artistic endeavor when it mirrors divine ambition too closely, and the complex, culturally specific ways in which trauma can consume the human spirit, leaving behind a fractured psyche grappling with an irresolvable crisis of meaning, agency, and faith. Kısakürek's work thus enriches the global literary discourse on trauma by offering a powerful, non-Western perspective on the artist as a tragically fallible creator, forever caught between the impulse to generate worlds and the terrifying responsibility for the lives, real or imagined, that inhabit them.

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