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## A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Reşat Nuri Güntekin's Novel *Yaprak Dökümü* from an Object Relations Theory Approach

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze Reşat Nuri Güntekin's novel *Yaprak Dökümü* from an Object Relations Theory perspective, offering a psychodynamic account of the characters' intrapsychic worlds, early object representations, and relational cycles. While the established literature on the novel predominantly approaches the work through socio-cultural lenses, a significant gap remains regarding the application of contemporary relational psychoanalysis to the text's interpersonal dynamics. The theoretical backbone of the study is Otto Kernberg's structural object relations model, complemented in an integrative fashion by Melanie Klein's and W.R.D. Fairbairn's frameworks, D.W. Winnicott's conceptualization of the false self, Heinz Hartmann's ego psychology, and Heinz Kohut's theorization of narcissistic injury. Employing document analysis and close reading techniques, this study reveals that Ali Rıza Bey constructs his children as narcissistic extensions, compelling them to develop defensive false selves. The familial network extensively utilized primitive defense mechanisms—splitting, projective identification, primitive idealization, and devaluation—which hindered whole-object integration and object constancy. These oscillations align with the structural features of borderline personality organization. By situating these intrapsychic conflicts within the broader matrix of Turkish psychoanalytic literary criticism, this research contributes an interdisciplinary depth to the dialogue between psychology and literature.

**Keywords:** Object Relations Theory; Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism; *Yaprak Dökümü*; Splitting Mechanism; Narcissistic Extensions; Document Analysis

### 1. Introduction

In Turkey, psychoanalytic literary criticism has increasingly consolidated its position as a rigorous, multi-layered academic methodology. Initiated through the foundational frameworks of Mehmet Kaplan, the discipline has evolved past descriptive psycho-biographical accounts of authors to engage directly with the structural configurations of literary texts [1]. Within this paradigm, creative literature and psychological theory are conceptualized as inherently complementary fields, given that both place the structural variations, unconscious conflicts, and phenomenological depth of the human condition at their analytical focal point [1]. Despite this growth, Reşat Nuri Güntekin's canonical novel, *Yaprak Dökümü*, has predominantly been restricted to rigid socio-cultural and historical interpretive frameworks [2].

A significant portion of literary criticism evaluates the novel through literary sociology, examining its narrative through macro-sociological parameters such as the anxieties of misguided Westernization, the erosion of traditional moral values, and the structural dissolution of the family institution under economic stress [2]. Erdoğan [3] defines the text as

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a “social document” and “thesis novel” mirroring the socio-economic transformations of its era. While these perspectives provide invaluable insights into the work’s historical background, they naturally prioritize collective social dynamics, leaving the characters’ complex intrapsychic mechanisms open to further elaboration.

To complement these sociological readings, contemporary Turkish scholarship has begun to integrate psychodynamic perspectives to deconstruct classical texts [e.g. 4, 5, 6]. However, a specific theoretical gap persists regarding the systematic application of Object Relations Theory to *Yaprak Dökümü*. Utilizing an object relations framework deepens the social document reading by enabling a rigorous examination of the characters’ internal object worlds, primitive defensive configurations, and object-seeking behaviors [5, 7]. Re-reading the text through this psychodynamic lens does not seek to invalidate the sociological consensus; rather, it aims to operate in dialogue with it, exposing the latent structural fragmentations beneath the family’s collapse [3].

### 1.1. Research Purpose and Significance

The primary purpose of this study is to systematically analyze *Yaprak Dökümü* through Object Relations Theory, explaining the characters’ intrapsychic architectures and destructive relational cycles. Rather than evaluating interpersonal conflicts as direct consequences of macro-economic hardship, the study aims to decode behavioral patterns through the psychodynamic positions defined by Klein, tracing the structural oscillations between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions [5]. The research carries significant academic importance by offering an original interdisciplinary contribution. Examining canonical characters through the conceptual tools of Klein, Winnicott, Kernberg, and Fairbairn simultaneously tests the explanatory boundaries of psychodynamic theories on fictional texts and provides insight into how complex psychological dynamics are externalized through aesthetic production [1]. The distinct clinical utility lies in demonstrating the interpretive potential that rich creative narratives offer to mental health professionals, particularly within the scope of bibliotherapy [9, 10, 11].

### 1.2. Research Questions

- How is Ali Rıza Bey structuralized as an internalized object within the familial matrix, and how does the collapse of his paternal authority affect his children’s self and object representations?
- How do primitive defense mechanisms, specifically splitting and projective identification, operate within the parental dyad and the external world to drive the progressive dissolution of the family?
- In what ways do the characters manifest oscillations between primitive idealization and devaluation across their familial and romantic domains?
- How does true self versus false self-dynamics and subsequent primitive defenses manifest among the family members under conditions of systemic collapse?

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## 2. Theoretical Framework

Object Relations Theory represents a foundational paradigm shift within psychoanalytic thought, moving from Freud’s classical drive-reduction model to a relational understanding of identity formation. Although Freud addressed interpersonal investments—defining the ego’s character as “a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes” [15, 31]—his focus remained centered on narcissism and drive discharge [13, 14, 16]. Klein radically transformed this model by asserting that the human infant is intrinsically “object-seeking” from birth, establishing immediate intrapsychic relationships from the beginning of life [17, 18]. This transition serves as a necessary theoretical lens to decode the familial collapse as a systemic vacuum of relational safety [19].

In psychodynamic literature, the “object” spans external individuals and their corresponding intrapsychic mental representations shaped by early unconscious fantasies [7, 14]. As formulated by Kernberg, these internalized structures are organized as a dynamic triad comprising a specific object representation, a self-representation, and an intense connecting affect [15]. Psychological maturation requires a trajectory from part-object levels—where parents are split into “all-good” or “all-bad”—toward whole-object integration. Achieving “object constancy” enables the ego to synthesize ambivalent emotions without triggering structural fragmentation [20].

Klein conceptualized development through two dynamic, fluid positions accessible throughout life: the paranoid-schizoid position, dominated by splitting, and the depressive position, characterized by whole-object integration, mourning, and reparation [5, 17, 20, 21]. Projective identification operates as a primitive communication strategy where parts of the self are split off and forced into external objects [18, 22]. Critically, Klein’s concept of primary envy—the intolerable destructive impulse directed at the good object’s creativity and goodness—provides a theoretical basis for

analyzing how external figures entering a family system may attack its internal cohesion not from a position of deprivation, but from an envious inability to tolerate the object's perceived goodness [18].

Winnicott expanded the relational matrix by prioritizing environmental facilitation; the “good-enough mother” initially adapts perfectly to the infant's needs before executing a “graduated failure of adaptation” that safely introduces external reality [17, 23, 24, 25]. When the caregiving environment subjects the infant to chronic failures, the ego constructs a defensive “false self” mask to shield the vulnerable true self [21, 25]. Crucially, the false self does not entirely annihilate the true self; it functions as a protective shield, and the true self periodically manifests through spontaneous gestures that leak through the compliant facade [17, 26]. This structural development requires a reliable “holding environment” where the primary caretaker binds unintegrated experiences into a cohesive ego identity [17, 26].

Kernberg synthesized classical drive theory with Klein and Mahler, defining borderline personality organization (BPO) through three operational criteria: severe identity diffusion, pervasive primitive defenses centered on splitting, and—critically—the preservation of gross reality testing under non-psychotic conditions [22, 27]. This third criterion is analytically significant: characters operating within a BPO framework can accurately perceive external reality even while their internal object world remains fragmented by primitive defenses.

Fairbairn reformulated libido as strictly object-seeking, and when primary objects frustrate relational needs, the ego splits into the Central Ego, the Libidinal Ego (bound to the exciting object in unresolvable longing), and the Anti-Libidinal Ego (internal saboteur) that launches destructive attacks against relational hopes [14, 17].

While technically constituting a separate school within psychoanalysis, Heinz Kohut's Self Psychology enters into direct dialogue with the object relations framework through the concept of the “selfobject”—the experience of the other as a functional extension of one's own psychic structure, serving to maintain self-cohesion [33]. Whereas Kernberg conceptualizes narcissism as a pathological defensive development against primitive aggression and envy, Kohut frames it as a “developmental arrest” resulting from the caregiver's failure to provide adequate empathic mirroring [27, 33]. In Kohut's model, the self develops along two fundamental axes: the “grandiose self” requiring mirroring and validation, and the “idealized parental imago” providing calming and safety [33]. When these selfobject needs are traumatically frustrated, the result is narcissistic injury accompanied by intense narcissistic rage [33]. In this study, Kohut's concepts are deployed within Kernberg's object relations framework to illuminate the narcissistic transference patterns in parent-child relationships and the psychic fragmentation caused by collapsing ideals.

Additionally, Heinz Hartmann's ego psychology contributes a necessary corrective nuance. Hartmann proposed that certain ego functions—perception, cognitive capacity, social skills, adaptation to reality—operate within a “conflict-free ego sphere” independent of internal drive conflicts, enabling the individual's adaptation to changing environmental demands [41]. This concept prevents a reductive reading in which all character behavior is collapsed into pathological drive expression, allowing the recognition that some adaptive capacities may coexist alongside structural fragility [41].

## 2.1. Assumptions and Limitations

The study is confined to a single work, *Yaprak Dökümü*. A critical epistemological tension must be acknowledged: psychoanalytic concepts—such as BPO, splitting, and projective identification—are deployed not for pathologizing fictional characters but as evocative literary decoding tools to comprehend their internal worlds [12]. Fictional characters lack a biological psyche external to the text; however, as products of the author's observations of human nature, their represented behaviors exhibit structural coherence amenable to psychoanalytic inquiry [1]. Clinical terminologies are employed as heuristic tools, respecting the ontological boundaries of the literary text.

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## 3. Materials and Methods

### 3.1. Research Design

This investigation adopts a qualitative research paradigm, offering a multi-layered framework to explore the phenomenological depth of human experiences and decode latent unconscious structures within literary productions [10]. Qualitative methodologies are suited for this study as their epistemological commitment focuses on rich, context-dependent discovery and hermeneutic interpretation of complex psychosocial phenomena [28]. Document analysis was selected as the operational research technique, involving the rigorous, systematic evaluation and critical appraisal of written materials [23].

Crucially, this research design explicitly positions clinical terminology—such as borderline personality organization, masochistic character structures, and false self-configurations—not as literal psychiatric diagnoses but strictly as

conceptual, hermeneutic tools for textual deconstruction [12]. As products of the author's fantasy world and acute observations, the characters' represented behaviors exhibit structural coherence that can be systematically decoded [1].

### 3.2. Data Source and Selection Logic

The primary data source is Reşat Nuri Güntekin's novel *Yaprak Dökümü*, originally published in 1930, evaluated through the 2024 edition published by İnkılap Kitabevi [2, 3]. Data extraction was governed by an explicit selection logic based on "key scenes." A textual unit was designated as a key scene if it met at least two of the following parameters:

- *Relational Disruptions*: Scenes depicting an abrupt breakdown in a character's intrapsychic equilibrium, marked by primitive defense mechanisms under systemic stress.
- *Imago Destabilization*: Dialogues or internal monologues chronicling the collapse or shifting of internalized primary object representations.
- *Authenticity Compromises*: Passages exposing a structural gap between authentic internal experiences and compliant external behaviors, signaling true versus false self-dynamics.

Through this systematic filtering, 14 major key scenes across the narrative arc were isolated for in-depth psychoanalytic interpretation.

### 3.3. Data Analysis Process

The qualitative data was processed through a four-stage analytical trajectory:

- *Stage 1, Character Categorization and Mapping*: Primary characters (Ali Rıza Bey, Şevket, Fikret, Leyla, and Necla) and catalytic secondary figures (Ferhunde and Hayriye Hanım) were identified and their relational networks mapped to construct a preliminary psychodynamic framework.
- *Stage 2, Close Reading and Key Scene Identification*: Close reading technique was systematically applied to capture the implicit psychic currents beneath the literal plot [11]. Isolated key scenes were processed with interpretative sensitivity designed to deconstruct symbolic disclosures and adult echoes of early relational remnants [8].
- *Stage 3, Theme–Concept Mapping*: Psychological themes—including intense envy, destructive rivalry, splitting of parental roles, and the deconstruction of paternal authority—were isolated into independent relational categories.
- *Stage 4, Theoretical Interpretation and Synthesis*: Thematic findings were mapped onto the core taxonomy of Object Relations Theory. Polarized responses were linked to Kleinian/Kernbergian splitting; disavowed impulses projected onto figures were analyzed through projective identification; and sustained suppression of authentic experience was synthesized under Winnicott's false self-framework.

### 3.4. Trustworthiness

This study utilizes the qualitative framework developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), substituting credibility for internal validity, transferability for external validity, dependability for internal reliability, and confirmability for external reliability [30]. Every interpretative inference was systematically anchored in direct textual evidence and verbatim excerpts with specific page references [11]. Confirmability was secured by actively managing researcher positionality and maintaining a reflexive stance [29].

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## 4. Results and Discussion

The psychoanalytic concepts and clinical nosologies utilized in the following sections are deployed not as literal psychiatric diagnoses applied to fictional characters, but as hermeneutic, interpretive tools for textual deconstruction. This epistemological distinction—consistently maintained throughout the analysis—positions clinical terminology as an evocative literary decoding method rather than a clinical diagnostic exercise [1, 12].

### 4.1. Paternal Authority, Punitive Superego Organizations, and Narcissistic Extensions

Within the structural matrix of the family, Ali Rıza Bey operates not as a flexible source of paternal guidance but as an archaic, punitive representation of the superego. Object relations analysis reveals that his internal world is dominated by unintegrated sadistic superego precursors and persecutory introjects [15]. He views his children not as autonomous individuals but as narcissistic extensions meant to sustain his precarious psychic equilibrium and mask internal deficits

[33, 34]. This mirrors the observation that parental attitudes frequently resurrect their own abandoned narcissism, treating the child as an idealized entity destined to realize unfulfilled fantasies [35].

His obsession with an unblemished moral identity serves as a defensive shield against profound anxieties regarding internal contamination [8, 36]. He believes that any ethical failure will result in divine retribution inflicted upon his children:

*“Ali Rıza Bey, who had always made it a principle to mind his own business, became intensely agitated regarding this matter... If he failed in his duty, God would punish him through his children” [37: 11].*

This confirms that the children function as tools to placate his internal punitive anxieties [33], forcing them to suppress authentic emotional lives and construct compliant false selves [24, 38]. The sudden abdication of his paternal authority triggers systemic fragmentation. He transfers his paternal role to Şevket: *“You are the father of this family after me”* [37: 22], and later: *“Şevket, we are going to swap places... You will be the father, and I will be the eldest child”* [37: 24]. When external economic shocks destroy his traditional status, he experiences acute narcissistic collapse: *“I have become poor now... I have lost my paternal right, just like all my other rights”* [37: 73]. His regression into a masochistic victim position reflects his inability to tolerate relational ambivalence or maintain stable whole-object relations [27].

These findings directly parallel Akça Öcal's (2025) deconstruction of intergenerational trauma in Fatma Aliye's *Enin*, which demonstrates how parental narcissistic vulnerabilities compel children into victim positions through configurations of intense envy [6]. While Akça Öcal focuses on the maternal axis, our study extends this insight to the paternal axis, suggesting that regardless of the gendered locus of authority, parental failure to provide empathic mirroring forces offspring into fragile false selves [6].

#### **4.2. Splitting Operations, Projective Identification, and Primary Envy**

Splitting serves as the primary psychological axis organizing the family's relational reality. The parental dyad displays an unintegrated split between the father (rigid morality, the ego ideal) and the mother, Hayriye Hanım, who represents the family's weak ego structures and the pleasure principle, yielding to immediate drive satisfaction rather than executing reality testing [32]:

*“She was a thoughtless, naive woman... she had acted purely on her feelings, with the weak maternal instincts of a mother who wanted to prevent her children from crying at all costs... She was enduring many things that she certainly loathed, simply because they wanted her to” [37: 54].*

The marital ecosystem survives by transforming Hayriye Hanım into an intrapsychic repository for Ali Rıza Bey's disavowed greed and survival anxieties through projective identification [18]: *“Hayriye Hanım was a pragmatic, calculating woman who took no nonsense when it came to the family's material interests”* [37: 27]. His attacks toward her reveal displaced anger at his own repressed desires, executing a classic projective identification loop [18, 27].

Klein's concept of envy plays a central role in decoding the relational function of Ferhunde, who enters the family system from outside. According to Klein [18], envy is the intolerable impulse to destructively attack the good object's creativity and goodness. From the moment she enters the system, Ferhunde cannot tolerate the family's conservative tranquility and internal goodness, coding their domestic peace as “suffocation” and “the smell of a tomb.” Her textual behavior demonstrates a refusal of gratitude and an assertion of narcissistic entitlement through omnipotent control over the system. Through projective mechanisms she manipulates the children's vulnerabilities, establishing herself as a destructive “all-bad object” that corrodes the family from within [18]. Correspondingly, Ali Rıza Bey's positioning of Ferhunde as the singular source of all evil reflects a scapegoat mechanism operating to disavow his own internal structural decay:

*“From the very first day, Ali Rıza Bey knew that all the evil stemmed from their daughter-in-law, Ferhunde. If it were not for her, the house would not have ended up in this state” [37: 86].*

By splitting Ferhunde as the absolute locus of corruption, the family preserves its precarious narcissistic equilibrium as unblemished martyrs, blinding themselves to pre-existing structural vulnerabilities [27].

#### 4.3. Oscillations of Idealization and Devaluation: Borderline and Endopsychic Dynamics

Şevket's attachment to Ferhunde begins as massive primitive idealization; he views her as an all-good libidinal object capable of liberating his autonomy from his father's moral codes. His entanglement with a married woman represents unconscious acting out against the paternal law [16, 40]:

*"Şevket had an affair with one of the typists at the bank... she was a married woman... she would definitely commit suicide if she did not marry Şevket" [37: 48].*

Because primitive idealization denies external reality, it is structurally doomed to collapse into persecutory devaluation [18, 27]. Ferhunde is rapidly devalued into a tormenting persecutor, forcing Şevket into total ego collapse:

*"In short, trying to be human brought nothing but harm to both you and me. Let us see and experience a bit of animality now!" [37: 90].*

Through Fairbairn's paradigm, Şevket's regression into "animality" represents the total takeover of the Anti-Libidinal Ego. Having been chronically frustrated by both the paternal and marital objects, his internal saboteur launches a devastating sadomasochistic attack against his own Libidinal Ego—the repository of his relational hopes—ensuring masochistic defeat at the cost of complete identity fragmentation [14, 17].

This pattern is equally pronounced in the daughters, Leyla and Necla. Both manifest severe identity diffusion and lack of stable whole-object constancy, splitting their worlds along rigid lines of luxury versus deprivation. They subject their father's ethical framework to persecutory devaluation:

*"What good was honesty to a man like you? You did not think of us. You made us worse off than beggars' children" [37: 52].*

They utilize romantic objects as provisional self-objects to shore up fragile self-esteem [33], and discard Ferhunde the moment her utility expires: *"No good was ever going to come from that woman to our brother... She can go to hell" [37: 87].* This rapid transition from compliance to devaluation highlights their borderline character organization.

However, evaluating Leyla and Necla's orientation toward modern life purely as drive discharge would overlook a significant nuance offered by Hartmann's ego psychology. According to Hartmann [41], certain ego functions operate within a conflict-free sphere, enabling adaptation to changing environmental demands. The daughters' capacity to navigate social environments, acquire new cultural codes, and execute pragmatic calculations represent conflict-free adaptive tools responding to the demands of Republican modernization. Yet the family's structural fragility and absence of object constancy prevent these adaptive capacities from operating within a healthy integrative framework. The conflict-free ego spheres become invaded by internal conflicts and narcissistic status ambitions, transforming adaptive potential into pathological instruments [41].

The bibliotherapy-oriented investigation by Karakuş and Yılmaz (2024) regarding Pamuk's *Masumiyet Müzesi* provides cross-textual validation for these dynamics, emphasizing how a primary caregiver's failure to establish a stable relational matrix generates insecure, volatile attachment behaviors, forcing the ego to rely on primitive idealizations and the manipulation of external objects to regulate a dread of internal emptiness [9].

#### 4.4. True Self vs. False Self Dynamics under Systemic Collapse

Fikret represents the ultimate embodiment of a pathological false self-structured around defensive maturity and extreme compliance [17]. Her premature ego development forces her into the role of a parentified child:

*"She was a petite girl of nineteen. Yet, she was more mature than a thirty-year-old person; she was the most precious helper for her mother at home... a second mother to her siblings" [37: 30].*

Suffering from a defective self-image due to a physical blemish, she seeks moral superiority through masochistic sacrifice [34]: *"Fikret was not beautiful... she had a blemish in her right eye... Why put an awake soul into an unattractive body?" [37: 30].*

However, within Winnicott's framework, the false self does not entirely annihilate the true self; it functions as a protective shield, and the true self periodically manifests through spontaneous gestures [17]. Fikret's false self-armor momentarily parts during a confrontation with her father about the family's collapse:

*"Fikret, at first was somewhat shaken, and seemed to feel pity for her father. But her expression hardened again, and in a heavy, restrained manner she said: 'Let us speak frankly, father'" [37: 63].*

Fikret's momentary trembling and the flash of compassion represent a spontaneous gesture of her authentic, empathic true self. Yet remaining in that emotional state would leave her defenselessly exposed to her father's weakness. The false self immediately intervenes, re-encasing her in the compliant, rigid armor. As Winnicott emphasizes, no matter how suppressed, the true self cannot be completely extinguished and reveals itself through such leakages [17].

Within Klein's framework, Fikret's self-sacrifice—becoming the family's caretaking object—can also be read as an omnipotent manic reparation attempt, an effort to halt the family's collapse through totalizing self-denial. However, this is not genuine reparation grounded in depressive-position integration; it is an artificial stabilization sustained at the cost of her own subjectivity. When the manic repair fails, Fikret's decathexis from the system becomes inevitable [18]:

*"Something incomprehensible was secretly passing through this child. She no longer drew close to her father, openly showing that she no longer believed in him as before" [37: 39].*

The systemic disintegration is finalized through Ali Rıza Bey's own catastrophic defensive operations. He resorts to isolation of affect and physical withdrawal into the attic, cognitively acknowledging reality while severing its emotional significance [27, 36]. When examined through Kohut's framework, Ali Rıza Bey's economic and status collapse constitutes not an ordinary disappointment, but a narcissistic injury—a threat perceived as targeting the very cohesion of the self [33]. According to Kohut, such injury generates intense narcissistic rage. The findings demonstrate that Ali Rıza Bey directs this rage not outward but inward, converting it into a masochistic, self-punishing withdrawal. The character who imprisons himself in the attic after losing his paternal authority thus embodies the Freudian melancholic dynamic where "the shadow of the object falls upon the ego," driving intense self-reproach, somatic depletion, and total withdrawal from life [13].

His porous object boundaries generate a massive projective identification crisis upon hearing of an external moral scandal, absorbing external guilt as his own intrapsychic sin:

*"Ali Rıza Bey felt as if he were having a stroke. His hands and feet tingled... covering his face in a wild state of fear and shame, as if he were the one who had seduced the girl, he lamented, crying, 'Alas, alas, alas'" [37: 15].*

Within a Kleinian framework, the recurring "clean bread" metaphor can be interpreted as a symbolic displacement of the primary maternal object providing uncontaminated nourishment, where unethically acquired resources are experienced as toxic introjects [18]. Ali Rıza Bey's subsequent attempt at reparation—returning to his former employer Muzaffer Bey to seek employment after having sworn never to see him again—constitutes a pathological concession driven not by genuine depressive-position integration but by narcissistic collapse and economic desperation: *"The old vow now belongs to old times and the old Ali Rıza Bey"* [37: 65]. This failed reparation attempt, rather than restoring the family, destroys the last remnants of his internal self-esteem and confirms the ego's inability to integrate ambivalent object representations through mature mourning [18].

#### **4.5. Preservation of Reality Testing within Borderline Dynamics**

A critical structural distinction must be noted: despite the pervasive utilization of primitive defense mechanisms throughout the family matrix, the characters consistently preserve gross reality testing—the third diagnostic criterion of Kernberg's borderline personality organization [22, 27]. Unlike psychotic configurations in which reality testing disintegrates entirely, the characters accurately perceive external reality even as their internal object worlds remain fragmented. Ali Rıza Bey's ability to recognize his economic ruin and consciously articulate his loss of paternal authority, the children's strategic adaptation to new social environments, and even Hayriye Hanım's pragmatic calculations all demonstrate intact cognitive reality assessment. What collapses is not the capacity to perceive external reality, but the capacity to integrate that reality with internal object representations in a cohesive, ambivalence-tolerant manner. This distinction is theoretically significant: the family's tragedy does not stem from a failure to understand what is happening, but from a structural inability to process it through mature depressive-position mechanisms [18, 27].

#### **4.6. Synthesis: Non-Competitive Integration of Sociological and Psychodynamic Paradigms**

A major contribution of this study is its establishment of a non-competitive, integrative position between literary sociology and psychoanalytic criticism. Traditional scholarship has focused on macro-sociological parameters, evaluating the novel as a social document [2, 3]. However, the social and economic anxieties do not simply influence the family from outside; they serve as situational triggers that activate preexisting intrapsychic vulnerabilities. The macro-

economic devaluation of the paternal figure simultaneously causes a catastrophic internal collapse of the children's "good object" representations. Socio-cultural transitions and object relations pathologies operate concurrently: the changing socio-economic environment destroys external structures, while the lack of internal object constancy prevents the family from organizing a cohesive adaptive response. By adopting this cooperative hermeneutic stance, psychoanalysis complements sociological critique, exposing the unconscious landscape upon which socio-cultural forces execute their transformations.

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## 5. Conclusion

The psychodynamic deconstruction of *Yaprak Dökümü* through Object Relations Theory demonstrates that the progressive dissolution of the familial network is fundamentally an intrapsychic and systemic phenomenon rather than a simple consequence of macro-sociological forces. The structural tragedy stems from a developmental failure to achieve whole-object integration and stable object constancy, leaving the family members locked within the primitive defenses of the paranoid-schizoid position. Instead of recognizing one another as autonomous subjects, they interact through fragmented self-object configurations designed to regulate narcissistic vulnerabilities. When modern pressures break the family's fragile holding environment, these defensive balances collapse catastrophically.

Ali Rıza Bey functions as a rigid, punitive superego representation, treating children as narcissistic extensions. Hayriye Hanım represents the family's weak ego and serves as a repository for projected material anxieties. Şevket experiences a severe endopsychic split where his Anti-Libidinal Ego executes a self-destructive attack against paternal law. Fikret embodies a pathological false self-structured around moral masochism, whose true self periodically leaks through the compliant facade before the system's collapse forces total detachment. Leyla and Necla manifest borderline traits, utilizing romantic objects as provisional self-objects. Ferhunde functions as both a primary envious attacker of the family's internal goodness and the collective scapegoat onto whom the household projects its disavowed corruption. These interlocking configurations confirm that the family's tragedy is the inevitable outcome of a shared relational matrix that never achieved the developmental threshold of whole-object love.

This study provides an original interdisciplinary contribution by bridging Object Relations Theory with Turkish literary criticism, demonstrating the explanatory power of psychodynamic formulations. The analysis highlights the therapeutic potential of literature within bibliotherapy, providing a functional framework for utilizing *Yaprak Dökümü* with clients struggling with intra-familial boundary violations, parentified child roles, or parental narcissism. Certain limitations must be acknowledged: the investigation is confined to a single text and a specific theoretical school, and the historical setting of 1930 may complicate translations into contemporary clinical models. Future research could apply this framework comparatively to other canonical works such as Karaoşmanoğlu's *Kiralık Konak* or Uşaklıgil's *Aşk-ı Memnu* and could design empirical case studies evaluating the clinical outcomes of bibliotherapeutic interventions using this text.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

### *Statement of ethical approval*

This study is based exclusively on document analysis of a published literary work and does not involve human participants, animals, or sensitive personal data. Ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required.

### *Statement of informed consent*

This study is based on document analysis of a published literary work and does not involve human participants. Therefore, informed consent was not applicable.

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