Yiğit Bener's *Missing Stones*: Hermeneutics of the Symbolic Death, the Wedge between the Personal and the Social

Nurten Birlik

Abstract: Yiğit Bener's *Missing Stones* (*Eksik Taşlar*, 2001) traces, through Devrim's dig into his past, his father's, Erdinç's life after the military cue in 1980 in Turkey and how his utopian ideals turn his life into a nightmare when he discovers that what he has fought for so far are formulated on a will to power rather than absolute ideals. Erdinç cannot go back to his previous life as all the previous parameters were shattered irreparably. He faces a social and intellectual dislocation. After Devrim contacts Erdinç who is in seclusion on a small island, through his role as a father, it seems, Erdinç will reposition himself in his culture. This time the father-son relationship is reversed: through his son he will forge new links to hold things together. The novel puts Erdinç's troubled relationship with the discourse he lives in and his search for a new operating master signifier(s) right at its center and it is for this reason that this essay seeks to give a Lacanian hearing to Erdinç's sense of rootlessness and his abortive attempts to escape it, and to explore the process he parts political company with his political network and how he justifies his political dissociation using Lacanian ideas of symbolic narcissistic gratification, ego ideal and *jouissance* as conceptual tools.

Key words: *Missing Stones*; Yigit Bener; Lacan; Turkish Novel; Political Novel

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标题：叶各特·博纳《丢失的石头》：死亡象征的阐释学，个体与社会之间的裂隙

内容摘要：叶各特·博纳的《丢失的石头》（埃克斯克·泰斯勒，2001）通过德福伦对过去的挖掘追溯了他的父亲艾丁克在1980年土耳其军事行动后的人生，展现了他的乌托邦理想——当他认识到他的追求是构建在权力欲望而不是绝对理想之上时——演化为噩梦的过程。艾丁克无法回到从前的生活，因为过去已经崩塌。他所面对的是社会和才能的错位。在德福伦与遁世隐居在小岛上的艾丁克联系后，艾丁克似乎通过其父亲的角色重新回到了他的文化之中。这一次父-子伦理关系颠倒过来，通过他的儿子，艾丁克构建了新的联系并重整破裂的生活。小说的中心是艾丁克与文化语境之间关联的断裂以及他对新的行动指引的追寻。基于这一点，本文试图从拉康的心理学视角分析艾丁克无法躲避的无根漂泊，并通过拉康的象征性自我吸引、理想自我和享受一系列概念来探讨艾丁克脱离政治生活网络的过程和原因。

关键词：《丢失的石头》；叶各特·博纳；拉康；土耳其小说；政治小说。

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Little work has been done on the works of the expatriate writers in Turkish literature who left the country after the military cue in 1980 to live in a European country, and who started out their career with a political consciousness only to end up defying all the political frames and utopian idealism. Despite many stylistic dissimilarities, they share some common characteristics like a deep sense of alienation and rootlessness which leads to an incurable sense of anxiety in their characters who live in a no man's land. This group of writers are usually motivated by a deep longing for Istanbul when they are in exile and make Istanbul the capital of their imagination. Thus in some of their works Istanbul is sometimes as important as the characters themselves, or, in some cases, it can be the main character as in Nedim Gürsel's *My Beloved Istanbul*, a collection of short stories on Istanbul. Yiğit Bener is one of these writers who had to leave Turkey for political reasons. Bener's first novel *Missing Stones* (*Eksik Taşlar*, 2001)[1] also belongs to the tradition of novels of dystopia in Turkish literature as it tells how the practice of the political ideals turns the protagonist's life into a nightmare when he discovers that what he has fought for so far are formulated on a will to power rather than political ideals. In such novels, the characters cannot go back to their previous lives as all the parameters were shattered irreparably. They pay a dear price for this break with their past due to their lack of interest in the public sphere, feelings of inner void, despair, apathy, and lack of interest in the future. They cannot continue to fight for

1 Translations mine.

their political ideals either and are faced with the difficult task of finding a personal solution resulting in isolation from their previous social network. The result is, in many cases, social and intellectual dislocation.

Missing Stones tells two interconnected stories of search, and narration in the novel oscillates between these two searches. The first story develops around Devrim, a young Turkish academician, and his search for the traces of his father; and the second is the story of a search on his father's (Erdinç's) side for some sort of solace in life. In other words, Erdinç's story of search (the background text) is told through Devrim's search (the foreground text). The background text intervenes in the foreground text through the accounts of Erdinç's old friends. Thus, in the whole novel, rather than a smooth flow of narration, there are temporal and spatial lapses which demand an alert reader to follow. Devrim goes to Brussels as an intern to the European Union and, ironically, discovers his father's real identity in this foreign city where he used to live as an asylum seeker. Just like a detective, Devrim hunts for traces of his father's and discovers that Erdinç was a self-exile in both countries (Turkey and Belgium) being pushed to the edges of the community. He learns that his father worked in different political factions, devastated his family and a promising future leaving his PhD in law incomplete for his utopian ideals and, then, all of a sudden, gave up all his political endeavours and went into seclusion on a small Turkish island. Discussion of how far and how realistically this novel reflects the political turmoil in the country is beyond the scope of this study. However, one feels obliged to emphasize that Erdinç shows a clear awareness of ways in which the practical necessities rather than the ideals determine the future of such utopian projects. As he sees himself as caged in the conventional ways of perception of political ideals, the novel reveals a wholesale attack on the hypocrisy of the political factions. Because of the persistent references to Erdinç's political ideals, *Missing Stones* seems to be built around his political endeavours. However, a closer look tells the reader that Bener puts Erdinç's troubled relationship with the discourse he lives in and his search for a new operating master signifier(s) right at the heart of his work. It is for this reason that the novel reveals more when it is viewed from a Lacanian perspective, which gives a central position to a master signifier in the formation of both a discourse and a subject. This essay will seek to give a Lacanian hearing to Erdinç's sense of rootlessness in both countries and his abortive attempts to escape it, and to explore the process he parts political company with his political network and how he justifies his political dissociation.

Until Devrim meets Erdinç's old friends in Brussels, he has been a "ghost father" (75) who simply vanished from his life at the age of seven leaving Devrim

and his mother to his maternal grandparents. They hated his father and who transmitted their hatred to their grandson. When he reappeared ten years later, Erdinç was a weak figure unable to communicate with his son, a "good for nothing" in the eyes of his grandparents. These old people could not bear the sight of Erdinç for reasons which were unclear; and they told Devrim almost nothing about him, as in his words: "They never referred to my father….He was the diseased of the family, a source of shame to be hidden from view…. As if he hadn't existed. Only my grandmother used to refer to him …. But she did it with contempt" (114).

Devrim's talks to Erdinç's friends turn out to be a process of rewriting his father's identity, which metamorphoses from an irresponsible womanizing anarchist to a lovable father with a strong sense of duty and responsibility. As the title implies, he fills in the *Missing Stones* in his past. From Erdinç's friends Devrim learns that Erdinç had to depart from the country. Devrim's mother could not get her passport to leave the country in the early years, when she managed to get it, it was too late for both herself and Erdinç. Yasemin stayed in Brussels for two years and the difficulties arose from several factors: their marginalized position in Brussels, financial difficulties, and last but not least, alienation from the other due to several years spent separately. To make matters worse, Yasemin had to leave their son Devrim at home as she could not get a passport for him due to her father's friends at important places. This old man kept his grandson to himself by pushing the son-in-law out of sight for some curious reason. He wanted to raise Devrim in his own image within a traditional context or he used him as a bait to keep his daughter near himself. Yasemin seems to have torn between the expectation of her own father and her husband, or in a Lacanian sense between two Fathers of two different discourses. She went back to Istanbul to her father's house and fell into a severe kind of depression. When all the asylum seekers were allowed to come back to Turkey by the official government, like many others, Erdinç went back to Istanbul. Instead of a happy reunion, theirs turned into a tragic one as both Erdinç and Yasemin changed a lot in ten years and as Yasemin's depression became even worse. Their endless quarrels and his failure to understand Yasemin led up to her suicide. Interestingly, she committed suicide when Devrim was away on holiday to celebrate his success in the university placement exams. This was revealed as a natural death to Devrim, in fact, when he came back from holiday he learned that his mother was given her burial ceremony. Shortly after her death, Erdinç went into seclusion leaving everything behind, including Devrim. The unbridgeable gap between himself and his son added another layer to his suffering.

Devrim's quest for his father and his own past, "takes place in locations, in

memories and also within socialist theory" (Türkeş 2). This is made possible by the frame story (the foreground text) which is based on a strange coincidence: Devrim will work as an intern in Shari's (Erdinç's ex-girlfriend) office at the EU. She acts as a link between Erdinç's past and present for Devrim when she depicts Erdinç as a determined man with a strong sense of responsibility towards his family. Devrim is shocked to hear that they were friends as his father seems so inferior to this intellectual, efficient and formidable woman. To learn that they were once lovers and his father still means a lot to her comes as an even greater shock to Devrim. Shari says that this man who sacrificed so much for his political ideals later left his faction in Brussels although he was one of its leading members. He joined another faction but he did not feel at home in this faction either, and soon joined the opposition group within this second faction, and shortly afterwards was expelled from it too. After ten difficult years in Belgium, he returned to Istanbul, where he had the chance to work freely in his previous faction before the takeover; but this, too, turned out to be an abortive attempt and he gave up his political endeavors altogether. In the end, the man who devastated himself and his family to create a political utopia started to live in perfect seclusion on a small island, cut off from his past and friends.

Through Shari, Devrim contacts Erdinç's other friends in France and Belgium who say almost similar things about him. His father metamorphoses into a collection of fragments which he cannot integrate into a whole because, now, Erdinç appears as a lovable figure who suffered a lot for both his family and his utopian ideals, and who, even in those difficult days, kept on fighting. Devrim tries to find the *Missing Stones* in the jigsaw puzzle (of Erdinç's life) by speaking to different people. In each relationship Devrim explores a different aspect of his father only thus he can reach a unified understanding of who his father is.

What Devrim hears from them is not enough to explain why Erdinç gave up his political ideals or his reasons for choosing seclusion. The only convincing justification comes from Erdinç himself in a letter to an ex-girlfriend in which he ruefully says: "I feel exhausted, I lost my belief in myself" (240), and he adds: "I tried hard but I couldn't adjust, it is beyond my capacity, there is a chronic allergy against this established system in me, this is a kind of disease of inability to adjust, whose cure I couldn't find" (242-243). His comments on his struggle command attention:

> Changing things … 'change'. This is the keyword. Not accepting the existing things. Not being content. Asking for more, at least looking for something not

> worse than the existing things. We tried to do this. We aspired for this role. We would be the midwife of history. We would give birth to a new world at the expense of unavoidable pains. We would write a new history. We could not manage. (241)

He asks: "Then what is the cure? Finding an apt way of escape, like finding solace in ethyl alcohol or in a variety of narcotic plants?" or "an escape of a mystical kind?" (242). Here we witness his efforts to cope with painful emotions. In the same letter, he says that he is doomed to unhappiness: "In the end, when one loses his hopes and aspirations, and when one gives up his beliefs, life itself becomes meaningless. If one is unable to change this meaninglessness, what is the point of insisting on living?" (243). His solution is to be a living dead (247), that is, seclusion. He accepts that his vital instincts are still strong but not strong enough to live in community. In his case there is strength of mind at odds with his surroundings. In such sections of the novel in which Erdinç reflects on his living present against the background of his past, one feels compelled to refer to Ömer Türkeş, who says that Bener "explores both the past and today in their interaction and offers two-partite criticism" (2-3).

Levent Cinemre drives the nail home when he says, "there is not much material in our literature about the ones who had to flee their country and to be away from their family after 12 September cue, *Missing Stones* fills in a literary gap." Cinemre also gives a list of themes explored in the novel and says, the narrative explores a wide range of issues (EU and Turkey, Turks in Europe, hatred for the immigrants, man-woman relations, feminism, linguistic nationalism in Europe, the past and future of socialism, the social status quo in Turkey) each of which deserves to be the sole topic of a novel.

Ömer Türkeş and Emrah Göker categorize *Missing Stones* as a political novel. Türkeş claims that it explores the recent past with its socio-political problems. He also claims that "there is no distance between the writer himself and what he narrates." For Türkeş this strong overlap between the biography of the author and what he narrates is made clear by the use of the names of the real political figures for the characters in the novel, like Devrim, Ulaş, Mahir, Sinan, Taylan, etc." (1). Türkeş continues; by locating the context in Brussels, Yiğit Bener has the opportunity to deal with the problems of "immigrants in Brussels, problems of the Turkish workers and the ex-left groups, socialist groups in Belgium, contemporary problems of international socialist movement" (1).

Göker thinks that "the narrative deals with all the political issues under the

sky" and claims that Bener pays special attention to fulfil the aesthetic requirements of political novel. To support this view, he underlines the fact that the narrator doesn't limit himself to the young man Devrim who is at the centrepiece of the novel. This narrator also gives us access to Laeticia (Devrim's girlfriend) and to Erdinç's former girlfriends, through his two letters to his lovers during these years of exile and through his dialogs in the last section of the novel and less often, through Erdinç's biggest love, Devrim's superior at the EU, Shari's thoughts. Göker also says: "Another detail in the novel that supports this view is, narrative is dominated by theatrical performance and intense dialogs. Abundance of conversations is another point that enables different characters to make political statements."

Due to its themes, the novel has been categorized within the political novel tradition by different critics (Cinemre, Türkeş, Göker, Naci, Polat) but according to Bener himself this categorization is unfair. Along with one's confrontation with one's political position; the novel puts under scrutiny many other things like man-woman relation, sexuality, love, marriage, morality, values, how one is viewed both in Europe and in his country, individuals' hidden impulses, etc. In this sense the novel offers a radical confrontation with one's self and the other, and everything. From this perspective, the political references here and there in the novel do not constitute the core of the novel, just the opposite, it is one of the minor issues in it. Problematisation of sexuality, love and male identity is foregrounded more than the other issues. (in Altun)

While Fethi Naci says that theoretical/ poetical discussions make up eight percent of the novel, M. Salih Polat says, almost all the narrative is made up of "theoretical" discussions. Polat claims that the political criticism offered in the novel is shallow and doesn't offer anything new. Polat seems to be harsh in his criticism considering the fact that not much was written about the period and about the people who went through that period in Turkish literature. The novel doesn't set out to offer a documentary account of the period. It concentrates on the intricate relation between Erdinç and his position in the dominant discourse, both in Turkey and in Europe. The most we can infer about the political history does not go further than a personalized version of it. In this line of thinking Polat seems to underestimate the literary merits of the novel and falls into the trap of what Whimsat calls intentional fallacy, the tendency in the reader to see in a literary text what one wants to see.

Ensar Altun, in *Cumhuriyet Kitap* instroduces the book as follows: "the narrative is for those who want to know about the lost lives of the lost generation."

However, Bener refuses that, in the novel, he set out to give voice to the predicament of the exiles. He reveals that his aim was not to create a prototype for the immigrants. He doesn't feel responsible for them as he thinks that everybody lived this particular period differently, "though in similar conditions." However, he cannot deny the fact that, "those who lived through such an exile period will find something from their own life in Erdinç's story." He continues to elaborate on the idea by specifying those possible common elements between Erdinç and the readers with an experience of exile:

> …loneliness, isolation, confronting racism, losing their reference points... in one place in the novel, there is a comparison between prison life and exile. As far as I have heard from my friends who have experienced both, prison life is led in the same country and within the same frame of reference. Thus, your perception mechanisms remain intact. You know that it is prison; your freedom is limited, through bad living conditions, different forms of oppression are in practice. When you are abroad as an exile, all your frames of reference are ruined. You feel as if you are left somewhere in the air. Its psychological oppression is much more than what you feel in prison. Neither a familiar home nor a familiar language. Nothing. (in Uludag)

By some critics the novel is also regarded as an autobiographical novel but this categorization is rejected by the writer himself who says that he never felt alienated and disconnected from his father as Devrim does (in Altun). Although accepts some of the parallelisms between himself and Erdinç, he underlines the differences which dominate the novel. He acknowledges the internal autonomy and unique logic of his protagonist by disconnecting himself from Erdinç (in Uludag).

Erdinç refutes the Name of the Father twice, first by questioning and trying to offer an alternative to the dominant discourse in his country through the political faction he was in, second by challenging the main tenets of this faction. Erdinç's predicament becomes more comprehensible from a Lacanian perspective which prioritizes a master signifier in the formation of both a discourse and a subject. For Lacan, a master signifier unifies the fragments into a meaningful whole and the discourse itself becomes stable against the background of these organized signifiers (Lacan, *Le Séminaire* 218). In order to cope with the sense of lack caused by the symbolic castration, the subject needs to identify with the operative master signifier or the signifiers revolving around it, and believe itself to be self-identical (Lacan, *Le Séminaire* 177-178). This identification and gratification gives the subject the

sense of unity and recognition which is essential for an awareness of an ego ideal. This is to say: the subject can position herself/himself in a culture due to this correlation between herself/himself and the master signifier (Lacan, *Écrits* 95-97, 229-231). If the subject's relation to the master signifier(s) is problematic, s/he can exist only on the margins of the dominant discourse as s/he is denied the symbolic identification and gratification. Among such subjects hysterics demand attention – as in this novel the protagonist's discourse is or has to be primarily a discourse of the hysteric. The hysteric achieves the transition to the symbolic register unlike the psychotic but there is the loss of the signifier's referential value at the conscious level. In the unconscious the master signifier exists as a major constitutional element but is negated in the consciousness (Lacan, *Le Séminaire* 107). This results in a lack in the signifying chain of the subject which finds its expression through a symptom which becomes "the signifier of a signified that has been repressed from the subject's consciousness" (Lacan, *Écrits* 232); and the hysteric's discourse is dominated by this symptom. To put all this into a nutshell, as the subject cannot have access to the symbolic identification and gratification in the dominant discourse, s/he compensates for this lack through the symptom, or the part object (*plus-de-jouir*) which is the unsymbolised cause of desire.

If one looks with a Lacanian eye at Erdinç's political endeavours and his unexpected seclusion, one can suggest that when he was in Turkey and in his early years in Brussels when his organic ties with his community in Turkey were still strong, the idea of a political utopia acted as both a symptom and a part object for him, or it took "the place of what by its very nature remains concealed from the subject" (Lacan, "Desire" 28). As an alternative to his failing identification with the operative signifiers in the dominant discourse, he preferred to be dominated by the idea of a political utopia which offered *jouissance*, free of the fear of castration. According to this reading, his utopian ideals enacted the struggle between the Symbolic register and his unconscious drives which posed a threat to the Symbolic narcissistic gratification. (It might be worth nothing here the underlying connotations of the idea of utopia: the unity, wholeness, abolition of any kind of lack or of all the binary oppositions, and homogeneity, all of which imply a challenge to the Lacanian idea of the symbolic castration).

Devrim is told by his father's friends that Erdinç was suffering for both being far away from his family and living in an alien community where he lost all his reference points. He was also struggling with the prejudice against his cultural roots: in Brussels he was always perceived as the cultural other, even among his left-wing friends. Devrim can see that Erdinç was seeking a sense of belonging in

a community which denied him recognition. This brings him closer to his father as he, too, is struggling with the same kind of prejudice. Devrim, too, feels that he is perceived as the cultural other by some of his friends at the EU whose first reaction is usually to say: "You don't look like a Turk" in an ironic attempt to be nice to him.

Interestingly, he is surprised to find out that his father managed to turn this predicament into an advantage. In the eyes of his small circle, Erdinç acquired the position of a self-exile, the attractive cultural other. Not only his political views but also his ideas on sexuality were quite radical, equally attractive to his friends. Erdinç found the traditional sexual ethics hypocritical and backward, and problematized its fundamental elements and taboos like loyalty and the secondary status of women. In his anti-monogamic morality, he was also against the institution of marriage as it commodified women taking them as objects rather than subjects, and challenged its arbitrary symbolic values. When Erdinç was in Brussels, he had many love affairs, all of which were known to his wife back in Istanbul. These affairs give a different shade to his image of the suffering but sought after hero. He was honest and open to his partners in all phases of his relationships and gave his partners the same freedom that he enjoyed. He went so far as to introduce his girlfriends to each other, even to his wife. In a provoking scene, for example, he made love to three different women at different times on one night at a party and each of the women knew this. On this issue, the writer dialogizes different views between the characters who take Erdinç as a womanizer, and the characters who approve of his practices (these are usually the women he slept with) because of his honesty, the consistency between his ideas and practice, and because of the genuine affection they received from him. Even the women who were victimized by his experiments in sexual matters and who still suffer the consequences cannot resent him. Whether they agree or disagree with Erdinç in his practice, it is striking that these old friends still have deep respect for him. Again a Lacanian look might explain how he could have a hypnotic effect on those around him: being on the margins of the symbolic register, Erdinç spoke from the position of the lacking but desiring subject. His theories on sexuality and politics served to open up the lack and kept it as it was rather than plugged it up. He implied the incarnation of forbidden *jouissance* for them, who promised a complement to their lack.

Not everybody speaks positively about his father. The leader of his second faction, comrade Philip, for example, says reluctantly that Erdinç was an active member in the beginning, and took many responsibilities but "later on his petit bourgeois tendencies started to become dominant. He diverted from the mainstream

party policy and his criticisms were gradually getting harsher" (81). Erdinç criticized the immigration policy, their idea of international solidarity, and he defied the party discipline and joined the bourgeois Trockist opposition. Then comrade Philip adds, "he was questioning the party's fundamental ideological principals, even the contributions of Stalin comrade to socialism" (81). Why did he disagree with the leaders in these factions? The basic doctrines were always the same, so what changed after he came to Brussels? The political community in this city had its own hierarchy, its own rules producing its own dominant signifiers which disrupted the other elements of discourse; and its representatives saw everything in terms of these dominant signifier. Erdinç's utopian ideals acted as the part object both when he was in Turkey and in his early years in Brussels but when he was allowed to integrate this part object to the discourse, it lost its previous attributes. In Brussels, when he was given the chance to talk and write about his revolutionary ideals freely without the threat of the Law of the Father, his political views were transformed into a totalizing frame of reference, a system of knowledge itself rather than a part object. It was no longer an unsymbolised cause of desire carrying the power of subverting and disrupting the authority of the dominant discourse but it became a symbolized frame. Now, Erdinç saw the basic doctrines of his faction in their symbolic references rather than as metaphors of *jouissance*, and as a result, they lost their hold on him. Once more he sabotaged himself by pushing himself to the margins of a frame of reference where a master signifier reigned. He was once more in the no man's land and was looking for a sense of belonging in this land which refused to grant recognition to him. This brought further alienation for Erdinç, from both his friends and the community at large. In that sense, this was, for him, another escape from castrating power of the Father.

Devrim learns a different aspect of his father from each of his friends, but they cannot make sense of Erdinç's reluctance to establish contact with his son. All of them say that Erdinç was very fond of his son, and some of them witnessed how Erdinç minded him much more intensively than his mother as a baby. To find an answer to this question and to get to know who this man really is, Devrim flies to Turkey, to Cunda, the island where Erdinç lives on. Their talks solidify the image of Erdinç created by his friends. Devrim was told that his mother didn't die a normal death but committed suicide as she was in severe depression. She was torn between her husband's ideals and the expectations of her oppressive father, who did everything within his power to put an end to their marriage. Erdinç says that he could not attempt to contact with him because when he fled from Turkey his grandparents accepted Devrim and his mother only on condition that Devrim would

not see his father again. When Devrim asks why he chose seclusion, Erdinç's reply is interesting: he says that he still regards himself as Marxist and still believes in the Marxist utopia but he lost belief in the ways to achieve this utopia. He gives harsh criticism of what has been done so far in the name of Marxism, and adds: "How can one defend a regime that is established by imprisoning, torturing and sending exile millions of people?" (326). All these Marxist factions ended up establishing a hierarchy and oppression similar to what they fought against, he says. Their basic mistake was that they were fighting against the will to power in the established system but they, too, acted on a similar will to power. Therefore, in Erdinç's opinion, all of the attempts to establish a Marxist utopia have failed. He adds ruefully: "I don't want power. I don't want to have power on others. I don't want others to have power on me. I want to be 'powerless'. I want powerlessness" (244). Emrah Göker thinks that the novel tries to come to terms with '78 revolutionism through an archaeology of the past in the presentness of 2000s." Türkeş takes Erdinç's words on the will to power as "a manifesto of a new political stance" and he also emphasizes that due to this new stance the novel ends on an optimistic note (1).

When Devrim insists that Erdinç should still fight for his ideals, Erdinç's answer deserves attention: "I don't have the energy to fight for anything." He gives expression to his case with a quotation from a poem (Mungan 108) and says that one should either be within the circle or outside it because: "When you are in it physically and outside it spiritually /…. there is nothing else to be done, my man, except for drinking in the evenings and being unhappy" (344). This quotation hints at the idea that his seclusion is born out of a desperate need to find peace away from the suffocating political context of his previous network.

In Lacanian epistemology, one's sense of identity or ego ideal is dependent on one's position in relation to the master signifier(s) which unify the other signifiers and which turn them from fragments into a stable discourse. At times of social upheaval the failure of the master signifier to stabilize the discourse might lead to a profound feeling of alienation and depression, and finally, to dissolution of the ego ideal. In this line of reading, it would not be wrong to suggest that *Missing Stones* is the fictionalized form of the subject's changing position to the master signifier. Erdinç feels alienated and pushed to the edges of the dominant discourse, as the patriarchal totalizing discourse cannot fulfil its function of providing a unifying principle, at least for Erdinç. And he is unable to establish an alternative to it through Marxism; in other words, he fails to find a new master (or a new Father).

From another perspective, Erdinç's quests for a new Father can also be taken

as the subversion of the Oedipus, or the passion for knowledge. In the myth, Oedipus paid a heavy price for his unusual knowledge. Likewise, Erdinç enacts the passion of Oedipus as he suffers from an inability to submit to the Name of the Father and seeks to assert his hysteric discourse over the discourse of the Father. He, too, pays a heavy price for his quest for a new Father when he fails in his attempts: he confronts the impossible and loses his desire to plug up the deep sense of lack. This also accounts for his choice to live in seclusion as a "living dead."

M. Salih Polat says that some stones remain missing in the narrative. This view may be accepted when we think of possible outcomes of a reunion in their near future against the background of the characters other than Erdinç and Devrim, like his grandfather. However, one can also say that the novel closes in a consciously ambiguous way emphasizing the open endedness of the aftermath of their meeting. Through his role as a father, it seems, Erdinç will reposition himself in his culture. This time the father-son relationship is reversed: through his son he will forge new links to hold things together. It will be the son who integrates the father into the symbolic register; and the novel ends when Erdinç shaves after a very long time of neglect and makes plans to repair the worn-out house he lives in. He is trying to achieve a humble command of his life on a decent ground. These attempts remind us of the words of the Fisher King at the end of Eliot's *The Waste Land*: "Shall I at least set my lands in order?"

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