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FRAGMENTS OF TRAGEDY IN POSTMODERN FILM

M.A. Thesis

SEZEN KAYHAN

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ABSTRACT

FRAGMENTS OF TRAGEDY IN POSTMODERN FILM

Sezen Kayhan

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Despite the theories on the 'death of tragedy', this study aims to find fragments and reflections of tragedy in postmodern film. Tragedy has changed and evolved with human society and its continuous chain from Ancient Greece to modern is broken with postmodernism. However, certain aspects of tragedy continued to be used by literature and film. Especially, the films with themes of chaos, violence, popular culture, paranoia, virtual reality and alienation often used the aspects of tragedy. The focus of the study is on these aspects adopted by postmodern film.

Key words: Tragedy, Postmodern Film, Chaos, Violence, Popular Culture, Alienation

ÖZET

POSTMODERN FİLMDE TRAJEDİ

Sezen Kayhan

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Bu çalışma, trajedinin ölümü üzerine geliştirilen teorilerin aksine, postmodern filmde trajedi yansımalarını bulmayı amaçlar. Farklı toplumlar tarafından değiştirilen ve gelişen trajedinin Antik Yunan'dan modernizme kırılmayan zinciri postmodernizm tarafından parçalanmıştır. Buna rağmen trajedinin belirli özellikleri sinema ve edebiyat tarafından kullanılmaya devam edilmiştir. Özellikle kaos, şiddet, paranoya, popüler kültür ve yabancılaşma temaları içeren filmler bu özellikleri sıklıkla kullanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, postmodern filme adapte edilen trajedi özelliklerine odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Trajedi, Postmodern Film, Kaos, Şiddet, Popüler Kültür, Yabancılaşma

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1.INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this thesis was to define 'postmodern tragedy' in contemporary cinema. I am using past tense because a difficult period of research proved the impossibility of such definition. When someone refers to tragedy in contemporary film, he/she either means the films of known tragedies like Hamlet or exact adaptations of classical and ancient tragedies like Star Wars. What I was looking for was a transformation, a new formation of tragedy. I was looking for the development of tragedy from Ancient Greek to postmodern. There are countless sources about ancient and classical tragedies and a considerable number of books about modern tragedy. However, none of the sources about tragedy mentions its 'postmodern' version. 'Postmodern tragedy' is a missing link. The research was disappointing. What I found was fragments, reflections and impressions of tragedy rather than a new formation. 'Tragic characters' and 'tragic instances' do exist in postmodern film and literature, but they are not enough to call a work as 'tragedy'. There are few obstacles which make this definition impossible. So, first I decided to find and analyze these obstacles to understand the possibility of a new formation of tragedy. I started with the contemporary use of the word "tragic".

As an adjective; "tragedy" appears so often in the confusion of our own century. When we hear that "a nine-year old boy found a loaded gun in his home and shot his five-year old brother in the head", we mostly define the situation as 'tragic', as well as 'sad and heartbreaking'. A broken career, a car accident, the destruction of an old house or a broken heart can be placed within the limits of the contemporary use of the word "tragic". When a love story sadly ends with an abandoned wife and children (or a cheated husband on the opposite), the phrase "how tragic" is used as the most appropriate form for the situation. However, if even the owner of a broken heart feels the pain and ache of love as deep as Romeo or Juliet, it does not bring his story to the literal level of tragedy. The contemporary use of "tragedy" which is closely connected to sadness, death and pain, has its roots in Schopenhauer's approach that tragedy is the

unspeakable pain, the wail of humanity, the triumph of evil, the scornful mastery of chance, irretrievable fall of the just and innocent. From one point of view, most of the tragedies do end with death or self-sacrifice of the hero, and they do create pain and sadness. But tragedy as a from of drama is also depended on so many variables such as heroism, morality, ethical dilemma and do not 'necessarily' end with 'self sacrifice'. In simplest terms; 'tragedy' can be defined as the obligation to make a choice between two positive moral values, such as the choice of Brutus in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, in which he has to make a decision between his love of Rome and of Caesar.

As we can see the contemporary use of the word 'tragic' is really different than its classical and ancient forms. We do not think about ethical dilemma, heroism or self-sacrifice when we simply use the word 'tragic' about a car accident. 'Tragedy' does no longer means a form of drama or fiction, but it is placed in life itself. Also with developing technology, newspapers, Internet and social media broadened the field of tragedy. Technology and the daily use of the word 'tragic' are reasons for confusion. Tragedy which was only limited with plays, jumped to novel in modernism. But, it was still easy to find tragedy when it was only limited with literature and theater. In postmodern era, any news or article can include tragic instances. Technology and the daily connotations of 'tragedy' are major problems against limiting tragedy with literature, theatre or film. Another obstacle is the postmodern genre theory which defends that the genres are mixed, ambiguous and blurry in postmodern era. Compared to the periods when genres were crystal clear, like tragedy or comedy, postmodernism can combine any genre and create a new structure.

In earlier periods, tragedy as a form of drama was related to certain characteristics. Ancient, Elizabethan and modern tragedies have unique characteristics. A classical tragedy like Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, presents a traditional hero, (Prometheus), who resists the pressure of the Gods (classical tyranny), accomplishes his duty (giving fire and enlightening mankind) and he sacrifices himself for human program (a universal positive value). The outcome does not surprise the audience, because it is already known by them. It is not possible to say that a classical character does what he

does, just because of an oracle or fate. On the opposite, he takes action to change the oracle and he behaves to change his destiny even though his destiny is unwavering. The same path is visible for Sophocles' *Antigone*; she revolts against tyranny by burying the dead body of her brother Polyneikes. However her revolt does not prevent the end with her suicide. Most of the classical tragedies' heroes or heroines are either gods and goddesses or princes and princesses. Psychology which does not have any space in classical tragedy, became more important with modern tragedies. The main difference between a classical and a modern tragedy was that the characters were down from the skies and they were something resembling human beings and absorbs the attention of both audience and dramatists. (Williams, 1992: 37)

When we enter the domain of postmodernism, we are no longer able to make these analyses and limit the borders of tragedy. Postmodern genre theory shows that 'tragedy' is no longer a pure genre and if we want to find it, we have to search it in mixed-genres. It is possible to find instances of tragedy in tragic-comedies or sci-fi tragedies, but it was not possible to define 'postmodern tragedy'. Tragedy's connection to political criticism, changing perception of tragedy after the Second World War and the emergence of postmodern ethics are the other obstacles which will be dealt in the following chapters. All these changes made the 'whole' structure of tragedy fragmented. Tragedy has been fragmented and its certain characteristics are used by several works. So I decided to collect these fragments and reflections of tragedy to locate it in postmodernism. In this work, you will find the effort of finding and collecting fragments of tragedy in postmodern film, instead of analyzing adaptations or remakes of tragedies.

The first chapter is a survey of tragedy from ancient to modern. The themes of Ancient Greek, Elizabethan and modern tragedy are categorized according to their dominant characteristics. Some major themes: free will, love, honor and self-sacrifice are continued to be used in different periods, so they are explained only in one part and not repeated in the other. The categorization is a combination of different classifications taken from different sources. This chapter also looks briefly at the philosophical theories on tragedy. Morality and ethics of tragedy are questioned in relation to these theories.

The second chapter defines the area where we will look for the instances of tragedy in postmodern film and literature. First part of the chapter illustrates the themes and techniques of postmodern literature and film. The major techniques: metafiction, intertextuality, irony, playfulness and multiperspectivism are presented. Second part of the chapter looks at the theories on what happened to tragedy in postmodernism. Some major themes; chaos, paranoia, violence, virtual reality and popular culture are selected. These themes cover a large part of postmodern literature and film that can relate to tragedy.

The third chapter analyzes four films; Sam Mendes' *American Beauty (1999),* Coen Brothers' *Fargo (1996),* Lars Von Trier's *Dogville (2003)* and Mike Leigh's *Naked (1993),* according to their relations with tragedy. These films reflect the characteristics of postmodern films; use intertextuality, irony and playfulness. They also focus on the similar themes; chaos, violence, popular culture, alienation and family. These films exemplify how tragedy is adopted held in postmodern film.

Finally, an integral definition of the "postmodern tragedy" has not yet been theorized. Neither its characteristics nor its way of handling characters were analyzed, as much as classical or modern tragedy. To understand tragedy in the postmodern era, we have to look at the fragments of it. This work can be seen as a discovery of such fragments in postmodern film.

2.HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism and its eclectic structure include both modernist and traditional approaches. Modernism is basically a rejection of tradition, so the definition of tradition is the prerequisite of defining modern and postmodern tragedy. In order to define tradition two main sources will be followed. One of them is Arthur Miller's *The Spirit of Tragedy,* which is a detailed chronological survey on the development of tragedy. The other one is Raymond Williams' *Modern Tragedy* that deals with social and political circumstances, which resulted in the need of change. The ideology of the period and social circumstances are analyzed to locate the plays in historical context. Historical periods of this chapter only cover major common themes and not a detailed survey of themes organized according to writers. So, the main goal is to categorize the major themes of the periods, some of them will later be picked up by tragedy in postmodern era.

2.2 ANCIENT GREEK

2.2.1 Background

Even though it is not possible to date the birth of tragedy, the writings of Aristotle and earliest works of Aeschylus take us back to 5th century Athens. During 6th century BC Greeks had great success in Mediterranean trade and industry. Mainland Greece gained power through a series of wars at Marathon, Salamis and Platea. At the beginning of 5th century, Greece reached its golden age, especially considering their politics and philosophy. Political power was transferred from landed nobility to a wealthy middle class. At this period Greeks started to regard themselves as *free men,* as equal citizens with recognized rights. The *polis,* a republican city-state, was a free, "open society," which protects the rights of their citizens with systems like open voting. With the rise of

democracy, tragedy started to appear. Maybe it can be too assertive to argue that democracy was the primary condition of the creation of tragedy but tragedy was definitely a product of growing freedom.(Muller 1968:50-53)

Greeks had three major tragedy writers, their thirty-two plays out of some three hundred remained. These writers are Aeschylus (*Seven against Thebes, Oresteia trilogy, Promethues Bound*), Sophocles (*Antigone, Oedipus Rex*) and Euripides (*The Bacchae, Medea, Electra*). According to Nietzsche, Greek tragedy starts with Aeschylus, reaches its golden age with Sophocles and ends with Euripides. The most detailed and well written work on these tragedies (which belongs to Ancient Greeks) is Aristotle's *Poetica* that presents us a series of analyses and a complete terminology on Greek tragedy. (Muller 1968:58-60) Aristotle's work has become a guideline for philosophers and theoreticians, who work on tragedy during following centuries. Thus, following *Poetica* and Aristotle's terminology can be a satisfactory starting point to conceive the world of tragedy and the tragic sense.

2.2.2 Themes

2.2.2.1 Myth

Before tragedy, the most famous form of poetry was epic. Homer was like the God of all poets and writers (even though his existence is not yet proven by historical records), almost every poem or play following Homer has references either to his gods or heroes. Basically legends and tragedies use same myths and characters. The heroes of Homer reappear in tragedies of Aeschylus, Sopochles and Euripides. Heroes like Prometheus, Oedipus, Agamemnon, Aias, Pentheus or gods like Zeus, Apollo, Athena, are some of the well known characters of Homer, who appear in later tragedies. (Muller 1968:58-60). The world of Gods is located at the highest point of Mount Olympia, while humans live on the ground, lower than Gods. Olympian gods were mostly Homer's creations. However, Homer is never really regarded as a tragic writer. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odysseus* were epic masterpieces, and they differ from tragedies in many ways. In both legends

and tragedies gods wield infinite power and determine the destiny of men. Heroes are always aware of this duality of worlds (world of mortals and immortals); they are afraid of the Gods and mostly obey their orders.

At this point, the attitude of characters differentiate tragedy from legend. In legends, heroes accept that they have a destiny set by the Gods, and fulfilling this destiny, in the most heroic and honorable way, bring them to the world of immortals. Compared to the complicated ethical dilemma of tragedy, the dilemma of the legend is rather simple, like a choice between being a hero or living a humble life. (Rorty 1992:34) Most of the heroes like Odysseus were fighting for *kleos* (κλέος), the word used for glory and immortality, asking questions to themselves during heroic actions like 'which one is more important; to die and be remembered as a hero (to live forever in other words) or to give up and be a regular person?'.While Homer's heroes fight for *kleos*, character of tragedy resists his fate. Resistance to and refusal to accept fate are new themes in literature that appeared with tragedy.

Fatum (destiny, fate) is known as the most common theme in Greek tragedies. Attempting to avoid an oracle is a common motif. By trying to avoid an oracle, tragic hero honors the free will of humanity. When we look at a tragic hero like Prometheus, we see the struggle to survive and fight against fate. Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* was the first part of a trilogy that Prometheus, after creating humans from mud, stole fire (knowledge) from Mount Olympia and gave it to humankind (also) teaching them arts of civilizations, like writing, medicine and science; Prometheus is punished by Zeus because of his betrayal. Prometheus had unlimited knowledge which can save mankind. Prometheus had two options; either to help mankind and be punished by Zeus or to leave mankind with their unfortunate fate and live as a Titan with gods. He chose to help mankind.

These clear references of freedom or the fight for freedom started to appear with tragedy. The main difference between epic plays and tragedy is this fight, which honors human freedom. *Telos* (τέλος), the goal, purpose of Odysseus or Agamemnon of Homer

is to act heroically, accept their fate and behave accordingly. The protagonist of tragedy, even knowing that his fate is written by the gods, or an oracle, fights against his fate, also knowing that he will be punished for several reasons. (Rorty 1992:202)

2.2.2.2 Arrogance

Hubris (arrogance) is known as the most common reason of punishment in Greek tragedy. Looking at Greece around 5th century BC shows that *hubris* was a legal term and considered a crime. It's crucial importance in Ancient Greek law could have resulted in its reflection on tragedies. Highest level of hubris is to play the role of a god, as a man or a mortal. (Rorty 1992:183) Agamemnon of Aeschylus' Oresteia trilogy is punished because of the hubris of walking on the fine purple tapestry. Agamemnon acted in a way that only gods are allowed to do, so he deserved the punishment.

Sophocles' *Antigone* also presents acts of *hubris* which brings both Creon and Antigone to their downfall. A rebel like Prometheus, Antigone does not respect any orders and buries his brother, knowing that she is going to be punished. On the other hand, Creon, who plays God and prevents Antigone to bury her brother, has too much pride to notice how far he has taken the matter. Antigone hangs herself; Haemon kills himself and later Creon's wife also commits suicide. Creon is left alone in pain. *Hubris* results in *nemesis (Νέμεσις-retribution)* which is the inevitable punishment or cosmic payback for acts of hubris.(Rorty 1992:384)

2.2.2.3 Will

Voluntas[1] (the will) used by Aristotle, was new in Greek drama, considering epic

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[1]   The will (voluntas) was pointed at as the core of tragedy by Schopenhauer. In his work *The World as Will and Representation* (1819) Schopenhauer tells that the will as the thing-in-itself is the source of all phenomena. Individuals are destined to serve their will and what we see in tragedy is the will's diverse manifestations battling against each other or the battle of the will in itself. Tragic for Schopenhauer is the self-negation or the self-destruction of the will. As he puts it; 'It is the antagonism of the will with itself which is in tragedy most completely unfolded at the highest grade of its objectivity, and which comes into fearful prominence. This antagonism becomes visible in the suffering of mankind which is produced, in part, by chance and error; and these stand forth as the

characters were always following the orders of gods according to their fate. *Voluntas* glorifies freedom. Schelling mentions about this glorification as;

> A mortal destined by fate to become a criminal, fight against this fate, and yet horribly punished for the crime, which was work of fate! The reason for this contradiction, what made it bearable, lay deeper than the level at which it has been sought: It lay in the conflict of human freedom with the power of the objective world. In this conflict, the mortal necessarily had to succumb if the power was a superior power- a *fatum*. And yet, since he did not succumb without a fight, he had to be punished for this very defeat. The fact that the criminal, who only succumbed to the superior power of fate, was punished all the same- this was recognition of human freedom, an honor owed to freedom. It was by allowing its hero to fight against the superior power of fate that Greek tragedy honored human freedom.(Szondi 2002:7)

Resistance is something that we only see in tragedy but not in legends. By resisting his fate, Prometheus refuses to be a slave and is willing to accept the punishment. It was a great thought: To endure punishment willingly for an *unavoidable crime,* so as to prove one's freedom precisely through the loss of this freedom and perish with a declaration of free will.(Szondi 2002:8)

Voluntas is an important indicator for tragic character, considering the hero of the epic poem does not make decisions by himself. As Achilles wonders in *Iliad*;

> Fate is the same for the man who holds back, the same if he fights hard.
> We are all held in a single honour, the brave with the weaklings.
> A man dies if he had done nothing, as one who has done much.(1951:318)

For Homer, Achilles' questioning is not a heroic action. Heroes should fight and die (self-sacrifice if necessary) for *kleos* and should not reason their fate. They should obey the gods and follow the path that will bring them to immortality.

Tragic arises when man realizes that he deserves a better fate. Tragic couldn't be written if the only duty of men was to love and serve gods. Tragic spirit is also pessimistic; tragedy arises human suffering as a result of unfair situations. Mostly the suffering is

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rulers of the world, personified as fate through their insidiousness, which appears almost like purpose and intention'.

not deserved, it can result from good intentions as well as bad and the innocent may suffer too. (Muller 1968:36) Its pessimism and humanism together result in the question "To what extent are gods responsible for the actions of individuals?" While legends were honoring the traditional values and presenting heroism as a way to immortality, tragic characters were not happy with heroic actions imposed on them.

2.2.2.4 Self-Sacrifice

Most of the tragedies end with self-sacrifice of the character. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* is a tragedy based on a myth which puts self-sacrifice in its focus. Iphigenia decides to kill herself declaring that she would rather die heroically than be dragged unwillingly to the altar. Iphigenia sacrifices herself for the sake of Troy. Sacrifice can either link to salvation or destruction, like Oedipus, who blinds himself after learning his fatal error. In either way, it is directly connected to the responsibility and the acceptance of responsibility by the character.

2.2.3 Character's Trajectory

2.2.3.1 Fatal Error

Prometheus, an immortal knew that he could lose his immortality because of his *hamartia*(ἀμαρτία)[2], or fatal error. The *hamartia* of Prometheus is his pity towards mankind. Prometheus moved by pity, steals fire and brings civilization to mankind. His *hamartia* results in *peripateia* (Περιπέτεια)*,* plot reversal or the change of fortune. Prometheus is a Titan, who becomes a human chained to a rock, because of his fatal error of pitying humanity. According to Aristotle, the cause of *peripeteia* is the *hamartia* of the hero. The *hamartia* is minor but becomes fatal in tragedy and the amplification of *hamartia* results in the *hamartanein* (missing the mark) of the hero: the effort to achieve a goal just results in the opposite. (Rorty 1992: 179)

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[2]*Hamartia,* used by Aristo to define a fatal or simple mistake of the protagonist that eventually leads him to the final catastrophe.

2.2.3.2 Recognition

Anagnorisis (used by Aristo, meaning recognition) refers to hero's sudden awareness of a real situation. In tragedies, at the moment of a clairvoyant insight, *anagnorisis*, the tragic hero suddenly comprehends the web of fate that he has entangled himself in. At the moment of *anagnorisis,* Oedipus faces with the fact that his trouble is his own fault. Oedipus also takes the responsibility of his own punishment, telling that gods are not responsible for his blindness. The moment when Oedipus became aware of his actions, is the breaking point of tragedy, and is common in tragedies, which is also called as *Cesura* (a complete stop in a line of poetry) moment. Höderlin says that;

> At such moments man forgets himself and the god and turns around like a traitor, naturally in saintly manner. – In the utmost form of suffering, namely, there exists nothing but the conditions of time and space. Inside it, man forgets himself because he exists entirely for the moment, the god [forgets himself] because he is nothing but time; and either one is unfaithful, time, because it is reversed categorically at such a moment, no longer fitting beginning and end; man, because at this moment of categorical reversal he has to follow and thus can no longer resemble the beginning in what follows.(1988:108)

2.2.3.3 Fall and Katharsis

Ancient Greek tragedies end with the fall of hero. Fall is mostly the self-sacrifice of the tragic hero. The end is not necessarily death, it can also be self-punishment like Oedipus blinding himself, but it should result in katharsis (κάθαρσις); purging. Aristotle's term katharsis refers to emotional cleansing in Greek drama, where the hero reaches a certain level of awareness and reacts. When the hero learns about his fatal error (in Oedipus) or accepts the punishment, (in Prometheus) the character cleans his soul with an action crucial for tragedy. Katharsis mostly comes with self-sacrifice or self-punishment, physically damaging self, sacrificing love or honor or committing suicide. (Rorty

1992:315)

2.2.4 Narrative Structure

Most of the Greek tragedies follow conventions in their form and scenery. One of these is the use of decorum; where characters have to act in a way that is appropriate of their social status, race, wealth etc. Another convention is the verisimilitude that the action has to be the representation of everyday life. Action has to be placed in one locale in twenty-four hours. Each play has to be didactic, including an important lesson and tragedy should never be mixed with comedy. These rules were based on Aristotle's *On the Art of Poetry,* also referred as *the three unities;* drama should take place in one location only (unity of place); that events should unfold in one day (unity of time); and that the focus of the play should be narrowed to the main events (unity of action). There is a continuous, linear narrative line that ancient Greek tragedy follows.

2.2.5 Nietzsche and the End of Greek Tragedy

After Sophocles, we arrive the last phase of ancient Greek tragedy with Euripides. Nietzsche sees Euripides as the murderer of art. "Greek tragedy" wrote Nietzsche, "had a fate different from that of all her older sister arts: she died by suicide"-by the hand of Euripides. Hence "she died tragically, while they all passed away very calmly and beautifully in ripe old age" (Muller 1956, p.125).

During the time of Euripides there were many movements of thought developing. The movements towards a scientific and more secular perspective of life, transferred the emphasis on mysticism and intrigue to rational knowledge. Euripides was mostly influenced by Socrates whose teachings naturally reject the irrational aspects of life and adopt a more rational mindset. The famous Socratic aphorism "knowledge is virtue" disregarded the dark and irrational nature of the Greek psyche. With the great rival school of Stoicism, the universe is perceived as perfectly rational and good. Stoics used Nature and God to identify Reason, while excluding metaphysics. Then, drama focused

on the visible and the rational. Euripides destroyed the balance between Dionysian and Apollonian by eliminating the musical element and diffusing the value of myth and suffering. He introduced the Socratic obsession of ultimate trust in human thought and knowledge into theater. Removal of Dionysus, resulted in the loss of mystical aspect of art. Drama became more naturalistic in terms of human representation, more reflective of the realities of everyday life.(Muller 1968:103-5)

For Nietzsche, Aeschylus and Sophocles were very successful in reconciling Dionysian and Apollonian psyche in their plays. The balance between them was crucial for tragedy. Apollonian element of Greek tragedy was responsible for the rational and serene, as the epics of Homer, while, Dionysian was opening a darker way to unpredictable and irrational. When we look at the plays of Euripides, we see a return to Apollonian and Homer's 'heroic'.(Muller 1968:103-5)

Whether or not Euripides was the murderer of Greek tragedy, he clearly marks the decline of Greek Tragedy. No Greek tragedies were written (or not found) after Euripides. The reason can be the lack of historical sources or the change of social circumstances. In either case there is a visible decline of Greek tragedy by the end of 4th century BC.

2.3. ELIZABETHAN

2.3.1 Background

> *History has rarely exhibited a more appropriate coincidence than the end of tragedy and the fall of Athens.*
>
> *Herbert J. Muller*

The fall of Greek tragedy was closely related to the fall of Athens. Greek cities started to come under the domination of Macedon. The *polis* was still an open society, which maintained the old traditions, but Greeks could no longer demand of citizens what Athens had in its time. So, Greeks were not able to control their destiny, they could still enjoy tragedy, but not enough to produce an inspiring drama form with great ideas.

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When Romans started to build their empire, they took over the bulk of Greek culture. Rome produced highly successful dramatists such as; Virgil, Horace, Lucretius, but it lacked audiences who could appreciate and inspire the drama. Seneca, who was the most famous of Roman tragedians, wrote his plays for recitation before an invited group, and not for performance. Romans were basically unsuccessful in producing tragedy, because they lacked a tragic sense of life. Compared to Greeks, they were unimaginative, insensitive and incurious.(Muller 1968:125-8)

The period between Roman and Elizabethan era belongs to Medieval poets. Medieval tragedy is known as a poetic narrative rather than drama. No real tragedy was written during medieval times but myth was still respected. The most glorious of all myths was obviously Jesus Christ's own. Jesus was the main hero figure, and in contrast to ancient Greek heroes, he never challenged God's plan for man. "Christianity trains men", writes Machiavelli "to endure evils, not to perform great actions".(Muller 1968:137) Medieval drama grew out of religion as Greek drama did. However, medieval drama was mostly under control of the church and salvation was the incredible myth of it. Medieval man always thought that he was sinful and his business on earth was the salvation of his immortal soul.

Age of Renaissance, the glorious rebirth of humanism and individualism encouraged immortality and irreligion. "The most evident stimulus of Elizabethan tragedy was the tensions of an age of transition and the conflicts between the old faiths and new enthusiasms".(Muller 1968:138) The great men of renaissance such as Leonardo da Vinci proved that men could do anything if they willed. Protestant Reformation encouraged rebellion against the central authority of Christian Europe. "Immortal God" exclaimed Erasmus, "what a world I see dawning".(Muller 1968:143) Montaigne was the leader in terms of perceiving the limitations and potentialities of the human spirit. "What Montaigne was attacking, however, was the Christian presumption and self-righteousness that had already pitted Catholics against Protestants in atrocious religious wars"(Muller 1968:147).

Instead of natural philosophy or science, the humanists preferred to look back to antiquity as their source of wisdom. A novel humanistic attitude towards the study of classical culture was introduced in fifteenth century Europe. Renaissance conception of tragedy was closely related to humanism, at least in the early stages of its development, it was greatly inspired by the classical, especially Senecan examples. An important element of tragedy; *tragic pathos*[3] emerged from hero's own character and not from an unfortunate state of circumstances. Marlowe and Shakespeare put into practice the possibilities of this new concept of tragedy. (Muller 1968:148-9)

2.3.2 THEMES

2.3.2.1 Fortune

In medieval times, tragedy was simply perceived as a reversal of fortune. The character falls from high to low estate when the Goddess Fortune spins her wheel. *Monks Tale* by Chaucer was a series of tragedies; means in fact series of *de Casibus Illustrium Virorum,* the Falls of Illustrious Men, such as Lucifer, Hercules, Adam. Someone riding the wheel of fortune could suddenly fall from it and be crushed under it. Boccacio was also responsible for the medieval concept of tragedy. Religious drama was the most famous form at the beginning of Elizabethan era. "The writer may not be very religious himself", Uzmen mentions, "but his vision is strongly limited by the view that the person may rise at first but will fall and be destroyed if he tries to achieve either power or a selfish satisfaction of his passions"(1988:188). Especially the wicked ones who are guilty of treachery, envy, pride, carnal desire and various Christian sins are destined to be destroyed. Shakespeare as an Elizabethan writer did not believe in this and did not use the wheel of fortune as his main theme however, he did have characters, who are doomed to destruction especially when they are wicked. "There might be particular sins which led to the falls, and at times these would be examined, in the light of the doctrine of Fortune as the ministering agent of Providence. But behind the particular sins was a more general sin: that of trusting to Fortune in the sense of seeking worldly success at

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[3]   *Tragic pathos* is known as communication technique which represents an appeal to the audience's emotions.

all"(Williams 2006:19).

2.3.2.2 Horror

Medieval men were living in two worlds; one was the world of the God; holy and imperial, the other was the world of earth; neither holy nor imperial. Spiritually, they were angels, believers, living next to the Creator and waiting him to free them with their death. As flesh and blood they were fallen creatures, who had to live at the bottom of the universe. Both the angel and the beast, heaven and hell, were within the medieval men. "Medieval men were given to a reckless immoderation, violent extremes in piety and blasphemy, asceticism and sensuality, chivalry and atrocity. Their lust for life led to a horror of death unparalleled in all history".(Muller 1968:139) Horror was a symbol of fear of hell, due to the thought of mortality. By the end of the fourteenth century the death's head and the skeleton became universal symbols. The ghosts of Shakespeare, or the cemetery scene in *Hamlet* were representations of this particular medieval fear.

2.3.2.3 Mortality vs. Immortality

Mortality vs. immortality was still an important theme. Humanists preferred to refer ancient Greek mythology to look for the meaning of immortality, rather than Bible. *Dr. Faustus* calls Helen of Troy;

> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.
> Her lips suck forth my soul: see, where it flies!
> Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
> Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
> And all is dross that is not Helena. (1994:52)

Even Marlowe refers to Helen and immortality, as an atheist he successfully illustrated a scientist's self-questioning about life and his acceptance of death in *Dr. Faustus*. Creating hell in a poem, which is completely different than how it is referred to in the Bible, was completely rebellious considering the social circumstances of the period. Dr Faustus summons a devil, Mephistopheles, who serves Lucifer. *Dr. Faustus* remains

confident in his damnation. His decisions are clear, much more than Greek heroes who were destined to be destroyed by Greek gods, and much more sentient. *Dr. Faustus* knows that man cannot escape from sins and death is inevitable.

2.3.2.4 Tyranny

Marlowe's plays mostly aim to capture the conscience of kings; to make kings afraid of being tyrants. His plays *Tamburlaine;* about the conqueror Timur, who rises from shepherd to warrior, and *The Jew of Malta;* about a Maltese Jew's barbarous revenge against the city authorities, were grand success during Elizabethan era. Marlowe as a successful figure also passed on to Shakespeare a drama of magnitude and magnificence. (Muller 1968:156-9)

The tragedies of Shakespeare mostly indicate his concern with political order. The king was the father of the community who is in charge of the communal welfare. The fate of the hero is connected to the welfare of community, so civil war is the evil against the State. (Muller 1968:165) Heroes of Shakespearean tragedy are always persons of high status; such as kings like *Richard, Henry, Lear*, leaders like *Anthony, Brutus, Coriolanus*, members of high class families like *Romeo and Juliet*, or a general of the republic like *Othello*. Compared to the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece, heroes of Shakespeare were definitely mortal and questioning "tyranny and mortality" through a series of bodily experiences on earth.

2.3.2.5 Good and Evil

In addition to religious drama, morality play was the form, in which most Englishmen experienced theatre in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Morality plays had theological origins and referred to pedagogical lessons about the consequences of good and evil education, or political lessons about the peculiar virtues of rulers. The techniques of morality dramaturgy, schematic rendering of temptation and conflict and allegorical representation were still quite visible into the seventeenth century.(Levin

1960:142)

As Bradley indicates in his lectures on Shakespearean tragedy; "Montaigne was the first to take a complex view of man in all his concreteness, and to hold it steadily. But Montaigne was seldom intense. His wisdom found little room for the heroic spirit that dares, defies, risks all. It was Shakespeare who most comprehensively embraced, and deeply felt, the contradictions of Renaissance. His plays began with the exhilarating new sense of the ideal potentialities of man, and then the more acute awareness of his limitations, his capacity for evil"(Levin 1960:144). The individual is the core of Shakespeare's drama. The nature of man and his capacity for good and evil are central to Shakespeare's plays.

2.3.2.6 Revenge

Revenge tragedy[4], which has its root in Seneca was quite popular in Elizabethan and later Jacobean eras. Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Jacobean *The Revenger's Tragedy* were well-known examples along with *Hamlet*. Revenge tragedies characteristically include a secret murder, mostly by a ruler, a ghostly visitation of the murdered victim to the hero, continues with a period of disguise and madness of the hero and with a catastrophe, a violent revenge. *Hamlet* presents the characteristics of a revenge tragedy.(Muller 1968:167)

2.3.3 Character's Trajectory

2.3.3.1 Ethical Dilemma

The ethical choice was also observable in ancient Greek tragedies, but the power of gods on human was detrimental to their fate. In Elizabethan era, the ethical choice is directly connected to character's own responsibility. Ethical decisions of the characters determine their future. Hegel analyzed the ethical conflict in tragedy in his *Aesthetics*. According to him; tragedy presents a conflict between two ethical principles, each of

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[4] Revenge tragedy is probably the most inspiring form of tragedy for postmodern dramatists. Many examples of revenge tragedies were deconstructed in 21th century.

which is valid in itself but becomes destructive when asserted to the exclusion of the opposing principle.(Szondi 2002:18)

When a hero courageously asserts a just position, which violates a contrary, his one-sidedness results in his greatness and guilt. As Hegel calls 'collision of goods' which is the conflict of two positive values always ends with the destruction of one or the other. So, the character by negating and damaging the equally justified power is involved in guilt;

> The proper theme of the original type of tragedy is the divine; not, however, the divine as the content of religious consciousness as such, but as it enters the world and individual action. Yet in this actual appearance, the divine does not lose its substantive character, nor does it see itself there as inverted into the opposite of itself. In this form the spiritual substance of willing and accomplishing is ethical...Now, everything that forces its way into the objective and real world is subject to the principle of particularization; consequently the ethical powers, just like the agents, are differentiated in their content and their individual appearance. Now, if as dramatic poetry requires, these thus differentiated powers are summoned into appearances as active and are realized as the specific aim of a human "pathos" that passes over into action, then their harmony is cancelled and they come on the scene opposed to one another in reciprocal seclusion and isolation. In this event, the individual action will under certain circumstances realize an aim or a character that is one-sidedly isolated in its complete determinacy, and therefore, in the circumstances presupposed, will necessarily rouse against it the opposed "pathos" and, in this way, lead to inevitable conflicts. The original essence of the tragic consists then in fact that within such a collision each of the opposed sides, if taken by itself, has justification; on the other hand, each side can establish the rue and positive content of its own aim and character only by negating and infringing upon the equally justified power of the other. Therefore, each side-in its ethical life, and because of it-is equally involved in *guilt.*(Szondi 2002:19)

While the characters are facing such conflicts, the main questions asked by the reader are "which values have come into conflict? And in which ways do the individual embody the conflicting strands of history?" Because the tragic hero has to act for and against good at the same time, the paradoxical nature of the situation brings him to his greatness.

For Hegel the core structure of tragedy lies in the ethical dilemma and not in its dramatic effect. This collision can only end with the destruction of the hero making

self-sacrifice inevitable. The heroes of Shakespeare are also shown to be not only destructive of the other but ultimately self-destructive. Brutus of *Julius Caesar* finds himself facing an ethical dilemma. He loves Caesar, but he also loves Rome; to rescue one of them, the other one should be destroyed. So Brutus chooses the sacrifice Caesar for the salvation of Rome. Such as Brutus, *Othello* guilty of murder, killer of Desdemona knew that he was going to destroy his love;

> my life upon her faith
> I kissed thee ere ı killed thee; no way but this,
> Killing myself, to die upon a kiss (2005:294)

And finally Hamlet reaches the ethical consciousness, where sacrifice is needed for a hopeful and new Denmark. The evil in Denmark is pure moral evil and has to be destroyed by *Hamlet*. At the end of the play Hamlet knows the mystery of human limitations. He accepts that his fall with patience; "If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all" (Shakespeare 1996:20). As mentioned in the play, even Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay, mortality is inevitable.

2.3.4 Conclusion

Tragedy evolved from ancient Greek world to Elizabethan age. It changed from honoring heroism in terms of bravery to honor maturity and courage to make an ethical choice. The free will, which emerged in ancient Greek tragedy, and was hidden behind the decisions of gods and fate, eventually became visible and honorable in Elizabethan era. Heroism in Elizabethan world was related to the discovery of inner-self and human's place in nature. Brave heroes of ancient myths with their weapons were no longer the subject of tragedians. Just like Greeks, Elizabethans also lost their theatre when they lost their power. Even though it was not so clear and sharp like Greeks', the end of the reign of Elizabeth also marks the end of Elizabethan poetry.

2.4 NEO-CLASSICAL

2.4.1 Background

Age of Louis XIV (1638-1715) symbolizes a period in Western civilization, when France took the cultural leadership of Europe and became the strongest power. It is also known as the age of absolute authority and order. During this period, France had a popular theatre like Elizabethan. However it did not produce tragedies until Corneille. (Muller 1968:208)

During the time of Corneille, the rationalism of Descartes had significant impact on philosophy. All writers were looking for objectivity and clarity in their works. Age of Louis XIV created many philosophers like Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, Spinoza and scientists like Newton, Galileo and Kepler. The church was no longer an obstacle to philosophical movements, the French were proud of their liberty, different than Italy and Spain which were under the influence of the Pope. Descartes' rationalism had certain impact on many fields of art. The main theme of seventieth century art in France was the war between passion and reason. Both clergy and philosophers defended that the whole dignity of man is related to thought. So plays of Corneille and Racine were honoring the dignity of thought while presenting passions as subjects that have to be brought under control. (Muller 1968:209)

With the rise of reason, the human paradox and the conflict between emotions and thoughts became the main theme of tragedy. While focusing on human paradox, French writers preferred to use the classical ideals of the Romans and Greeks, instead of English or Spanish. However, French neo-classicism was not an imitation of Greek ideals, it was a novel form developed in response to new needs. (Muller, 1968:207-9)Neo-classical drama was mostly following the Stoic approach of Greeks. Descartes, such as Socrates can be seen as the reason of this approach.

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2.4.2 Themes

2.4.2.1 Return of Hero

The period derives its name from the classical world because of the use of ancient myths in arts and literature. Two important tragedians of neo-classical world Corneille and Racine reused the heroes of Homer with their own interpretation. Homer's heroes were the main characters and the values of ancient Greece were honored. However, the stories were rationalized and changed following the major philosophical movements of the period. So, although the names and myths are used, they were not exact applications of these myths but interpretations of the plays.

2.4.2.2 Honor

Honor again was regarded as the highest value for mankind. Corneille's *Le Cid*, was illustrating the sacrifice of love during the struggle for honor. Characters mostly sacrifice themselves for honor. First, Don Rodrigo sacrifices the chances of winning Chimene as his wife by killing Don Gomes in order to save his own father's honor. Later, Chimene sacrifices her love by asking the king to kill Rodrigo to save her father's honor. Another character Infanta, who is in love with Don Rodrigo also sacrifices her love since her noble family cannot accept her relation with Don Rodrigo from lower class. So, *Le Cid* is a play about nothing but honor. The characters never choose emotions over reason. Such as Infanta, Chimene also chooses honor over love. Without denying her love for Don Rodrigo, she tries to control her emotions.

> This struggle over my passion is due to my honor, and this terrible duty, whose [imperious] command is slaying me, compels me to exert myself [lit. labor or work] for thy destruction. (Corneille 1986:34)

The characters sometimes criticize the acts for honor, like Chimene;

> O [sense of] honor!-merciless to my dearest desires, how many

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tears and sighs art thou going to cost me?(Corneille 1986:12)

yet they neither complain about their fate nor act against honor. Characters in *Le Cid* resemble Homeric heroes with their passion for fame and honor, but they differ from them with the romantic ideal of duty that can even require the sacrifice of their love or life. Their heroic Will is disciplined by Reason and is performed against Passion.

2.4.2.3 Love

Love was a common theme in the Elizabethan world, considering Shakespeare is the writer of most famous tragedies that involves love such as *Romeo and Juliet, Much Ado About Nothing* or *Othello.* In neo-classical literature love became the primary theme of tragedy. All Homeric heroes like Achilles and Agamemnon blossomed out as great lovers. Agamemnon and his son Orestes are represented as two lovers, both in love with Cassandra. Racine also portrayed Alexander the Great as someone who is worried about winning love of his mistress, rather than conquering the world.

2.4.4 Narrative Structure

Basically, narrative structure of neo-classical play was not so different than ancient or medieval tragedies. It tried to follow Aristotle's three unities[5]. However, *Le Cid* stretched the three unities and was criticized because of its disrespectful approach to ancient world. Other than that, later plays of Corneille and Racine adhered to three unities.

2.4.5 Conclusion

Neo-classical period created only two great tragedians; Corneille and Racine and ended with the decline of the age of Louis XIV. When Louis XIV died, France was no longer the superpower in Europe. Neo-classical tragedy died because it was so unrealistic and

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[5] Aristotle's three unities is about place, time and action. The play should take place in one location, in one day and the actions should be related to main plot. Unnecessery actions should be avoided.

hesitant to face realities, it was referring to generalities but not specific points, so it was harmless, safe, respectable but also empty at the end.

What followed the decline of neo-classism is the age of enlightenment, where reason became the cure for all mysteries and the secrets of nature are unlocked. Fear is defined as the power of ignorance, prejudice and superstition. The writers of enlightenment were so successful in literature; they used irony and inescapable paradoxes of man's nature in satire masterfully. However, because of the lack of tragic sense of life, no great tragedies were produced during the age of enlightenment. (Muller 1968:240-1)

2.5 MODERN

2.5.1 Background

The word 'modern' is originated from the Latin word 'mado'(now) which is a derivation of "modernus". It was first used during 5[th]century AD to separate Pagan and Christian eras in Roman world. In the ancient sense, the term 'modern' signifies a period of change from old to new. According to Habermas 'modern' was born in medieval world and continued to exist since then. So, every art movement after the medieval period is connected to modern. Generally, the word modern is used to define a period in 19th century, which Habermas calls 'romantic modernism'. This latest modernism based on the objection to tradition. (Yılmaz 2005:17-8)

While some scholars suggest that modernism is only related to arts and literature, others think it also refers to a certain political system and the change in lifestyle. Descartes and secularization had a certain impact on the rise of modernism on reason, and not emotion.

The bourgeoisie began to be the masters of towns and their values were eroding the tradition. According to Greenberg; modernism is not only an artistic movement but it is also an historical innovation. With Kant, self-criticism in western culture started to

develop and reached its highest point with modernism. French Revolution was the most successful application of this improvement as the victory of bourgeoisie over the Church. (Yılmaz 2005:17-8)

The events that followed the French Revolution was called its tragic aftermath. The Napoleonic wars the disintegration of the feudal order, the fall of Social Revolution and finally a world war, showed that modern period was a complete chaos. (Yılmaz 2005:17-8)

Artists were isolated and uncared during these unpredictable changes taking place in the world. They were disappointed with the fall of socialism, a political system which emerged with so many hopes and promises. The capitalist world had new offerings, but many artists were skeptical and worried about what lies beneath this new form of freedom. As Muller indicates; "With increased freedom, political and intellectual, modern man has come to realize that he is not so free, but a slave to custom, to economic necessity, to class consciousness, to unconscious desire, to irrational passion- to impersonal forces that cannot inspire the awe that the will of the gods once did" (1968:245).

When tradition is destroyed, so are the common moral attitudes and a common faith. It was no longer possible to write a tragedy like Greeks or Elizabethans, after watching the destruction of so many heroes, or heroic actions like the revolutions. The more the intellectuals and activists on the left had lived through the disastrous blockages of the Stalin's Soviet Union, the more they lost their faith in change. Also, what made the magnificent theater of Athens or England possible was the intimate nature of civic life and the small size of the cities. In the brutality of modern world, this kind of tragedy was impossible to produce. (Williams 2006:42)

So modern man started to question his nature and his limits; good and evil, freedom and slavery, hope and despair, free will and dependence. All the depressions of the period brought him to a point where he started to question his own existence and the meaning

of life. "In the tragic view the need of man to wholly realize himself is the only fixed star, and whatever it is that hedges his nature and lowers it is ripe for attack and examination" (Miller 1978:4). So man exist if he can realize himself. Modern tragedy like any movement of modern art, is highly debatable, and also like other modern movements, it does not have a linear development, but divided into many movements like liberalism, naturalism, existentialism and realism.

2.5.2 Themes

2.5.2.1 Bourgeois and Common Man

The beginnings of bourgeois tragedy can be seen in the eighteenth century plays, especially in Shakespeare. But, the first great bourgeois tragedy belongs to Ibsen; *the Ghosts,* which thrilled and shocked Europe. *The Ghosts* was based on the idea that the sins of the father are visited upon the children. The ordinary man is the center of the play. The real concern of modern tragedy is common man who is familiar and ordinary in experience. Arthur Miller believes that "the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were" (1978:3). The core of tragedy is the action taken by hero against the scheme that degrades man. According to Miller, most of us are "flawless" in modern world and do not take a stand when we have to deal with the schemes that degrade us. But there has always been those, who act against fears and insensitivity. Modern tragedy is focused on a psychiatric view of life or purely sociological, more than tragic flow. It requires a balance between what is possible and what is impossible. By placing the spirit of the average man in its heart, modern tragedy illustrates how to question morality and deal with fears. Like Ibsen's play, the ghosts are not necessarily scary supernatural creatures of Elizabethans, but metaphors of human beings, as Mrs. Oswald tells:

> I am half inclined to think we are all ghosts, Mr. Manders. It is not only what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers that exists again in us, but all sorts of dead ideas and all kinds of old dead beliefs and things of that kind. They are not actually alive in us; but they are dormant all the same, and we can never be rid of

them. Whenever I take up a newspaper and read it, I fancy I see
ghosts creeping between the lines. There must be ghosts all over
the world. They must be as countless as the grains of sand, it
seems to me. And we are so miserably afraid of the light, all of us.
(Ibsen 1917:105)

2.5.2.2 Destruction of Hero

Modern hero is naturally unheroic. Writers like Strindberg attacked the conventional
idea of character. A hero is always presented as a fixed, consistent, stable thing, but
modern man is confused, multiple and largely unconscious about the results of his
behavior. Man now recognizes his limitations. Chekhov also indicates that; "To divide
men into the successful and unsuccessful is to look at human nature from a narrow,
provincial point of view... One must be a god to be able to tell successes from failures
without making a mistake"(Muller 1968:287). While tradition puts tragedy as what
happens to the hero, the modern ordinary tragic action shows that it is what happens
through the hero.

2.5.2.3 Social Consciousness and Revolution

According to many writers of modern world like Brecht or Miller, the main cause of
suffering is a political system and social classes. A false society is supported by an evil
system and limits human beings with an illusion of public virtue and public morality.
The social consciousness changed and society became an actively destructive and evil
system.

When rank became class, a new definition of tragedy emerged. While rank implied
connection and order, class was only separation. The new class consciousness showed
that it was not a true democracy. The Resistance was a true democracy, for Sartre. The
soldier, the commander, the civilians were threatened by the same danger and has the
same total responsibility. Resistance and revolution do not separate but unify. The action
of struggle for human freedom, and against other human beings' brutality is tragic in
character. As Williams evokes, "the children of the struggle, who because of the struggle

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live in new ways and with new feelings, and who including the revolution in their ordinary living, answer death and suffering with a human voice. From day to day we can make everything past, because we believe in future."(2006:63).

2.5.2.4 Validity of Morality

Tragedy is shaped around morality, moral conflicts and ethical choices. There has always been good and evil and their struggle against each other. When hero disappeared, modern man had to accept the tragic truth; evil is not the main source of the suffering and there is no apparent moral order governing the universe. The true human condition can be helpless and hopeless but no moral error is irreparable and must end with death.

Tragedy is then fundamentally associated with the great crisis of human progress: the Greek conflict 'between man and fate', and the dualism of man in the Renaissance. Comparable crisis recur, and in modern tragedy the conflict extends to the Idea itself.' not only shall the relations of men to moral concepts be debated, but the validity of those moral concepts. (Williams 2006:27)

Williams shows us a new form of liberal tragedy. The error is moral, mostly a weakness in an otherwise good man, who can still be pitied. The error is also can be questioned and it is not fatal. It is internalized within the concept of dignity. The way to handle suffering; to experience it or to learn from it, replaced the noble ways of handling it such as self-sacrifice.

2.5.2.5 Hope

Even though modern tragedy looks so dark and pessimistic, writers never give up humanistic faith. Ibsen and Chekhov were two of these hopeful writers. Ibsen's the Ghosts is pessimistic since there is no faith in the everlastingness of human ideals, but it is also optimistic because it shows the capacity for the recreation and development of ideals.

Also, in every play of Chekhov, one or more characters call a recurrent theme of hope. Chekhov's drama is mostly known as the tragedy of the gradual frustration and final hopelessness. It starts as seeking and not finding and ends with the story of no longer seeking reconciliation. Uncle Vanya cries in The Cherry Orchard; "What shall I do with my life and my love?" Another common approach of modernism is not to focus on the problem of the character alone but generalize it, in terms of whole humanity. So the question of Uncle Vanya is also the question of millions of others who cannot find a satisfying answer to his question. Sonya tells Uncle Vanya, concluding the play; "I have faith, I have faith". When Uncle Vanya continues to cry, she only repeats: "We shall rest". Chekhov mentions about his living faith: "My holy of hollies is the human body, health, intelligence, talent, inspiration, love, and absolute freedom-freedom from violence and falsehood, no matter how the last two manifest themselves"(Muller 1968:291).

2.5.2.6 Self and Free Will

A survey on tragedy can be seen as a survey on the development of the human will. The will first started to be mentioned in ancient tragedies and reached its independence through ages. Modern tragedy is the highest point of human freedom and free will. Self-fulfillment is a requirement for freedom. Self should realize himself.

Modern self is social and can be understood through its interactions. According to existentialists like Sartre, it can achieve a high degree of individuality and freedom only in a civilized community. Sartre's play No Exit focuses on the need to accept other selves. Two women and a man are mysteriously stacked in a chamber as hell. One woman, a lesbian and man struggles to possess the other woman. They finally realize that they must forever go around in circles, because the other as a threat will always stay. So they discover: Hell is other people. (Muller 1968:304) Sartre's ideal self is a social product and it becomes conscious only through its relations with other selves. So the self can realize itself only in a community with understanding and accepting others.

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2.5.2.7 Secularization

The first stage of substantial secularization can be found in neo-classical period. With increasing emphasis on a rational morality, religious values were no longer the center of life or literature. The sharp lines between good and evil began to dissolve. "Poetic justice" no longer existed in the modern world. God was not the judge and the political systems, which are in charge of judgment, were not fair. So the understanding of the good will be happy and the bad will suffer slowly disappeared.

In Christian world man was naturally limited, but in liberal world man is absolute. So good and evil do not have Christian emphasis anymore. It was common in tragic tradition that evil is related to pride, lust, jealousy, disobedience or rebellion. In modern era, both good and evil are created by humans, we can be good or evil in particular situations. The self consists both good and evil through its realization. For Sartre, the self should deny God to give his own life a meaning. Neither God nor Nature is responsible for the fate of humans, it is the humans themselves . So, the self should be free and able to complete responsibility for what he makes of himself. (Muller 1968:302)

2.5.2.8 Mortality

In contrast to emphasis on immortality in ancient literature, mortality started to be seen as a natural event which gives life its meaning. Human death is the deepest meaning of a culture with the grief and memories it brings. The fact of death is inevitable. Man is mortal. Accepting mortality in such a way, helps humans to read back life from death's point of view. Death is necessary and all human will end the same way. So, death becomes something that controls reality.

2.5.2.9 Rejection of Tragedy

Tragedy can be interpreted as the highest form of drama, but modern world needed the spirit of revolution which tragedy was not able to create. So, instead of sympathy, what we need is a direct shock, said Brecht. When playgoers settle back and enjoy the play, it was impossible for them to think 'beyond the play'. When the tragic flow ends with katharsis, viewers do not need to think beyond the play. But if you prevent the pleasure, with a distancing effect, then you will be required to think about the play. (Williams 2006:227-9).

Brecht's drama was revolutionary in terms of its invention of 'complex seeing'. While Aristotelian drama enforced 'thinking from within', Brecht considered his 'epic style' to enforce 'thinking beyond'. He was pushing the spectator to think about the play from an objective point of view. Reevaluate the play over and over again. It was a certain objection against the traditional Aristotelian drama and the Greek form of tragedy.(Williams 2006:227-9)

2.5.3 Character's Trajectory

2.5.3.1 Acceptance, Passivity and Resistance

As debated above, modern characters are lonely and isolated. So, the way they follow during a tragedy is rather passive. It is essential for them to have the will to find the self. In genuine tragic action it is essential that the principle of individual freedom and independence, or at least that of self-determination, the will to find in the self the free cause and source of the personal act and its consequence, should already have been aroused. (Williams 2006:33) It is not necessary for him to follow a specific path like ancient or Elizabethan heroes. This conscious individuality is only the condition of modern tragedy.

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In ancient tragedy, the characters clearly represent the substantive ethical ends; while in modern tragedy the ends seem more wholly personal, and our interest is directed not to the 'ethical vindication and necessity' but rather to 'the isolated individual and his conditions'(Williams 2006:34).

2.5.4 Narrative Structure

The narrative structure of modern tragedy is revolutionary and experimental like its content. Many different structures were used to destroy tradition. The events are reversed, the chronological events are disordered, and mostly the plays do not have an ending, in terms of Aristotelian drama. Especially Brecht attacked the traditional methods of theater very harshly. Precisely because changes in narrative structure mostly aimed the active participation of viewers.

2.5.5 Conclusion

Modern era interpreted tragedy in a completely unique way. Tragedy was no longer regarded only as a genre but also an idea. Existentialists like Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard thought that human existence is essentially tragic. "This view is in turn premised on large-scale processes of secularization, disenchantment, and individualization that make it possible for human beings to think of themselves as caught up in conditions of isolation and existential homelessness" (Fiske, 2008:3)

Also with the introduction of the novel, tragedy was no longer limited to theater. So, literature and film (with late modernism) created new approaches to tragedy. After the destruction of traditions, Aristotelian formulation of a tragedy was not applicable to modern tragedy. Modern tragedy was all about change; change of forms, change of ideals, change of themes. But considering tragedy as an expression of 'freedom' and 'free will', modern tragedy continued to serve for the same purpose of defending 'human will' against an authoritative system.

When we enter the domain of postmodernism, the discussion on genres gets more complicated. As Watt puts it, postmodernism is more about turns than movements:

That is to say, while modernism is typically charted by Author-Gods (Joyce, Woolf, Lawrence), movements (Dadaism, surrealism), and groups(the Bloomsbury group, the symbolists), postmodernism is plotted in "moments" (presentational, deconstructive) or "turns": Richard Rorty's "linguistic turn", Mitchell's "pictorial turn", and most obvious, Ihab Hassan's "postmodern turn". It is at once both too global and too local-and usually too skeptical of the self-justifying discourse of modernism-to be actualized in movements. (Watt, 1998: 8)

These turns mark points of change rather than common ideas or beliefs. Compared to modernism, it becomes almost impossible to categorize certain movements. When the movements and genres are blurred, so are the definitions. So defining "tragedy" in postmodern era is a very tricky, I will try to deal with in the next chapter.

3. TRAGEDY IN POSTMODERNIST LITERATURE AND FILM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows that he cannot say to her "I love you madly", because he knows that she knows (and that she knows he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still there is a solution. He can say "As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly". At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly it is no longer possible to talk innocently, he will nevertheless say what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her in an age of lost innocence.

Umberto Eco

Postmodern age, or in Umberto Eco's words; the age of lost innocence, is seen as the end of modernism. However, its end gave a start to endless discussions about the existence and rise of postmodernism. There are so many debates about the period that postmodernism was born; most scholars dated the rise of postmodernism between 1945 and 1960. The end of World War II marked new movements in arts, especially in United States.(Yılmaz 2005:123-5) There is no agreement on 'postmodernism' or the end of 'modernism' but it is a known fact that in contemporary world the dynamics of aesthetical production are so bounded with merchandise production. "What has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods (from clothing to aero planes), at ever greater rates of turnover, now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation (Jameson, 1993: 7).

Many different theories on postmodernism were put forward by various scholars such as Lyotard, Derrida, Habermas, Foucault, Baudrillard, Hassan, Bakhtin and Jameson. Habermas argues that modernism has never ended and it still continues as an uncompleted project (1983:2). While, for Lyotard 'postmodernism' is a condition of post-industrial societies which is related to both economical and philosophical break off (1983:17). Jameson, finds it more appropriate to call the period 'late capitalism' instead

of 'postmodernism' because capitalism is still the dominant political system in the world. (1993:123-5) And pop-art, experimental film, video and new 'expressionism' of postmodernism replaced the films of auteur, existentialism in philosophy and the final forms of representation in the novel (ibid.) While some scholars limit 'postmodernism' with art movements, Jameson points out that it is inextricable from capitalism, and postmodern art pieces (especially the architectural works) are directly connected with consumer society and the logic of late capitalism. I will not discuss the definition of postmodernism or the philosophies behind it at length. My aim is to look briefly at the social circumstances that gave rise to postmodernism and how they changed our perception of tragedy.

In late twentieth century, dominant modern ideologies have undergone a set of crises. Modern ideologies, liberalism and socialism, which were central to the political life after the French and American revolutions, gave rise to new forms of domination, instead of promoting freedom. The modern state, instead of being a democratic association of citizens, determining their own destiny, became a rationalizing and controlling force; "a prison in which all the inmates are under constant surveillance from the controlling guards" (Schwarzmantel,1998:153). Modern ideologies were criticized as a simplification of social and political approaches, not able to offer different perspectives on complicated human nature or its transformation. Dividing humans simply into two politically; Right and Left, modern ideologies were deficient in understanding 'changing human'.

As Schwarzmantel (1998) puts it; there are two sides to the crisis of modernity and its ideologies. On the theoretical and philosophical level, a great skepticism began to emerge against modern ideals of progress and emancipation with a suspicion of a hidden agenda of control and domination. And in terms of transformation, modern ideologies were no longer sufficed to deal with the changes in the real world, and the leading postmodern society started to pose problems and questions that Left-Right spectrum of old modern world can offer no answer. (ibid:154-5) A basic Left-Right division is seen as false and reductionist.

The change can be seen in many different areas resulted by the problems of citizenship, crisis of nation-state, crisis of civil society, and the most obvious one, decline of class identity. Even though the class politics has not disappeared, other identities have arisen and started to challenge class as a fundamental reference point. (ibid:166) Other identity based groups centered at the point of production and replaced class identities.

The challenge offered by postmodern theories are analyzed; the first as the rejection of the progress towards 'the good old society' and the belief in death of 'grand narratives'. It is accepted that the attempts to reach agreement can only lead to dictatorship. Second is the idea that a single force can never encapsulate everybody's vision of good society. Pluralism and diversity are necessary in terms of creating a free society. The last one is the need for new social movements that contribute to the global view of the good society. The future of politics lies in the realization of these articles. (ibid: 169)

These articles show that no longer there exists a general agreement or consensus on modern ideologies. As Lyotard also mentions:

> We no longer have recourse to the grand narratives-we can resort neither to the dialectic of spirit nor even to the emancipation of humanity as a validation for postmodern scientific discourse... the little narrative(petit recit) remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention, most particularly in science (Lyotard 1992:60)

Regardless of what mode of unification it uses, the grand narrative lost its credibility. Marx or Kant were no longer legitimate sources. The ideal society of comfort was somehow apparent in United States. So, with protecting this system, citizens of United State started to live post-historical, while the rest of the world is stuck in the past. What this system brings is individuals, who are no longer living for abstract ideals, but only interested in survival. (Yılmaz 2005:123-5) Governments will be busy with consumer demands, arts and philosophy will completely perish because daily routines will keep everybody busy.

In terms of arts, the first discussions on postmodernism began within architecture.

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Postmoderns criticized the modern buildings for being just ugly and alienating concrete masses. Modern architecture was against the tradition, but they also had to face the danger of becoming something that they are opposed to. So for postmodernists, that modern architects become academic and it was a boundary against improvement. Modern architecture revolution was unsuccessful. With its fall, a period of eclecticism started. Now, artists shouldn't afraid to use different elements together, without judging their harmony. (ibid:123-5)

It is a period of relaxation and loosening. Now, any work can be a work of art and anybody can become an artist. Modern ideals are completely left. Modern schemes become postmodern codes and everybody is free to interpret them. Postmodernism is an aesthetical form of the compilation of patterns. This form is supported by collage and pastiche.

Every modern art movement was a product of rejection or resistance. While rejecting the old, they were creating new rules. And sometimes they were even breaking their own rules to be new. Postmodernism on the other hand, announced that these rules were no longer important. Because as Feyerabend says, it has only one principle:"anything goes". (ibid:123-5)

Genres and forms were no longer categorizable. The new conditions of the world also gave rise to a new understanding of drama. Jameson explains five major characteristics of postmodern text based on their relation with capitalism, mass culture and changing social conditions. First, a postmodern text is a product without depth. While modernist cultural texts refer to deeper meanings, postmodern texts only care about the surfaces. Only images are real and only surfaces matter. Second characteristic that Jameson refers to is the absence of any normative rules, styles or forms. Pastiche can combine very different styles from Ancient Greek to modern without any coherent rule. Third is about the fragmented structure of postmodern texts. Postmodern works do not aim to create coherent narratives, they are formally and temporally fragmented, in other words they are schizophrenic in character. Fourth is the longing for the past. A strong feeling of

nostalgia and a romanticized longing for the past are visible in postmodern works. Last characteristic is 'the postmodern sublime' Jameson refers to the experience which cannot be represented in contemporary cultural codes. (ibid.,128)

To understand tragedy in postmodern drama, it is necessary to make connections between these characteristics of postmodern text and their application to visual culture. In the following part, I will look at the techniques and themes of postmodernist film and literature and try to imagine how tragedy is integrated into them.

3.2 TRAGEDY IN POSTMODERNIST LITERATURE AND FILM

3.2.1 Background

Around 1970s, auteur driven modern cinema movements started to be replaced by rather darker and violent images. Even though auteur like Godard, continued to produce new films, it was not the golden age of Fellini, Truffaut, Bunuel or Resnais anymore. The death of the authors like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, reactions following Second World War and the rise of the personal computer caused a similar replacement in literature. Social events around 1960s and later; social conformism, political assassinations, post-Vietnam syndrome, Cold War and nuclear terror created a rather dark and more violent world. The new forces of American society, post-Fordism, economic globalization, ecological and urban crises resulted in the death of modern narratives and shaped the fragile world of late capitalism. (Boggs, 2003:15)

So, paranoia, fear, cynicism and violence become the main characteristics of postmodern film and literature. The dark and violent images are presented with the help of various themes and techniques. Some of these themes and techniques like historiographic metafiction, intertextuality and playfulness are borrowed from modernism, while some like hyper reality and techno culture are peculiar for postmodernism. Postmodern literature fictionalizes actual historical events *(The Things They Carried, Slaughterhouse-Five)*, refers to many other texts *(The Name of the Rose,*

A Thousand Acres), has a certain sense of black humor and generally uses irony (*The Crying of Lot 49, Naked Lunch*). Through magic-realism it often uses imaginary themes and subjects *(If On a Winter's Night a Traveler),* or through hyper reality it can focus on the replacement of the real by simulations *(Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?).* Paranoia (*Breakfast of Champions*) and violence *(Fight Club, A Clockwork Orange)* are other two major themes of postmodern literature.

Just like postmodern literature, postmodern film also has a wide range of themes and techniques. Carl Boggs and Thomas Pollard elaborate five general trends of postmodern cinema in their work *A world in chaos: Social Crisis and the Rise of Postmodern Cinema*; "The first category is the blockbuster (*Batman, Jurassic Park, and Titanic*), featuring hyper real, supercommodified media spectacles extending well beyond the movie experience itself; second one is the theme of existential morass pervasive in earlier film noir and neo-noir films (*Out of the Past, Touch of Evil, Taxi Driver, and Chinatown*) and more recently given fuller articulation in the works of Woody Allen; third is the emphasis on the uniquely American slide into historical quagmire and with it the vanishing of classic hero-protagonists, most visible in the dystopic films of Oliver Stone (*Born on the Fourth of July, The Doors, Salvador,* and especially *JFK*); fourth is a turn toward the motif of Hobbesian disorder and chaos reflected in the work of directors like Scorsese(*Mean Streets, Taxi Driver and Casino*), DePalma (*Dressed to Kill*), and more recently Quentin Tarantino (*Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*); and the last one is the embellishment of a "ludic" or theatrically playful cinema where little is valued or held sacred, where conventional norms and rules are subject to irreverent mockery, as in the cinema of John Waters (*Hairspray, Cry Baby*, and *Serial Mom*)" (2003: 16).

Another categorization of postmodern film, identifies six types based on their themes;; self-referential films using pastiche as Tarantino's *Kill Bill, Jackie Brown* or *This is Spinal Tap*, hyper real films that presents a technologically developed, desirable worlds like *The Matrix Trilogy* or *Inception,* films with flattening of affect showing emotionless and unauthentic lives under the influence of technology, films that play with perception of time like *Memento* or *Donnie Darko,* films that questions altered states like

schizophrenia or drug use like *A Beautiful Mind* or *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, and films with robots and cybernetics with artificial intelligence like *Blade Runner* or *Avatar*. (ibid., 19)

Postmodern film and literature share the common themes and techniques of historiographic metafiction, intertextuality, simulation, pastiche, play, black humor, irony and pluralism. Now, I will try to describe the themes and techniques of postmodern film and literature.

3.2.2 Techniques

3.2.2.1 Metafiction

Modernist fiction was a response to the initial loss of belief. As its follower, postmodern fiction also reflects on the breakdown of traditional values and the uncertain, self-questioning and culturally pluralistic nature of our age. According to literary critic Patricia Waugh; a new mode of writing emerged in the USA in the later 1960s. The descriptive term 'metafiction' is used to define this new form that became "a trademark of postmodernism and the cause of both anger and celebration in the critical circuit"(Waugh, 1984:100). Metafiction is closely related to intertextuality, language games, disappearance of plot and a character, use of irony and black humor (pastiche as the imitation of previous art works, presented with humor), discontinuity and collage.

John Barth's "Literature Of Exhaustion" is a pioneer manifesto, which denounces realist fiction and glorifies Borges' ironic use of conventions, language games and metafictional experiments. For Barth, narrators became tired of writing or were lost in a maze of words. Borges' style was the only possible contemporary mode of writing. (ibid:100). Metafiction clearly states itself as artifact and poses questions about the relationship between reality and fiction. After 1960, the reflection of human beings became a more general cultural interest and the way humans are represented, started to shape their experience of the world. Because of so many written examples, hundreds of

styles, endless literary discussions, "novelists have tended to become much more aware of the theoretical issues involved in constructing fictions. In consequence, their novels have tended to embody dimensions of self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty" (ibid:2). Writers as well as directors experienced a different level of self consciousness about written and visual language and presented it with a playful, parodic, naive style.

Metafiction also emphasizes that history is human creation. Linda Hutcheon explains the relationship between postmodernism and history with her terms 'historiographic metafiction':

> When its critics attack postmodernism for being what they see as ahistorical (as do Eagleton, Jameson and Newman), what is being referred to as 'postmodern suddenly becomes unclear, for surely historiographic metafiction, like postmodernist architecture and painting is overtly and resolutely historical-though, admittedly, in an ironic and problematic way that acknowledges that history is not the transparent record of any sure "truth".(Hutcheon, 1988:37)

Historical re-conceptualization, parody, textual plays and self-reflexivity are essential elements of historiographic metafiction. Novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez; *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a multigenerational, non-linear story of Buendia family, or Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, a post war science fiction novel about a soldier share a perception of history as pure fiction, which associated them with historiographic metafiction. Cinematographic historiographic metafiction also pinpoints the textuality of films and of history. John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* takes place in a period when women are banned from the stage. A woman called Viola de Lesseps, joins Shakespeare's company, under the cover of a young man called Thomas Kent. When Shakespeare learns about her true identity, they have an affair which results in the creation of *Romeo and Juliet*. We barely find resources about Shakespeare's life and work, that were written in that period. S*hakespeare in Love* creates a completely new historical world, using the power of fiction. But it also shapes our perception of a period with using real historical characters and making us believe to a certain extent that the film is biographical. *Titanic* also uses a similar way*,* with inserting fictional characters to a real ship. *Pearl Harbor's* love story chooses an important attack of Japanese army

as its background. Some of the historiographic metafictions referred to other texts and films, used historical intertextuality while creating their own fictional world.

3.2.2.2 Intertextuality

For postmodernists and poststructuralists, a film or a text is never a finished product. Every text has traces of other texts that can be seen as a net of codes between others. As Julia Kristeva says: "Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1986:37). This large mosaic of references can only exist with the knowledge of a certain literary or art history. Like James Joyce's *Ulysses,* which can be experienced as a modern literary work, is also a response to an epic myth, and also refers to the other responses to the myth. So a deep knowledge of the references are necessary to completely decode the text. With a structure like this, the classical transfer of codes from writer to reader is changed into a system in which the text is filtered by different codes and reach reader via other texts.

Kristeva's theory which has its foundations in Saussure's *Semiotics,* looks at intertexuality in two axes; while *vertical axis* connects the text to other texts, *horizontal axis* connects the reader and the author. (ibid:145). Different than Kristeva, the British film theoretician John Fiske labels 'vertical' and 'horizontal' intertexuality not only making connections with literary works, but includes other media. His horizontal intertexuality connects text with other books and vertical intertextuality is found when a book makes a reference to a film. (Fiske, 1991:108)

Intertextuality is not only a simple system of using references, but a complicated system of creating a 'meaning' redefines the 'signifier' and the 'signified' interacts with the reader and gives him/her an active role in interpreting the text. Pedro Almodovar often uses complex references to other films, books and plays in his films. Tarantino also often uses intertextuality. *Kill Bill* has clear references to Asian martial arts films, rape and revenge films and Italian spaghetti westerns. *Pulp Fiction* refers to pulp magazines and crime novels which were important characteristics of popular culture. The uses of

these references are also related to the theories of 'play'

3.2.2.3 Play

It is possible to say that the focus of a postmodern work is the relation between 'play' and 'reality'. Metafiction looks at each character as they are players and they have a certain way to play. How did play become an essential element in arts?

Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play" is the major work on which, different theories on postmodern art are based. Briefly, Derrida claims that all structures have a center. It does not matter if it is a philosophical or literary structure, or a concrete building, a center always keeps the other parts together. While keeping the other parts, the center also limits the movements of that which Derrida calls 'play'. If it is a concrete building; this limitation or lack of play is good, but if it is a philosophical system, it's not so good. (Klages, 1997:1) For Derrida, all systems want to be stable, to be fixed and to have no play. As he called the 'rupture' in 1950s, changed the way of thinking that the center is a construct in contrast to philosophical systems as all insisting on a center, and it is not simply true or there. Deconstruction is also based on the possibility of play.

Related to play, Derrida also borrows the method "bricolage" from Levi-Strauss that is, getting a particular job done without caring about the stability or purity of the system. A bricoleur can use various terms and ideas, without acknowledging its system of thought. It is not necessary for him the truth, as long as the terms and ideas are useful. Bricolage also produced a new way for systems that they do not necessarily follow the ruins of an old system, but they can establish a new center, a subject or an origin. (ibid:1) Play is an important part of this discussion, because it is the unstable, unfixed and mobile.

The postmodern shows two attitudes toward the idea of play; it can either disapprove, be nostalgic, mourn the loss of fixity of meaning, or it can approve, play along, rejoice in multiplicity. (ibid:1) In terms of metafiction, the more playful a literary work or film, the more 'fictitive' it is, and though the more postmodern. Novels like *One Hundred*

Years of Solitude (1967) definitely achieves play by characters coming back to life after their death or so ordinary characters behaving in fantastical ways.

Metafiction looks for the new possibilities of play. It is free when the old rules of the genre are being discarded and the new rules not yet defined. It is completely playful, therefore it is free. Writers like Beckett or Calvino and directors like Woody Allen and Quentin Tarantino use this freedom to play with the possibilities of combination. (ibid:2) They play with the ideas of truth, self, God, making the meaning multiple and ambiguous.

Christopher Nolan's *Memento* chronicles the memories of Leonard, an ex-insurance investigator who suffers from short term memory loss. He attempts to find the murderers of his wife, trying to remember by taking notes. One story line moves forward while others are narrated backwards. *Memento* plays with our perception of time; it cuts memories into pieces and changes their chronological order. Gus Van Sant's *Elephant* also uses a non-linear narrative while following the lives of several characters both in and out of school, before the shooting in Columbine High School occurs. Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*, David Lynch's *Lost Highway*, Wong Kar Wai's *In the Mood for Love*, follows a similar non-linear narrative, with plays on time and our perception of it.

Some films play with our perception of the 'film world'. *Truman Show* is about an insurance salesman/adjuster who discovers his entire life is actually a TV show. He lives a fake life with actor friends in a big studio with hidden cameras everywhere. Truman thinks he is an ordinary man with an ordinary life, but he has to face with the reality, which also forces the audience to face with uncontrolled and unlimited means of communication in the postmodern world.

Other films play with our perception of the 'construction of film' by frequently breaking out of the constructed world of the film. Michael Winterbottom's *24 Hour Party People* is an example of such film. The character who, is based on Tony Wilson talks directly to

the audience through the camera lens. With using such technique, it disrupts and subverts its own narrative, emphasizes the artificiality of the film as 'a construction'. Play is also visible in postmodern parody and pastiche.

3.2.2.4 Parody and Pastiche

Parody and pastiche are key attributes of postmodern culture. Parody, as Linda Hutcheon uses the term, is the ironic imitation of the past that "unacknowledged modernist assumptions about closure, distance, artistic autonomy, and the apolitical nature of representation" (Hutcheon, 1989:104). Hutcheon values postmodern parody self-reflexivity seeing it as an effective political critique and presentation of historical awareness.

For Bakhtin, parody is a result of the natural development in the cycle of a genre; every genre will reach a stage where it begins to be parodied. (Bakhtin, 1981:121) Parodies are most visible in films, such as the parodies of classic horror films, or Mel Brooks' parodies of western films. A work is called 'pastiche' when it copies multiple works and fields (music, fashion, fills, art) in one film, such as *Austin Powers* films as a pastiche of Swinging Sixties, or *Indiana Jones* series as pastiche of 1930s adventure series.

Fredric Jameson characterizes pastiche as 'blank parody' without any political motives. Patische imitates previous genres and styles, but unlike parody, its imitation is not ironic. As Jameson characterizes:

> "Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic
> style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a
> neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives,
> amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter"(Jameson, 1993:18)

For Jameson, pastiche has become a 'dead language' unable to satirize in an effective way. Tarantino's films are considered as pure pastiches. His *Pulp Fiction,* the intertwining story of two mob hit men, a boxer, a gangster's wife, and a pair of diner bandits, is a pastiche of 1950s pulp fiction texts. *Kill Bill*, the bride's legendary revenge

story is a pastiche of kung-fu films.

3.2.2.5 Irony and Black Humor

Black humor and irony are probably the most recognizable aspects of postmodernism. Both were often used by modernist filmmakers, so their use did not begin with postmodernism. However, they became central features of postmodern film and literature as well. Linda Hutcheon claimed postmodern fiction as a whole could be characterized by the ironic quote marks, that much of it can be taken as tongue-in-cheek. (Hutcheon, 1989:102) Writers like Pynchon, Vonnegut and Burroughs used black humor in really serious subjects like wars or drug use. They used wordplay and irony.

Their purpose was to deal with very serious, often taboo subjects, and provoke discomfort and serious thought as well as amusement. Stanley Kubirick's film about nuclear war threat; *Dr. Strangelove* plays the subject for laughs, instead of dramatizing it with fear. Coen Brothers' films like *Fargo, No Country for Old Men* and *True Grit* also go around serious subjects like racism, economic crisis, violence and murder and deal with them in a unique humorous way. Coen's *Fargo* will be analyzed in detail as an example of contemporary tragedy in postmodern film in the following chapter.

3.2.2.6 Pluralism and Multiperspectivism

Pluralism and multiperspectivism in film and literature go along with the politics of postmodernism. The existence of so many identities; ethnic, national, class, regional, gender or sexual result in the question: are the ideologies of modern world able to respond to all of these identities. In other words, the continuation of modernity created the conditions for the disintegration of the ideologies that arose as a response to it.(Schwarzmantel, 1998:173)

Multiperspectivism was a need of the postmodern society. The crisis of modern ideologies gave rise to two approaches to the postmodern need of pluralism; it can be a

result of the changing nature of postindustrial society, or it can always be desired even before the change (ibid.). The reason as the first or second, in contemporary society overriding importance is not given to a particular identity, like the political, but to plural identities, which defines humans in multiple ways. While 'identity' means belonging to a certain group in modernism, in postmodern era it is the membership of a multiplicity of groupings. Regional, national, ethnic, class, professional, cultural, generational, religious, environmental identities can no longer be categorized only by class affiliation.

In addition to pluralism in identity, multiperspectivism also allowed the readers to play a more active role in the process of reading/watching. Active role of the reader/viewer in the work also meant the death of authors. 'The death of the author' and 'the birth of the reader' was announced by Barthes in 1968, declaring that 'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination' (Barthes 1977: 148). The readerly text in its most simple form is a traditional piece of literature that uses standard representations and dominant signifying practices. There are no multiple meanings in text, everything is clear, the reader/viewer only receives what is presented. The writerly text, on the other hand, puts the reader/viewer in a position of control, plays with perception with intertextuality and language games. The reader takes an active role in the construction of meaning.

'The death of the author' located the reader/viewer as a site of the production of meaning, the reader no longer only receives what is signified by the signifier, has a dominant role in literature, who interprets, judges, interacts. The omniscient narrator no longer exist. As Barthes states:

> . . . the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signified; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable . . . ; the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language (ibid:5).

Barthes' writerly text is the dominant form of literature (which is also applied in cinema,

started with French New Wave and continued) in the postmodern world. There is always a blurred vision between what is real and what is artificial. By violating the conventions of realism, a 'writerly text' transforms the readers into producers, instead of consumers. So, pluralism and multiperspectivism are both related to subject (various identities) and the perspective of the reader (interpretation).

All of the characteristics mentioned above; historiographic metafiction, intertextuality, playfulness, irony, black humor, pluralism and multiperspectivism are the techniques of postmodern film and literature. A postmodern work does not necessarily reflect all of these techniques but it uses one or the other. These characteristics can also be found in the films that will be analyzed in the following chapter.

3.3 CONTEMPORARY TRAGEDY

In the first chapter, we looked at the tradition of tragedy to define the specific characteristics of the genre. Around 1950s, after Second World War, many art forms, themes and concepts become uncategorizable. The existent movements were deficient in terms of categorizing new ideologies and movements of art. "Tragedy" as a genre or an idea became a part of this complication. Many scholars like Steiner defended that 'tragedy is dead'. For them, tragedy was an Ancient Greek genre that reflects the theatrical understanding of Greeks which does not have any place in postmodern world. Postmodern is accepted as a post-tragic period. For others, "tragedy" was not only a genre but it also was an idea. "Scholars have distinguished between three kinds of meaning and usage clustering around "tragedy" and "tragic": the literary, the philosophical, and the vernacular"(Felski, 2008:2).

Mixed Genres

The literary use of the word "tragedy", sees it as a genre, rather than an idea. It can be useful to look at the genres or the ambiguity of genres in postmodern art to understand the 'breakdown of tragedy as a genre in postmodern world'. Parallel to the change in

history and social thought, it is possible to say that there is a certain change in genres. Clifford Geertz mentions about an enormous amount of genre mixing in intellectual life, in his article "Blurred Genres":

> This genre blurring is more than just a matter of Harry Houdini or Richard Nixon turning up as characters in novels or of Midwestern murder sprees described as though a gothic romance had imagined them. It is philosophical inquiries looking like literary criticism (think of Stanley Cavell on Beckett or Thoreau, Sartre on Flaubert), scientific discussions looking like belles letters morceaux (Lewis Thomas, Loren Eiseley), baroque fantasies presented as deadpan empirical observations (Borges, Barthelme), histories that consist of equations and tables or law court testimony (Fogel and Engerman, Le Roi Ladurie), documentaries that read like true confessions (Mailer), parables posing as ethnographies (Castenada), theoretical treatises set out as travelogues (Lévi-Strauss), ideological arguments cast as historiographical inquiries (Edward Said), epistemological studies constructed like political tracts (Paul Feyerabend), methodological polemics got up as personal memoirs (James Watson).(Geertz, 1980:168)

Most of the critics think "genre" is not an appropriate term for characterizing postmodern writing. The term 'postmodern genre' sounds contradictory, because postmodern is not related to anything systematic and cannot be placed in certain frames like genres. Some argue that genres do not exist in postmodern literature. In contrast, post-structuralists like Derrida think there is no genreless text. "Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (Derrida, 1980:65). Even if blurred, mixed and chaotic, the characteristics of specific genres are visible in postmodernists texts.

Accepting that postmodern literature is not genreless, we can look at the way the genres are mixed or changed. Blurring or mixing genres indicate a new way of thinking. Postmodern literature broke the readers/viewers' auto-categorization of genres by mixing them. Different genres such as short stories, proverbs, ballads, lyrics now became parts of other texts like novels. Tragedies are no longer pure tragedies but they are mixed with comedies and became tragicomedies or mixed with hyperreal world and became sci-fi tragedies. This changing nature of tragedy makes it uncategorizable in the postmodern era.

Tragedy: Out of the Limits of Theater and Literature

Another difficulty of defining contemporary tragedy is that it is no longer in the limits of theater but it spread to literature; novels or media; films and tv-series, newspapers and magazines which advertise personal stories or the Internet where everybody can share their own tragedy through blogs, websites etc. Tragedy should be discussed pluralistically. Because with postmodernism not only the genres are blurred but the form is continuously being reshaped. With the introduction of the novel into literature world, tragedy was no longer only limited to theater. And with postmodernism, in addition to novel; film, television, the internet and various media extensions can also create, reflect or talk about tragedies.

The rising importance of visuality is a key marker of postmodernism. Meaning, information and pleasure are transmitted to consumers through visual technology. Visual technology cover everything that is designed to be looked at or to enhance natural vision. From oil painting to television, any visual material has a certain impact on consumers and just as the nineteenth century was classically represented in the newspaper and the novel, postmodernism is best imagined and understood visually. (Mirzoeff, 1999:4). As Mirzoeff quotes from Barber;

> "Postmodernism has often been defined as the crisis of modernism. In this context, this implies that the postmodern is the crisis caused by modernism and modern culture confronting the failure of its own strategy of visualizing. In other words, it is the visual crisis of culture that creates post modernity, not its textuality. While print culture is certainly not going to disappear, the fascination with the visual and its effects that marked modernism has engendered a postmodern culture that is most postmodern when it is visual."(Mirzoeff 1999:3)

Visual culture defines the relations between class, gender and racial identities. So the most visible change between modern and postmodern is this increased emphasis on visuality. So tragedy, as a form of theater, later literature became related to film, TV, internet and other forms of visual media. The spread of tragedy to visual culture marks

another critical point which makes the definition of contemporary tragedy more comprehensive and ambiguous.

Tragedy and Postmodern Ethics

The philosophical discussion on tragedy is formed around its relation to ethics and free will. "What renders the tragic so resonant to modern theory, as Vassilis Lambropoulos points out, is its gesturing toward what lies beyond the limits of human understanding, its ability to play an 'ethical role without acquiring a fixed moral value'(Felski, 2008:3). As mentioned before for Hegel, tragedy is an ethical decision between two positive values. It is the decision of Brutus to save Rome, or to save Caesar, or the decision of Antigone between burying her brother or not breaking the law. For some scholars the essence of tragedy is not 'sorrow' but the philosophical depth of sorrow. Tragedy is about questioning the morals, questioning the limits of human, questioning freedom. But when we compare "postmodern ethics" with Ancient Greek morals, we see that we cannot apply Hegelian theory to contemporary tragedy.

Postmodern approach to morality is often the celebration of the 'demise of the ethical'. "Ethics itself is denigrated or derided as one of the typically modern constraints now broken and destined for the dustbin of history; fetter once deemed necessary, now clearly superfluous: another illusion the postmodern men and women can well do without" (Baumann, 1993:3). The distinction between 'right' and 'wrong' disappears. The pragmatic and utilitarian postmodern view, weighed 'right' versus 'wrong' on the same scale of the things to do. With the vanishing distinction between 'right' and 'wrong', other values which were not used to be important in tragedy such as 'usefulness' and 'propriety' started to be considered at the same level with them. As Baumann states, everything seem to float at the same level and "the totality of ways and means, in all its aspects, was lived as if validated by powers no human will or whim could challenge"(ibid., 4). Free will, which was the most crucial element of tragedy, now became equal to superficial elements such as 'money' or 'ambition'. Contemporary tragedy is stuck between negative values; these values used to be called 'negative' in

classical and modern periods but became null in postmodern age.

Tragedy as a 'Form of History'

The last discussion brings us to the vernacular use of "tragedy" and "tragic. Today, the word 'tragedy' is mostly used for car accidents, the death of children or terroristic acts. Often, as Terry Eagleton remarks, when people describe something as being tragic, they mean nothing more than "very sad" (Fiske, 2008:3). Everyday usage of the words 'tragedy' and 'tragic' can be wrong when we consider its literary and philosophical meaning. Car accidents do not involve deep ethical dilemmas, philosophical sorrow or self-sacrifice. But this gives us clues about how tragedy is perceived in postmodern world. What does 'tragedy' mean in a postmodern world? Is it a form of literature or philosophical experience? Or does it even exist?

The most appropriate answer for these questions comes from Susan Sontag. Sontag redefines tragedy as a 'form of history', rather than a form of drama, that "reflects or attempts to resolve the great historical tragedies of our time" (Sontag, 1966:285). According to her, modern drama has failed to engage with tragedy, because no form of literature can reflect the cataclysmic event of the Holocaust. So the Holocaust is a breaking point between modern and postmodern art. Sontag explains the importance of the Holocaust in reshaping art forms as:

> We live in a time in which tragedy is not an art form but a form of history. Dramatists no longer write tragedies. But we do possess works of art (not always recognized as such) which reflect or attempt to resolve the great historical tragedies of our time. Among the acknowledged art forms which have been devised or perfected in the modern era for this purpose are the psychoanalytic session, the parliamentary debate, the political rally, and the political trial. And as the supreme tragic event of modern times is the murder of six million European Jews, one of the most interesting and moving work of art of the past ten years is the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961. (ibid:284)

The Holocaust is the ultimate gaping tragic wound. Any attempt to represent it will be so weak and unnecessary. Adorno's famous injunction declared that "to write poetry

after Aushwitz is barbaric"(Adorno 1981:34). Because the horror of Holocaust was beyond human imagination, it also unveiled the meaningfulness of the traditional ethical dilemma that takes place in tragedy:

> In a time which has not lacked in tragedies, this event most merits that unenviable honor-by reason of its magnitude, unity of theme, historical meaningfulness, and sheer opaqueness. For no one understands this event. (Sontag, 1966:284)

Unlike other genres, tragedy did not evolve to some other art form, but it became indicative of life itself. The tragic terms 'suffering', 'self-sacrifice' and 'pain' became meaningless and writers started to search for new meanings. Compared to the sufferings in the Soviet Union, the bombing of Hiroshima or the Holocaust, the real tragic events and thousands of destroyed lives, the tragic fall of one or two characters did not signify so much. "Novels started to explore the philosophical problem of "useless pain" which Levinas and many others think has been posed inescapably by the events of the twentieth century". (Silverstone, 2007:273).

The Holocaust also marks a breaking point in terms of power relations. Nobody would be able to write a play like Hamlet because our world is so different than his. What we have in our world is a completely different system of power relations, which tragedy focuses on. Tragedy after Holocaust became a form of history. Tragedy is not only a genre anymore, but life itself. So a work of art that reflects a real tragedy in life became a 'tragic work of art'. This is why it is possible to find the instances of tragedy in postmodern art but impossible to define "postmodern tragedy" as a genre. The films and texts cited in this work combine some of the classical characteristics of tragedy as a genre with the natural tragedy of life.

Tragedy as Political Criticism

Tragedy is also a process of criticizing the system. The criticism started with the importance of free will and continued with the questioning of morality. A possible tragedy in postmodern era then is a form of critique, which is mostly related to America,

directly or indirectly. It criticizes the system or an unfair condition created by this system. The way it criticizes is very different than the resistance of modernism. However it also aims to create awareness of the contemporary situation by reflecting stories.

The rise of America as a superpower is an important factor which determines the changing characteristics of tragedy. When we looked at the tradition of tragedy in the first chapter, we saw that tragedy was always with the most powerful, the most democratic, as well as the free. Ancient Greeks, the highest example of a culture gave birth to it, Romans only in their successful times were able to produce tragedy, England and France were leading powers when Shakespeare or Racine appeared, and Europe was the centre of thought during modernism. In postmodern era, United States is a leading power in the world, therefore postmodernism has been an expression of American culture. As Jameson puts it; "...I must remind the reader of the obvious; namely, that this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and super structural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror"(1993: 5). So the new form of 'tragedy' is either was born in America, or it is somehow related to American system. Generally there is an anti-hero who is surrounded by a system which is constructed by humans (and not by gods or goddesses), the character is not free to make ethical decisions and he is so insensitive and passive about the events taking place around him. While the existence of obvious ethical decisions supports the idea of 'tragedy', the passivity of the characters supports 'anti-heroism'. It is the 'tragedy' where the political system is the main cause of suffering, instead of oracles or heroes themselves.

Contemporary Instances of Tragedy

As mentioned above, it is not possible to define 'postmodern tragedy' as a genre. However it is still possible to find instances of tragedy in contemporary film and literature. The changes and mixing genres make it clear that we can no longer evaluate

tragedy with its traditional themes or classical frames for characters. Considering tragedy as a form of history and an experience of life, an incredible variety of themes, characters and narratives make the judgment much more complicated. So, I will try to pick the common elements of traditional tragedy and common elements of postmodern film and literature to categorize themes and the trajectory of the character.

First, from an Hegelian view, tragedy simply deals with free will and ethics. Its adventure through time can be seen as a story about the importance of free will, or how free will became more important through time. In ancient and classical tragedy, characters encounter ethical dilemmas with two positive values. A system (gods or kings) forces him to make a decision. Even if it results in his destruction he chooses to act upon free will. He becomes a hero. In modern drama character again is forced to make an ethical decision. This time the system is no longer related to gods or kings but politicians or different power holders. This time he chooses not to choose. He is totally unheroic. He questions the system and his passivity is a form of resistance. So, the modern character acts upon his free will, showing that he has the freedom of choice. In postmodern era, we see a completely different system. Here everything is so chaotic and the character is stuck between negative values. These negative values are so visible and depressing that they mostly result in suicide, murder or various violence acts. It is not only sadness or sorrow that defines tragedy but the 'philosophical depth of sorrow', 'spiritual waste' and 'suffering of hopelessness'. Tragedy in the postmodern world, still criticizes the system as a continuation of tradition, but makes it in a different way, instead of forcing him to make a decision between positive values it pushes him into a pool of chaos and violence. It still shows the importance of free will, by illustrating the 'lack of it'. As we mentioned before, tragedy is a post-form evolving through interpretation, so seeing the suffering coming from the lack of free will, the reader/viewer realizes its importance on a different level.

In contemporary film and literature, tragedy succeeds at this by using such important postmodern themes as chaos, popular culture, paranoia, violence and virtual reality. Tragedy in contemporary literature and film has an incredible range of themes, but here

I will focus only on five themes chaos, paranoia, popular culture, violence and virtual reality which also cover many sub-themes (that will be used in film analysis) such as marriage, post colonization, depression, drugs or amnesia.

3.3.2 Themes

3.3.2.1 Chaos and Disorder

Chaos theory, following catastrophe theory, is related to the discontinuities that may occur in the evolution of a system, has first come up in 1960, when the tiny errors of weather systems, apparently resulted in enormous unpredictable variations in the outcome of the equations. (Sim, 2001:176) While these errors showed the unpredictability of weather forecast, it also gave rise to a series of study in applied mathematics, with applications in several disciplines including physics, economics, biology, and philosophy. "For history that chaos theory has clarified about weather forecasting: the impossibility of grasping the plurality of details inherent in initial conditions renders any human attempt at understanding the present or forecasting the future proportionally deficient"(Ward, 1998:213). Chaos theory simply studies how small changes in initial conditions can result in diverging outcomes for chaotic system. Its famous example of Butterfly Effect related to the study of Edward Lorenz illustrate the sensitive dependence of initial conditions. As Philip Merilees concocted the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil can set off a tornado in Texas. (Sim, 2001: 178) This unpredictability appeared as something that science cannot predict. Postmodernists started to see chaos as a counter to science. Its unpredictability is parallel to the uncertainty of the material world. Such as "jump phenomenon" or a "sudden change of equilibrium" or a "phase transition like water solidifying into ice" (Watt, 1998:138) postmodern narrative forms one such system.

As Harold J. Morowitz suggests, chaos theory's implications have been "shattering not only to the world of physics but also to the philosophy of knowledge... The chaotic behavior of a class of dynamical systems touches everything from long-range weather

forecasting to the problem of free will" (1993:210). Postmodernism is about the collapse of the modern categories of objectivity and logic, so both chaos theory and postmodernism reject the linear causal models and both are based on the principles of uncertainty and indeterminism. (Ward, 1998:9) Western science is always referred by literature just like Romantic poets refer to the new science of geology, nineteenth century authors refer to Darwinian evolution theory and modern authors refer to quantum physics and medical science.(ibid,12) When we enter the postmodern domain, its chaotic environment, paranoia and cynicism in it is best explained by chaos theory.

Comparing it with classical tragedy, we move from a world of 'knowing the future', oracles and fortunetelling to an unknown world where future is unpredictable and anything can happen within the next minute. It is an insecure world. As the most common response to chaos; anxiety occurs when someone fails to cope. As Singer argues that "we have two choices when dealing with chaos: the first choice is to pretend that disorder is squashed by order; the second choice involves accepting that disorder is the predominant state of being in the universe and that order is a mere exception to disorder"(ibid, 207). Sooner or later, everyone deals with chaos in life, the irrational, the confused and the unpredictable aspects of existence. A small event can drastically change the future and humans are terrified in the face of this possibility.

In his work, *The Literary Appropriation of Chaos Theory,* Brian Ward discusses two novels: Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Italo Cavino's *If On a Winter's Night a Traveler* as fictions dealing with chaos theory and its psychological effects. *White Noise's* lead character Jack Gladney is the chairman of the department of Hitler studies at Blacksmith College. Chaos occurs when the town of Blacksmith is threatened by a toxic chemical spill called 'airborne toxic event'. (ibid.,66) Jack Gladney's family is an ordinary family who are so saturated with the images of violence on TV, so they started to enjoy the disaster footage. As one of Jack's collegues say:

> Because we're suffering from brain fade. We need an occasional catastrophe to break up the incessant bombardment of information... The flow is constant... Words, pictures, numbers, facts, graphics, statistics, specks, waves, particles, motes. Only a catastrophe gets our attention. We want them, we need them, we depend on them.

However, when Jack's own family faces a real catastrophe, the amusement leaves its space to anxiety. The residents of Blacksmith are forced to evacuate their homes. Fear, panic, distrust, suspicion, anxiety and depression come with chaos.

Like DeLillo, Calvino is also concerned with chaos theory and with the issue of finding order and meaning in disordered information. At the end of the first chapter of each new novel, an unnamed male 'reader' starts reading the first chapter of each novel, hoping that it is the narrative he wants to read, and when he realizes it is not, he takes another novel and starts to read its first chapter. Whenever he selects a narrative to read, he moves further away from the original. (Ward, 1998: 155) The reader talks about his experience of life as:

> Every moment of my life brings with it an accumulation of new facts, and each of these new facts brings with its consequences; so the more I seek to return to the zero moment from which I set out, the further I move away from it: though all my actions are bent on erasing the consequences of previous actions and though I manage to achieve appreciable results in this erasure, enough to open my heart to hopes of immediate relief, I must, however, bear in mind that my every move to eras previous events provokes a rain of new events, which complicate the situation worse than before and which I will then, in turn, have to try to erase.(Calvino, 1982:18)

Calvino's characters want to erase their mistakes by returning to earlier times, or determine the others to happen. In Calvino's terms it is about "the conflict between the chaos of the world and man's obsession with making some sense of it is a recurrent pattern"(Sbragia, 1993:283).

Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* is another novel that looks for the meaning in chaos. It is also one of the best examples of contemporary tragedy. Tomas is, a Czech surgeon and an intellectual who lives for his work. When he writes a letter to the editor in which he metaphorically likened the Czech Communists to Oedipus, he is forced to deal with the consequences of that letter. He writes that Czech communists claimed that they did not know what they were doing and were not able to foresee the consequences of their action. But unlike Oedipus, the Communists use their ignorance

to absolve themselves of guilt, and remain in power. Tomas faulted the Communists for using lack of knowledge to explain away wrongdoing and praises Oedipus for accepting responsibility for his action. Exactly at this point we see the difference between the classical and contemporary tragedy. In ancient tragedy Oedipus punishes himself, even though he had made a mistake without knowing, he acts upon his free will, but in contemporary version there is an obvious 'lack of free will' in terms of taking actions.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being also illustrates how meaningfulness and meaninglessness is separated by a fragile border. Kundera tells that:

> "It takes so little, so infinitely little, for a person to cross the border beyond which everything loses meaning: love, convictions, faith, history. Human life-and herein lies its secret-takes place in the immediate proximity of that border, even in direct contact with it; it is not miles away, but a fraction of an inch (away)..." (Kundera, 1999:207)

Sanity and madness history and forgetfulness, meaningless and meaningfulness are
at the two sides of this fragile border, when the border is crossed, the meaning of life is lost.(Ward, 1998:27)

Finally, I want to argue a common metaphor of chaos; supermarkets that are used in several novels and films. One example of this is mentioned in DeLillo's *White Noise.* Here the ordering of the products displayed on the shelves are so complicated that when there is a rearrangement, the elderly supermarket customers are unable to see the arrangement. For them the supermarket's order no longer exists. However, it does not mean that it is lacking in order but the customers fail to recognize it. So the arrangement symbolizes a different kind of sense instead of nonsense. A true understanding of nonsense must be founded on the fact that nonsense is hidden sense. (Ward, 1998:220)

Similar to that in Robert Litell's *The Visiting Professor: A Novel of Chaos*, the chaologist Falk realizes the interesting management of E-Z Mart due to his fascination with its multitude of products. Falk realizes that the supermarket is a metaphor "for the science of chaos in the sense that order is thought to be lurking behind the appearance of disorder (ibid., 139).

In George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead,* a group escaping from flesh-eating zombies come across a shopping mall. After killing the zombie population inside the mall, the place becomes their private sanctuary. The group block large glasses with trucks and make the mall safe. However, everything continues to collapse behind the doors of the mall. Stephen King's *The Mist* uses the supermarket as a similar location to *Dawn of the Dead*. The mist coming to town brings numerous species of bizarre creatures. A group is trapped while shopping in a supermarket. They use the supermarket as a place for protection. But waiting and the expeditions to seek help ends with panic and paranoia. Horror/thriller films often places supermarkets at the centre of chaos.

In Kathryn Bigelow's *Hurt Locker* the supermarket is again used as a metaphor. We see the endless choice of cereals on the selves, and the soldier has to pick one. He looks to his right and then to his left, it looks like an incredibly hard decision which cereal he wants to eat. His hesitancy represents his "lack of free will" in choosing a cereal label. Later the same soldier who cannot even decide which cereal he will eat, has to decide who he will kill in Iraq War. So, this strong contradiction forms contemporary tragedy which is illustrated successfully in *Hurt Locker.*

3.3.2.2 Popular Culture

Today, when we refer to 'popular art' we simply mean an art work that measures its success by the size of its audience and the profit it brings to its maker. (Guins, 2005:59) Various theories on culture, such as the theory of mass culture, 'popular culture' or the culture industry, mainly tended to define the end of the separation between 'high' and 'low' culture. Mainly based on American populism, high culture is stigmatized as a status hobby of small groups of intellectuals. (ibid:115) Jameson tells that the older traditional forms are reorganized and reconstructed under capitalism according to various rational models of efficiency. Market system eliminated the quality of the various forms of human activity and ruthlessly reorganized them in efficiency terms. (ibid:116). The division between high and low art is collapsed. High Modernism

collapsed into fusion with commercial culture, mass culture and pop culture. Capitalist commodification lead 'art' to be measured with its practicality and easy consumability. Consumability of the art work is closely related to its image, because what the viewer mostly consume is the image of that work, rather than the art work itself. Adorno mentions the commodification of art works in his article "Culture Industry"; the entire practice of culture industry is to transfer the profit motive onto cultural forms. At first these forms earn a living for their creators, just like other commodities in the market and then they sought for profit. (Guins, 2005:104). Efficiency is the most crucial condition of production. "The culture industry intentionally integrates its consumers from above. To the detriment of both it forces together the spheres of high and low art, separated for thousands of years"(ibid:103). With destructing the difference between high and low art, culture industry also standardize the work; there is an eternal sameness, the differences are covered so that the consumer can be familiar with the art work which make the work more easy to sell.

Television and popular music are the most visible examples of the destruction of the separation between high and low art. *The Simpsons*, an animated TV series which is a parody of a working-class American family and their life style became a popular culture phenomenon in 90s. The show had many references to music, film, literature, science and social events. The creators of the show also used current politics as humorous elements, with inserting them in the background as a column in newspaper, or bits of text in a sign. Shakespeare and Bible were other sources of the show. A great example of popular culture, *The Simpsons* used intellectual, high culture issues and made fun of them. The show simplified the issues, so they can be easily consumed by the viewers. *The Simpsons* continued to be the highest-rated show for years. As popular as *The Simpsons*, Rap Music also deals with a serious subject as homicide in a commercially successful way. Rappers show violent death in glorified ways. "The major themes found in these homicide-related rap lyrics were the normalization of killing, respect maintenance, confrontation with the power structure, vengeance, and masculine confrontation" (Hunnicutt, 2009:611).Rap music and *The Simpsons* successfully present 'tragedy of everyday life' in contemporary world.

Different than reflecting 'tragedy of everyday life', many popular films simply choose to follow ancient and classical schemes of tragedy. *Star Wars,* George Lucas' epic space opera became a pop culture phenomenon in 80s. *Star Wars'* relation to ancient Rome's history has long been discussed. The conversion of the Roman Republic to Roman Empire is identical to the conversion of the *Star Wars'* Old Republic to First Galactic Empire. *Star Wars* not just uses Roman History, but borrows elements from ancient Greek tragedy. The tragedy of Anakin Skywalker, a slave who later trained to be a jedi, basically follows the tragic flaw mentioned in Aristotle's *Ars Poetica.* In the first film, Anakin (aka Darth Vader) is introduced to his future bride Padmé, who later will play an important role in Anakin's fall. Jedi master Qui-Gon wants to train Anakin because he believes that Anakin is 'the chosen one' and he will give balance to the Force. So Anakin's destiny has already been determined. Like many tragic heroes Anakin has an important deficiency; his pride (hamartia) prevents him to be a real jedi. He always talks about how he will be so powerful as to prevent people from dying. Hamartia is the main reason that makes Gods angry in ancient tragedy. Anakin foresees the death of Padmé and believes that he can prevent her death with his powers, even it means to choose the Dark Side. With his actions Anakin causes the death of both Padme and Jedis. He results in his own downfall. All that remains for Anakin is suffering and misery. Like all Greek tragedies the recognition occurs too late to prevent disaster. Later when Darth Vader meets his son Luke, he helps him. Anakin doomed to fall through his fatal flows, chooses to kill the emperor and save his son. Anakin's free will which resulted in his downfall before, later rescues his son, and frees Anakin through this rescue. *Star Wars,* one of the major symbols of popular culture which has spawned a media franchise including books, comic books, television series and video games clearly present the elements of Greek Tragedy in the story of the rise and fall of Anakin Skywalker.

Also in theatre a similar structure is followed, plays like Heiner Müller's *Hamletmachine* use intertextuality and some other postmodern methods as interaction between the performers and the public. The play can be seen as an interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet. Hamletmachine* problematizes the role of intellectuals in

Communist East Germany. Müller confronts the ghost of Hamlet and Ophelia with using postmodern methods. Popular plays and films used the elements of Greek and classical tragedy with postmodern themes and techniques.

3.3.2.3 Paranoia

It is highly debatable whether if chaos and anxiety gave rise to paranoia or if it is the other way around. But it is a known fact that we live in the age of 'paranoia'. In a world where every move of human beings can be surveyed by a hidden camera, every word they say can be listened through a telephone bug, every letter they write can be checked with Internet, every relation they have be can be controlled by a system, no wonder why paranoia is a major theme of literature and film. Anxiety and paranoia is discussed by Baudrillard in *Symbolic Exchange and Death* as;

> Our rationalist culture suffers from a collective paranoia. Something or someone must have been responsible for the least accident, the slightest irregularity, the least catastrophe, an earth tremor, a house in ruins, bad weather; everything is an assassination attempt. This paranoia is less interesting than the fact that what happens is interpreted this way (2004:161)

Cynicism and suspicion confer a paranoid modality to postmodern life that gives the feeling of being watched everywhere, followed and monitored by complex information systems. Postmodern paranoia can be explained in several ways like a clinical psychosis, in Freud's sense or as an episteme, a postmodern mode of knowledge. (Flieger, 1997:87). The analysis of postmodern paranoia through psychoanalysis is a completely different and highly detailed process which I will not go through in this thesis. Here, I will look at how paranoia turned into a literary style and occupy a central space in postmodern film.

The literary history of paranoia goes back to Ancient Greece, the stories of Oedipus and Jacosta, or the Oresteia trilogy. But until the first half of 20th century, when Kafka, Orwell, Lovecraft and others exploited paranoia in their stories, it did not take the center stage in literature. (Gioia, 2010:1) Before them, paranoia is mostly dealt as a mental condition rather than a result of collective anxiety. Postmodern paranoia can be seen as a

special case that "Jean Baudrillard has called 'hyper visibility'--the preeminence of the virtual in the millennial era, accompanied by an increasing blindness to the real material conditions that ground us" (Flieger, 1997:88) So, postmodern paranoia is more of a social condition rather than a personal one. The results of changing social conditions; Cold War and the increasing reputation of espionage activities of FBI and CIA supported this condition.

Many postmodern writers such as Paul Auster, Thomas Pynchon, Alain Robbe Grillet used paranoia and formed fictions where the protagonist feels watched and surveyed by an eye in the sky. Philip Dick's novel *Valis,* a science-fiction novel tells the story of Horselover Fat, a man who God contacted using a pinkish ray of light, is one of these examples. Fat tries to survive in 70s and this encounter with God encourages him to write an exegesis about his experience. In *Valis*, the reader begins to fear that the paranoia creates the fiction rather than the other way round. (ibid.,90) But it is Thomas Pynchon who removed paranoia from elaborate scenarios of Kafka and Orwell, and insert it into banalities of everyday suburban life.(Gioia, 2010:2)

Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* is about the girlfriend of a deceased rich man, Oedipa Maas who steps in to settle his estate but instead starts to distrust people and feel insecure about many conspiracies around. Later it is understood that these conspiracies are not products of her paranoia or mental state, but they are real and they bring her to various secrets. When the conspirators are not interested in money or power, but just delivering the mail, Maas realizes that there is an alternative postal system run by a shadowy group whose history goes back to the sixteenth century when their group attempted to wrest control of European courier service from other dominant companies. After all of her discoveries, Maas finally ends up only suspecting her own paranoia. Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow,* a much more complex work than *The Crying of Lot 49*, is set in Europe at the end of World War II. The narrative is about the production of German rockets and characters' effort to uncover a secret mysterious device called "Schwarzgerät". Just like in *The Crying of Lot 49*, the conspiracy theories of *Gravity's Rainbow*, are not only theories, they are all justified so the novel is not paranoid in the

traditional sense of the word. (ibid.,101)

Pynchon defines paranoia itself as the "reflex of seeking other orders behind the visible" (Pynchon,1995:219). So, like the term 'tragedy', 'paranoia' also has a changed meaning, and it is no longer a mental condition, but a reflex to find the 'hidden orders'. In the previous chapter we talked about chaos and how it occurs when there is a system different than the ordinary or accustomed. It is not necessarily a 'lack of order' but 'disorder' that someone has to look behind the visible to make sense of it. Similarly, paranoia is no longer a condition of 'dreaming', 'hallucinating' or 'assuming', but 'suspecting' and 'searching'. "To put this in the contemporary jargon with which *Gravity's Rainbow* is obsessed: paranoia is a necessary product of all information system" and "for all the paranoid scares in *Gravity's Rainbow*, it would be even scarier, Pynchon suggests, if we began to stop suspecting "hidden orders behind the visible." (Fleiger, 1997:103)

Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*, presents a similar sense of paranoia. *Ghosts*, a detective fiction and part of *New York trilogy*, is about a detective called Blue who investigates Black for a client named White. Again, like Pynchon, Auster justifies the reasons why characters are paranoid. They're followed and being reported, so they cannot be called 'paranoid' in traditional terms. Here, paranoia ensures the comfort of being alive. The characters feel important when they are the object of someone's interest. Paranoia as a symptom instead of a disorder, shapes the characters' identity.

William Burroughs' creates a surreal paranoid world, different than Auster and Pynchon in his novel *Naked Lunch.* This time paranoia is directly linked drug use. William Lee, a writer/bug exterminator has a serious narcotics additions and suffers high level of paranoia, thinks that he is a secret agent in Tangiers. Through a serious of fantastic experience, he writes a book called "Naked Lunch" but he has no memory of it. Burroughs' non-linear, fragmentary narrative supports the feeling of paranoia.

Other than Burroughs, Samuel Beckett and Doris Lessing were also successful in

creating paranoid worlds in their works. Beckett's *Waiting for Godot,* also regarded as a tragi-comedy and the first postmodern literary work by some scholars, concerns two tramps: Estragon and Vladimir who are waiting for someone called Godot. After long conversations, they contemplate suicide. Godot never comes. The absence of Godot and the crisis of existence and alienation it creates is the major reason of paranoia. John Nash's life story; *A Beautiful Mind*, even though showing a personal mental condition, because of its references to the Pentagon and espionage in America, it can be marked as an example of postmodern paranoia. *Matrix, Fight Club* and *Videodrome* also tackle paranoia from different angles.

3.3.2.4 Violence

The traditional tragedy is defined as 'an experience of suffering through series of ethical choices'. The suffering is a path to wisdom. In the aftermath of the Holocaust 'the experience of suffering' found a new meaning. "As Rowland Wymer notes, the unparalleled loss of human life in the Holocaust challenges attempts "to give suffering a meaning by seeing it as a necessary path to wisdom"(Silverstone, 2007:272). The victims of the Holocaust were not free to choose their destiny. Their pain was not serving some enlightenment, so the Holocaust did not fit the traditional definition of tragedy.

Just like the victims, the witnesses were also clueless about how to deal with reality. After watching thousands of people dying, witnesses were no longer able to feel so intense. So, violence entered our lives in a way that we can no longer deeply feel it, or learn from it. As Silverstone says:

> So saturated in images and prior texts, contemporary audiences ought to be so dulled as to be incapable of any intense feeling, let alone those tragic emotions of pity and terror Aristotle famously recommends in response to acts "involving destruction or pain" arising from "death on stage and physical agonies and wounding"(Aristotle 1989:65) How can a tragedy be "cool" and "hip" enough for a postmodern audience to approve while at the same time evoking the white-hot rage and sorrow that would make an audience truly attend to the power of the emotions it evokes? (ibid: 250)

The images of violence created a world that can no longer even express its grief. To quote Jean-François Lyotard : "What art can do is bear witness not to the sublime, but to this aporia of art and to its pain. It does not say the unsayable, but it says that it cannot say it"(Lyotard, 1990:47). It was not possible to be loyal to another person's pain, be confronted by the events and also be rational to judge them ethically. So, now the pain is visible but not expressible (Silverstone, 2007:60). Exactly this point show us that postmodern tragedy is more about this inability to express rather than being able to do so.

One of the writers who deal with this post-war trauma is Jerzy Kosinski who tells the story of a boy of unknown religious and ethnic background in his book *The Painted Bird (1965)*. The boy experiences different social and sexual deviances around unidentified areas of Eastern Europe during World War II. He is an antihero who has relations with with peasants and experiences rape and violence. In a different way, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five (1969)*, tells the story of a soldier who journeys through time during Second World War. He witnesses the bombing of Dresden and later had a post-war married life in the U.S.A. Both Kosinski's and Vonnegut's characters live a fragmented and ambiguous life. The non-linearity of their stories is directly connected to what we discussed as 'the unspeakable'. The journeys through time or through memory just shows images and do not express the events chronologically. With this way, their stories are separated from tradition, history, the classical way of experiencing events and the classical way of perceiving emotions.

Another type of violence related to racism and xenophobia is also an important subject for many novelists. Postcolonial and post-structuralist theory advances varied subjects concerning memory and the tragedy of people suffering from a kind of collective 'amnesia'. (ibid:72). Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* looks at five centuries of Spanish colonialism and the continual violence and repression it brings. Latin America's lack of a national identity resulted in self-destruction.

Another novel about colonization and violence is Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing*

(1950). Mary and Dick are a married couple from Rhodesia (Lessing does not exactly call it Rhodesia, but she refers to South Africa and Rhodesia). Mary moves into Dick's farm where he manages the labor. Even as they are cold and distant to each other, they are committed to their marriage. Mary is extremely racist and so cruel to the black workers who work in their farm. Thinking that whites should be masters of Blacks, Mary takes money from their pay and reduces their break time. Later, a worker called Moses becomes really important for Mary. He starts to work in the house as a servant. Moses witnesses Mary's hard times and their relation turns to a special one and book ends with Mary's death at the hand of Moses. So colonization or the 'tragedy of colonization' is criticized by postcolonial writer in an effective way.

In the domain of filmmaking, we can say that Quentin Tarantino, a master of using physical violence in his films, explored the ways that 'postmodern' and 'tragic' can be reconciled. Tarantino who creates anew with visiting old, combines previous character types and genres with a supreme awareness of them and elicit strong emotions with juxtapositions of these material (Houlahan, 2007:251). "What Tarantino unfolds others have discovered as well. Perhaps this is especially the case with the construction of new tragic scenarios, where the great exemplars since Aeschylus and Sophocles are ever present, never more than in the early twenty-first century, when so much cultural production has become readily available in digitized form. (ibid.).

Tarantino's film *Reservoir Dogs (1992)* is a clear example. The film is about a jewel robbery that goes wrong. After the police show up right at the time, robbers begin to suspect that one of them is an undercover cop. Film also has one of the longest death scenes with Tim Roth as Mr. Orange. Mr. Orange was shot and suffers from a wound bleeding profusely. Like a tragic character he knows that he is going to die soon. Mr. White shares this scene with Mr. Orange; as the tragic protagonist needs an audience to share his suffering. Really close to his death, Mr. Orange reaches to a highly emotional moment with his conscience and confess that he is an undercover cop. Mr. White looks at him calmly with apprehension. The sequence is so close to a classical tragic moment of awareness and it is extraordinarily moving. (ibid.)

Another postmodern film that deals with violence is David Fincher's *Fight Club* based on the novel of the same name by Chuck Palahniuk. The film is about a global organization, underground "fight clubs" built by a traveling automobile company employee and a soap salesman. The nameless narrator suffering from insomnia goes to cancer therapy groups to witness more severe suffering. Later he meets with a soap salesman on a business tip and invites him to his house. Soon, they start to have a fight in the house, then out of a bar which results in forming a "fight club" in the basement of that bar. *Fight Club* is analyzed as 'an accurate portrayal of men in 90s and their relation with violence'. It is also charged as "shaping up to be the most contentious mainstream Hollywood meditation on violence since Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange"* (Goodman: 1999, 2).

Especially, after 9/11 violence had a new meaning.

> Yet there are key differences between accounts of the Holocaust and those of the 9/11 events. Chronicles of the Holocaust contain little authentic moving-image documentation, while the occurrences of 9/11 became internationally visible when they were still taking place. Conversely the physical tortures of the Holocaust have reached public awareness most vividly through images of atrocity captured after the Nazi camps were liberated, whereas the physical containment of the damage inflicted on September 11-facilitated by the nature of the attacks and the fact that the World Trade Center Towers imploded instead of scattering their wreckage outward-rendered the destruction of human life almost invisible to the eye. The popular media rushed to compensate for this invisibility with a blitz and seizing on a fitfully fought, nebulously defined "war against terrorism" as a durable support for commercially "public affairs" coverage.(Steritt, 2004:63)

Terroristic attacks, the way they were presented in media and the Iraq War following it, changed the whole perception on violence. Violence became much more visual compare to Holocaust. People were shocked and terrified after what they saw in Holocaust footage. But when they see 9/11 on every TV channel, they were already partly saturated to similar images by mainstream Hollywood films. For most of them, the experience of watching 9/11 was not that different than watching a crime-action film. The attack and the war also gave rise to the production of more terror and war films.

A recent film, Kathryn Bigelow's *Hurt Locker* is one of the most famous Iraq War films. The film tells the story of an American bomb squad who has to detonate a bomb in Iraq. Hurtloceker questions soldiers' mental state, their motivations and the problems they have to deal during war. Hurtlocker clearly presents the American view of the Iraq War. Films like *9/11* reflected the universal reactions against the terroristic attacks, collecting short films from directors of different nationalities. Also documentaries like *Fahrenheit 9/11*, tried to investigate the entire politics behind terroristic attacks from a dissenting point of view. These terroristic acts gave a new direction to the presentation of violence in postmodern films and literature.

3.3.2.5 Virtual Reality

In his book *The Social Construction of Reality,* Peter Berger talks about how reality is produced: "Reality' is manufactured. It is produced by the interrelationship of apparently 'objective facts' in the world with social convention and personal or interpersonal vision" (Beger and Luckmann, 1971:51). For him the new social forms are related to frameworks of knowledge and particular historical structures. Language is a tool of construction rather than reflection in this process of 'constructing reality' in metafiction. The raised level of consciousness helps to acknowledge two poles of metafiction; one accepts a real world where not all relations are composed of language, the other shows a world of prison where there is no escape from language in its construction. (Waugh: 1984: 53). To a certain extent, modernism succeed to enlighten the reader with using self-reflexivity that the world of the novel is a human construction and history is created and not reflected in these novels.

When we enter the domain of postmodernism we see that the major tool of constructing reality is not 'the language', but 'the image'. According to Baudrillard, in postmodern era America has a mythical power throughout the world based on the advertising image (Watt, 1998:62), based on simulation. It is a spreading cultural phenomenon; whole culture is effected by video games, advertisements and shopping malls. The original

work is no longer important, as long as its copy is interesting. Baudrillard's theory of simulation is related to cinema, television and internet, also has countless connotations to/with semiotics, play and signs.

Simulation or simulacrum, similarity or copying the original is not a new concept. Simulation and the problem of 'imitating reality' discussed deeply through the history of thought. Jean Baudrillard identifies three different simulacra depending on the historical periods that they belong to. He divides the historical change of simulacra in three phases; first phase is premodern where the artificiality of the copy is visible and the real work is unique and much more valuable than its copy, second phase modern where distinctions between image and reality break down due to the proliferation of mass-reproducible copies of items and the third phase where the distinction between reality and representation vanishes and originality becomes a meaningless concept. (Hegarty, 2004:102)

Postmodern fiction takes place in this very final phase of copying, where reality and copy are indistinguishable. Jean Baudrillard claimed postmodernity was defined by a shift into hyper reality in which simulations have replaced the real. In postmodernity people are inundated with information, technology has become a central focus in many lives, and our understanding of the real is mediated by simulations of the real. (Baudrillard, 1984:36) Many works of fiction have dealt with this aspect of postmodernity:

> The era of hyper reality now begins... it signifies as a whole the passage into orbit, as orbital and environmental model, of our private sphere itself. It is no longer a scene where the dramatic interiority of the subject, engaged as with its image, is played out. We are here at the controls of a micro-satellite, in orbit-living no longer as an actor or dramaturge but as a terminal of multiple networks. Television is still the most direct prefiguration of this. But today it is the very space of habitation that is conceived as both receiver and distributor, as the space of both reception and operations, the control screen and terminal which as such may be endowed with telematic power. 86-t.i.

Technology after all, is a thread for culture which opens a way to an unknown, scary

world. Robots, cyborgs, human-like but non-human creations scare mankind because of their potential of replacing human. And in this world of image, a copy can easily replace its original. There are no souls and no metaphor of the body in this system. Technology imposes itself upon human experience, so that it becomes irredeemable. (Bukatman, 1993:15).

One of the most visible characteristics of postmodern film is its use of futuristic technology and science-fiction. Science-fiction offers an alternative mode of representation framed around the most important events within our lives and consciousness. Its main purpose is to express human potentials, confront the boundaries of human meaning and value. (ibid:7) I am not going to analyze science-fiction films in this work, but I want to mention tragedy's connection with science fiction and its use in film. Tragedy and science-fiction are always considered as oppositional groupings. As Wymer explains that the genre theory of Frye suggests that the sources of all genres are Homers The Iliad and The Odyssey. (Wymer, 2007:261) The major genres derived from them are comedy and tragedy, romance and realism. Science fiction belongs to the group which derived from The Odyssey and not from The Iliad:

> Science fiction is normally situated within the traditions of romance and fantasy which begin with The Odyssey rather than within the stream of "tragic realism" which flows from The Iliad, yet Frye's own remarks about The Iliad make clear the close connection with the more rigorous forms of science fiction: "With The Iliad, once for all, an objective and disinterested element enters into the poet's vision of human life"; at this point in history, poetry acquires "an authority based, like the authority of science, on the vision of nature as an impersonal order"(Frye 1971:319).

The basic distinction between science-fiction and tragedy is their use of different "chronotopes" which involve different ways of engaging with and representing past, present and future"(Wymer, 1007:263). Tragedy deals with the past. The events in the past are continuous nightmares that the hero can never escape. The choices of the past and their rightfulness are always re-evaluated through the story. On the other hand science-fiction is known as a "literature of the future". Most science fiction stories are about future technological and scientific developments. "In contrast, the tragic perspective on the future is either that it has already happened and is therefore no longer

a hopeful possibility, or that it will be much the same as present, if not worse". (ibid: 265)

But considering science-fiction and tragedy share an essence of Homer and genres become much more blurry with time, it is possible to say that science-fiction and tragedy are not in opposing groups, but combine in many levels. Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Dispossessed*, Doria Russell's the *Sparrow* (1996), a science fiction novel about a Jesuit priest, and Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange (1962), Matrix Trilogy* and *eXistenZ* are examples of this combination. Another notable example is Cronenberg's *Videodrome,* which presents a most literal depiction of image addiction. The film follows Max, the CEO of a cable station who receives a broadcast signal featuring violence and torture. He becomes addicted to the show and then obsessed to find the source of the broadcast. As Bukatman quotes from Baudrillard; "In its themes and structure the film serves as a graphic example of what Baudrillard termed 'the dissolution of TV into life, the dissolution of life into TV'. Baudrillard terms this immixture 'viral', echoing Burrough's injunction that 'image is virus'." (ibid:92) Max's addiction reduces him to the status of a videotape recorder. As O'Blivion tells to Max:" Your reality is already half-video hallucination". (ibid:89)

Blade Runner is another American science fiction that depicts a dystopia where a company called Tyrell Corporation produce genetically engineered robots called replicants. The manufacture of replicants are banned on earth and they are only used for dangerous missions on off-world colonies. The replicants who are still on earth are being haunted by special police forces called Blade Runners. Its close relation with Greek tragedies is marked by Mary Jenkins; as she says humans play the role of God with changing the genetics, and this is a sign of hubris in tragedy. "The mythological Titan, Prometheus, challenged and enraged the gods by stealing fire to bestow on humans. Fire enabled humans to make, amongst other beneficial things, weapons to subdue animals. Prometheus's act of hubris is also Victor Frankenstein's and Tyrell's"(Jenkins, 1997:11). Blindness in the film can also be interpreted as another reference to classical tragedies. So films like *Blade Runner*, or science-fiction as a

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genre, has close relations with tragedy in postmodern film.

3.3.3 Character

Postmodernism does not present a radical break with earlier conventions of characterization. A significant number of the old conventions of character persist. (Fokkema, 1991:60) But there is still some visible changes in the way that the character is defined. The first change is probably the use of the term "figure" or "cipher" instead of "character". Both terms offer a shallow, non-complex structure for the character which lacks a psychological structure.

Modernist text concentrates on the inner reality of the character and presents all the complexities. Even the character is confused, he is not totally lost, and he still holds the center. "Where a realist text concentrates on self-knowledge or self-discovery, the modernist text rather probes the nature of identity, the boundaries between self and other, the continuities of an essential self". (ibid:58) While character and his world that function as cause and effect are essential in realist text, in modernism character starts to question the psychological motives and free will that result in cause and effect. With modernism character no longer just judges the morality, but also the validity of morality and himself to explore the complexities of the self. As Fokkema puts it:

> Where in realist texts the "old stable ego" as Lawrence called it is in fact subservient to a moral problem in the text, the modernist text concentrates on this ego to explore the complexities of a still unified self without foregrounding the difficulties of (re)presenting such a self. This, the reasoning goes, becomes the task of postmodernism. (ibid:58)

Postmodern character, not really different from the modern, continues to question the system and the complexities of the self. He/she still questions the social, philosophical and economic problems around him/her. But unlike modern questioning, his search is rather reluctant and unwilling. It is as if that he had already accepted the search is a dead end. His psychological motives are definitely weak. The postmodern character can be defined with the terms 'insecure', 'hopeless', 'bored' and 'lost'. All these negative aspects

are closely related to the ambigious political, economic and social power structures called 'systems'.

In postmodern world, 'systems' replaced people and man became expandable. "Man in the Big System is to be-and to a large extent has become-a moron, button-pusher or learned idiot, that is highly trained in some narrow specialization but otherwise a mere part of the machine" (Von Bertalanffy, 1968:10). In the world of cybernetics, 'systems' function as the new machines of industry revolution in terms of 'alienating people'. When we look at the postmodern character we can easily see the connection between his/her insecurity, unguidedness, hopelessness, boredom, isolation and alienation. Alienation as a major concept is related to the main aspects of postmodern character such as lack of confidence, lack of hope or social isolation. As Senekal remarks, "at the present time, in all the social sciences, the various synonyms of alienation have the foremost place in studies of human relations" and "investigations of the 'unattached', the 'marginal', the 'obsessive', the 'normless', and the 'isolated' individual all testify to the central place occupied by the hypothesis of alienation in contemporary social science". (2008:8) So, analyzing postmodern alienation can guide us into the analysis of postmodern character.

'Alienation' is not a new concept considering its psychological presentation in classical literature and its sociological and philosophical importance for modernism. Many writers like Homer, Shakespeare and Goethe referred to the 'alienation of character" in their works; *Hamlet*, *Faust* and the *Iliad*. "In the Age of Kafka alienation took on the meaning of existential dread. Camus, influenced by Kierkegaard and Sartre, as well as by Kafka, shifted alienation to a category reflecting a dishonored post-war France still suffering under the stigma of the Nazi occupation" (Bloom, 2009:xv). But the most commonly used form of alienation has been theoritized by Karl Marx.

From a Marxist perspective, man is alienated within the capitalist mode of production. As a systematic result of capitalism, workers become autonomous human beings who are conditioned to correspond the demands of bourgeoisie. In this respect Marx defines

four types of alienation in labor under capitalism; alienation of the worker from the work he produces, alienation of the worker from the process of producing, alienation of the worker from himself and alienation of the worker from other workers. (1988: 20-27) "Marx identifies three aspects of alienation namely private property, the commodity character of labour and the division of labour in society" (Senekal, 2008:8) Many modernist work approached alienation from such sociological perspective.

Another, a psychological approach on alienation suggested by Melvin Seeman in his article '*On the Meaning of Alienation' (1959).* Seeman who works within a tradition of social psychological empirical research used Marx's insights to construct a model of alienation. He categorized five dimensions of alienation: powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation and self-estrangement. (Geyer, 1996:viv) In addition to these five alternate meanings of alienation, Seeman later added another: cultural estrangement.

At the present time, alienation does not only refer to social relations but also to personal psychological state. "In modern sociology (…) alienation is a term which refers to the distancing of people from experiencing a crystallized totality both in the social world and in the self" (Kalekin-Fishman, 1998:6) It is really difficult to define postmodern alienation because it "refers to objective conditions, to subjective feelings, and to orientations that discourage participation" (ibid, 98). And neither Marx's nor Seeman's theories answer the question of 'what postmodern alienation' is. However, Seeman's classification provides a methodological framework suitable to the analysis of alienation in postmodern film and literature. Thus, we will analyze postmodern character using Seeman's classification of alienation, its adaptations and reinterpretations.

3.3.3.1 Postmodern Alienation and Self-Estrangement

As Senekal stresses; "although alienation is not a modern phenomenon, it has progressed far beyond Marx envisaged"(2008:15). While the classical forms of economic alienation are still dominant for most people, especially in the Third World

where joblessness, economic exploitation and poverty are major problems, new forms emerged with the increased complexity of postmodern life. The modern forms of alienation are related to the effects of this complexity on the individual. (Geyer, 1996:xiii) "To oversimplify, one might say that a new determinant of alienation has emerged, in the course of this century, which is not the result of an insufferable lack of freedom but of an overdose of "freedom", or rather, unmanageable environmental complexity" (ibid).

Geyer mentions the differences between the classical and new forms of alienation. Alienation is not a state but a process. It evolves through social and psychological changes. And in most Marxist sociology the individual is often considered to be unaware of alienation, however in postmodern era the individual is aware of her/his alienated state. They are fully conscious of their own feelings.

Despite these changes, humans' basic needs of identification and participation remain:

> The human need recognized by Hegel for an identity of social dimensions surely will not fade away with the dawning of postmodernity. This need, however, will now have to be met through forms of participation and identification representing a recognized selection from an array of historically engendered social possibilities, mandated neither by divine authority nor by anything of a more mundane nature. (Schacht, 1996:10)

With this variety of social possibilities alienation and interaction become relational concepts rather than steady states. (ibid, xv) The fragmented multiple identities and the increased amount of choices created new forms of alienation. The individual has different involvements in many fields which is an obstacle in front of a "unified self", thus the classical unified definition of alienation. Various forms of life effect individuals differently. As Schacht states;

> One might think of these forms of life as a vast array of games of different sorts that are being played alongside each other but relatively independently of each other, and differing in many respects. There is not just on game in town that everyone is expected to play, in which everyone may meaningfully be characterized either as a participant or as a refusenik, and with which it makes sense to characterize everyone either as identifying or as at odds. Everyone may be deemed to be better off playing some such games rather

than none, but there is no prior presumption with respect to anyone or any genre in particular. (Schacht, 1996:12)

The individual is no longer alienated by cruel industrial capitalist demands but is being exposed to borbardement of choices. S/he can choose not to participate and remain alienated happily. In other terms the individual is "inalienable" because of his/her conscious choice. (Geyer, 1996:xv) "It has also been neutralized and specified: "alienation from what?" "integrated into what?" (ibid.) Under postmodern conditions alienation has deepened. An increase of anxiety and boredom resulted in a loss of feeling and sensibility. (ibid,xix)

Seeman's most individual form of alienation; self estrangement has also deepened under such circumstances. Seeman (following Marx) defines self estrangement as the loss of intrinsic meaning or pride in work. The rewards that lie outside the activity are bound up with behaviours. A worker who works only for his salary or a housewife cooks simply to get over it are the instances of self-estrangement. It is mainly the inability of the individual to find him/herself rewarding. (Seeman, 1959:790) The person experience himself as an alien. S/he is estranged from him/herself.

The self can only exist with its environment. What one wears, what one does for a living, where one lives, what one eats define the self. One of the most important changes comes with the twenty first century, is the role of media in the creation of these images. These images shape reality and our perception. Popular culture, movies and sitcoms define the self. (Senekal, 2008:56) "We can experience the world only through a kind of filter of preconceptions and expectations fabricated in advance by a culture swamped by images" (Ward, 1997: 60). With the mass media the fiction became indistinguishable from real. So, Seeman's formation of identity has changed significantly.

These significant changes in the formation of identity also effected the literary representation of alienation. Gergen argues:

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> Traditional alienation literature often posits the individual as separate from the social-as either cut away from a necessary lodgement or buried within a social sphere that prevents self-realization. However, as much as of the literature on the autonomous self suggest, this view is deeply flawed. This view is effectively replaced by one in which the individual is inherently a social agent. To the extent that the world is meaningful at all, the individual is a culturally interpolated being. (1996:122)

The 'social self' formed by media and popular culture resulted in the emergence of characters who judge themselves and others with image codes. These codes can be attached to a particular dress, a diet or a house. The distinction between 'us' and 'them' are also shaped with the help of these codes. The characters are free in their choices and they are aware of the fact that they are alienated but they prefer to be happily alienated. Such characters; *American Beauty's* Lester and *Naked*'s Johnny will be analyzed in the following chapter.

3.3.3.2 Powerlessness and Lack of Confidence

According to Seeman, powerlessness is a notion of alienation originated in the Marxian view; "the worker is alienated to the extent that the prerogatice and means of decisions are expropriated by the ruling entrepreneurs" (Seeman, 1959:784). It is basically related to the notion of 'internal versus external control of reinforcements'. The person feels alienated when s/he is controlled by external factors or dependent upon external conditions. When the person thinks these external conditions such as the manipulation, luck or chance are so dominant in life, s/he feels powerless. (ibid, 785)

In ancient and classical eras, the person is supposed to control many of the influences shaping his life. The characters fight for control of their lives. "In modern societies that control had passed to external agencies" (Halman, 1998:100). Halman reminds that the modern world gives so many opportunities to individuals as the equal opportunities, democracy, modern judiciary system and the abolition of the slave trade. However, despite these opportunities modern man is often assumed as more powerless than people in traditional societies. (ibid.) He/she is more powerless because the external forces are more dominant. Especially in postmodern era the control mechanisms became much

more ambigious, inextricable and complicated.

The more complex the controlling mechanisms are, the more desperate the individual feels. As Kalekin-Fishman claims, "A person suffers from alienation in the form of 'powerlessness' when she is conscious of the gap between what she would like to do and what she feels capable of doing" (1996:97). With increased opportunities the world has become so complex and the link between action and outcome became obscured. (Geyer, 1996:xvi) It became almost impossible to know the consequences of an action.

Seeman writes that postmodern characters uninterest in politics also because of powerlessness. People do not believe that they have an impact on politics, thus have little interest in it. (1959:784) The isolated and bureaucratized individual in contemporary society is convinced of his/her powerlessness and accepts that his/her thoughts will not change anything. So s/he simply decides not to vote or not to participate in political actions. Like the characters of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, (as Senekal reminds) who always talk about being "colonized by wankers", but show no interest in finding ways of becoming involved in politics, postmodern character does not involve in politics because s/he does not believe in it.

Another clear sign of postmodern character related to the notion of powerlessness is his/her lack of confidence. Confidence can be seen as concept in progress through classical tragedy to postmodern. The heroes of classical tragedy like Prometheus, or Oedipus are so certain about themselves. Despite knowing he cannot change destiny, Prometheus insists on his action. Hamlet on the other hand, is also confident compare to confused Dr. Faustus. Even though he is not sure if the causes of his actions will be successful, Hamlet goes for his revenge. Modern character is not as confident as Hamlet, he is rather confused and definitely unheroic but still aware of the system around him. Modern character, even when he is passive he resists to the system with questioning it. While modern character is about "resistance" and "reason", postmodern character relates to "acceptance"," passivity" and "losing control. "The stability of the concept of character had been shaken" (ibid: 59).

An absence of psychological depth and the introduction of the notion of "surface" in postmodern literature also shaped the character in this way. Several different aspects can be the reason of character's lack of confidence. It can be anger, guilt, fear of making mistakes, depression, unrealistic expectations or paranoia. Whatever the reason, the concrete, conscious modern character is replaced by repressed, lost postmodern character.

3.3.3.3 Meaninglessness and Lack of Hope

'Meaning' refers to the individual's sense of understanding events in which he is engaged. 'Meaninglessness' emerges when the individual is unclear as to what he ought to believe and when there is no clarity in decision making. The individual cannot choose among alternatives confidently. In other terms, s/he cannot 'act intelligently' or 'with insight'. (Seeman, 1959:786)

One of the major reasons of meaninglessness in postmodern world is the information overload. After two world wars that contributed to meaninglessness, the Internet brought it to a different level. It became so easy to reach information. The Internet that originally designed to transmit the scientific data, but now almost everybody has access to Internet. (Senekal, 2008:28) Geyer explains the relation between the overload of information and meaninglessness;

> It is one's image of the world that has become fragmented, owing to the overload of information with which one is confronted as a result of a horizon-widening process set in motion by increased communication and the overload of possibilities from which one can barely choose using the antediluvian selection mechanisms still promoted by much of present-day education (Geyer, 1996:xxv).

In this context, powerlessness and meaninglessness are connected. Because of the variety of choices the person both feels meaninglessness and powerlessness. These aspects, together or separately mostly result in the emergence of violence. The character can use violence as a power mechanism or find 'the meaning of life' in violence.

In many postmodern films, meaninglessness leads the character into violence. Gus Van

Sant's *Elephant* is an example of how meaninglessness affect youth. During the film, the audience witness a series of pointless daily activities of high school students. Later two students find 'the meaning' in violence and shoots the other students and teachers. A similar film; *We Need to Talk About Kevin* tells the story of a teenage boy who murders many students in his school. In one scene, Kevin talks to the camera about how meaningless a life occupied by television is:

> It's like this: you wake and watch TV, get in your car and listen to the radio you go to your little jobs or little school, but you don't hear about that on the 6 o'clock news, why? 'Cause nothing is really happening, and you go home and watch some more TV and maybe it's a fun night and you go out and watch a movie. I mean it's got so bad that half the people on TV, inside the TV, they're watching TV. What are these people watching, people like me?

According to Kevin, all the murders he committed are what make life meaningful. Otherwise, there won't be anything to watch on TV. When violence is accepted as a way of making life meaningful, all the traditional values; expectations and hope become meaningless.

Hopelessness is an aspect of postmodern character closely related to 'meaninglessness'. In contrast to postmodern, modern writers like Chekhov used hopeful words to offer a bright future, even in the most pessimistic moments of narrative. "Many classical and Renaissance tragedies arises from the hope, persistently entertained despite the apparent evidence to the contrary, that the natural order should also be a moral order, as it is in Stoic philosophy and Judeo-Christian thinking" (Fokkema, 1991:274). Modern tragedy kept both a scientific attitude towards events and also the moral and religious concern for love and justice. When we look at postmodern character, we don't see any kind of real concern. He is desperate, lost, bored and most importantly hopeless. All the characters constituted violations of the conventions of realism or modernism (ibid:189).

'Hopelessness' is the characteristic of postmodernism, and the 'lack of hope' works as a system of criticism against contemporary world. Such as their modern forerunners, postmodern characters also represent universal human beings. They represent contemporary events and their 'lack of hope' is a warning for humanity. This postmodern

pessimism can be caused by madness, fear or most originally sophisticated boredom. However, not all of the postmodern characters necessarily reflect 'hopelesness', they have multiple selves which means they can both be 'hopeful' and 'hopeless' under different circumstances.

3.3.3.4 Normlessness and Social Isolation

'Normlessness', anomie in the traditional usage, refers to the situation in which the social norms have broken down or are no longer effective. The idea of normlessness can be related to social conditions, personal disorganization, reciprocal distrust or cultural breakdown. (Seeman, 1959:787) When there are no norms in life, individuals start to look for something that can fill the gap;

> Insofar as one of the most general functions of the social structure is to provide a basis for predictability and regularity of social behavior, it becomes increasingly limited in effectiveness as these elements of the social structure become dissociated. The victims of this contradiction between the cultural emphasis on pecuniary ambition and the social bars to full opportunity are not always aware of the structural sources of their thwarted aspirations. To be sure they are typically aware of a discrepancy between individual worth and social rewards. But they do not necessarily see how this comes about. Those who do find its source in the social structure may become alienated from that structure and become ready candidates for rebellion. But others, and this appears to include the great majority, may attribute their difficulties to more mystical and less sociological sources…in such society (a society suffering from anomie) people tend to put stress on mysticism: the workings of Fortune, Chance, Luck.(Merton, 1949:138)

Here in the contemporary world fortune, luck and chance occupy such an important place because of 'normlessness'. The lack of norms can result in superficial and weightless relations, youth violence, sexual promiscuity or drinking culture. And most of the time the individuals are driven to depression or isolation even without any obvious reasons just like Haneke's *The Seventh Continent* which is about an urban middle class family who suddenly decide to commit suicide without any apparent reason. The film implies a strong feeling of normlessness and meaninglessness which result in depression and isolation.

The self is still dependent on its environment in postmodern era. Its relations are

constructed through language and interaction. Community and culture are still crucially important for the existence of 'the self'. Even though the relation between the individual and the society is alienable, modern world provides a fertile landscape for isolation: "while social isolation is typically experienced as a form of personal stress, its sources are deeply embedded in the social organization of the modern world. With increased isolation and atomization, much of our daily interactions are with those who are strangers to us and with whom we lack any ongoing social relationship" (Senekel, 2008:45).

'Social isolation' is mostly confined to the intellectuals and described as an experience belongs to the intellectual ivory tower. The artists, writers, intellectuals live with the 'feeling of being separated' or 'cut off from the type of rewards and lifestyles that prevail within one's own society'. They live 'apart from others, yet needing to be wanted by others'. (Neal&Collas, 2009:95) However, in our mechanized world, social isolation is not only confined to the intellectuals. There is a visible decrease in communication with others and man's increasing isolation. (Senekal, 2008:46) Isolation became a social phenomenon that can be experienced by anyone.

An example for 'social isolation' is *Taxi Driver's* Travis who is a lonely and depressed Vietnam veteran, living in New York. Travis is alienated and isolated by a society he is unable to connect. He often has monologues and goes to cinema by himself. He is insecure in social and romantic attachments. As a taxi driver he barely talks with his customers who have limited and impermenant relations with him. *Taxi Driver* shows the relation between war and isolation and how post-war traumas negatively effect an individual's integration into modern urban society. War is one of the major reasons of social isolation.

Another reason is the institution of marriage. As Neal&Collas explain; there are social boundaries around the heterosexual couple. In an intimate relationship friendship ties weaken as a woman and a man become increasingly self centered. The couple try to fulfill the wants and desires of each other ,but the couple is not a social unit and they

end up being isolated. (2000:113) Also "individuals who are moderately involved in communal activities report the highest levels of satisfaction with their marriage" (ibid, 116). Marriage, family and their social connotations in postmodern era will be analyzed through films in the following chapter.

Social isolation can also occur through migration. Small communities often have integration problems. "international migration has never been as pervasive, or as socio-economically and politically significant, as it is today. Never before has international migration seemed so pertinent to national security and so connected to conflict and disorder on a global scale" (Christie, 1997:1). Because of the integration problems the migrants have difficulties in integrating into the present state and remain tied to their past. They are 'rootless' and 'lost'. The terribly hard working and living conditions offered to migrants support 'social isolation'. Their rootlessness is only bound to increase with increasing international migration. (Senekal, 2008:48)

3.3.3.5 Eclecticism and Redefinition of the Self

Until this part we talked about negative aspects of postmodern character. However, as Fokkema mentions with a new mode of postmodernism it also became possible again to learn the dreams, feelings, psychological motives and thoughts of character 'which was moreover signified by codes conventionally enhancing mimesis'.(ibid,184) The postmodern character became fragmented and multiplied, instead of totalized and 'whole'. The discontinuity of character showed that the classical types and categories of the characters are changed by multiplicity and fragmentation. So, it was not possible to categorize a character as it used to be6. Because of the eclectic and fragmented structure of the characters, the negative aspects we mentioned above cannot be valid for every character.

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[6] The exceptional formation of postmodern character also differentiates it from ancient and classical tragic hero. Therefore, we will not search for classical 'tragic hero' in postmodern age, but in next chapter will look at the new definition of 'tragic hero' which is more similar to modernism than ancient or classical.

There is an incredible variety of postmodern characters. Some characters can be just a voice, the narrator, the other one can be emphatically body. Some characters are just references and some are real. The variety of characters is not restricted to different texts but the same novel, such as one character is reflecting consciousness, while others are purely textually. (ibid:181-2) The variety of postmodern character represents different levels of consciousness. Postmodern self, just like modern, exhibits the sense of crisis and loss of belief in an authoritative system. "Modernists aimed at the impossible task of exploring pure consciousness" but postmodernists have accepted Wittgenstein's notion that; "'one thinks that one is tracing the outline of the thing's nature over and over again and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it"(Waugh, 1984:27). So, postmoderns have already accepted that the 'pure consciousness' is unreachable. And instead of framing self and consciousness, postmodernism finally created a system where it is impossible to distinguish one from ends and another one begins.

Postmodern character has multiple selves and the fragmentation prevents him to be strong or self-confident. He often loses control. As Russell puts it:

> Characters in postmodern literature exemplify such multiple selves, and the texts in which they appear offer the reading subject the opportunity to escape from his or her rigid self. This giving up of fixed ego-structures was taken to encapsulate the real attack on bourgeois society, an attack seen to be more effective than that of the acting, rebellious ego. (Russell 1982: 56).

The matter of the self is still important for postmodern characters as they challenge the notion of self and introduce the fragmented one. So, the old ideology of the unified self is now replaced by the new belief in the fragmented self. (Fokkema, 1991:63) While modernism focused on laborers, postmodernism constructed multiple and fragmented identities defined entirely by consumers. The identities become pluralized, hybridized and fractioned. The silent characters of the past became important and central for postmodern. As Russell puts it: "This giving up of fixed ego-structures was taken to encapsulate the real attack on bourgeois society, an attack seen to be more effective than of the acting, rebellious ego" (Russell, 1982:56)

As mentioned before, tragedy in postmodern age is related to 'raising awareness', rather than 'taking action'. The destruction of the fixed ego structures serve exactly for this purpose. Postmodern characters are not as rebellious as modern, but they try to reach to a certain level of awareness through multiperspectivism. While the postmodern character is mostly hopeless and lost, they can also be hopeful about certain issues. Because postmodern self includes 'multiple-selves' they can feel both hope and despair. Such characters will be analyzed in the following chapter.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The variety of postmodern themes and techniques can be quite confusing, especially when we are looking at their relation with an ancient genre as tragedy. Virtual reality, paranoia, violence, popular culture and chaos are not the only themes of postmodernism but they cover an important part of the postmodern literature discussion. Such as the themes, the aspects of the character also outline 'a postmodern tragic' hero/unhero. In the 'tragedy' part of this chapter we discussed that there is no such a thing as 'postmodern tragedy', however the instances of ancient, classical, modern tragedies are present in postmodern film.

As I also said the aim of this thesis is not to look how ancient or classical tragedies are adapted to postmodern film but rather find how postmodern literature and film created their own tragedy (not necessarily as a genre). Postmodern literature and film borrows 'tragedy' from life, finds it as a form of history and use it as political criticism. There is no 'postmodern tragedy' as a genre, but there is tragedy in life in postmodern era. To find the reflections of tragedy of life in literature and film, we have to look at the works that combine postmodern techniques; intertextuality, playfulness, irony with postmodern themes chaos, paranoia, violence, popular culture and virtual reality. In most of these it will possible to find fragmented characters who lack of confidence and hope. However, as a twist of postmodernism, the character can also have the exact opposite aspects. In

the following chapter, we will be looking at the films with these themes, techniques, characters and twists.

4. TRAGEDY IN POSTMODERNIST FILM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In previous chapter many themes and techniques of postmodern film and literature are analyzed. In this chapter only few of them will be our focus. This chapter aims to illustrate the examples of tragedy in cinema, which borrows some characteristics from Greek, Elizabethan and Modern tragedies and combines them with postmodern themes as chaos, violence, popular culture and family. Virtual reality will not be a part of the analysis, because the theme and the genres related to it; science-fiction, cyberpunk, steampunk need separate comprehensive discussions. Like virtual reality, paranoia also will not be the focus of this chapter. Paranoia can be observed in the films that we will discuss, but it won't be a part of the main discussion. The themes and films for this chapter can be broadened, but I preferred to narrow them down to have a limited but more dense discussion. Four films which reflect the same themes: chaos, violence, popular culture and family, similar techniques: irony, black humor, intertextuality and playfulness are selected. These films basically include the main themes and techniques of postmodern film. However, the main reason of their selection is because they have unique relations with tragedy. These four films show four different perspectives on the instances of tragedy in contemporary cinema. They successfully draw an outline about how tragedy can be held in postmodern film. Four films are selected for their common characteristics and their unique relation to tragedy. These films are Sam Mendes' *American Beauty,* Coen Brother's *Fargo*, Lars von Trier's *Dogville* and Mike Leigh's *Naked.*

All of these films, produced around 90s and after, reflect chaos in society, deal with violence and present the conflict between patriarchal and matriarchal orders. Chaos can be caused by the lack of communication in family as in *American Beauty*, or it can be related to the attitudes of a whole town as in *Dogville*. While *Naked* shows the loss of individual in a chaotic society, chaos in *Fargo* is directly related to the changing perceptions of violence. Violence, a major theme in *Fargo,* can also easily be observed

in other films. *American Beauty* not only ends with the murder of the main character, it also includes violence against homosexuality. *Naked* illustrates street violence against homeless people. Through the film *Dogville* shows sexual and physical violence against the lead actress and it ends with the massacre of the whole town. The conflict between patriarchal and matriarchal orders is another major theme of these films. In *American Beauty,* two unhappy damaged couple (man-woman) are compared with a happy gay couple. Male dominance is criticized in another way in *Fargo*, where patriarchal families that are even unable to save a daughter or a wife, are crushed by Marge's matriarchal order. Finally, *Naked* presents a dysfunctional family with two women and a man.

Each film is analyzed according to its unique relation with tragedy. Like American Beauty's tragic approach is related to world's perception of 'beauty' while *Fargo* creates a 'tragic awareness through horror and laughter. *Dogville* follows the path of an Elizabethan revenge tragedy and *Naked* with its focus on 'tragedy of self-realization' is close to ancient times-a Socratic way of existence. Even these films have different specific relations with 'tragedy', the reason of their selection is their common characteristics.

All of them share a certain sense of black humour and irony. They also use intertextuality as a technique and refer to many other works. *Dogville* clearly refers to Brecht's epic theatre with its distancing effects and theatrical scenery. It is also related to American gangster films and westerns. *Fargo* refers to traditional film-noir narrative and crime films, but also combines it with comedy. Popular culture references are important for *American Beauty*, while *Naked*'s atmosphere reminds post-apocalyptic films. Play is another technique used by these films. While *Dogville* plays with our perception of 'film world' with using chalkboard grounds and artificial decors, *Fargo* plays with our perception of reality with presenting a completely fictional story as real. American Beauty and Naked's relation with 'play' is related to their characters rather than narrative. Characters share common characteristics.

All of the characters look for freedom and meaning in life. *American Beauty's* desperate father Lester Burnham tries to get his happy old days back. Lester finds excitement in attracting a teenage girl that frees him and helps him to understand the importance of his family. *Fargo*'s Marge tries to understand the relation between money and violence. She continuously questions the meaning of dignity in life. *Dogville*'s Grace, running away from her gangster father, believes that humans should not be punished because of their weaknesses. Her search leads her to discover the evil in human nature. *Naked's* Johnny, resists against the dominant system and tries to communicate with others through his Socratic journey.

The chapter's basic division is also related to characters' approach. The division is between tragedy in American and European film. It is not only a geographical division but an obvious separation between optimism of American and pessimism of European approach. Even after his death Lester Burnham continues to talk optimistically about life and how every moment we live is so beautiful and so valuable. Like Lester, Marge never gives up believing in good, she solves a bloody case and still hopeful about the future for her child. Grace and Johnny on the other hand end giving up on believing in good. Johnny has lost his hope long before the story of the film begins. Grace starts as a believer, she believes in the good in people but after everything she lived through she decides that there is no hope for Dogvillians and they only deserve to die. Characters' optimistic and pessimistic approach is the main criteria of the division.

4.2 TRAGEDY IN AMERICAN CINEMA

In previous chapter, we mentioned about popular American films like *Star Wars* and *Blade Runner* that directly referred to ancient and classical tragedies. These films basically followed the definition of tragedy in the way Aristotle wrote about in *Ars Poetica.* In this part, we will not be looking at an exact adaptation of ancient tragedy. Two American films; *American Beauty* and *Fargo* will be analyzed. Neither of them refers to tragedy directly. However, the instances of tragedy are present in these films. These instances also support the theory of tragedy as a form of history and political

criticism, rather than a genre in our world. Also mentioned before the main criteria of the American/European division is the difference between their pessimistic and optimistic style. American films form the optimistic side of this discussion. We will clearly see the difference through *American Beauty's* main character Lester Burnham, and *Fargo*'s Marge Gunderson.

4.2.1 American Beauty

> Sometimes I feel like I'm seeing it all at once, and it's too much, my heart fills up like a balloon that's about to burst... and then I remember to relax, and stop trying to hold on to it, and then it flows through me like rain and I can't feel anything but gratitude for every single moment of my stupid little life...
>
> *Lester Burnham*

The leading character in *American Beauty*, Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey) realizes that his life is much more valuable than he thinks just before he dies like many tragic characters. But it is too late. After that, he starts to tell the story from the beginning that brought him to his death. With its opening scene, *American Beauty* draws us into the terribly unhappy marriage of Lester and Carolyn. Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey) who works in advertising industry presents his wife Carolyn (Annette Bening) who is a real estate agent and their daughter Jane (Thora Birch) who is a typical teenager, angry and insecure. The film starts with Lester's voice-over, after he is murdered. His first sentences simply describe the major postmodern situation; "Both my wife and my daughter thinks I am this gigantic loser. And they're right. I have lost something. I didn't always feel this sedated".

The loss of Lester, the reason for his sedation is not specified as love, morals or belief, but this feeling of 'emptiness' is so dominant in present culture, so that we always feel like drifting to nowhere. Few reasons of Lester's sedation can be analyzed through American Beauty as success obsession, family bounds and oppression of popular culture.

4.2.1.1 Family, Chaos and Freedom

"See the way the handle on those pruning shears matches her gardening clogs" says Lester in reference to Carolyn "Thats not an accident". Carolyn; the embodiment of perfection sells images as her job and as she says; "part of her job is to live that image". Carolyn is a product of the system which divides people into two groups; winners and losers. We see Carolyn trying to sell a house, cleaning the house, advertising and when she fails selling it, she starts to cry and then slaps herself for being so emotional, a mortal sin of postmodern-corporate culture. She is also a classical product of popular culture. Her job and her marriage are related to her image. So, if she can manage to make her job and marriage look good, people will buy this image. However, Carolyn unsuccessful in her job and her marriage cannot manage to have a good image. Just like Lester, Caroline has lost something that she has to find.

On the other hand, Jane also lives with the longing for happiness. She hates her family, they cannot even have a proper chat during dinner, her father is clearly attracted to her best friend and her mother is so brutal to her. Jane thinks she will find happiness in a boob job and collects money for the procedure. Jane's best friend Angela (Mena Suvari) is also a product of popular culture, only hanging with so called 'popular people', dreaming of being a model and trying to attract anybody who is willing to look at her.

Chaos in the film is basically caused by the lack of communication between the members of Burnham Family. Long silences at dinners, Lester and Carolyn's fights, Jane's weird personality and Carolyn's affair illustrate their chaotic life and its consequences. The other characters are so similar to Burnhams, another broken family, Rick (Wes Bentley), his retired Air Force Colonel father (Chris Cooper) and his sick mother (Allison Janney) live next door. The only happy family in the film looks like the gay couple who visit Rick's family and insulted by Rick's father. And Lester, totally unaware of his wife's and daughter's lives, or what is happening next door, just keeps hating his job but continues to work dreaming the days he used to sell hamburgers, 'taking the least responsibility possible'.

There is a certain need for freedom for every character. Then, with the encouragement of Angela, Lester decides to change his life. He quits his job, with a really aggressive resignation letter[7], buys a brand new sports car and starts to work in a burger place. He also starts to run in the mornings and work out to "look good naked" and impress Angela. During Lester's change, Carolyn has an affair with a real-estate king Buddy Kane, who just like her thinks that "in order to be successful, one must project an image of success all times". Jane on the other hand decides to hang out with Rick instead of Angela, even though he is so weird. And Rick continues to sell drugs, refusing the discipline of his father.

Considering tragedy is always founded on free will and free choices, can we consider these choices of characters free? Are these choices related to a stand against the system or just fate? In a way the characters reach what they want, Lester, Jane and Carolyn get their romantic visions, Ricky gets his drugs, and Angela gets Lester. But "these are too deeply implicated in the system for us to even imagine an "elsewhere" to which they might lead" (Smith, 2002:3). So, these choices make us feel that the characters are free, but they are not. They are even not sure what they get is what they want or need.

Lester waits for Carolyn on the couch, doing nothing, drinking beer and watching TV. When Carolyn arrives, so angry about the sports car and Lester's resignation, Lester starts to talk about the days they used to be happy. When he cannot really communicate with Carolyn, because she is still so obsessed with the couch, and if Lester pours beer on it, Lester shouts at her; "This is just a couch-these are stuff-not life itself". Lester desires to have old days back and be happy with his wife and daughter again. But what he gets is Angela. Carolyn also misses happy old days, and she desperately need success in her job, but what she gets is Buddy Kane to satisfy her temporarily passions. And both Jane and Rick need healthy families but what they get is drugs and boob jobs.

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7 Lester says in his letter; "My job consists of basically masking my contempt for the assholes in charge and at least once a day retiring to the men's room so I can jerk off while I fantasize about a life that doesn't closely resemble hell" and he adds "For 14 years, I ve been a whore for the advertising industry. The only way I could save myself now is if I start firebombing".

When we look at all characters, what we see is; as Smith says "...in short, no exit. Culture is a totalistic system that affords no leverage point by which a genuine project of emancipation could get itself off the ground. Every apparent way out is already subsumed, already co-opted. The system may offer mitigations and palliatives - ways to keep hope alive - but no real alternatives."(ibid.,3). So, even though the characters look free in their choices, they just accept the fate and follow the flow. Thus, *American Beauty* does not offer us a real chance of freedom in sense of classical tragedy, there is no escape, triumphant self-creation or autonomy. However, 'Beauty' emerges in *American Beauty* as a transcendental element, which transforms the characters in a unique spiritual way and creates tragic awareness, Antigone's and Prometheus' awareness of their fatal flow and how their actions can change destiny of others.

4.2.1.2 Beauty and Tragic Sublime

American Beauty's most haunting visual image is definitely Ricky's video of the dancing plastic bag. Rick explains this image as 'the most beautiful thing he has ever seen'. As he says: "That's the day I realized that there was this entire life behind things, and this incredibly benevolent force that wanted me to know there was no reason to be afraid. Ever". Rick also portrays a dead bird, an old woman frozen on the curb, or Jane's sadness as 'the beauties of life'. He tells; "Sometimes, there's so much beauty in the world I feel like I can't take it... and my heart is going to cave in."

Beauty, this unique, intrinsic value is clearly a way of seeing life and making it meaningful. David Smith talks about the powerful presence of beauty in the film, in his article *Beautiful Necessities: American Beauty and the Idea of Freedom.* Smith mentions Emerson's essay '*Fate'* that offers us 'beautiful necessity' arose through the realization of 'freedom necessity'. A sense of aesthetical appropriateness or beauty (like its perception in American Beauty) is directly connected to the realization of freedom. Beauty is a way of seeing the world clearly and meaningfully. (ibid.,4)

So, in contrast to classical tragedies, which show us that freedom is to be achieved by intentional effort, or like modern tragedies, which show it is achieved by not taking action, here we see it may occur to us as 'an experienced quality, an unintentional penetration, like the beauty emerges from the dance of the wind-driven bag'. "It is not found beyond fate, rather, it comes as an affirmative moment within fate. Freedom is the discovery of beauty in our necessities." (ibid.,4).

'Beautiful Necessities' also partly answers the question of what sort of freedom is possible in a deterministic system. Beauty appears in the film as liberation from the trap of post-modern culture. Emerson explains this liberation through beauty in his essay '*Fate*' as;

> Let us build altars to the Beautiful Necessity. If we thought men were free in the sense, that, in a single exception one fantastical will could prevail over the law of things, it were all one as if a child's hand could pull down the sun. If, in the least particular, one could derange the order of nature,--who would accept the gift of life?
> Let us build to the Beautiful Necessity, which makes man brave in believing that he cannot shun a danger that is appointed, nor incur one that is not; to the Necessity which rudely or softly educates him to the perception that there are no contingencies; that Law rules throughout existence, a Law which is not intelligent but intelligence,--not personal nor impersonal. (Emerson, 2004:389)

Like Emerson, Kant also worked on 'beauty' as an aesthetic value and individuals' relations with it. In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant asks 'how are judgments about beauty possible'. Why someone calls a flower or a sunset beautiful and expects to others to agree with him/her? To understand such an attitude, one must first understand four particular unique features of aesthetic judgments on the beautiful. Kant names these four features as 'moments'. (Kant, 74)

The first moment is about aesthetic judgments being disinterested. Lester wants to own Angela because he thinks it will give him pleasure. But his desire is distinct from the aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic judgment is free from such interests. Here Lester's judgment results in pleasure, rather than pleasure resulting in judgment. This is also why Angela's beauty does not enlighten Lester, but his remembrance of beautiful

moments does. (ibid.,76)

The second moment is about the universality of aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic judgment can both be universal and subjective. Rick's video of a dancing bag is a good example of this. The beauty in this video impressed the audience, as much as it impressed Rick. The third moment is the problem of purpose and purposiveness. For him, beautiful is purposeful and pleasure as a feeling arises on the achievement of a purpose. The fourth moment is the necessity of aesthetic judgment. Beauty is a transcendental a priori and presents common sense. (ibid.)

The feeling of sublime is not separate from the beautiful. Feelings of the beautiful and sublime are the variations of each other. They can be alternated or joined. "the feeling of the sublime is a pleasure produced by the "feelings of a momentary inhibition of the vital forces followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all the stronger" (ibid,98). Tragedy stirs the feeling of sublime. And like tragedy, the sublime invokes a feeling of attraction. Kant also explains that ideas of the sublime are aroused through chaotic situations, just like in *American Beauty*. In *American Beauty*, we see 'beauty' presented as tragic sublime. In the chaos, the characters desperately search for something to admire. As Lester tells they have lost something that they have to find. Beauty and sublime fill the gap in their lives.

The representation of beauty in film also has some references to religion. We mentioned that gods and religion occupy an important place in classical and medieval tragedies. Secular tragedies of modern period changed the idea that religion should be a part of tragedy. In *American Beauty*, religion is not clearly mentioned but, beauty is described as God's reflection on the world. In those ecstatic moments full of beauty Rick feels that God is looking at him and beauty is what he sees when he looks back. Ricky's unique understanding of beauty also categorizes the characters who 'get it' like Lester, Ricky and Jane, who understand a sense of meaning that is absolute and unquestionable. The presence and effect of beauty is 'spiritual' in the film, but this feeling becomes so visible and its transcendental value creates the tragic sublime. And like all great tragedies,

awareness and freedom come with death.

4.2.1.3 Death and Awareness

A certain transformation in film starts with Rick's description of 'beauty'. Only Jane shares Rick's different understanding, and their perception hold them together. Parallel to Rick and Jane's story, Lester follows a similar path; his awakening is prompted by a main event; Angela, an attractive teenager arouses his sexual interest. After Lester's libido is reawakened, he starts to change his life. He quits his job and experiences how liberating it can be. After buying a new car and working out for a while Lester finally reaches his fantasy Angela. This magical moment when Lester is confronted by the reality that lies under his fantasy, is the breaking point *of American Beauty*, when Lester is transformed by "beauty".

At the beginning, for Lester; Angela, a teen-goddess is everything that the word 'beauty' can refer to. But when he reaches her, Lester discovers that Angela is not a nymphomaniac, she is just a virgin who tries to cover her inexperience with made up sexual stories. His lost fantasy awakens Lester and enlightens him with 'beautiful Necessities". At that moment the camera slowly moves and catches a photo. It is a family photo with Lester, Jane and Carolyn taken in an amusement park. They all look so happy. Lester sits on a chair, studies the photo, and a totally different, mature smile appears on his face. He acknowledges his deep love for his family. Ann Hall says that communication in this scene is non-verbally. "No longer does Lester translate for us. We see it happening before our eyes, and this technique makes a very strong impression. It is one of those moments of tragic awareness. And like all great tragedies, this realization comes too late. Just as Lester makes this connection with his family, the Colonel shoots him. (Hall, 2006:31)

Violence, an indispensable element, occurs long before Lester's murder. The colonel wants to kill Lester because he thinks Ricky and Lester have had a sexual encounter. The colonel's hatred against homosexuals can be seen in the scene when the gay couple

welcomes them. When the colonel understands the sexual orientation of the couple he clearly insults them. The colonel also tries to infuse hatred and wants his son Rick to humiliate them too. In addition to his rage against gays, Colonel also beats Rick and probably caused the illness of his wife. We do not see the exact moment that Colonel learns the truth about his son, that he did not have a relation with Lester, but we can guess his regret resulted by uncontrolled aggressiveness. Violence causes death and death causes awareness. Colonel is not the only one enlightened by death, Lester is also brightened by this disastrous event.

At the end, his lost fantasy frees Lester. Freedom he experienced is not in a way he is free to do whatever he wants but freedom to face reality and open himself up to the possibility of change this loss creates for others, just like Prometheus. He does not sacrifice himself, as we mentioned; it is not an intentional act, but his death is an unintentional move, an affirmative moment within fate which will change the life of others.

Finally, Lester's death still offers hope as he says "And then I remember to relax, and stop trying to hold on to it, and then it flows through me like rain and I can't feel anything but gratitude for every single moment of my stupid little life..." Death brings hope and it frees Lester. These dualities of American Beauty, its irony: between fate and freedom is what constitutes its tragic spirit and mysterious achievement.

4.2.2 Fargo

The Coens *Fargo* is another appealing postmodern dark comedy which, like American Beauty, involves in critiques of American culture, especially the late twentieth century community and family. *Fargo* presents the everyday life of a middle class small-town. Film starts with a Minneapolis automobile salesman; Jerry Lundegaard (William Macy) planning to kidnap his wife for ransom. Jerry hires two men; Carl (Steve Buscemi) and Gaear (Peter Stormare) to kidnap his wife. From the moment of the kidnapping, things go wrong and a non-violent affair turns to a bloody one. Meanwhile a local police chief

Marge Gunderson (Frances McDormand), who is seven months pregnant, traces criminals and quickly deduces the chains of events. Marge questions Jerry, interviews the prostitutes who had sex with criminals and drives to Mineapolis hoping to find evidence. Wade (Harve Presnell), the father-in-law wants to deal with the kidnappers but during the money exchange, Wade shoots Carl in the face, Carl kills Wade, later Gaear kills the daughter Jean (Kristin Rudrüd), and kills Carl with an axe. Then Marge arrests Gaear while he is feeding the last of Carl's body into a wood chipper. And finally Jerry is arrested in a motel.

What is really disturbing about *Fargo*, is not the visualization of these bloody events, but the banality of how they are presented. *Fargo* enhances comedy and blur its credibility with its snide sarcasm and cynicism. As Sharrett puts it "The Coens seem to have partaken fully of a particularly noxious current of postmodern liberal sensibility, namely, a need to affirm what is simultaneously belittled, frequently from an elitist posture that views with contempt all aspects of middle and working class".(Sharrett, 2003:58). All of the murders in the film look so ordinary and characters use guns like any simple kitchen object. With its extraordinary presentation of violence Fargo criticizes the American myth and its unsepereable relation with money.

4.2.2.1 American Myth, Popular and Media Culture

And for what? For a little bit of money. There's more to life than a little money, you know. Don'tcha know that? And here ya are, and it's a beautiful day. Well. I just don't understand it.

Marge Gunderson

Marge, as the only extraordinary character in Fargo, explains all of the blood-chain in the film with these sentences. Jerry has been trying to raise money by promoting a real estate deal to Wade. When he couldn't succeed it, he found another way of raising money; to kidnap his wife. As Joel Coen said in one of their interviews; "All the men in the movie are preoccupied by money". Jerry wants to raise money, Wade wants to keep his money, Carl and Gaear want to earn money no matter if they have to be violent. So, money occupies the central space in Fargo and all values are secondary. As Sharett says:

> The film seems to be a product of the bankruptcy of the postmodern American scene, stricken with anxiety about a "politic of meaning"-hence the assurances of the "true crime" preamble that opens the film-soliciting nostalgic, if quizzical, yearnings for a dubious time of innocence, when the small-town community supposedly represented a culture of mutual support and collective values. (ibid.,62)

Really far from being supportive and dignified, the characters only care about themselves and do not hesitate to commit a crime for their own benefit. Especially family values are clearly replaced by money.

Worshipping money is one of the characteristics in the film borrowed from the postmodern American scene. Another is the characters' addiction to TV. As Sharett mentions in his article; characters behave as their personalities have been shaped by media. We see Jane watching a brain dead TV show in the morning just before she is kidnapped. Wade watches an ice-hockey game, ignoring Jerry and Jane, when Jerry tries to talk about money issues. Carl and Gaear watch The Tonight Show with Jay Leno after their night with prostitutes. Marge and Norm watch National Geographic in their bed. Film's notion of banality is related to media culture with these clear references to characters' choice of tv shows. (ibid.,70).

So, money and media are the two main references to American popular culture. Like *American Beauty* that used success and consumer culture to represent postmodern American myth, *Fargo*'s world is founded on a similar basis, missing ethical values of American bourgeoie. Fargo views the old family values with suspicion, restores a new "normality" and assertion of "family values" by using a postmodern style of expression.

4.2.2.2 Family between Patriarchy and Matriarchy

Fargo defines the classical patriarchal family as suffocating and unstable. Wade, Jerry's father-in-law, the most obvious patriarch figure is only concerned with his daughter Jean. Before kidnapping Jean, Jerry tries to convince Wade, reminding him his

daughter's future is threatened by financial problems, Wade replies as "Jean and Scotty will never have to worry". Wade's statement clearly illustrates that in a moment of crisis, Jerry will easily be pushed out of the picture. Jerry is a completely sick father figure as well. He has no feelings for either his wife Jean or his son Scotty. Jerry clearly hates his father-in-law. "Jerry's relationship to Wade and also to his wife Jean and their son Scotty, suggests the film's sense of the basic falsity and pathology of the family". (ibid.,73) The Lundegaard family has typical American bourgeois life. Jerry is an unsuccessful car-sale; Jean is a housewives depended on her father and husband's money; and Scotty is a typical teenager trapped by the family strictures. Jerry and Jean has so little in common, and their relationship centers on their son. But like his parents, Scotty only has little sympathetic interest them. Only after the kidnapping, confused and terrified Scotty seeks assurances from his father. But, Jerry again fails to be a trustworthy father and answers Scotty's questions with clichéd palliatives. On the other hand, Wade the narcissistic businessman and the strong father figure also fails at rescuing his daughter.

Fargo humors the phoniness of the classical family construct. The patriarchal family is lost in legend. The most obvious reference to it is the Paul Bunyan statue that is used in many scenes in *Fargo*. Paul Bunyan is a lumberjack famous in American myths and folklore. A strong figure; ax yielding Paul Bunyan statue, a masculine cultural model appears few times in the film. "The Paul Bunyan statue evokes a powerful myth whose time has long since passed. In today's world its meaning has changed. The Coens photograph the statue in different ways at various points in the film. At times it looks oddly out of place; at other times it resembles not a benign pioneer, but a monster wielding an ax".(Luhr, 2003:95) *Fargo* tells us that the strength of Paul Bunyan is no longer needed in our culture. There is a certain decline of masculinity. Both father figures Wade and Jerry fail so dismally because they want to be powerful, respected and strong as Paul Bunyan. Jerry kidnaps his wife because he wants to be a rich, successful businessman. Wade, already a rich, successful businessman just acts like a ruling patriarch and does not listen to Jerry, goes to rescue his daughter, to prove everything is under control but fails and gets killed in the process. The bandits Carl and Gaear always

discuss who is right and Carl continuously chatters that he knows what he is doing. Marge's high school sweetheart Mike also tries to convince Marge in a masculine way, talking about his success in business and the death of his beloved wife. When Marge learns that he is neither employed nor married, he breaks down pathetically. (ibid.,93)

Like *American Beauty* which puts gay marriage against exhausted same-sex marriage, *Fargo* offers the dominance of the feminine. Marge and Norm, who have a matriarchal relation stand apart from all these defected relations. Marge and Norm's relation is infantile, Norm is like a big baby insists on making breakfast to Marge when she has to investigate the murder, brings a lunch box and eats it with Marge in her office. "Comparably Norm seems oblivious to the postures of power so desperately important to the other men. The two seem to inhabit a different genre from the other characters. The two are "far removed from the stereotypes" and that is their strength, and that of the Coens"(ibid.,97). Norm is not a really weak dependent character, he also gives us the impression that he will be a great father. His relation with Marge is semi-verbal, according to Ethan Coen; "Norm totally personifies how undemonstrative people are in that place. The relationship with his wife is based on the unsaid, but they succeed in communicating somehow". Both Norm and Marge are exceptional characters. Especially Marge who is far removed from stereotypes is a postmodern hero who unbinds all the events and arrests the criminals.

4.2.2.3 Marge as an Unheroic Tragic Hero

Marge Gunderson is probably the most memorable and noteworthy character in *Fargo*. She is a pregnant police chief who looks for justice and finally cracks the case and finds Jerry Lundegaard who is responsible for all the blood in the film. Even though her job puts her in the category of masculine female heroes, her pregnancy differentiates her from all the others. As Luhr mentions; "much about Marge derives from images of women in most of the postmodern neoconservative cinema. She is not phallicized female like Rambo on the order of the protagonists of the Terminator films". Marge is a peaceful, lovely woman who likes to spend time at home or in bed with her husband.

What makes Marge a postmodern hero/unhero is the eclecticism of her character. Her uniqueness comes from her various missions as a police officer, a mother, a wife, a colleague. What makes Marge so extraordinary is her modesty as a police officer and her not-surprised, not-afraid attitude against all crimes. During an investigation of a crime scene, Marge directly goes next to blood and bends on her knees on the snow, hoping to find evidence without worrying about her bulky belly for a second. Marge does not worry about either her baby or the criminals. She drives all the way, questions Jerry Lundegaard, traces any evidence to find Carl and Gaear. Marge is definitely a hero who adopts all kinds of unheroic behavior like eating fast-food in every stop she can find, talking about really exciting and frightening events as they are nothing important, being a decent wife and flattering her husband for his small successions. While Marge's eating habits (with the help of her pregnancy), her taste in music and her sympathy for popular culture places her in postmodern American scene, her heroic behavior show how she is so similar to classical tragic characters.

In two scenes, we clearly witness Marge's extraordinary modesty. Actually, it is better to call it Marge's extraordinary behavior rather than 'modesty', considering she is not really aware of her success and she perceives all the heroic acts as regular daily activities. In the scene, Norm watches TV in bed with Marge, Norm tells her that TV has announced it. We think that they announced some news about Marge's case but then we understand that Norm refers to the choice of his mallard painting for a three-cent postage stamp. Marge is not surprised, she congratulates her husband and says how proud she is. We see the ironic lack of any reference to Marge's heroism when she focus on Norm's minor accomplishment and underestimating her own. The other scene of Marge's odd nature is again a bedroom scene, her high school sweetheart Mike awakens her by telephone, says it was a great excitement to see Marge on TV. However, Marge totally lacking in enthusiasm diverts attention from her own celebrity and asks how Mike is doing. Marge does all these as if there were no other way to behave.(ibid.,98)

For *American Beauty* we talked about a transcendental value, the importance of beauty,

the existence of unsayable in tragedy. The unsayable in *Fargo* is the character Marge, who makes the audience feel as if she were like from another planet or coming from a different world, different reality. As Luhr puts it;

> Marge barely resembles a genre homicide detective. She does not radiate the world-weary, "tough-guy" cynicism associated with such characters; in addition, she is both a woman and visibly pregnant. Furthermore, her regional accent, her lack of attention to traditional codes of "feminine beauty", her stylish clothes and bulky police uniform seem initially calculated to characterize her as a comic figure, but by the end of the film, those early cues have proven misleading. She is clearly someone for the audience to admire, not laugh at. Most laughter at her results from the spectator's inability to see past moribund stereotypes, the same stereotypes that lead to the destruction of the characters that accept them.(ibid.,91)

Marge a uniquely funny and respected character is also the one who gives the main message as "For a little bit of money. There's more to life than a little money". The closing scene illustrates two entirely different worlds. On the one hand, there is Scotty alone in the world, his mother and grandfather dead, his father on his way to prison. On the other hand, Marge and Norm are awaiting their child, the center of their world, away from Marge's cruel everyday world of murder.

4.2.2.4 Horror and Laughter on the Way to Liberation

One of the most crucial things in the comparison of tragedy in ancient, modern or postmodern times is to understand how the social conditions and understanding have changed. The same conditions also effect films and filmmaking. "Times have changed, filmmaking has changed and cultural notions of what is disturbing have changed. What was once disquieting may now be nostalgic and even comforting" (Luhr, 2003:97). The violent scenes in Fargo might have easily shocked 1950s audience but for a 2000s viewer, they are not so different than that which we are saturated by TV every day. As we mentioned before, wars and media resulted in the loss of sensibility in postmodern era which makes the shocking effect of tragedy almost impossible. So, if horror cannot create the tragic effect, what can liberate the audience? Fargo answers with 'laughter'.

It is important to note that how comedy can be treated as tragedy. In a previous chapter we talked about how genres are mixed and because of these blurry genres it became almost impossible to define a genre with strict lines. Actually tragicomedy which blends aspects of the genres of tragedy and comedy belongs to an older period than that mixing. Tragicomedy was existent as a genre even in 16th century. However *Fargo* not just only blends the aspects of comedy and tragedy but also adds horror to it. Violence is a major theme of *Fargo*. So, to understand the instances of tragedy in *Fargo*, we have to look how the aspects of horror and laughter are blended.

According to Bakthin the nature of horror and laughter is interrelated. Fargo is kind of laughter liberates the consciousness and hence creates freedom. For Bakhtin laughter is against the background of mass violence:

> Violence does not know violence. Analysis of a serious face (fear or threat), analysis of a laughing face… The sense of anonymous threat in the tone of an announcer who is transmitting important communications. Seriousness burdens us with hopeless situations, but laughter lifts us above them and liberates us from them. Laughter does not encumber man, it liberates him. Everything that is truly great must include element of laughter. Otherwise it becomes threatening, terrible or pompous, in any case, it is limited. Laughter lifts the barrier and clear the path. (Bakhtin, 1984:134-5)

Much of the humor in Fargo emerges from characters' unexpected reactions to violence. Gaear kill three people on the road; a policeman who stops them for an improper license plate and two witnesses. They do not expect to kill these people but they cope with the event relatively calmly. In this scene "the funny isn't close to horror, it is horror". (Brottman, 2003:78) Carl and Geaer are incomprehensible and strange. In the scene they blindfold Jean with a sack, after kidnapping her, they act like they freed Jean and giving her a chance to escape. However Jean cannot succeed to escape and ends up running in circles, disoriented and crying. She cries for help desperately. Carl and Gaear continue to play with her and watch her pitiful situation. Then Carl breaks out into laughter. Here, laughter is used as control over hostility. "The two kidnappers stand watching the scene, one is laughing, and we are invited to laugh as well, joining this hostile and veiled attack that satisfies an aggressive motive in the form of the socially acceptable "assault

by a joke". (ibid.,83) At this point, humor averts aggressiveness and hostility to come out, otherwise all the frustrations and tensions can come out in a violent way, which later we see in Jean's murder. Carl's weird reaction is also related to his other strange behavior that signifies his lack of communication skills.

Carl is not the only one who suffers from communicative failures. Almost every character in the film is unsuccessful in communication. Jerry, Jean and Scott rarely talk with each other. Wade, even though talking so much, does not really communicate with either his daughter, or his son-in-law. Gaear and Carl only 'discuss' and never 'talk'. As Brottman puts it:

> While providing much of the film's comedy, this continual stream of verbal
> parataxis means that the characters function at a basic level of communication,
> emotionally mute, their "conversations" more like instinctive, habitual noises
> and gestures can be deep, familiar and comforting, but generally the film
> presents us with very little mediation of meaning through the shared verbal
> communication of ideas (ibid.,84)

Marge and Norm, even communicating semi-verbally, are the only characters who seem to understand each other well. Humor, considering Marge, also emerges from her weird nature and her strange relation with Norm. The funniest character in Fargo, Marge Gunderson, is also the only peaceful and just character. Because the humor is not based on an event but the whole nature of a character, it never leaves Marge, it involves her every activity as daily routine. What differentiates Marge from the others is the humor in her character and not the humorous scenes she has been to. Marge does not use humor as a cover her aggression but as Bakhtin says as a lifestyle: "Laughter can be combined with profoundly intimate emotionality. Laughter belongs not to the culture of Saturnalian excess, but to "the culture of the weekday" (Bakhtin,1984.135) Laughter is a part of Marge's eclectic character, related to her optimism.

Marge, film's symbol of hope appears in the last scene of the film. The film ends with Marge, driving her car into the endless white snows cape. This repeats the opening scene in reverse. She enlightens a dark picture. At the end while Jerry is in pathetic

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arrest, Marge and Norm expects their baby in a peaceful home. This last scene summarizes the optimistic approach of *Fargo*.

4.3 TRAGEDY IN EUROPEAN CINEMA

Hopeful and optimistic approach to tragedy has been discussed through American films. When we enter the domain of European Cinema, especially after 90s, the pessimistic approach is much more dominant. Two films: the Danish film Dogville and the British film Naked will be analyzed according to their relation to tragedy and postmodern methods. Both films have a strong dark atmosphere. While Dogville refers to American's contemporary situation, Naked takes place in London, however its dark image and unidentifiable locations give the idea that this city can be anywhere on earth. Two different pessimistic individual journeys can be discovered through Dogville's Grace and Naked's Johnny.

4.3.1 Dogville

Dogville, the first part of Lars Von Trier's trilogy "America: Land of Opportunities" differs from *Fargo* and *American Beauty* with its unique aesthetic approach and pessimistic view. Trier uses nine chapters and one prologue to tell the story of Grace, a young woman who runs away from her gangster father and ends up in a little town called Dogville. Tom who is a wannabe writer finds her in a cave hiding and wants to get the permission of townspeople for her stay. Dogville is not a highly populated town; a blind man, a shop owner, a black cleaning lady, a family with many kids, a worker, a young woman, Tom and his father are the only residents. Townspeople give Grace two weeks to prove herself. Grace tries to help the townspeople in their daily work. At first nobody needs her help, but then they are convinced to get her help not for the work they need, but for work they think it could be good if done. Meanwhile the police continues to look for Grace and hang warning signs to town announcing Grace is a thief and a murderer. In the meeting at church the townspeople decide that they love Grace and allows her stay, but soon after that they turn into monsters. Grace is forced to do heavy

physical work and also to meet the sexual needs of men in the town. After she suffers for a long time, finally she decides to get revenge. Tom calls the gangsters to hand in Grace, but soon they learn that the cruel gangster is not Grace's enemy but her father. Grace asks her father to destroy the town and gets her revenge with not leaving even a single person alive in the town.

All the story takes place on one sound stage that is separated by white paint that outlines houses and streets. The design is interpreted in two ways: first is that it looks like a crime scene as the way Trier sees America. Secondly it is like a classroom chalkboard, Trier (like a teacher) tends to teach his audience the limits of the exploited and abused. (Özmenek, 2003:87) The stage (like a theater stage) allows the audience to feel the reflected emotions, but also averts a total identification. The alienation effects with other references to Brecht, clearly states Trier wants to succeed what Brecht did with 'epic theater'[8]. But Trier does not follow Brecht step by step, and like any postmodern work , the film combines different aesthetic and ethical approaches with its eclectic nature.

Religion is one of these components, as Trier clearly challenges faith of New Testament with the Old. As Ozmenek states: "For most of the film, Grace seems to be following the New Testament's principle of 'turning the other cheek': each time she is exploited, she submits without complaining. In the last part of the film, however, she seems to have changed her attitude to that of the Old Testament 'an eye for an eye'."(ibid.,88). 'An eye for an eye' attitude can be seen as a reference to American westerns.

Like *American Beauty* and *Fargo*, *Dogville* is also a good example of mixed genres. It includes the aspects of gangster films, film noir, melodrama, tragedy and western. The major theme of western was the conflict between Native Americans and cowboys, bounty hunters or farmers. Native Americans were mostly insulted, and shown as dishonorable villains. The hostility against Native Americans appears as a relatively new subject; xenophobia in *Dogville*. Grace's story is simply an attack on America's

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[8] Brecht used non-realistic scenic design to distance his audience. Costuming, props and visual captions were against a selective realism and aimed to alienate audience. With these effects Brecht aimed to prevent 'identification', cut out 'catharsis' and provide interaction.

popular attitude towards immigrants. As Tom defines: the problems of 'giving and receiving' in *Dogville* is related to the problems that immigrants have to face in United States. *Dogville* looks at the relation between conditioned hospitality, hostility, and xenophobia.

4.3.1.1 Conditioned Hospitality and Xenophobia

Grace arrives the town in need of help. She is defenseless and scared. Tom finds her and convinces her that he can help. Tom, who arranges 'moral rearmament' meetings at town to remind people of the values they forget, thinks Grace is a perfect illustrative gift. But neither Tom nor Dogville offers Grace unconditional hospitality. Tom proposes to the townspeople that Grace should prove her potential as a guest by helping them. Grace and Dogville agree on a two week trial period. However, in Tom's mind, Dogville has serious problems in 'receiving and giving'. So Grace will only be a bad example of hospitality, only an illustration that will support Tom's point. Here, Tom chooses to point to the problem, instead of offering a solution.

At the beginning no one welcomes Grace. She goes through every door asking if she can help, but the answer she always gets is "There really isn't anything we need doing." After rejected by almost everyone, with Tom's guidance she starts doing the jobs that 'didn't need doing'. After two weeks, Grace's stay is approved by a town election. Grace sees Dogville as a peaceful town. Even when Tom shows Grace the figurines at the shop and says "Those awful figurines say more about the people in this town than many words", Grace defends the town as "All l see is a beautiful little town in the midst of magnificent mountains. A place where people have hopes and dreams even under the hardest conditions. And seven figurines that are not awful at all."

Later, Tom tells Grace that her stay becomes more 'costly', people are threatened by gangsters, so she should pay a 'counterbalance'. Soon, a so-called intimate help from Dogville turns into increasingly violent and abusive tasks. Grace is forced to do hard labour. In addition to physical abuse, she is also raped first by Chuck and then the other

men of town. Meeting sexual needs of men becomes a condition of hospitality. Women also damage Grace psychologically. When Chuck's wife learn about their sexual encounter, she takes the figurines that Grace bought with all the money she collected with hard works and breaks them. In the scene more violent than the rape scene; Vera tells her that "I believe smashing them is less a crime than making them. I am going to break two of your figurines first, and if you can demonstrate your knowledge of the Doctrine of Stoicism by holding back your tears, I'll stop." After being tortured and raped, Grace is finally chained by the neck to a heavy wheel of an old mill.

Grace is definitely an outsider. Whatever she does she cannot become one of them. When people of Dogville cannot identify with Grace, they turn her into a 'consumable thing'. They consume Grace as a property until nothing remains. Dogville's terms of hospitality allows Grace to be consumed monstrously (Atkinson, 2005:6). Atkinson reminds us that the very nature of hospitality is to protect and comfort the guest. In Kantian terms the right of the guest is not to be treated as an enemy upon his arrival to a new land. Hospitality can be seen as a pact between the guest and the host that promises non-hostility. (ibid.,2) Kant's laws of universal hospitality follows simple rules:

> The right to hospitality, "the *right to visit* […] belongs to all men by virtue of their common ownership of the earth's surface": since the earth's surface is finite, its inhabitants must necessarily tolerate each other. No single human being – or State – has "a greater right to any region of the earth than anyone else" (Kant, 1983:118).

So, everyman has the right to visit a place peacefully and has rights of passage. However, what Dogvillians understand of 'hospitality' is not its universal use. There is no moral context in Dogville. Hospitality for them is a kind of exchange that the host should offer something in return for their peace. And when the guest is out of service or properties, she or he is sentenced to torture.

Xenophobia, the unreasonable fear of foreigners arises when people of Dogville see Grace's otherness. Grace always appreciates their behavior. She even responds with mercy and forgiveness to all forms of abuse. While Dogvillians only accept Grace under certain conditions, Grace forgives and accepts the other as wholly other.(Atkinson,

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2005:8) Grace is the exact opposite of what they are. But, at the end Grace's decision is against Dogville. Her choice to have the town massacred and to consume it by fire can be seen as a result of Dogvillians' hostile behaviors. Change in Grace's attitude illustrate the duality; existence of both 'good' and 'evil' in her character. The question of contraries is existent for almost every changing character in the film.

4.3.1.2 Insoluble Duality: Grace and Tom Between Idealism and Perversion

Dogville basically mediates on the idea of justice and morality. However the film which starts with pure idealism (with two idealist heroes: Grace and Tom), ends up with calling attention to the impossibility of universal justice. The film starts with an establishing shot from God's point of view, which also refers to God's absence in *Dogville*. Later we see Tom, 'a writer who had come up with a series of meetings on moral rearmament with which he felt obliged to benefit the town', instead of writing, because he is not really able to write. Tom acts like a prophet who gives weekly speeches about values and morality. It is as if he covers the absence of God in town. Tom believes that townspeople 'are not just fine by themselves', rather 'there is a lot this country has forgotten and in need of a refreshment of their memories by way of illustration'.

Tom finds Grace a gift, his big project of illustration. Grace; a stranger, is a great example to discover the problematic reactions of townspeople in terms of 'giving and receiving'. But soon, Tom wants Grace to give a 'counterbalance' because her existence in town started to become a little bit 'costly' for the townspeople. But there is a tricky approach to a gift, because it is accepted unconditionally and then it turns to an exchange. As Michael Lattek illustrates referring to Derrida's idea of gift: "This 'idea of justice' seems to be irreducible in its affirmative character, in its demand of gift without Exchange,…without economic circularity, without calculation… The idealism of Grace and Tom thus take complimentary positions of ignorance". (Lattek, 2003:103)

Lattek analyzes Tom's character with referring to Lukacs; for him the idealist hero has a demonic character. It is more a Socratic daemon between the gods and men, like Tom who tries to act like a prophet. But in the end it is the human force which perceives the reality, as Tom becomes just like the other violent townspeople, and calls the gangsters to get Grace (ibid.,102)

Grace on the other hand, looks so innocent and so giving. She accepts any condition that is offered by people. She even peacefully allows the men to violate her sexually. Grace like Tom also acts like a prophet. However, her existence is not enough for the people of Dogville to be virtuous. So "the absence of justice gave rise to the necessity of violence as law creation and enforcement" (ibid.) Grace's violence arises as a way of coping with the lack of justice. After everything Grace lived through, sexual abuse, discrimination, destruction of her properties, she concluded that what the townspeople did is evil and should be punished. When Tom calls the gangsters, Grace's father unexpectedly offers to destroy Dogville.

Grace's revenge is the only possible way to make justice. "Grace is exploited by the town, but the finale of the film shows that these exploited people can and do fight back, with tragic consequences".(ibid.,113) Revenge for 'justice', an aspect of Elizabethan revenge tragedy can be seen in *Dogville*.

4.3.1.3 Dogville as a Revenge Tragedy

With its dramatic scenes like the rape of Grace by Chuck, or the humiliation of Grace by Vera, Von Trier creates strong emotions. Dogville deals with a victim, a suffering heroine who has to work through a series of difficulties, physical and emotional hardship and has to solve the problems with bravery and sacrificial acts. Probably the most dramatic scene is the one in which Grace is humiliated by Vera (the scene mentioned before). Vera with a women-gang tells Grace that she believes in education and she will educate Grace on doctrine of stoicism with breaking her figurines. When Vera breaks the figurines, we see a close-up of Grace hardly holding her tears. The

dramatic music supports Grace's emotion. In addition to close-ups and music, the narrator explains how Grace feels:

> As the porcelain pulverized on the floor, it was as if it were human tissue disintegrating. The figurines were the offspring of the meeting between the township and her. They were the proof that in spite of everything, her suffering had created something of value. Grace could no longer cope. For the first time since her childhood, she wept.

Another heartbreaking scene is Chuck's rape of Grace. When Chuck rapes Grace for the first time, Grace gives such a weak reaction. Chuck hides Grace when the police arrive, so he feels that he has the right to abuse Grace sexually in return. That scene and few others can be categorized as melodramatic.

However, the minimalist staging of *Dogville* creates a theatrical mode that shows the film is not exactly a melodrama. The unrealistic houses separated by each other by chalkboard lines breaks the viewer's engagement with other points. Also the narration and non-naturalistic tone of narrator emphasizes artificiality. Because of these distancing effects *Dogville* is mostly interpreted as Brechtian. Brecht's Verfremdungseffekt, the essence of the aesthetics of epic theater, considers audience as a critical observer and prevent themselves losing in character passively. The chalk outlines of *Dogville* serve for this purpose successfully. The narrator's voiceover also defamiliarizes. The distancing effect differentiates the film both from melodrama and tragedy. But it is still possible to find clear instances of tragedy in *Dogville*.

When we look at *Dogville,* we see a massacre as a result of revenge which cannot be called as "victory of virtue". Grace punishes the whole town, even the little kids and the film ends with a total bloodbath. Grace is not peaceful, forgiving or virtuous anymore. However, what Grace does is the only way to reach 'justice'. So, Dogville is closer to a revenge tragedy, that sees vengeance as a way that can lead the hero to justice.

A revenge tragedy or 'tragedy of blood' mostly include a bad person, usually a ruler (here Tom and all Dogvillians), a hero driven to madness (Grace), a catastrophe or an

eruption of general violence at the end (massacre of Dogville). The main thematic concern of earlier revenge tragedy was the problem of pain. Later with political concerns themes of absolute power, corruption and justice added. Dogville focus on the themes of pain, power and justice.

The most famous revenge tragedy, Hamlet follows a similar path with Dogville. Hamlet who is driven to madness after the murder of his father by his uncle, seeks revenge. As a typical revenge tragedy the plot arises out of a situation that hero is not responsible. In Hamlet the crime has been committed before the play starts. During the play Hamlet tries to prove that his father is murdered as the ghost told him. In Dogville, series of crimes are commited during the film. What tragedy really based on is the intolerable and evil situation surrounding Hamlet or Grace. A catastrophe, a major bloody scene takes place in the end. Both characters take revenge disguised as 'poetic justice'.

What separates *Dogville* from an Elizabethan revenge tragedy is the lack of self-sacrifice. In an Elizabethan revenge tragedy the tragic flow leads to the downfall of the hero. Hamlet' vengeance causes the destruction of everyone including himself. Because the character is not totally driven to madness, or to kill herself in Dogville, 'we might ally ourselves with her on the basis of retributive justice, but it is difficult to see vengeance as a virtue-and thus to see virtue as victorious".(ibid.) So, *Dogville* borrows some qualities of revenge tragedy and consume them in a different context.

4.3.2 Naked

Mike Leigh's Naked combines present problems like poverty and homelessness with (as he calls) "the tension between spiritual and material values and the sense of impending doom." The film differs from our previous American examples with its obvious pessimistic view. Naked's protagonist Johnny, a drifter flees Manchester to London after his sexual encounter with a married woman turns into a rape. Johnny seeks refuge with his ex-girlfriend Louise. During his stay in London, Johnny spends most of his time in the streets with provoking anyone intellectually to prove his superiority. He

challenges a homeless-Scottish boy, a security guard and a waitress with his long and lyrical discussions. He also seduces women, including Louise's house-mate Sophie, who later claims that she is in love with Johnny.

Johnny's aimless journey into the dark streets of London is similar to Grace's journey to a dark town called Dogville. In both films the protagonists are separated from their families and similar to American Beauty and Fargo these lonely characters are products of sick families. In Naked "family" is not the focus of the film, but a portrayal of dysfunctional family is there.

4.3.2.1 Dysfunctional Family, Unusual Sexuality and Violence

It is known that Mike Leigh mostly deals with families in his films but in Naked everyone is so lonely. "It is about displacement" says Leigh "I've dealt more with families than just about anybody, but in this film I felt the need to address the situation of people who have drifted away from their families" (Ellickson, 2000:67).

Johnny arrives in London looking for Louise, but he meets Sophie instead. When Louise is at work, Johnny seduces Sophie. Later we learn that Louise and Sophie also "ve been out a couple o' times". Louise kisses Johnny when she arrives home, but she doesn't get jealous or angry when she learns about Johnny and Sophie's sexual encounter. So all the complications in their relationship and the way they accept each other portray an unusual 'dysfunctional family'.

Johnny and Louise look so far from marriage and even Sophie who looks for a decent relationship is not sure if she ever wants to get married. In a pub Sophie and Louise talk about 'having a baby'. Sophie tells that she was pregnant once, but it turned out she wasn't but her boyfriend left her anyway. Louise who was pregnant once had an abortion when her friends warned her about her irresponsibility and inability to take care of a baby. Louise explains the main problems between two sexes: "men don't like you if

you're strong, don't like you if you're weak, hate you if you're clever, hate you if you're stupid".

These unusual characters and their 'original' sexual practices are mostly related to violence in the film. In Johnny's sex scenes, it's almost impossible to understand if it is rape or sadomasochistic sexual act. All the women, the married woman at the beginning, Sophie and the lonely woman (Johnny rejects), are there by choice. Johnny does not bully women and forces them to have sex with misogynistic disdain. He rejects the woman that the security guard watches secretly, claiming she is too old, and even does not try to seduce the waitress. Johnny can be the source of psychological and emotional abuse, but not physical. Another character Jeremy on the other hand, clearly rapes and beats women.

Watson reminds that the two most violent scenes in the film are not caused by Johnny. The first scene is the rape of Sophie by Jeremy. When Jeremy finds Sophie alone, he forces her to wear Sandra's nursing uniform and have sex with him. He also beats her and she cannot defend herself being afraid if police comes they can find drugs. The other scene is a gang of youths beating Johnny. Johnny already beaten up by a poster man is attacked by a group with no reason. Johnny, different than Jeremy, applies psychological violence. What Watson says about Johnny's violent scenes is that "they certainly involve a lesser degree of violence than the rape and the beating up and they therefore encourage us to see that we have a responsibility to make discriminations. And not just between different kinds and degrees of physical violence, but between physical and non-physical violence too. (Watson, 2004:121)

Naked makes a clear distinction between characters Jeremy and Johnny. The film cannot be seen as a misogynistic attempt mainly because of this distinction, but it has similarities with *Fargo* and *Dogville* in terms of pointing the problems of patriarchy and male dominance. It is not Johnny but Jeremy who behaves extremely violent and humiliates women continuously. Jeremy says "I hope I didn't give you AIDS" to Sophie as if it is a part of usual postcoital talk. Leigh shows that a certain affinity for violence

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and disrespect for women are existent in society, just like Chuck of *Dogville* and Wade of *Fargo*. On the other hand Leigh also shows female solidarity in the conversations of Louise and Sophie and how Sophie leaves Louise, Johnny and Sandra's house all by herself. With all its different characters, the conflict between masculine and feminine, violence and chaos Leigh warns us about the impending apocalypse.

4.3.2.2 Impending Apocalypse

Naked takes place in London but it is about something fundamental rather than local. All of the characters are rootless and displaced. They are unable to communicate with each other, so desperate and lost. Leigh clearly states that he worries about the future, watching how things are getting worse in the world. In his words "the fabric of society is crumbling and there are people all around the streets"; homeless, poor, needy people as wells as sick and lost (like Jeremy or Sophie). People are insecure and society is collapsing. (Carr, 2000: 56)

The eerie atmosphere of the film, misty and dark empty streets give the impression of an abandoned town. A Scottish boy called Archie comes out of nowhere in the middle of the night. He looks for his girlfriend. Johnny asks Archie if he is Scottish and how is Scotland. Archie replies as 'Fuckin' shite'. So things in Scotland are no different than in England or anywhere else in the world. Later Johnny accepts to stay at the point where he is and wait for Maggie, Archie's girlfriend. When the girl comes Archie disappears. The scene reminds of Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot'. Two characters run in the streets of London aimlessly, even when they find each other, things do not look more meaningful.

After the couple walks away in the mists and disappear, Johnny continues his aimless walk. He meets Brian, a security guard who works in 'a postmodernist gas chamber'. After Johnny challenges Brian with his intellectual questions, Brian lets Johnny in. A discussion on Brian's job starts. Brian accepts that his job is boring but it gives him time

and space to contemplate the future. When Brian says that, Johnny gives him a long lecture about the future and apocalypse:

> Has nobody not told you, Brian, that you've got this kind of gleeful preoccupation with the future? I wouldn't even mind, but you don't even have a fuckin' future, I don't have a future. Nobody has a future. The party's over. Take a look around you man, it's all breaking up. Are you not familiar with the book of Revelations of St. John, the final book of the Bible prophesying the apocalypse?

Johnny who later defends that 'God is hateful' supports his claim about the end of the world with a series of prophecies about catastrophes. Brian insists on not believing him, but Johnny continues, he does not offer that the world will end but 'man will cease to exist'. Johnny's actions starts to make sense considering his belief in end of the world. Johnny, an unemployed prefers to walk in the streets and confront people with his ideas, instead of looking for a job. Having been persuaded by the argument that the world come to an end, Johnny easily concludes there is no available forms of work worth doing. (Watson, 2004:109) He doesn't have anything more to do in terms of 'worldly jobs' as Louise's. Desperately looking for a job is not something for Johnny. He is both a victim and a victimizer under different lights.

4.3.2.3 Johnny as Victim and Victimizer

The film's protagonist Johnny is mostly referred as a "marginal character" or a "drifter". As Ellickson defines: he is neither a hero nor a villain, an absolute outsider who exploits people's vulnerability. (Ellickson, 2000:70) He is rude to everyone around him and uses his intellect as a weapon instead of a way of communication. Johnny does not care if people want to be confronted by his endless questions. Because of his belief in the pointlessness of 'worldly jobs', Johnny confronts Louise about her work:

> Johnny: So how's, um… work?
> Louise: It's all right.
> Johnny: It's all right.
> Louise: Yeah.

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> Johnny: What did you hope it would be? I'm sorry-did you (now addressing Sophie) get that? It's everything she hoped it would be, but she doesn't fuckin' know what she hoped it would be!

Louise, still surprised to find her ex-boyfriend at her house, offers him a cup of tea. Johnny does not give up, talks about how Louise is changed and how she is different than him and Sophie. While they have to survive with unemployment benefits, Louise works in a 'fancy' job:

> Johnny: What?! I mean, you don't seem very pleased to see me.
> Louise: I am pleased to see you!
> Johnny: Are you too good for us? Now you've got yourself a posh job in the big 'shitty'? I mean, me an' 'er on the fucking' dole, aren't we?
> Sophie: Right!
> Johnny: And you're a career girl-are you happy with that?
> Louise: Yeah.
> Johnny: Are you sure?
> Louise: Yeah.
> Johnny: I'm delighted.

For Leigh, Johnny is a victim as everybody else. His intellectual attacks are a function of his own vulnerability. (ibid.,70). Johnny is socially an outsider, nobody in the film looks like they really understand him. He is an unemployed, homeless person. In most of the scenes he covers his despair with a series of complicated intellectual arguments. We see how desperate he is in the scene where he goes to the waitress' house. Johnny meets with a girl who invites her to a house. Later we learn that she is also a homeless person and the house owner allows her to stay during their vacation in America. Johnny after having a shower there, starts his challenging questions. At the end, the girl gets really angry and throws him out. Johnny desperately asks her help because he doesn't have any place to go and it is 'like a fuckin' Eskimo grave out there'. But the girl does not change her mind and first Johnny curses himself for not understanding what is happening, then curses her for her insensitivity:

> I hope that when you're tucked up tonight, all snug and warm underneath your tear- sodden fuckin' duvet in your ankle-length Emily Bronte windin' - sheet, that you spare a thought form, with me head in a puddle of cold dog's piss. An' I hope that you dream about me. An' I hope that you wake up

screaming'. An' I hope that all your fuckin' children are born blind, bow-legged, hare-lipped, homeless hunchbacks!

Later that night Johnny is beaten by a gang and hardly reaches Louise for help. Maybe the closest characters to him are Brian and Louise. Brian just helps him, while Johnny expects to be kicked out. He behaves toward Johnny as someone really important, and reacts to his intellectual attacks. Louise also does not seem offended by Johnny's rudeness. She kisses him intimately and agrees to quit her job and go back to Manchester with him. The film ends with the escape of Johnny. It can be interpreted as Johnny liberates Louise. She quits her job that she finds boring and goes to Manchester where she really want to be with her friends. Johnny on the other hand is a totally free person. He prefers the street rather than going back. Johnny's addiction to liberation and his Socrates like intellectual-street personality brings us to the tragic qualities of the film.

4.3.2.4 Tragedy of Self-Realization

As noted above, the main reason for Johnny's lack of enthusiasm about work is that there is no productive or meaningful job for Johnny. Besides that, challenging people and attempting to engage in others looks like a full-time job for Johnny. He is not really an 'unemployed' person, he rejects employment by the dominant system. He works in the job that he finds the most useful. Watson explains why Johnny does not waste his life as Brian accuses him. For Watson from one commonsensical point of view Johnny is wasting his life because he does not follow the general rules of society. But from another point of view he is not wasting his life at all. Johnny spends his time in the most useful way, drawing people into a kind of 'Socratic debate'. Johnny's discussions force people to question their basic assumptions about their life. His arguments could even result in the transformation of others' lives. Socrates harassed interlocutors with questions. It was his job to force people to think, to pay attention and take care of themselves. (Watson, 2004:114) As Watson also mentions referring to the notes of Pierre Hadot; the philosopher Epictetus who praised and applied Socratic method wrote that it became an incredibly hard thing to do to confront people with ideas. Trying to

have a Socratic dialogue was no longer a safe business in Rome that could end with a fist in the face. (ibid.)

People reaction to Johnny is not really different. Archie, the homeless guy shouts at Johnny and curses him all the time. Later the poster guy Johnny talks beats him and runs away with Johnny's bag. The waitress who invited Johnny to her house throws him out when he keeps asking question and reminding the girl of her own neediness. Johnny forces people to face with their own weaknesses. Maybe the most clear example is between Johnny and Brian. Brian welcomes Johnny's Socratic way of debate. Johnny asks questions to Brian about his job that he looks so attached. Johnny asks: "And what is it what goes on in this postmodern gas chamber?". Brian replies: Nothing. It's empty. Johnny asks: "So what is it you guard, then?, Brian: Space. Johnny emphasizes the pointlessness of his work:" You're guarding a space? That's stupid, isn't it? Because someone could reach in there and steal all the fucking' space and you wouldn't know it's gone, would you?". Johnny's other questions also confronts Brian about how stupid and boring his job is.

Like Brian, Johnny also forces Louise to think about boredom. Because she is bored in her job and wants to go back to Manchester, she assumes that the probable reason of Johnny's visit is that he is bored in Manchester. Louise asks: "**What happened in Manchester were you bored? Johnny replies as** "Was I bored? No, I wasn't fuckin' bored. I'm never bored. That's the trouble with everybody - you're all so bored. You've had nature explained to you and you're bored with it, you've had the living body explained to you and you're bored with it, you've had the universe explained to you and you're bored with it, so now you want cheap thrills and, like, plenty of them, and it doesn't matter how tawdry or vacuous they are as long as it's new as long as it's new as long as it flashes and fuckin' bleeps in forty fuckin' different colors. So whatever else you can say about me, I'm not fuckin' bored." In his argument Johnny illustrates a major postmodern problem "being bored of everything" and for his reason "accepting anything new' no matter what it stands for.

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With his Socratic way of debate Johnny illustrates another type of tragedy: tragedy of self-realization. Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* is based on the same problem of representing the self and self-realization. The individual who cannot fulfill his own self starts to transform into something else. He becomes a security guard, a poster man, a businessman. He finds a job to represent himself. Representing the self is the exact opposite of self-realization. Representation limits freedom and prevents self-realization. In *Naked* Johnny forces people to face with their self representation.

The ending of *Naked* can be interpreted as Johnny's help to Louise on her way to liberation. Before the last scene, we see Louise decided to quit her job and go back to Manchester. In the last scene, we see Johnny running away, leaving the house without telling Louise. This scene can be interpreted in two ways. It can be seen as Johnny's escape. He does not want commitment or is afraid to go back to Manchester. Because Johnny is a street person, it can be seen as his choice of streets instead of a settled life. On the other hand, Johnny frees Louise. Maybe he does not go back with her as he promised, but Louise quits her job to go back to Manchester where she thinks she belongs. Johnny not just frees himself but the others with his questions and behavior. Johnny asks questions endlessly. As Leigh also states, the characters do not come up with any answers. And for him, "the whole experience of making films is one of discovery". Thus *Naked* asks questions rather than giving answers and creates tragic awareness through its Socratic questioning on life and individuals.

5. CONCLUSION

The above discussion has discovered that 'tragedy' in the postmodern era is not dead but it can only be found as fragments, reflections or impressions. First, we looked at the characteristics of tragedy to find what kind of fragments and reflections used in postmodern film. Tragedy's path from Ancient Greek to modern tragedy is analyzed according to specific characteristics of the particular periods. In Ancient Greek tragedy the emphasis is on myths, arrogance, free will and self-sacrifice. The hero is generally punished by the Gods because of a fatal error, mostly related to hubris, and recognizes this error too late. Even though the hero knows that his fate is unavoidable, he still rebels. The story mostly includes the fall of the hero and self sacrifice. Elizabethan tragedy focus on fortune, horror, tyranny and revenge. The hero is forced to make a decision between two positive values. Tragedy rises from this ethical dilemma. With modernism and the emergence of 'novel', tragedy became not only a drama form for theatre but also for literature. Modernism widened the range of tragic themes. Bourgeois and common man, social consciousness and revolution, validity of morality, mortality and secularized became new themes of tragedy. Modern tragedy also replaced hero with anti-hero and rejected some aspects of tragedy like catharsis.

With postmodernism, it became impossible to define 'tragedy'. Few changes that deeply affected tragedy's transformation are discussed in second chapter;

a) The changed definition of tragedy after the Holocaust: After Second World War 'tragedy' was no longer a genre but a form of history.
b) Cinema, television, newspapers and the Internet's effects on widened field of tragedy. With the help of new media, tragedy was no longer limited with theatre and literature.
c) Postmodern genre theory: Tragedy as a genre no longer exist. However, still in films and plays tragedy is used. It is mixed with other genres such as horror, science-fiction or comedy.
d) Tragedy's connection to political criticism: Tragedy always aimed to create awareness against a system; which was about Gods in ancient world, kings in Elizabethan era, politicians in modernism and fragmented power sources in postmodernism.

With these changes tragedy had a new meaning. It could be found in news, social media, films or life. It was not necessarily fiction.

Some postmodern themes are directly related to tragedy; which are chaos, violence, popular culture, paranoia and virtual reality. Chaos mainly presents the contemporary situation. Lack of communication, economic confusions and social disorder are all related to the theme of chaos. Popular culture uses tragedy with adapting ancient and classical tragedies to commercialized productions. Various genres connected to virtual reality follows a similar path. Sexual, physical and psychological violence are also important themes of postmodern literature and film. The fragments of tragedy can be found in films which combine these themes with postmodern techniques such as intertextuality, metafiction, irony and playfulness.

In the third chapter, four different films are analyzed according to their relations with tragedy. Some characteristics of them are directly borrowed from the genre of tragedy, like tragic twists, self-sacrificial heroes and revenge, some others only follow tragedy as an idea as using horror and laughter for liberation, focusing on liberating beauty or self-realization. *American Beauty* simply uses irony to create tragic twists, ends with the death of the hero and shows the necessity of 'beauty' for freedom. *Fargo* uses black humor, it is formed by a series of murders and all the cases are solved by a unique 'postmodern' hero. The hero represents some classical characteristics like idealism and being self-sacrificial but what makes *Fargo* a tragedy is its use of horror and laughter on the way to liberation. *Dogville*, a pessimistic example borrows some tragic qualities like pain and revenge ends with the massacre of whole town. Thus really differentiates it from a tragedy but what makes it tragic is not its end but the developments that bring the main character to massacre. In *Naked*, the Socratic hero forces people to face their weaknesses. The film approaches tragedy with its way of creating tragic awareness. All of the films are chaotic and they include violence and death (only in *Naked* there is no death), deal with problems between the male and female dominance and borrow different elements of tragedy. These films mainly show how different fragments of tragedy is perceived and applied in postmodern film.

Consequently, in the postmodern era tragedy is no longer a genre of theatre. It evolved through different cultures and periods. Postmodernism fragmented 'tragedy' and distributed its fragments to different media. It is now possible to find its reflections even in a short news story. Film, theatre, literature, Internet and other virtual media use tragedy in different ways. Even though tragedy has been destroyed, fragmented and mixed with other genres it is still an important idea and a form of drama for cinema and literature.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: List of Movies

A Beautiful Mind (2001, US)

American Beauty (1999, US)

Austin Powers (1997, US/Germany)

Avatar (2009, US)

Batman (1989, US)

Blade Runner (1982, US)

Born on the Fourth of July (1989, US)

Casino (1995, US/France)

Chinatown (1974, US)

Cry Baby (1990, US)

Dawn of the Dead (2004, US/Canada/Japan)

Dogville (2003, Denmark)

Donnie Darko (2001, US)

Dressed to Kill (1980, US)

Dr. Strangelove (1964, UK)

Elephant (2003, US)

Fargo (1996, US)

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas (1998, US)

Hairspray (2007, US)

Indiana Jones; Raiders of the Lost Arc (1981, US)

In the Mood for Love (2000, Hong Kong)

Jackie Brown (1997, US)

JFK (1991, US)

Jurrasic Park (1993, US)

Kill Bill Vol.1 (2003, US)

Lost Highway 1997, US)

Magnolia (1999, US)

Mean Streets (1973, US)

Memento (2000, US)

Naked (1993, UK)

No Country for Old Men (2007, US)

Out of the Past (1947, US)

Pulp Fiction (1994, US)

Pearl Harbour (2011, US)

Reservoir Dogs (1992, US)

Serial Mom (1994, US)

Star Wars (1977/2008, US)

Taxi Driver (1976, US)

The Doors (1991, US)

The Matrix Trilogy (1999/2003, US)

The Mist (2007, US)

This is Spinal Tap (1984, US)

Titanic (1997, US)

Touch of Evil (1958, US)

True Grit (2010, US)

Truman Show (1998, US)

24 Hour Party People (2002, UK)