

LITERATURE AND CHANGE: EARLY SHORT STORIES OF OSMAN ŐAHİN

by

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## ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Osman Şahin, Village Literature, Sovereignty, Genre Theory, Parable, Modernity

Author Osman Şahin began his literary production by publishing four short story collections of the genre known as “Village Literature” between 1970 and 1983. The short stories in these books displayed characteristics that were not present in his later works. They were similar to parables in their form, however a majority of them lacked resolutions specific to the classic genre. This thesis compares and contrasts this aspect of Şahin’s literature with both his later works and works by other authors of “Village Literature”.

In order to grasp the nature of his works, they are evaluated within the author’s biographical background as well as their thematic structure. Certain paradoxes depicted in these works add to the understanding of their content.

By further discussing these parable-like stories within the scope of Georges Bataille’s concept of “sovereignty” and Martin Heidegger’s conceptualization of “technology”, the significance of this form was observed to be a testimony to the change the world of the villagers in Turkey went through. The clash between the feudal and modern was reflected in their understandings of sovereignty and their relationship to technology.

As a conclusion, the difference of the parable-like stories of Şahin from the classic parables is claimed to be a radical way to express the transition from one world of meaning to another.

## ÖZET

EDEBİYAT VE DEĞİŞİM: OSMAN ŞAHİN'İN ERKEN DÖNEM KISA ÖYKÜLERİ

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Anahtar Sözcükler: Osman Şahin, Köy Edebiyatı, Egemenlik, Tür Kuramı, Mesel, Modernite

Yazar Osman Şahin, edebi üretimine 1970 ve 1983 yılları arasında “Köy Edebiyatı” olarak da bilinen türde yayınladığı dört öykü kitabıyla başladı. Bu kitaplardaki öyküleri sonraki eserlerinde olmayan özellikler gösteriyordu. Biçim olarak mesellere benzemelerine rağmen çoğunluğu türün klasik örneklerinde olan çözüm kısımlarından noksandı. Bu tez Şahin’in edebiyatının bu yanını daha sonraki eserleri ve “Köy Edebiyatı”nın diğer yazarlarıyla karşılaştırıyor.

Eserler, doğalarının anlaşılması için, yazarın özyaşamsal arkaplanı yanısıra tematik yapıları içerisinde değerlendirildi. Bu eserlerde dile getirilen bellibaşlı paradokslar içeriklerinin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulundu.

Bu meselimsi öyküleri Georges Bataille’in “egemenlik” kavramı ve Martin Heidegger’in kavramsallıştırdığı “teknoloji” kapsamında daha derinlemesine tartışarak, bu biçimin anlamının Türkiye’deki köylülerin dünyalarının içinden geçtiği değişime tanıklık etmek olduğu gözlemlendi. Feodal ile modern arasındaki çatışma, egemenlik anlayışlarına ve teknolojiyle ilişkilerine yansıtılmıştı.

Sonuç olarak, Şahin’in meselimsi öykülerinin klasik mesellerden farkının bir anlam dünyasından ötekine geçişi dışavurmak için radikal bir yol olduğu öne sürülüyor.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: PREAMBLE.....	7
CHAPTER 3: THE AUTHOR.....	9
CHAPTER 4: THE THREE LITERARY PERIODS	
4.1. How the Periods are Categorized.....	19
4.1.1. Themes.....	20
4.1.2. Style and Rhetoric.....	22
4.1.3. Perspective, Narrative, Literary Purpose.....	22
4.2. The Periods	
4.2.1. The Early Period (1970-1983) .....	24
4.2.2. Coup d'Etat Period (1983-1989) .....	24
4.2.3. The Nostalgia Period (1989- ) .....	26
4.3. Significance of Categorization.....	27
CHAPTER 5: POLITICS OF THE VILLAGE	
5.1. An Overview of Kemalism, Populism and the Village.....	29
5.2. Village Institutes as Ideological State Apparatuses.....	33
5.3. Ethnography - Folklore.....	34
5.4. The Ghost of the Author.....	37

CHAPTER 6: THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	41
6.1. Themes of Conflict	
6.1.1. Law.....	42
6.1.2. State.....	46
6.1.3. Custom.....	49
6.1.4. Religion.....	52
6.1.5. Feudalism.....	54
6.1.6. Modernity.....	56
6.1.7. Capitalism.....	58
6.1.8. Gender.....	60
6.1.9. Death.....	63
6.1.10. Mourning.....	65
6.2. A Second Person Addressee: Before the law, before the mother.....	67
6.3. Paradox of Living.....	69
6.3.1. Sacred Bodies	
6.3.1.1. Sacrifice and <i>the Red Wind</i> .....	69
6.3.1.2 The Disposable.....	75
6.3.2. Strategy, Tactics, Resistance and Rebellion.....	77
6.3.3. Evil-Sovereign.....	80
6.3.4. Hospitality.....	82
6.3.5. Forgiveness.....	84



CHAPTER 7: VISIONS OF THE VILLAGE: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.....	87
7.1. Yaşar Kemal.....	89
7.2. Orhan Kemal.....	93
7.3. Bekir Yıldız.....	96
7.4. Duran Yılmaz.....	100
CHAPTER 8: SOVEREIGNTY AND THE LOSS OF HOME.....	105
8.1. A general economics.....	108
8.2. The Men of Great Reason.....	112
8.3. <i>Bestand</i> and <i>Gestell</i> .....	115
8.4. The Danger.....	121
8.5. The Genre as Witness to Change.....	123
8.6. Revelation and Truth.....	126
CHAPTER 9: CHANGE AS ABSENCE OF AUTHORITY: THESES.....	129
9.1. Parable as form.....	131
9.2. The Story begins where the Story ceases to be written: <i>Metabola</i> .....	134
9.3. Rhythm is memory.....	139
9.4. Literature Concerning essence of Technology.....	141
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION.....	145
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i> .....	148
<i>GLOSSARY</i> .....	152

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Deemed to have started in 1950 with Mahmut Makal's *Bizim Köy* in 1950, there appeared a new movement in Turkish Literature called *Köy Edebiyatı* (Village Literature). This new *genre*, with its predecessors going back almost half a century founded its veins mainly in the Village Institutes that aimed at reproducing an intellectually productive elite from the depths of the rural public.

Osman Şahin was one of the many in this process. Born in the heights of the Taurus Mountains to a feudal family, with prospects to match, he was a perfect candidate for the institutes. After the war, within the issues of the new republic in connecting with rural folk, the institutes were devised to be a bridge between the villager and the urban, the republican elite and the "backward" masses. Osman Şahin saw the end of this attempt. He was one of the last graduates<sup>1</sup>. Interestingly enough, his birth had coincided with the establishment of the institutes in 1940 and at the age of 17, he had found himself a man of great expectations as a young village teacher.

Following his graduation, the fissure between the ideals of the young republic and its predicaments revealed exigencies that Osman Şahin and his peers were called to answer. However, the bloody period between 1960 and late 1990s was ornamented by the failure and disappointment of such intellectual elite aimed at by the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri) had a lifespan of 17 years between 1940 and 1957. They were officially closed down in 1954.

Until the year 1970, Şahin remained a teacher with political involvement both scholarly and practically. It was in this year that he put down his literary “potential” on paper. That year brought him and a village institute peer of his (Ümit Kaftancıoğlu) a short story award (*TRT 1971 Büyük Öykü Ödülü*) that attracted the attention of the literary audience to the advent of *Village Literature*.

1970s was a period of certain social transformations in the history of Turkey. The radical leftist and rightist traditions and accumulations that came to fruition were combined with the artistic, intellectual potentials of the society and the massive discontent of the lower classes.

The interview conducted with Osman Şahin for this study allows one to say a couple of things relevant to the political context at hand. Firstly, following his childhood in his village on the highlands of the Taurus Mountains, and being a member of the last generation of students at the *Dicle Village Institute* had two important effects on his political background. One was his organic relationship with south-eastern Turkey; while the other was being exposed to the promises and doctrines of the village institutes where being involved in production was the major premise of the education. Among the major political agendas, there are the questions of agricultural reformations and modernization of the pre-industrialized Republic of Turkey. Democratic Party (DP) had ended the twenty-seven year-old reign of the founding Republican People's Party (CHP) in 1950. This decade that lasted until the military coup in 1960 was a period of huge capitalistic, radical-religious and xenophobic agenda that would have its resurgences. On the other hand, the southeast was struggling with the clash between the feudal system and the newly arriving modernizations of a macro-scale series of capitalist innovations. Şahin spent his education and childhood within such a flow of politics. In fact, -to remind, at the age of 17- he had become a teacher to the children of *Ağas* (*the Bucaks* – about whom he'd write two ethnographic novels in the 90s) in Siverek – then, a part of Diyarbakır.

In the 60s, he'd enjoy a relatively hopeful period of intellectual improvement, though under the shadow of the military. His involvement with major intellectual circles of the time would encourage him to write. About what, he'd find the answer from friends again. He'd tell stories to all around him, anecdotes from the exotic east, where he'd say that you witness “a story everyday”. In 68, Mahmut Makal, who was a friend of his would tell him directly, “*to write like the way he recounted*” (*anlattığın gibi yaz işte*). And that would be his starting point.

Osman Şahin's works cover a period of forty years now. There have been many changes as to style and content. This work focuses on a specific period and a specific *subgenre*. It focuses on the way he handles his specific subject matters.

To follow a pattern, the analysis of Osman Şahin's work demands a classification. In order to do this, his life as biography will require an adequate scrutiny. His engagement with his homeland will provide us with knowledge on the ambiguity of the prototype, the conflict between the centre and the periphery of politics in Turkey forced upon bridging that very conflict. In other words, we will inquire into the unbalance various doctrines simultaneously present in the struggle for political dominance in Turkey create.

The aforementioned classification however, will not be based on this biographical sketch. It will rather be produced by the literary aspects of his works. In this sense, we will have to face various challenges regarding a classification that –among other things– escapes chronology. To exemplify, themes and styles will be primary factors of this classification. At the end, three literary periods will emerge; a need to distinguish between stories that reflect upon a future literary period and stories that reminisce – that remind us of the engagements in past literary periods will appear as exceptions that help. As such, a whole chapter will be dedicated to this classification and its significance in our work, for what concerns us is the first period that withholds the specific *subgenre* that has *change* as its essence. An essence that dominates form to the impossibility of its total formation. An essence that negates the structure of the work it

gives birth to. Namely, we find that he pursues writing parables that do not fulfil the criteria of a classic parable.

At the point when narrowing down the subject matter will seem to clarify our questioning, another challenge will present us with another necessary differentiation. Literature often provokes the critic to attach it to a socio-political framework. In order to escape this provocation that would add up the before and after of the phenomenon to arrive at a mere simplification of its dynamics, we will have to consider this narrative at its core. In order to better grasp this attempt, let us consider a stack of wood put in a stove for heating. One puts wood inside the stove and burns it, ignites it. For the warmed up residents of the room, the spectacle is wood put inside, the heat in the room and the smoke that comes out of the chimney. A framework that evades the questioning of literature in the name of context, perspective et cetera often arrive at the conclusion that smoke comes off the wood and there's heat in the room... Which, unfortunately, often makes sense. However, the criticism at hand, in order to escape this vehement deduction, will take into account the wood and the smoke (socio-politics and history if you will – although not quite) to isolate *the burning* that is its actual concern.

This socio-political context hinted at gives itself within the concept of the *village*. The literature that is our concern was named as “village literature”. The nomination signifies a *mode* of literary production that requires the reader to see the village as distant from him or herself. Moreover, the way the topology dominates the genre denotes that distance to be ideological. The fascination with the content is only possible because it is alien. We will try to understand this alienation and its effects to better understand the importance of Şahin's proximity *and* indifference to his subject matter.

Şahin himself will also become an object of study within that political context as an agent of politics. His encounter with *indoctrination*, *folklore* as the exact name of ethnographic transformation of the time and *experience* that finds itself in the absence of the ethnographer will all be topics of focus. Again, such a study is to disentangle the invasion of perspectival meaning-making that renders the work down to a projection of

positive experience. Our work, on the contrary, is to question the negation that literature becomes – the negation that even finds and encounters itself in its negation. Therefore, disentangling will mean radically trying to put down the “substance” to the extent of filling the void that the author is. Pushing the biographical/contextual meaning-making of this work of literature to its limits grants a revelation of what cannot be revealed. The rural underwent a ruthless destruction in the face of change and what was lost had the chance to reappear in literature.

A two-fold analysis will undergo our attention. Here, straight forward distinctions need be made. A generally thematic approach gets us closer to the origin of this *subgenre* we keep speaking of. What we call generally thematic concerns the content of the stories. Yet, it covers a minor part of the narrative as form as well. To put it bluntly, once we start talking about the absent yet present second person addressees in some of the stories, we will have to consider the characteristics of that absence content-wise, be it a dead mother or a judge in court. Moreover, the subject matters of the stories themselves will contain experiential paradoxes that will have to be analysed separately from the *themes* that can be positively discussed as entities you can physically or practically point at such as the state, customs or even gender issues. The ambiguities and debates considering these *themes* are not of our primary concern. We take them at base level, and consider them elements of definition first, matter of debate second. This means that we analyse all these themes at the level of their context within the stories themselves above anything else. This also means that any allegorical scrutiny/curiosity will be suppressed for the sake of clarity. This choice has its foundations in the final chapters of this work. As a result, the chapter devoted to a general thematic analysis will be comprised of the specific themes first, thematic perspectives (regarding, say a narrative with a second person addressee or a third person/omniscient narrative) second, and the paradoxes (i.e. hospitality, madness, sacrifice) third. To sum up, we will consider the essence of Osman Şahin’s generic literature as *change*.

In the final part, two complications will surface. The literary form of Osman Şahin’s stories withholds a hybrid structure. On the one hand, there’s an oral/folk

tradition that gathers his stories into their final condition. On the other, there's a responsibility towards a modern *penetration* into the invisible rural. This hybrid structure can be explicated within and against its correspondence to its chronological past and future. However, when one seeks a pattern under the name of a canon, it is quite possible to iron out irregularities that mess up a nice and neat progression. Although this sounds similar to the workings of the stove mentioned before, the *logic* is completely different. Like an asymptote in the middle of the graph of a mathematical function, two different patterns may meet and fail to meet in the infinity. The key is to bring a second dimension to the pattern. In this case, the dimensions can be said to be found in the Bataillean distinction between the restricted and general economies and the Heideggerian questioning concerning technology. These two dimensions intersect at literature. Georges Bataille, following his detailed study of the theory of expenditure and his study of sovereignty in his *Accursed Share* (1988) arrives at the importance of literature as a space of *pure sovereignty* that renounces the traditional/political forms of sovereignty. Martin Heidegger, on the other hand, in his seminal article *The Question Concerning Technology* (1977), muses on the possible potential of art's capability of revelation and hold against the grasp of technology on existence. The finalization of this study resides in such a cross-section. The conclusion will be seminal. At the "hybridity" of the structure of Şahin's stories, we will encounter the possibility of its generic difference. His parables of change will present us with the possibilities and impossibilities of an autonomous existence in opposition to both political forms of sovereignty (traditional or modern) and the domination of technology in meaning making in the world.

## CHAPTER 2

### PREAMBLE

This work asks three questions to its subject matter. *How does a genre of a work of literature relate to what it addresses?* When we consider a certain work of literature, we may take into account what its contents, from settings to character developments, say about states of minds, a sociological or a political context, and conclude accordingly, that it addresses issues in a certain way. We may also consider the form of the work and look at the narrative structure that addresses the same issues with its play on signification. In all cases, we produce meaning out of meanings. We claim to be a dictionary for the reader. On the other hand, rather than asking what it is *about*, we may ask it what it is. This gesture is to isolate the entity -to a point- from its use, from its contexts and relieves it from its extensions. Such relief is the reading of the genre. What the genre is transgresses the limits of meaning to give meaning to the meaning. To elaborate the question, what happens when you read a parody and not realize it's a parody? Taking a parody serious pushes the reader to defend or attack certain attitudes parodied in the text while the text "means" the opposite of what it is saying. A parodic genre therefore, is beyond its content in its addressing. Similarly, what we'll realize to be a parabolic genre that dominates Şahin's literature will open up the domain of its difference from the classic parable as well. This we'll find, to be its essential commentary on its subject matter, which is *change*.

*What modes of sovereignty play in this work? In return, what does literature say about sovereignty itself?* The rural setting that Şahin employs is questioned on the



grounds of the feudal modes of sovereignty and the violence of the modern modes of sovereignty on the former. Not only do these questionings contest both kinds but also reveal themselves to be another mode. Revelations like these also ask questions concerning myth. The myths of the feudal and the myths of the modern are contested by the interplay between literature and myth. The construction of the modes of sovereignty, therefore undergo a challenge as their structures are transposed, transmuted, transformed and finally subverted.

*Regardless of the temporal aspects, how does the domain of sovereignty which is the space of literature question worlds of meaning? How does technology enter this equation? We ask certain meanings their meaning when we address this literature. After we analyze the background and contents of Şahin's early literature, we take up how the informative is reflected in its performance. You can look at a work and say that it is about a certain place and time. You can further go on to say it was written at a certain period. However, regardless of such knowledge, what can be said about its correspondence with the world? Apparently, Şahin's early stories interdict this correspondence with the lack of it. The feudal and modern worlds of meaning corrode within this world of non-meaning. We take up how meaning is created and try to dig up its grounding assumptions. Technology here, matters as the congregation of meaning rather than its practical aspect of utilisation. In this regard, this literature accompanies technology in congregation and dissents in its refusal to claim the truth of practical knowledge. In summary, we ask what this genre does in what it can not do. Why do these parable-like stories do not end in the same manner? Furthermore, we ask how Şahin's work differs in its contestation.*

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE AUTHOR

Osman Şahin was born in 1940 in the heights of Taurus Mountains to a *yörük*<sup>2</sup> family. His village in the city of Mersin, whose name is changed from *Efrenk*<sup>3</sup> to *Arslanköy* after the villagers' heroic involvement in the war of independence, occupies the setting of many of his stories. He is one of thirteen children.

At the age of ten, after finishing primary school in the same village, he had the opportunity to attend the prestigious Village Institutes. He mentions in several places that even the attendance of the exam required for the institutes caused him the trouble of walking 15 kilometers to and from the city centrum (Şahin, 2004a: 165). He gets enrolled in the Dicle Village Institute in Diyarbakır in 1950. After six years, he graduates to become a teacher in a nearby village called Kalemli in Siverek. He finds himself teaching children of *ağas* where violence, famine, feudal tensions and tragedies are everyday practice.

Having finished his one year internship as a teacher, he attends Ankara Gazi Institute of Education in 1958. He participates in activist action against the regime of Democrat Party which the party in power at that time. Following his undergraduate education, he begins his work as a teacher in Malatya and spends a period of six years

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<sup>2</sup> Turkic nomads.

<sup>3</sup> Although the name sounds like the word for *Frank* or *French* in Turkish, the origin is not mentioned in any of the many texts Şahin wrote about this place.

until 1967 there as a physical education teacher. He takes folkloric notes about thirty-three villages in a period of nearly seven years in eastern Anatolia at that time.

Afterwards, he continues teaching physical education in İzmit until 1974. He becomes a member of Turkey Teachers' Union (Türkiye Öğretmenler Sendikası). Amidst his teaching career, he serves his military obligation in 1970 around the time of which he receives the TRT Short Story prize for his first ever story *Kırmızı Yel* (*Red Wind*) along with another student of the Village Institutes, Ümit Kaftancıoğlu. A former actor and a prominent film director of the time, Yılmaz Güney buys the rights to his award-winning story but can not accomplish the film due to convictions and imprisonment. The story is later adapted by Atıf Yılmaz to screen as *Adak* in 1976. In early 1970s, with the money he earns from the rights to this story, Osman Şahin buys a house in Göztepe, İstanbul. In that year, he continues his teaching in Suadiye High School. All throughout his years as a teacher he is politically active as a leftist activist.

Due to a book criticism he wrote for Aydınlık Newspaper in September 1978, he is tried and prosecuted by the military court after the 1980 coup d'état. The decision first forces him to continue his teaching in Trabzon, but he retires *ex mero motu* from teaching. In 1983, he is sentenced to one and a half years and he serves in prisons of Şile and Yalova.

After having served his sentence, he writes essays for various magazines and newspapers, at the same time continuing his work in literature and script writing. He is married with two children and is still living in Göztepe in the house he had bought.

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Osman Şahin writes 38 short stories in between 1968 and 1983. These stories are published as four books: *Kırmızı Yel* (1970), *Acenta Mirza* (1973), *Ağzı İçinde Dil Gibi* (1980) and *Acı Duman* (1983). All these stories have a raw, plain and seldom lyrical

approach towards simple plots with a sting in the tail without a resolution. He wins the Nevzat Üstün Short Story award with the third.

At the time of prison, his works and language undergo an abrupt change. He withdraws to a more dramatic style and his themes shift from the plain rural occurrences to the psychological and the allegorical. His collection of short stories from his times in prison is published in 1988 with the name *Kolları Bağlı Doğan*. This work stands as a unique take on the life in prison and inmates for Şahin's bibliography.

With *Ay Bazen Mavidir* (1989), Şahin goes back to his roots and studies the rural in a more mature and developed way. However, by this time, his style has transformed from the raw parabolic to the conclusive, nostalgic pieces that employ more complex narratives.

In *Başaklar Gece Doğar* (1991) he revisits the village of Sarıbahçe in Ceyhan, Adana, which is supposedly the village of a literary legend of Yaşar Kemal, *İnce Memed*. He produces this work from his ethnographical studies in 1970s of the resistance movement of the villagers against the *ağa*. Parts of the interviews he conducts there appear in his book on Yaşar Kemal years later. He pours his knowledge of the resistance by narrativizing testimonies into a coherent novel. It is in this book that he begins to establish his prominent lyrical style of intertwining the spectacular with the ordinary. It may be said that he situates his works at the edge of a romanticism that is still documentary and realistic.

The next year, he comes up with an anthropological collection of writings on *yörüks* and the geography in which they inhabit: *Son Yörük* (1992). This collection totally reveals his ethnographic endeavours from his village institute days. The informative yet politically charged texts hint at his nostalgia for the feudal customs and values. All the persons examined in this book invoke this nostalgic indulgence.

*Selam Ateşleri* (1993) is published after he has earned several awards with *Ay Bazen Mavidir*. This book is, without doubt, one of the masterpieces of Şahin, for it provides a successful mix of all of Şahin's traits. Psychological studies of the protagonists, location-specific vocabulary and language games, exhilarating twists and unexpected endings, shifts in the centre of the story, shuttling between the lyrical and the epic: They all feed the stories in the most powerful way. Şahin earns two more prestigious awards with this work.

In 1995, Şahin comes up with a children's book, comprised of seven stories. *Güneş Harfleri* continues the strength of *Selam Ateşleri* but comes closer to the mythological and the dramatic. The distance between the subject matter and the approach is warmer and the harshness of rural life is moderated.

The same year sees the coming of yet another anthropological scholarship. He returns to the village of *Kalemlî* where he first taught after his graduation from the village institute. This time, he pursues the blood feud and numerous killings that took place among the *Bucak Aşireti*.<sup>4</sup> He sees this work as a debt paid to the family he had served in 1957 the experience of which had given him subject matter for almost all his stories in his first two books. He considers *Bucaks* like a second family; the mother *Gülçin Ana* as a second mother as such. In *Bucaklar*, he takes up the origins of the blood feud from its roots until the imprisonment of one of the major players: Adnan Bucak, who was one of his students. Strikingly, Şahin keeps his ethnographic distance at the same measure he did in his fiction. Even in the parts where he tells of the murders of persons he was the teacher of, he remains distant. The sequel to this book appears in 1998. *Yeraltında Uçan Kuş* follows the story of Adnan Bucak in prison between 1968 and 1974. The interesting characteristic of both books is that although it is not indicated directly or implicated within the text, their primary and major source is Adnan Bucak himself.

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<sup>4</sup> Bucak Aşireti (the Bucak clan) was a prominent and powerful Kurdish feudal family whose children occupied many important positions in politics, business and bureaucracy.

Şahin publishes two minor works in 1997. *Su Kurusu* is a collection of riddles which is a product of his folkloric work back in the day. *Geloş Dağı Efsanesi* on the other hand, is a children's storybook which does not measure up to the strength of *Güneş Harfleri*.

Starting with 1998, Şahin excels in his short story writing and publishes masterpieces of his genre one after the other. *Mahşer* (1998) combines the mythological with the traits we counted in *Selam Ateşleri* and earns him yet another award. The stories are less violent and have a mystic aura that disguises the violence with a distance. *Ölüm Oyunları* (2002) follows the same path with a rashomon-like take on a popular story of one of his ancestors *Çolak Osman Ağa*. He tells three different versions, all with a slightly altered style.

As he works on short story writing for children, in 2004 he collects his essays to the date and publishes one of them without a binding context under the name *Ateş Yukarı Doğru Yanar*. The essays have a wide range of book reviews (including the one on Julius Fuchik which resulted in his prosecution) and personal comments in newspapers. The second book is a coherent and detailed work on Yaşar Kemal: *Geniş Bir Nehrin Akışı*. This book also shows his fascination with bearing witness to the changes in society. In fact, he dubs Yaşar Kemal to be “the author of aberrations” (Şahin, 2004b: 61, 85 and 92).

After two children's books (*Güney Arısı*, 2004; *Kanatları Yamalı Kuş*, 2005 ) which are less significant in his bibliography, Şahin comes up with a book as powerful as *Selam Ateşleri*. *Sonuncu İz* (2007) is the most diverse collection of stories he has ever produced. It even contains a daring narrativization of a story of an Armenian girl at the time of deportation in 1915. The imagining of this work is all the more interesting regarding the fact that Şahin is in a vehement opposition against the topic of genocide. On the other hand, this story also hints at an ideological backlash (a curse on literature) that can be observed in his last book. In his works after the coup d'état of 1980, as soon

as Şahin enters a domain where he finds a personal connection via identification (i.e. prison, war of independence, migration), his stories become violently discursive, laying bare a nationalist, socialist or secular-modernist attitude towards its subject matter.

The year 2008 sees his most powerful children's novel, *Saçlı Yılan ve Selvihan*, which delineates the concept of death and friendship in the most intricate way. Regarding it being a children's story, the force of this mythological story is immense. Şahin keeps the parabolic structure he is best at and resolves his story in a realistic commentary.

The next children's book, *Katuna'da Dokuz Ay* (2009) remains quite weak in contrast to this work. It repeats the mistakes of *Sonuncu İz* in a like-wise manner. The closer the story to identifications of Şahin, the further it is from literary power. This very aspect produces his final book in quite a schizoid nature. Although *Darağacı Avcı* contains three of the best stories –one having the eponymous title which he calls his masterpiece with solid reasons- Şahin has ever written, this last book also returns to the stories of the mourner/wailer mothers of his village immersed in a strongly nationalistic discourse. It should be added that it is more the content than the style.

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Among his achievements are over fifteen awards for his short story books and his additions to art and literature. His works are translated to many languages including German, French, Sweden and Hungarian. The only English translation up to now has been a selection of translations from students of Department of Translation and Interpreting at Boğaziçi University, by the name *Tales from the Taurus* (2006).

Probably his most underrated achievement is his collaboration with cinema. By the year 2010, a total of 24 films are either adapted or influenced by Şahin's stories which have won at least 24 awards from various festivals. The most famous of these stories are also among the best films of Turkish cinema, including *Kibar Feyzo* (1978),

*Tomruk* (1982), *Züğürt Ağa* (1985) and *Kan* (1985). To note aside, some films do not cite his name as a reference, while they are influenced by Şahin's verbal contribution in the script writing. *Kibar Feyzo* and *Züğürt Ağa* are such films. While the former basically makes use of five stories (with *Fareler* being the core story), the latter makes use of an actual story about an *ağa* who sold his village to move to Cihangir, İstanbul, whom Şahin knows personally.

Although he has such a prodigal profile to his name, Şahin's reception in both literary and film criticism is poor to say the least. The articles citing his name do not exceed fifty pieces and most of them are couple-page long reviews. What's more, many of these pieces are of little avail to the contemporary reader. This has a lot to do with blacklisted magazines whose copies were not quite available after the 1980 coup d'état. One of the most important of these is a special edition on Şahin by *Öykü Dergisi* (1975-6). In summary, it could be said that criticism on his work have two peaks in the late 70s and after the time he switches his publisher to *Can Yayınları* in 1998, which is an effective publishing house, considering the market.

The only existent theses have only recently been published by two literature students from Abant İzzet Baysal University and Ankara Gazi University. They both will be available in 2011.

Among the most notable names to have provided significant criticism for Şahin's work are Mehmet Şehmus Güzel, Attila Dorsay and Talat Sait Halman. Along with such resources, there are a number of interviews conducted by newspaper or publishing house magazines such as *Cumhuriyet Kitap* and *Remzi Kitap Gazetesi*. Many sources (primary source probably being the official website<sup>5</sup>) also inform us on the fact that Ali Akay and Mehmet Şehmus Güzel have published a study called *Osman Şahin'in Yapıtlarında Ölüm İmgeleri ve Düşler*<sup>6</sup> in Paris, France.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.osmansahin.com](http://www.osmansahin.com)

<sup>6</sup> Literally "Images of Death and Dreams in Osman Şahin's Works".



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An overview of the criticism captures a repetitious indulgence in admiring the spectacular in Şahin. The authentic and the exotic are what characterize Şahin's reception. Many of the interviews pinpoint the mystical worlds illustrated in his stories (Zileli, 2008; Okay, 2009; Akdemir, 2010) while many of the criticisms underline the realistic aspects (Andaç, 1983; Uyguner, 1983; Güzel, 1984).

The recurring themes of death, suppressed sexuality, famine, hopelessness, technology and the changes in the modes of production has caught the attention of scholars along with the underlying oral tradition and pagan values. Moreover, Şahin's modernist approaches are not missed. To exemplify, his mastery in psychodynamic examination which makes him stand out among the writers of the subgenre of village literature who could not measure up to such a task (Güzel, 1985: 119; Okay, 2009); his interchanging use of perspective (Bayrak, 2000: 337; Güzel, 1985: 121); his formation of experience into a comment on society (Bayrak, 2000: 334; Güzel, 1985: 118). The visual strength and the kinship with the cinema of the 70s and 80s are also compared to *cinéma vérité* (Güzel, 1985: 119).

One other major observation is the social realist aspect where Şahin illustrates the village and the existing modes of living against the fast-invading capitalistic modes and understandings along with the technological and political advancements (Bayrak, 2000; Güzel, 1985; Zileli; 2008). For Mehmet Bayrak, Osman Şahin takes the responsibility of testifying for the violence and struggle in the rural and turn it into a socialist consciousness (Bayrak, 2000: 336). Moreover, he continues the conventional idealistic approach even in his criticism as he finds a direct correlation between the strength of the stories and the magnitude of the problem at the centre of the story (Ibid: 337). This is a hard guess since it would be hard to account for the strength of Şahin's last masterpiece *Darağacı Avı* (the story) along with the stories *Parçala Niyazi*, *Mahşer* (the story), *Kör Gülüşan* etc. with this approach. Then again, this crucial detail also hints at the

endeavour to see an allegorical structure in Şahin's work, which is a misinterpretation if not a mistake. Şahin's relationship with ethnography and ethnographic allegory exceeds such interpretation.

As an author, he has both an advantage and a disadvantage of having begun writing at a time the country had a "semi-feudal economical structure" for he could narrate how the immense destructive change capitalism and industrialism brought on the rural but not exceed the limits of societal exigencies in his story writing (Okay, 2009). This sort of writing was demanded popularly. They are, admittedly, "stories of tears" which earn meaning with "practice of living" (Bölükbaşı, 2008).

Experience is at the foundations of his literature. Almost all stories are based on actual persons or hearsay. This is an easy path of conduct regarding he has spent half of his life in the setting he wrote about. Şahin believes this to be a golden rule about authorship: "Every author must write about where and what he knows best" (Ibid). This crude approach is perplexing regarding his latest works based on the times of war and the mythological. His familiarity with these topics is from his encounters with the wailers and the mourners of his village called the *beyanas*.<sup>7</sup>

His experience extends to such a colossal range that one is at once drawn into a magical world. He has witnessed the "exotic" world of the *yörüks* as his home, listening to tales of the Taurus Mountains –mythological and experiential; he has witnessed the south-east Anatolia's pace of life and feudal battles, acquainting famous *eşkıyas*, *ağas* and criminals of all sorts (including the ones in *Kırmızı Yel*, *Bedvanlı Zülfo* and *Memedi Lezgo*); he was in a circle of intellectuals in İstanbul (including Mahmut Makal and Bekir Yıldız).

The diversity of his acquaintances from the "shamanic women" to the immigrant *ağa* in İstanbul not only endow him with plenty of material –that other authors could

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly this name literally means *Lord-mothers*.

have even paid for to listen to- but also distinguish his take on that very material. In one anecdote, he describes the response of one of his author friends to his story *Bebek*. The story captures a part of the journey of a father carrying his baby from the village to the hospital. Şahin's friend tells him that the story should end when the father puts the baby in front of the doctor although the baby's already dead (Ibid). Şahin is a stranger to this obsession with fascination and sensation (as in dramatic endings); it is where he escapes a certain orientalism present in the intellectual circles even.

## CHAPTER 4

### THREE LITERARY PERIODS

#### 4.1. How the Periods are Categorized

In order to understand the nature and motivation behind our analysis, we have to settle the logic behind isolating our subject matter. This categorization was attempted to understand a certain genre of stories which were present in Şahin's early stories. They were the ones that had provoked the questions we sought answers for in the last three chapters of this thesis. Therefore, one of the most important questions was whether to include certain stories or books in the later decades or not.

The primary logic of the methodology employed here was that all books were considered firstly according to their themes, then their styles. Finally, their narratives were studied with respect to their apparent particular purposes. In other words, if a work took up the prominent theme of death and it was employed in a way that it singled out the mourning ritual by focusing on it in a detailed way, the last thing to differentiate it from all the other works was to look at how the narrative served a literary purpose such as examining the psychology and neglecting the socio-political context (as in *Darağacı Avı*).

The hardest part about the categorization occurred when these levels rendered chronology of the works totally irrelevant. Especially in the 90s where Şahin was very

productive (nine works), the works present an ambivalent nature. There are anthropological works, essays and criticisms, short stories, novels, children's novels and even a folkloric compilation of riddles. In a period of 40 years, Şahin has published 24 books. There were 13 short story collections; 4 children's novels; 3 essay collections; 2 ethnographic novels; 1 novel; 1 collection of riddles. Since the essays, criticisms, historical pieces and riddles were not "literature" and covered the whole 40 years anyway, we kept them out of scrutiny. The categorization of the remaining 13 short story collections and the 7 novels was easy to the point of finally deciding to keep the novels out. The reasons for this were obvious when we had a closer look at the style and rhetoric. The novels had an absolute generic difference. It is important to understand that the examination had to be done. Certain short story writers may carry their short story writing to their novel writing, such as Sait Faik Abasıyanık's *Medarı Maişet Motoru* or Aziz Nesin's *Seyahatname* which are more like strongly connected short stories of these authors rather than novels of approaches else. This possibility had to be eliminated.

Finally, the categorization was applied to periods regardless of their date constraints. Only what we call the early period remained faithful.

#### **4.1.1. Themes**

There are more or less three settings pervasive in Şahin's stories. The first is the rural setting of the south-southeastern Anatolia while the second is the mountains and highlands which the *yörüks* inhabit. These two settings are the most prominent. The third is a little ambiguous but we may at least say it evolves around the prison and urban crime. In accord with these settings, the themes of "social" values are evaluated in different senses. While the first setting brings about a more documentary approach, the second setting employs a more mystical engagement. The third implies the dissolving of social connections. While the first two settings occupy Şahin's works from beginning to

the end, the third only appears in the works *Kolları Bağlı Doğan*, *Bucaklar* and *Yeraltında Uçan Kuş* and *Darağacı Avı*.

The way Şahin takes up the documentary and the mystical creates the biggest shift. Although two stories he wrote (*Ağız İçinde Dil Gibi*, *Yörük Ana*) before imprisonment and two stories in prison (*Voltalar*, *Cezaevi Üstünde Gökyüzü*) foreshadow his indulgence in the pastoral mystique, he does not make it a major theme of his works until 1995 with *Güneş Harfleri*. While death and violence are themes of social conflict prior to this shift, they become questions of human essence afterwards. A similar case is true for customs and modernization. While the earlier stories dwell on the disappearance of customs and also the violence of modernization on them, in later stories the focus is more on their beauty, innocence, truth etc. For example, *Makam Taşları* is about the disrespect for the sacred mourner of the village the stones of whose monumentary grave are used for the construction of a firm's building. In contrast, the story *Değişim* pinpoints what modernization does to the religious institutions of the rural. "Neither Hadımlı, blasphemy, domes nor were beads left behind..." (Şahin, 2009c: 77). Şahin was empathetic about the first story whereas he is indifferent or even content with the changes regarding the institution in the latter. This may be said to be an ideological choice but we will comment on this later.

Şahin's love, interest and passion for legends, myths and fairy tales rise after *Güneş Harfleri*. *Geloş Dağı Efsanesi*, *Mahşer*, *Ölüm Oyunları* and *Saçlı Yılan ile Selvihan* are more interested in the ancient virtues than the modern presence, albeit the twist at the end of the last example. What was a major conflict in earlier stories (namely, violence of modernization) becomes a minor commentary later on. This is even true for the exceptional third setting where the "criminals" suffer as much from modernization as traditional laws.

#### 4.1.2. Style and Rhetoric

There is a consistent use of local language in Şahin's works. While the oral tradition of the *yörüks* which is directed at pedagogic narratives marks Şahin's style of writing, it later on invades the whole rhetoric. The eponymous story *Mahşer* and the stories of the mourners in *Darağacı Avı* are the best examples of this invasion. The first is a modern, albeit rural take on *A Thousand and One Nights*. The other is a return to the stories told in the *yörük* villages. In both cases, a distance marks the text. That distance removes the stories from the social-realistic indulgence Şahin conspicuously expresses in the earlier stories. While only the language of the earlier stories was poetic, the later stories also adopt the register of a bard or a mourner. He does not just tell stories by this time, he creates performances out of them.

Same is true for the treatment of later stories which are very similar to the early stories plotwise. As late as stories in *Sonuncu İz* (such as *Klarnetçi* and *Acı Kahve*), the raw material undergoes a heavy scrutiny, capturing feelings to the extent the reader gives up observation for empathy. Such a close relationship is not present in early stories. Fascination and anger are the sole driving forces behind the earlier stories while enchantment and humane understanding replace these driving forces later on. The exception of anger against institutions of authority should be noted. The discontent with authority is present in each and everyone of Şahin's works.

#### 4.1.3. Perspective, Narrative, Literary Purpose

Şahin employs raw plots at the start of his literary career. He treats them with minimal literary play, save for the heavily charged poetic language. There is little complication in the narrative structure. He rarely employs first person narrative (His two ethnographic novels, his short stories from prison and few semi-autobiographic

stories). He either uses a third person omniscient or a speech directed at a second person addressee. As he improves his plots by weaving different stories into each other, the narrative gets more complicated with multiple twists, shifts in register, as do the lengths increase. A more intuitive approach pervades the text, truth and representation become dubious. The thrice observed pseudo-mythical story of Çolak Osman Ağa and his wife in *Ölüm Oyunları* as well as the interchanging personas of Kötüş Hasan and Sert Kerim in *Ay Bazen Mavidir* exemplify his search for more psychologically in-depth stories.

As years go by, Şahin also leaks ideological content into his narratives. As we said above, the stance in *Değişim* inclines towards a secular attitude. The traces of nationalism can be seen in *Bey Analar* of *Darağacı Avı* while a pro-anti-nationalistic trace marks *Maharık* of *Sonuncu İz*. The stories get less and less personal in correlation with this.

One interesting aspect is that many of his short story collections have choice mystic meditations as the opening stories. *Kolları Bağlı Doğan* begins with an autobiographic story of the same name; *Ay Bazen Mavidir* begins with *Bozkırda Vivaldi*; *Selam Ateşleri* begins with the eponymous meditation that is purely nostalgic; *Mahşer* takes *Gölgemin Gölgesi* and *Sonuncu İz* with again an eponymous story as pastoral narratives that mourn for a past that was all too human to continue in the modern age. As can be seen, these meditations of nostalgic and frequently pastoral structure only begin at the fifth book.

Considering a literary purpose, Şahin does not heed to the idea of a literature that is independent of the author. It is clear from his statements about “writing what one knows” and literature being a measure of “society’s pulse”. Still, the sort of dependency seems to have altered as he “matured” in his writing.<sup>8</sup> One alteration is obvious in the subtlety of the poetic language. What was once a raconteur’s take on a parabolic story approaches the paper it is written on. It is a removal from the performance of a

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<sup>8</sup> Osman Şahin considers his early short stories to be amateurish (from the interview). He is not completely wrong.



raconteur to the performance of an “author”. In other words, there is less intonation and more presentation in later stories. While you could imagine a person telling the stories of his early years, the later stories rule that possibility out. One type of effervescent distance (I’m telling a story.) is replaced by another type of monotone distance (You are reading my story.). This accounts for the apparent wisdom replacing virtues in his later stories as well. Virtues are immediate human aspects while wisdom is a mediatory for accumulation of experience and knowledge.

## **4.2. The Periods**

### **4.2.1. The Early Period (1970-1983)**

The most homogenous period then, is comprised of Şahin’s first four books. They apply an immediate focus on raw stories that have the characteristics of a raconteur’s story telling. They expect and draw responses of instant awe, sympathy and anger. Of the thirty-eight stories in this period, only *Gömlek* and *Beyaz Öküz* seem to provide a difference in language and the development of the characters. They do foreshadow later works in this sense. The stories are stunning in their proximity and availability to the reader. They employ the *happening* in contrast to the *already-happened*. It is important to see that this is different from a distinction between past and future. They are not stories of reality; it would be a mistake to call it this. They are rather, stories of actuality; the voice of the author is almost diegetic. Ideology is kept at a distance as is commentary and psychological depth.

### **4.2.2. Coup d'Etat Period (1983-1989)**

This non-period hints at a transition. The books of this concern are: *Kolları Bağlı Doğan*, *Başaklar Gece Doğar*, *Bucaklar*, *Yeraltında Uçan Kuş*. The first book is the only short story collection in this manner. What we observe here is that the prison years and personal experience change something in the attitude of the author. The stories – with apologies- are all too personal. The feelings these books evoke in a reader are impeded with the haunting reality of the feelings of “an author writing them”. The stories of *Kolları Bağlı Doğan* keep the keen eye that sees the tragicomic at the instant of a happening, yet they push themselves to fascinate while no push as such is needed. Take for example, the story of *Kolları Bağlı Doğan* (*Falcon, Wings Bound*). The story is filled with a constant struggle to give a meaning to all the torture and violence that takes place in the prison and contrasts it with the prior parabolic story of the falcon whose wings were bound. The pages are filled with recollections that do not cohere with the “humanity of the author”. For the first time, a first-person perspective is used - and not for the better. There are passages typical of the prison literature of the post-coup d’etat period. “Life was itself a process. What is your place in that process?” asks the narrator (Şahin, 1996: 21). He goes on to bring forth statements like “In fact, torture was not the most evil thing done to humankind; it was to leave him unoccupied and workless” (Ibid: 27). Passages of such tonality daub an otherwise fragmented memory into a weak narrative.

The other three books share the aspect of a weak narrative up to various levels. *Bucaklar* and its sequel *Yeraltında Uçan Kuş* seem as disconnected in this regard. The proximity of the actual happening of the stories seems to evoke this aspect. Testimonies (of one person) gather and integrate all events under a narrative.

*Başaklar Gece Doğar* seems to breach this soft bone via imagination. The literary examination lacking in the other three books pervades this book and transmutes its characters from figures to subjects. The common aspect of these four books is that they frequently state the obvious or indulge in excessive didactics. It is quite related to what the coup d’etat did to the literature of the time when revolutionary ideas were reduced to redundancy by both the ideologists and the state. Their repetition gave in to decadence

of meaning. It would not be far from our concern to add that this “period” was a time of search for a way out for a literature independent from the trauma of the coup. The reminiscence of a rural rebellion of the 70s, that this last book is, seems particularly relevant. Not only is it a reminiscence of what all the political struggle was for, but also a remembering of hope. It is, to say the least, personal.

#### 4.2.3. The Nostalgia Period (1989- )

Amidst his search for political hope, Şahin continues to write what he does best. His short stories become more intricate and stylistically charged. *Selam Ateşleri* announces the advent of a mature author and signals the implementation of Şahin’s mix of the nostalgic and the elegiac in his literature. The yes-saying attitude, like Nietzsche’s donkey,<sup>9</sup> occupies the texts and the indifference to even the vilest murder (like that of *Darağacı Avı*) states his resolution. It is interesting to see that his investigations regarding his own political attitude and his literature of this latter period often conflict. Although Şahin’s outspoken Kemalism and statism frequents his interviews and television appearances, his short stories –with few exceptions- subvert the very foundations of Kemalism from various directions such as nationalism, reformism and even populism. The author himself might not have such motivations in mind, but it is true.

To exemplify, a children’s story from *Güneş Harfleri* proves an interesting point. The story *Şapka (The Hat)* returns to the times of the “hat reform” in 1925. It is one of the few stories written in first person perspective. It tells of how two kids in a village wake up to see a hat guests have brought with them to their house. Since everyone else is sleeping, they can not make sense of what it is and go out to play with it. Eventually it gets stuck on a tree and their father has to pick it up. The recurrent use of “the hat of the State” and “novelty” is both a joke on the “uneducated peasant” and the authority of the

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<sup>9</sup> From *Thus Spake Zarathustra* among others.

state (Şahin, 1995: 26-28). The story is concluded as the guests who have turned up at their door are revealed to be volunteers to introduce the western hat to the villagers. The process of the first unease and the eventual admission of hat use serve as a conclusion. There's frequent expression of admiration for Atatürk, yet it does not exceed the comical administration of the reform process.

Another example is that of *Bayan Ali (Lady Ali)* from *Selam Ateşleri*. This is one of the few short stories to have a conspicuously queer protagonist in the setting of a village. The story examines how villagers first react to Ali's sexuality only to accept it in time in return for his powerful bull inseminating their cows. Ali's "unconventional" relationship with his mother, him being a favourite of village girls, his failure of a marriage and the transference of sexuality to the superior masculinity of the bull are studied with sharp cynicism. The peasants are frequently travestied in Şahin's or his peers' works in the 70s. The radical interpretation of the sycophant villagers who call him a faggot behind his back only to smile and call him Bıyık Ali (Moustache Ali) to his face instils simultaneous laughter and anger in the reader (Şahin, 2009c: 54). It is a subversion of the myth of the "noble savage" his early works had, in a way, reinforced. The matter is a matter of human consciousness now.

The nostalgic, therefore, is not comprised of nostalgia for a past that was noble, innocent or respectful. On the contrary, it is for a loss of time itself, a loss that is an ongoing part of the human present. His literary journey is not home in the romanticism of the rural anymore. He has to see a wider picture. As he concludes the protagonist's trip to the top of the mountain in *Sonuncu İz*: "The return has begun" (Ibid: 23).

### **4.3. Significance of Categorization**

This categorization is important to the extent it is evaluated as a distinction between not what we think the author has been thinking but rather the form and essence

of the texts. This is also one of the reasons why chronology is not sufficient to explain the categorization. The aim of this work is to see the interaction of Şahin's stories with the temporality of change. While we can deductively apply an overall characteristic to his whole literature, we may miss the significance of the difference between his periods and how these differences signify an aspect of a literature whose genre is beyond its generic form and contents. Şahin's early period stands out as an immature generic structure dominates his stories.

## CHAPTER 5

### POLITICS OF THE VILLAGE

#### 5.1. An Overview of Kemalism, Populism and the Village

After 1923, the politics in Turkey were motivated primarily by a desire for modernization *and* stability at the same time. Both desires concurred in a paradoxical way. On the one hand a change was targeted, on the other hand the prevention of another change was of decisive importance. The transformation of the current state towards a modern state was more or less visible and obvious. From the reformations on education to institutional transitions in law, politics, religion etc, a bureaucratic control and service was being instilled. The modern citizen meant an educated, Turkish-nationalist, consciously civilian, industrially progressive, secular person submissive towards homogenous mobilization especially at the times of crises. There was an ambiguous understanding of the modern citizen. While secular-nationalism was the most conspicuous form of politics, populism stood implicit and was at the origins of the desire for stability.

The importance of populism targeting villages was underlined by decisive politicians and exemplified with regard to its political implications (Ömerlioğlu, 2006:15). The public (*avam*) meant all the rest of the layers in society except for the educated, “modern” elite. In other words, the public was delineated by an abstract concept of education and elite (Ibid: 37). The elite were the desired modern class of

people while the villagers stood in direct contrast to this. Still they provided the image of the pure and the unmuddled Turkish person awaiting acculturation. This signification went hand in hand with the colonial master-slave relationship. The modern elite needed the difference of rank between himself and the *avam* for both as a signifier of his modernness and for the control and subordination of the *avam* as a resource.

Villagerness (*köylülük*) as such, was the myth of the progressive modern state situated and bound in Anatolia, a ripe land of potential. In fact, this effect of villagerness is still present in the intellectual circles and politics. It reveals itself in the lack of civic consciousness and participation of the *avam* even in the city (Ibid :17).<sup>10</sup>

The state played its trumps accordingly. This play was not visible and appeared implicitly in strategic measures under a populist discourse. Considering the late-capitalism of Turkey, the evaluation of such populist discourse, we are warned, should be based not on the response to the needs and necessities of the peasants but on the new typology of intelligentsia that emerged (Ibid:25). In the early years of the republic, the populace was specifically the peasants/villagers until massive immigration and transition starting in the 60s. The basis of the problem within the state was described to be an alienation of the people subject to the state, namely, the peasants. It was an emergency to reconnect the desolate base of the new republic (Ibid: 35).

In order to do this, the state needed intermediaries: People who could connect with *the* people. However, this project failed as the emergence of the Democrat Party (DP) after the Second World War proved. DP showed that the *avam* did not trust the elite –never had. This was also because the founding elite evaded the idea of the intermediary as a direct institutionalization for a lack of a majority. They therefore circumvented it. The lack of intermediary institutions between the state and the public was therefore not a shortcoming but a desired thing in the imagined nation-state of those “elites” (Ibid :46) The double play concerning populism created a fissure between the

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<sup>10</sup> The vulgar metropolitan would be called a villager (*köylü*) as an insult, then as now.

elite and the public and conserved it. In this sense, it did not detract from remaining at the level of enunciation. The villager was a target for education only to the extent that he remained a villager and did not feel disturbed about this (Ibid :48). This here is the foundation of the divide in the politicization of Turkey.

Various measures to seal the gap appeared starting with the 30s. The short adventure of the Village Institutes between 1940 and 1957 and the showpiece agricultural reformation in 1947 were both directed at a consolation of the *avam* and a middle ground between the local powers and the central government. However, both the village institutes and the agricultural reformations at the same time tried to keep the difference between the elite and the villager by feinting to remove it. In this sense, the economical reformations in late 40s were nothing but a performative hush-hush. The moderation of leftist inclinations that were influenced by the ongoing global tendencies was also an important aim (Ibid: 143).

The idea that culture and ideology was a driving power for societal progression is considered to be a typical syndrome among third-world intellectuals (Ibid: 60). Cultivation as acculturation therefore, was an intellectuals' project imposed on the villagers; although almost none of the intellectuals had the strength or daring to actually spend time in the villages they wrote about. Even when they did, it had the characteristic of a tourist or an ethnographer (Ibid: 63).

The populist (*köycü*) discourse has four major aspects according to Asım Karaömerlioğlu: The prejudice against urbanization and industrialization; the appraisal of the village and the villager; its schizoid relation with Westernization (not all can be western but us); the consideration of education as the primary power for the transformation of the village (Ibid: 66).

The crucial question to ask is this: Why should the villager remain a villager? There were substantial strategic reasons for this (Ibid: 72). Firstly, the villager would not involve in the industrial society and the *alienation* that comes with it. This would



also sustain the arising consciousness and “rebellious nature” of the working classes. Secondly, it would keep the families intact and ripe for political tractability. Moreover, these families could keep their autonomy in preserving a supply-demand chain within their own economy. This was desirable considering the weight on the shoulders of the industry at its infancy. “It would not be an exaggeration to say that the populist discourse was utilized to impede the mobilization of the masses in Turkey” (Ibid :218).

At the end, the Kemalist grounds of the new republic could not compete with the perking out failures of populism. Capitalism and industrialism were too strong to sustain in the preservation of the villager in the village. 1960s’ immigration to the cities and Germany accelerated the immigration to the metropolitan cities in later on and the 1980 coup d’etat is the symbolic end of the feudal/agricultural village in Turkey. Needless to say, we situate Osman Şahin’s political background right at the middle of this transformation.

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What is meant by the concept 'Village'? This question is worthy of a short discussion. By the village, we firstly mean a closure distant from the city where means of production belong to the villagers. The spatial situatedness away from the city is very important. Moreover, the village at once signifies tradition, superstition, archaic measures and understandings, savageness, uncontrolled violence, conservatism and feudalism. This conception, as we derive from the political background, is a negation manufactured for its own negation. The “modern elite” manufactures an image of a village to negate it and thus become the modern elite it justifies itself to be. The elite as such see in the villager the animality it negates as well (Bataille, 1988). Moreover, the villager signifies a totality, a unity with the inception of the modern man. It affirms the historical man’s presence in the present. This is what the village is in this context: The myth of the modern elite.

## 5.2. Village Institutes as Ideological State Apparatuses

The third part of Karaömerlioğlu's work focuses on the Village Institutes which are devised as ideological state apparatuses of the state. They aim at an agricultural transformation by raising the cultural and professional levels of the villagers (2006: 18). The primary discourse in the village institutes is the interpellation of a "protestant work ethics" of capitalism in the agricultural society of the rural (Ibid: 97). This went hand in hand with learning by working.

Osman Şahin's *Bozkırda Vivaldi (Vivaldi in the Moors - Şahin, 2009c)* sketches the world of the village institutes in a particular anecdote. The students who study music encounter an old man they kept seeing in the city train station in their dining hall. The man plays the recorder to earn money on the streets. Their music teacher has brought the man to play the recorder to the students. The students are amazed at the fact that music is such a bond. The exaltation of the children's feelings also hints at a symbolic level where the state (education) and the *avam* merge. The indoctrination of the village institutes has passed onto this story in the most clandestine way of a child's affection. There's both gratitude and responsibility charge within these feelings. The title of the story also provides such unison of the rural and the urban.

*Sabun Postallar* (Şahin, 2008a) on the other hand, goes to another personal experience of Şahin. As he enrolls in the institute in Diyarbakır, they cut his hair, have him get washed with a soap for the first time and it is there that he learns the size of his shoes. This initiation ceremony is told in a similar manner of fascination that seizes the reader in the former story.

One other aspect of the institutes was that they reinforced Turkish nationalism via performance and knowledge (Karaömerlioğlu, 2006: 101). The gratitude for all the opportunities granted by the institution also further reinforced the belief that these values of standing together were the truth behind their wellbeing. This was also a reason behind the choice to create a diverse student body including as many minorities as

possible (Ibid :102) The transformation of the villager also meant the transformation of the feudal system against the will of the *ağas* whose strength bothered the state. That is why they were also considered a threat by the *ağas* (Ibid: 99). In short, for the elites, the institutes symbolized the return of the republican “revolution” to its political base, the *avam* (Ibid: 109). However, this return did not surface without its implicit political agendas.

### 5.3. Ethnography – Folklore

*“If the ethnographer reads culture over the native's shoulder, the native also reads over the ethnographer's shoulder as he or she writes each cultural description”* (Clifford, 1986: 119).

Ethnographies open up to a certain mindset or ideas via the representation of a micro level representative of the idea. The immediacy of the mediary representative utilizes a fascination with the unity of the micro society with that of the macro. The ethnographer looks at the field and sees a beyond to it. This is the allegoric character of ethnography. It speaks of something by speaking the other. *Allos* is ‘other’ and *agoreuein* is ‘to speak’ (Ibid: 99).

Osman Şahin’s work is considered to be documentary realism. Its kinship with realism is its push against allegory for the symbolism that is the “lesser” of two evils. What actually happened pervades in the text as something to *politically* hold on to. In the struggle of the peasant, one sees the struggle of a nation. The conflict is that he remains in the tension between the symbolic and the allegorical. On the one hand the rural is far removed, on the other it is closer - than the desirable distance, which is

unknown. This limbo is also characteristic of the politics of the state. It neither wants the rural to be far nor close. The new system wants its objects to be ready-to-be-used objects.

Where allegory attracts “attention to the narrative character of cultural representations” by adding meanings of different levels of narrative, “the valorization of symbols over allegory in romantic aesthetics” (which also questions “realism”) challenges that narrative character (Ibid: 100). The struggles of both approaches indicate that there is no narrative to life. Only when it is a life-story does it enter narrative and narrative representations presuppose a coherent picture, which always signifies a discourse that holds and pushes every object within its world of meaning. It keeps the difference and the sameness together, simultaneously. “[E]thnography's narrative of specific differences presupposes, and always refers to, an abstract plane of similarity” (Ibid: 101).

In our case, Şahin makes use of a folkloric training. The Village Institutes offer an education to note down the details of rural lives. This education is typical of the ethnographic needs of the state. In its common roots with positivism and colonialism, this ethnography seeks to study, understand, explain and control its objects. The first three scientific steps are at the core of folkloric studies the institutes train the students in. Şahin has taken notes filling 33 notebooks for 33 villages. It is a taught habit. The interesting aspect of it is that the ethnographer is also an insider. It is at this double personality that allegory and symbolism are both deflated. “Cultural anthropology in the twentieth century has tended to replace (though never completely) these historical allegories with humanist allegories” (Ibid: 102) Both the historical allegories observed in the early literature (i.e. *Yaban*) and the later humanist allegories (i.e. *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*) undergo an erosion in Şahin’s work. The significance of his studies resides on the fact that they are neither symbolic nor allegoric. They adapt an allegoric structure but habituate symbolic content (to be reevaluated in the Theses). What still remains is that the “difference invades the text, it can no longer be represented; it must be enacted” (Ibid: 104). That difference we’ll see, is brought about

by change, rather than come about as an essential property. The villager signifies a difference as a part of that change in the mindset from the feudal to the modern.

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In his anthropological work *Bucaklar* (1995), Şahin sees the illustration of “a modern hamlet”<sup>11</sup> in the entrapment of Adnan Bucak in the blood feud of his tribal family. It is an interesting reading over Şahin’s shoulder if we come to think of it, and it certainly plays “a potent and pervasive mechanism for the production of meaning in the West” of Turkey (Ibid: 106). In the interview regarding this dissertational work, Şahin has indicated that his experience teaching to the children of this family was crucial for his growth as well. It was “the place that made him an author” (Excerpt 1). What’s more, he thought he “owed” them this work. “Anthropological fieldwork has been represented as both a scientific "laboratory" and a personal "rite of passage"” (Clifford, 1986: 109).

The ethnography of his second birth-place is a portrayal of “an "ethnographic present" (which is always, in fact, a past)” and its “synchronic suspension” puts the other in a narrative that endows it with a temporality that is at the same time synchronic and diachronic (thus *allochronic*) with the present of the ethnographer (Ibid: 111). It is a *salvage*, in Clifford’s terms: “A rhetorical construct legitimating a representational practice” (Ibid: 112). As such, it goes hand in hand with the colonial image of the *avam* as both an affirmation of the west and the myth of its negation. “The other is lost, in disintegrating in time and space, but saved in the text” (Ibid: 112).

The ethnographic assumption that the objects need to be represented by an outsider risks Şahin’s own authenticity. He alienates himself in order to write. He writes himself at the risk of losing himself. It works different from an autobiography *or* a biography. The nostalgia or the remorse that could arise from biographical work is

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<sup>11</sup> From the book cover by Şahin himself

impossible here. This refers to the ethnographic distance he has or has given in to. “Every imagined authenticity presupposes, and is produced by, a present circumstance of felt inauthenticity” (Ibid: 114). Şahin is neither the elite nor the *avam*. He is torn between the pendulating structure of his own work. The alternative comes to him in his masterpieces as he withdraws/journeys towards the nostalgic mystique of the pastoral in *Selam Ateşleri*, *Sonuncu İz* and *Güneş Harfleri*.

“The self, cut loose from viable collective ties, is an identity in search of wholeness, having internalized loss and embarked on an endless search for authenticity. Wholeness by definition becomes a thing of the past (rural, primitive, childlike) accessible only as a fiction, grasped from a stance of incomplete involvement” (Ibid: 114).

#### **5.4. The Ghost of the Author**

How is this ethnographic entrapment within the tension of the allegorical and the symbolic exceeded in Osman Şahin’s literature? This is at the same time a question of ethnography’s difference from literature. Despite the substantial answer lies in a questioning of sovereignty, which we dwell upon later, the choice of narrative has some answers.

Şahin has time again repeated his astonishment with all the material he experienced in 1957. This astonishment is conspicuous in his statement that in that part of Turkey, you witness “a story everyday”. He has told that even a mere ride with a horse may give birth to a story: As he was riding one day, his horse refuses to pass from the middle of the road. Only later does he discover that there is actually a grave in that place and that the horse can smell it and not step on it. The contrast of the horse’s “attitude” with the attitude in *Makam Taşları* towards the “grave” tremped by

bulldozers is remarkable. An honest, albeit controversial statement as it is, Şahin reveals his involvement to be in the domain of the ethnographic where what happens is spectacular because it has meanings beyond itself. The discovery of “meaning” that is not immediate is the source of astonishment.

How Şahin treats his experiences is quite valuable. In various interviews including the one conducted for this thesis, he says about certain stories that he has been there when it happened or that he has met with the protagonist personally and listened to that story.

Apart from the two ethnographic works *Bucaklar* and *Yeraltında Uçan Kuş*, he has one other work whose basis is direct interviews. *Başaklar Gece Doğar* (*Ears are Born at Night* - 1991) contains numerous protagonists Şahin has interviewed prior to his novel. The parts in these interviews which are about Yaşar Kemal are quoted later in his collected essays about the author (Şahin, 2004b: 37-47). Memedo, Zeynel, Ahmet and İsmail appear in this work with reference to their rebellion that is the subject of *Başaklar Gece Doğar*. What Şahin does here, is that he cross-references his interviews and forms a narrative from third person perspective with a romanticized but realistic approach. The use of collected or first-hand information for novels is common practice considering works of authors from Daniel Defoe (i.e. *Moll Flanders*) to Dostoevsky (i.e. *Demons*). Şahin continues this in this particular work.

The matter with his short stories, which he obviously takes more serious, is quite different. For example, Şahin meets the “protagonist” of *Kırmızı Yel* in the year 1962 when he is a teacher in Malatya. Two military officers are passing by his village when they decide to stop by and take a break. Since the village teacher is someone who can relate to them in terms of being a man of the government and also can speak Turkish, they go to his place. It is here that Osman Şahin meets Müslüm Koca, the person who has sacrificed his son (see **Analysis – part c**). He listens to the story there and in fact,

begins his story with a modified version of what Koca has told him.<sup>12</sup> Then he imagines the version of this verdict in court and writes it as is.

*Bedvanlı Zülfo* is similar. Şahin does not witness it directly, but learns from the villager whose land is invaded by an *ağa* after the river moves it. He imagines the reaction of the peasant as one of attempting to sue the *ağa* and the aftermath.

*Makam Taşları* is actually a story about his own village sending many soldiers to the war of independence. The “protagonist” in whose name a monument of *makam* stones is raised is his great grandmother. The only play done with the actual story lies in the narrative. All the action is facts, yet he focuses on the customs of mourning in contrast to the how the modern state treats those customs. The same custom is observed ethnographically in *Son Yörükler*, for example, and we do not see the relationship with the state in there.

The eponymous stories of Memedi Lezgo and Parçala Niyazi are also of this nature. Şahin mentions Memedi Lezgo’s name also in *Bucaklar*. Both are stories of the prison with their personal stories intertwined. Lezgo is a famous eşkıya whose pride and dignity are not moved by the inhumane prison conditions. Niyazi’s story about how he starts lacerating himself as soon as he detects a threat of a thrashing by mafia or the police is also about pride and dignity – against inhumane treatment both inside the prison and outside. Şahin always isolates the virtues from their actual background. He imagines the exact plot that correspond to the value rather than tell the story as a signifier of an idea, ideology or historical signification. This is where he differs.

The best example at this point is *Ocağına Düşmek*. Going back to the interview, we learn something which is crucial for all his stories. Osman Şahin has been sitting

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<sup>12</sup> “*Kimse bilmez ki, dedi, açlıktan, dedi, götümüz çakıl bağlamış*” is modified into “*Biz oralarda sıçmayı unutmuştuk Hakim Beğ*”. (No one knows that our asses have scabbed pebbles from hunger – We had forgotten to take a shit back in there Mr. Judge)



next to the protagonist of this story as he accepts his arch-enemy into his house at a time of need. As he pulls his chair in front of the door and prevents the other pursuers of his enemy from entering the house, Şahin sits by him listening to the conversation. The story differs from the actual event only at the end. In the story, the protagonist sends his enemy away and complains to his wife about how he had to obey the custom and not kill the guest in need despite the feudal laws concerning blood feuds. In the actual version, he finds a way out of the conflicting laws. He gives his enemy boots to wear for the mountainous terrain, and hunts him down the next day, following the traces of his boots, and kills him...

In answer to a question about why he removes himself from such stories, Şahin simply replies: “Then it would be an interview, not literature”. He does not explain however, why the isolation of the virtues he underscores is so important. It seems it is our task to do so.

The way Şahin removes his own trace from the stories and in fact, leave his haunting presence is the difference between literature and ethnography. The author haunts as an uncanny presence within the story. He is there and not there. Him not being there marks his literature.

## CHAPTER 6

### THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In order to make sense of a further nature of Osman Şahin's stories in his early period, it is crucial to extend the basic analysis of his work. Therefore, for any extension, a prior (basic) analysis is crucial. As a matter of fact, this analysis is a part of the attempt to isolate an extended understanding, despite it being an "extension".

To substantiate the concern at stake, let us consider the concept of capitalism which is quite pervasive in the stories we focus on. It is true that both the presence and absence of capitalism has a meaning in Şahin's stories. Furthermore, it is a direct answer to most of the questions raised by the author. The instinctive attraction to a ubiquitous concept may relieve criticism from the weight of an overwhelming detail which seems to be far away from any answers. However, that overwhelming detail may go further than the answer itself. In this case, the apparent change in the economic system may be more important than the change being towards a specific "capitalism". In other words, just because the work hints at the evils of capitalism, we may miss *the nature* of the work that hints at the *advent of a different* system.

To repeat, this analysis will be basic - and reserved to the literature itself. It is impossible to say that it will be free of perspective of course however, the aim is to provide data which is as "raw" as possible – if we may say so.

Some questions concerning form and style will be considered apart from the content. Basically, we will focus on themes and concepts; and they will not be merely categories. They will come at us along with their adjoined capacities. To be certain, there will be a clear cut difference between the dialectic nature of the themes and the paradoxical appearance of the concepts. Thus, if we deal with sacrifice for a god, it will be thematic when the subject matter concerns an individual who indulges in an action in reference to that god. On the other hand, if we deal with a sacrifice that creates a conflict within its logic, it will be considered as a concept. No wonder than, the same example will be evaluated under different measures.

The abundance of examples always bears the danger of deviating from focus. Then again, in hope of evading possible deviations, they may lay a pattern bare. Such is the method of our approach.

## **6.1. Themes of Conflict**

### **6.1.1. Law**

The theme of law here will be evaluated in reference to an embodiment of law without tempering with the metaphysics of it. Our presumption is that law always appears embodied in the performative word of decision. In the traditional sense –which is valid here-, that which speaks the word of law is *the* law for the person who aims to address it. Therefore, the question “Who do we talk to about this?” at the time of injustice refers directly to an addressee that has the ability to speak the word of law. This speech may come as simply the speech of a policeman, a judge or say a lawyer. This transferred speech is our current subject matter.

In the story *Opoletli Kardaş*, the protagonist is the *ağa* of a village who has never experienced an encounter with any person with governmental responsibility. After a

festive preparation to visit the city of Mardin, he leaves with his servants and in the city, in response to youngsters who mock his outlook, he shoots and kills one of them; for it is a crime to insult the *ağa*. He is totally surprised to see that police officers try to take him away for the murder. One of the elderly policemen realizes the nature of *ağa*'s amazement and sweet-talks him into complying. The words of the *ağa* at this point are most significant. It is not the first time he is shooting someone. In both mountains and land, he has both killed and ordered to be killed – those who were against the “*ağa-law*” (Şahin, 2006: 25).<sup>13</sup>

This direct correspondence of law to the person of *ağa* does not appear for the first time here. Right before the *ağa* leaves for the city, Şahin describes the *maraba* to be even content for their rights to be embodied<sup>14</sup> in such a man like the *ağa* (Ibid, 20). This embodiment reveals the understanding of law as personification. It is the decision of a sovereign in the traditional sense that is law.

In fact, we see how this understanding is transferred to the modern structure in another story: *Bedvanlı Zülfo*. Zülfo loses a small piece of land in the middle of the current of a river to an *ağa*, who justifies the confiscation by saying that the small piece of land has moved into his property after a flood. On the verge of hopelessness, Zülfo decides to sue the *ağa*. Unlike the former story, there are now two laws in front of us. Moreover, the law embodied in the *ağa* is questionable via the existence of the state laws. However, Zülfo has two persons he listens to during his decision. One is his mother, who wants retribution and the other an elder, who speaks common sense and experience. While the mother supports the idea of suing the *ağa*, the elder tries to persuade Zülfo that both laws are corrupted and aid each other. The crucial point made in the story is about the helplessness of the peasant. Zülfo is confronted by the *ağa* after his decision is heard throughout the village. He is asked if he even knows what a lawyer looks like. His long delayed answer is a mere “someone like us” (Ibid, 36). The *ağa*

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<sup>13</sup> *Dağda, bayırda ağaya-kanuna yamaç çıkan yeri gelmiş vurmuşam, yeri gelmiş vurdurtmuşam.*

<sup>14</sup> *Hatta Haklarının böyle bir adamda canlanmasından hoşnuttular bile..*

retorts, saying that the lawyers are not really like Zülfo, but like *ağa* himself. A definitive differentiation is put forth. Later on, as Zülfü and his mother give up on the case, they decide to move to another village. The concluding remarks are significant. That other village certainly has an *ağa*, “but maybe the name’s different” (Ibid. 39). Personification of the law is in negation to the person. The person just occupies a position of authority.

There are two outstanding stories in the first book by Osman Şahin, which have a common aspect of narrative. Both protagonists of the stories are testifying before the court, of their crimes. They were both adapted to white screen. One is the *Red Wind* and the other is *Fareler (Rats)*. *Fareler* was one of several stories which composed the screenplay of the famous Turkish film *Kibar Feyzo (1978)*. The names of the protagonist Feyzo and the antagonists Bilo and Meho Ağa were kept. *Red Wind* was referred to and also used in *Adak (1979)*.

What makes these stories important as to their common aspect is the imagination of the court itself. Osman Şahin himself was interested in this. As we know, he had known the protagonist of his first story personally. To quote his motivations to write it: “This man would probably be taken to court. What would he say there?”<sup>15</sup>

This speech before the court has many dimensions to it. For our concern now, we take the direct interaction with a different law as our subject matter. The importance of the second person addressee as a part of the narrative style will be taken into account later on. As mentioned, the conflict between the existing feudal law and the new state laws appear in different forms in these stories. On the one hand we may see the first clashes while on the other, we may see a cross-challenge. In these latter stories that take place before the court, we see a different thing. It is an imagining of free speech. To remark, both stories are comprised of vulgar and honest speeches that wouldn’t actually be allowed that way in court.

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<sup>15</sup> Ama bu herif dedim, herhalde mahkemeye götürülür. Mahkemede ne dedi acaba?

In *Fareler*, the conflict is simple. The crop is in danger of being infested with rats. The peasants realize that the crops are not eaten, but piled up underground. As they cunningly try to put aside some of the crop for themselves, the *ağa* realizes there's something going on amongst the peasants and calls a clerk from the government. A pre-eminent theme of backstabbing peasants also appears here. Feyzo scares the clerk away but has a row with Bilo (one of the other peasants) over a share of the crop. As such, Bilo snitches on Feyzo and the *ağa* is angered. Feyzo is shot and decides to shoot the *ağa* before he dies. Obviously, he survives the wound.

The matter with *the Red Wind* is more complicated. In *Fareler*, the co-existence of feudal and governmental law was also a social matter. Whereas in the former story, the matter is strictly personal; this also brings about the most potentially allegoric story in Şahin's works. For our concern now, the two stories merge on the court scene. Lawlessness is presented before the law. The concept of embodiment of law is challenged. In the most literal meaning of it, law does not speak here. Instead, it listens and does not answer.

Many stories have hints of such conflicts between the traditional understanding of *ağa*'s word for law and the law of the state. However, a pattern is established in one of the last stories of Şahin's early period. In *Sarı Sessizlik (Yellow Silence)*, a smuggler is caught dead at the border. His corpse is brought to his village and the villagers are interrogated. No one claims the corpse fearing a lawsuit. A similar story is also depicted in Bekir Yıldız's *Kaçakçı Şahan*. In both cases, the corpse is unclaimed. However, in Yıldız's story, a dramatic twist awaits the reader. The corpse has gold in his mouth for his father to pick up in case he is put at the back of a military van after he is dead (Yıldız, 1982). Şahin, as we'll observe, isolates the basic human condition rather than presenting a dramatic resolution like Yıldız's stories frequently bring about. What's more, in a later story, *Otopsi (Autopsy)*, he repeats his attitude to isolate the response of the mourners, leaving the story unresolved in a classic way (Şahin, 2009: 224).

To repeat, the peasants can not even “claim their dead”, afraid of being “blacklisted, tried, thrashed”, “appearing on court and giving away the names of others” (Şahin, 2007: 202). This fear is one of established change in the understanding of the peasants. The relation is overturned. Law speaks against the peasant’s silence. The law of *ağas* is finally, in the most crucial matter –matter of death- totally absent.

### 6.1.2. State

What the state is may change in context. In fact, the state is quite similar to what the name implies. It is a context. For our concern, it is not much different from the state of things either, except that it is a state of people in a political sense. For the characters of Şahin’s stories, the state is a variable in the equations of their struggle for living. It is a tricky theme one must admit. Here’s how.

A similar pattern with the prior theme of law may be formed accordingly. One of Şahin’s most powerful stories is that of a wailer by the name Kara Havva. Kara Havva corresponds to an actual person. A relative of Şahin’s in fact. It is custom in their village that no one but the wailer mourns for the dead first. Kara Havva is that person. Her name reappears in various other works about the *yörüks*, the most significant of which is Şahin’s latest work up to now: *Darağacı Avı (Gallow Hunt)*. In this work, Kara Hapa, the descendant of Kara Havva is told to have inherited Kara Havva’s immense capability to mourn out loud. And it is here that Kara Havva is mentioned to have mourned for almost 80 dead at the times of war (1914-1922).

*Makam Taşları* is the name of the story in which Kara Havva is put in focus. The name of the story is quite hard to translate for *makam* has several different meanings like place, authority, mansion, post, mode, rank, office etc. One might notice that they all have a common vein in rank-authority. This common aspect forms the core of the story. What Kara Havva had in the first place as *makam* is yielded to the new age of *makam*, the new state, the new understanding and so forth. Not only is it the story of a

village sacrificing countless men/soldiers for the new nation state but also a village sacrificing in vain. As custom goes, when Kara Havva dies as she wails for her own son, the villagers show respect and pile up stones by the road close to her place of demise. As it is by the road, people throw the best stones they find on the pile to honour the dead. These stones pile up into a huge monument. And when there's the need for stones to construct a building for a company, the construction agency does not refrain from using the best stones in that area, those over Kara Havva's monument...

The story is powerful in many ways. It has the fading and forgetting of custom for a new understanding that does not respect a history which it does not see as its own to say the least. The sacrifice of the village for the new state begins the story. Another sacrifice ends it. The death of their sons may be reconcilable to an extent, but the loss of a past is not. The state sits over its foundations in oblivion. In a country which is full of monuments, we are once again reminded that history lies in the ruins (Benjamin, 1998). Yet this literature sees the ruins at their limit. It is the loss of history as loss of the ruins. In compliance, Şahin's stories also see allegory as form at its limit. The stories fail to correspond. Instead, they reveal a truth beyond correspondence. Kara Havva's heir Kara Hapa is very significant at this point. Hapa is described to be a wailer who told of "the world and life via the dead" (Ibid: 59). Kara Havva, in none of the passages mentioning her name is one that *teaches*.

What does this say to us about the state? The state of people? Let us take another example. *Nüfus Sayımı (The Population Count)* plays on a prejudice which still exists today: The bountiful hospitality of the east. As a clerk from the government visits a village at the edges of southeast Anatolia, he is eager to have an astonishing meal prepared by the *ağa* and the village (Şahin, 2006). At least that's what he heard. He is disappointed to see that they have nothing but *bulgur* and *ayran*. The *ağa* sulks throughout their meeting and explodes into saying that he also would love to serve the governor if he could, but they are starving. In simplest words, the state comes to the village only to take. The village is nothing but resources to "the state". You can count them, they can serve you and that's it.



The final example for this pattern resides in a relatively complicated story of a Kurdish guerrilla. The story *Özlü Hamurlar* is told paragraph by paragraph, switching from the perspective of its protagonist to that of third person omniscient at each paragraph. The name of the story is again playing on the determinant. At this point, we may observe an interesting stylistic aspect in Şahin's stories. A good many of Şahin's stories have simple noun phrases as their names with puns on the modifiers. As we mentioned before, *Makam Taşları* was one of the best examples. Other examples include *Kurt Avı* (*Wolf Hunt*) where the "wolf" also refers to *homo homini lupus* (Man is a wolf to man); *Acı Duman* (*Bitter Smoke*) where bitter is also the feeling of giving away the last of the tobacco etc. These puns usually correspond to transference of meaning rather than equivocations of irony. The wolf hunt becomes a manhunt, the "tasty" smoke becomes a "bitter" smoke. The shift in meaning is a central characteristic to this genre. It is crucial for understanding its origin.

As such, *Özlü Hamurlar* literally means 'meaty dough' which is full of nutrition that can last a whole family. On the other hand, "özlü" means with-essence. In the text, it is used as a simile for land (Şahin, 2007: 65).<sup>16</sup> The essence of the land is rich, however, the protagonist can not benefit from it. He is angry against injustice, against feudal, religious and governmental authority. According to his part of the narrative he witnesses the death of his father at the hands of rural militia<sup>17</sup>, quits school and takes refuge in the mountains. There is even the question that still haunts Turkey's politics today: "Can a human being be human and be humiliated and thrashed because of the language he speaks, the bread he eats or the water he drinks, mother?" (Ibid: 66)<sup>18</sup> This is quite a strong remark regarding the so-called Kurdish Conflict was a relatively new phenomena in Turkey's political agenda in those years. Not only the state has abandoned the village, but it also requests total subordination now. Needless to say,

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<sup>16</sup> *Ekilip biçilse özlü hamur örneği, sofraların tümüne yeter.*

<sup>17</sup> *Kolcu*

<sup>18</sup> *Hiç insan insan olur da konuştuğu dil, yediği ekmek, içtiği su yüzünden aşağılanır, dövülür mü Ana?*

language, food and water are literally matters of concern. The shifts in register add to the rhythm of the story, which resonate the burden of the protagonist's memory. The memories antagonize what the state embodies. The blood lost in the construction of that very state is unjustified. The state only signifies reluctant loss without gain. It is not a new remark. To exemplify, both in *Yaban* of Yakup K. Karaosmanoğlu (1932) and *Günebakan* of Hamdullah Suphi (1929), there are remarks about the reluctance of the villagers to sacrifice for the nation state *anymore*. However, the content of these texts are chronologically situated at the time of war when there is hope of rebuilding. Both the authors are exemplary intellectuals of the same hope. After decades, slight hopes have yielded their places to utter discontent and contempt.

It should be noted that the ethnic issue here is omitted to focus on a general issue. For obvious reasons: If we are to consider the ethnic struggle regarding the Kurdish geography as an exception, we may fail to recognize the change of understanding which is at the origins of Şahin's work. That is why, the story *Makam Taşları* is evaluated on a par with *Özlü Hamurlar* although one takes place in a "Turkish" village while the other in a Kurdish village. The fact that the author does not treat them differently has similar foundations.

### **6.1.3. Custom**

Custom as a theme undergoes a similar definition as that of the state. We consider it as something in relation rather than arriving at an all-embracing scheme. As such, we seek a pattern. Custom as daily practice is our starting point. To finalize, the fading away of "custom" will provide an argument.

The notion of the custom as traditional law regulates and dominates decisions in the stories at hand. We start with two stories which come closest to parables. This proximity to parable is not a coincidence, for the further away the story is from clashes

of the modern and the traditional, the closer it gets to pedagogical correspondence. Yet, this supposed correspondence of literature and experience is another axis of our discussion. The question we will ask is: What if these stories fail to meet the criteria for their *genre*? What if the correspondence is a failure of correspondence?

The core issue of *Ocağına Düşmek (To Fall at the Mercy of)* is hospitality vs enmity. The protagonist Seyfo is sitting at the porch of his house when a man running away from his enemies who are trying to shoot him comes asking for mercy. They exchange glances for a second and Seyfo takes İsako inside of his house, not allowing his enemies, who arrive seconds later claiming their enemy, in. Only later when both the enemies and İsako are sent away do we learn from Seyfo –in an answer to his wife- that İsako was also his own enemy in blood<sup>19</sup>. The rule of hospitality overrides enmity.

We have taken into account the actual experience of Osman Şahin regarding this story before (Chapter 3). We will not be dealing with it now. It is important to see the pagan tradition here that we can hardly imagine in contemporary society. The story of *Baucis and Philemon* is the prototypical story of hospitality. One treats the guest like he is a god (i.e. Zeus). The concept of ‘Tanrı misafiri’ (Guest of God) that is prominent in Turkey/Anatolia should be considered ‘guest as god’. Moreover, there is an ambivalence concerning the concepts of guest and enemy, which will be further discussed (see *Hospitality* below).

A similar custom can be observed in *Acı Duman (Bitter Smoke)*. In order to arouse envy in his enemy-like neighbour, Neşo smokes sawdust at his porch, visibly. Hido, who is having a nicotine crisis, sends his wife to ask for some “tobacco”. Neşo is alarmed when his own wife gives him the good news of their enemies falling at their mercy. There is no genuine tobacco to be given. Yet, Neşo’s wife Zeynar, as is custom, has put aside some tobacco for hard times. They serve their neighbours at the expense of their own joy. It is custom above else.

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<sup>19</sup> Lit. *Kan davalı*. Meaning an enemy whose reasons are either blood feud or an unforgivable violation of conduct.

How is custom challenged then? We need a definition here. Custom overrides reason. It overrides it to serve a sovereign space. The rule of hospitality keeps the sacred space of the home intact. The rule of neighbourly service keeps the sacred space of neighbourhood intact. Any disregard for such service is blasphemy. Custom overrides a very specific type of arrogance: Property. Neither home nor neighbourhood are properties in this understanding. Property is nullification of sovereignty. We should note that the sovereign space we mentioned is not that of those who serve it. On the contrary, the one who accepts the guest despite the enmity is subordinated. He serves. He conforms to the idea that he does not own himself. Rephrasing Bataille, custom affirms the sovereign space of endless expenditure (i.e. order of *ağa*), subordinating the space of limited expenditure (i.e. home, neighbourhood) (Bataille, 1988b). It makes servitude the measure of humanity. Neşo and Seyfo are human to the extent that he serves custom. Despite their ill intents...

How is custom challenged then? It is challenged precisely by the traditional sovereign. In this case, *ağa*. *Ağa* has the capability to decide anything, but even so he can not contradict custom. It is custom which affirms his decision. In *Reşim*, we encounter a festive moment in the harvest. All peasants have gathered after a fruitful harvest and are expecting *ağa* to fulfil his promise to give them extra crops after a year of famine. They have put the *reşim*, which is a token of harvest at the top of the gathered crop. It is believed to have a sacred power of guarding the crop. Because of it no one steals (Şahin, 2006: 133). As the *ağa* refuses them their extra share on justified grounds, the *reşim* loses its aura. One of the peasants throws the *reşim* at *ağa*'s feet. The symbolic convergence of *reşim* and *ağa*'s rule is broken as is the promise. *Ağa* has overridden the custom (of promise) that affirms the custom (of servitude) and as such, the custom (of *reşim*) is overridden by the peasant.

In a similar story of *ağa* abusing custom, Behram Ağa of *Gömlek (The Shirt)* fears that his peasants will revolt following a series of revolts in neighbouring villages. He consults the elder and arrives at the idea of sharing a symbolic shirt with one of the key

contributors (Eno) to a possible rebellion. According to custom, when *ağa* shares a shirt –meaning both men wear it at the same time- with a peasant, that peasant becomes a protégé and follows *ağa* as a direct servant. Everything goes well and the rebellious wave is pacified until Eno can not bear the weight of being a “strike-breaker” anymore and throws the shirt in *ağa*’s face (Şahin, 2007: 93).

Both symbols of custom are shattered in transgression. As soon as the truth of custom is revealed to the peasants as an affirmation that does not affirm anymore, there is rebellion. No wonder Şahin captures precisely these moments. We will see that a similar mode of rebellion is also present in *Tomruk (Lumber)*. However, shattering of custom is mortal for the feudal system, whereas in capitalistic mode of production (as in *Tomruk*), custom does not have such role of keeping together a system of servitude. Or rather, it is modified and transformed into a capitalistic mode (such as the transformation of charity).

As we see, there is a shift from the self-affirming to the self-destructive. In the latter two stories, the challenge set forth from inside of the custom is not negotiable. This gives way to the defiance of it.

#### **6.1.4. Religion**

Religion as a theme underlies the theme of feudalism. That is why this part is more of an introduction to it. Both the feudal institutions of religion and lordship (*ağalık*) coexist as reinforcements of each other. However, religion is demeaned more than lordship. It is partly because religion as superstition and anti-modernity is incapable of adapting to the new state. Considering the current agenda in Turkey, this statement is ironic if not tragic. For Islam as a religion is more capable than feudalism in terms of adapting to the economical systems it attaches itself to (Bataille, 1988a: 87, 90). Time has showed us this.

At this point, what part religion plays is downsized to a negativity. In *Fırat'ın Cinleri (Demons of Euphrates)*, although the *ağa* is curious whether the protagonist Yağda is actually rabid or not, he gives in to the sheikh's decision to throw her into the river Euphrates. The poor woman is thrown into the river to be cured of the demons that possessed her. *Ağa* disposes of her for the sake of coherence in custom and religion.

On the other hand, in the *Red Wind*, Resul sacrifices his son for he has promised god innocent blood in exchange for welfare. When he gets his crop, he fulfils his promise. Religion is not a system of thought but a submission. A pure submission that overrides explanation (Ibid 83). It is this submission that comes to be questioned and transformed into a different submission. This transformation is the truth of the contemporary agenda of Islam and capitalism's consensus.

One last example is a subtle underlying theme. In 1970s, there occurred numerous massacres against religious minorities of Islam, specifically against the *Alevis*. *İzmir Bekir* relates to one of them: The Maraş Massacre in 1978. *İzmir Bekir* is the protagonist who has served wars in establishment of the new state and is a symbol of the new republic in Şahin's text. In fact, this story is by far, the most symbolic of Şahin's texts, for Bekir's murder is the murder of the unity the early republic dreamt of. Religion is, once again vilified as incompatible with the newly born system. The divides within Islam are unacceptable. To clarify, it is a crucial part of the republican doctrine to remain ambivalent against this divide. On the one hand, unity is desired and on the other, minorities are suppressed in order to keep the unified image. *İzmir Bekir* is one such example.

### 6.1.5. Feudalism

What of feudalism? Or in clearer terms, what of *ağas*? We already asked of *ağas* in terms of law, state, custom and religion. We evaded certain crucial characteristics up to this point. Firstly, the *ağas* we talk of were mainly Kurdish and the setting was in south-eastern Anatolia. Even if the *ağas* of the *yörüks* were subject to a story, they did not address the issues we discuss here. Secondly, when we say feudalism, we mean an *autonomous* feudalism whose external affairs are still linked to state. This autonomy is challenged on various grounds of economy, indoctrination and of course, civil progressivism as modernity. Lastly, we mean traditional sovereignty where embodiment of law is an instance. Regarding this last remark, we take up Bataille's conception of sovereignty as the restoration of expenditure to the present moment after transgressing the boundaries of an expenditure limited to the primacy of future (Bataille, 1988b: 242). This means that the *ağa* is given the privilege of spending without gain at the expense of his *maraba* who produces for an ends of return. The logic of production is overwhelmed by *ağa*'s spending. In his embodiment does the peasant partake in limitless expenditure. It is the master-slave dialectic Hegel speaks of and it is precisely this dialectic that is challenged in the change from traditional to the "modern" Bataille speaks of (Derrida, 1978: 334).

Let us begin with an example of utter loss. In *Kurt Avı (Wolf Hunt)*, an *ağa* is worried about his son's urination problems. The sheikh advises a wolf hunt. This superstition is to be fruitful in solving the urination problems of the son. However, the centre of the story shifts from the problem to the hunt itself. As the peasants hunt a wolf, they encounter peasants from another village, who start chasing the same wolf. In order to obey their *ağas*' greed, both sides take up on each other and shoot each other, losing track of the wolf. The story is concluded as follows: "They were sorrier about the wolf that was lost than their *maraba*" (Şahin, 2006: 45).<sup>20</sup> Such is the importance of the lives of the peasants in the face of the urination problems of *ağa*'s son.

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<sup>20</sup> *Kaçan kurda, ölen marabalarından daha çok üzüldüler ...*

A similar case is shown in *Irgat Erleri (Men of Labour)*. Irgat is the name given to any labourer although etymologically it was derived from Ancient Greek *ergatis*, which meant working-woman. The phenomena of the labourer being deprived of being considered on a par with men of equals seem to have shifted its meaning to both genders. The story does not prove otherwise. After a fire in the field, a husband and wife who were working in those fields lose their son. They had tied the boy by the ankle so that he would not be lost during labour. The *ağa* promises to build a concrete grave for the kid, soothing the labourers. After a year, come the labour season, the couple revisit the grave, expecting a concrete grave. They are disappointed to see that there are grasses, taller than the other, on the place where their son was buried. *Ağa* disrespecting the dead is unacceptable even on feudal customs. Yet, it is precisely this insignificance of the peasant that opens up the realm of traditional sovereignty to the *ağa*.

We have given examples of how *ağa*'s position is challenged via disenchantment of custom as well. Where does this lead to? *Acenta Mirza* allows the *ağa* to speak as well. It is comprised of two letters. One from Mirza Ağa to his relative Latif and one back from Latif. Mirza is worried that agriculture is dead and many of his peasants have migrated to become tradesmen in big cities and even workers in Germany. He is at the point of selling his village land and asks for advice. Latif is "realistic" and advises Mirza to transform his land into money and thus capital for business. He further advises Mirza to found an agency for trade, thus, becoming an agent – *Acenta*. This theme was famously explored in the film *Züğürt Ağa (Broke Ağa, 1985)*. This film was also loosely based on Şahin's stories. *Ağas* had to adapt to the new capitalistic system. They did it by transforming their land and goods into capitals and adapting their workpower into capitalistic modes of production. The most significant blow was struck upon the understanding of limitless expenditure. *Ağas* lost their lordship precisely on the grounds that their spending was regulated by a restricted economy. This was the major change.



### 6.1.6. Modernity

Thematically speaking what we investigated as religion to feudalism is what modernity is to capitalism. Duty regarding feudalism is justified in religion. Duty regarding capitalism is justified in modernity. Both the crises of capitalism and feudalism are immediately appropriated and resolved by religion and modernity. This does not imply that we can regard modernity is a religious attitude. Then again, the resemblance is not far-fetched.

Once again, we begin with the originary. As we remember, in *Nüfus Sayımı (The Population Count)*, the encounter with the state was one of demand. There's another aspect to the demand. A civil society demands the population count. The civic man is a counted man. The number is his primary presence. The number is the symbol of his entrance to the supply-demand equation. On the other hand, this very equation is also an imposition of different façades which is modernity's basis. We seek a contingency here. We define modernity to be being ready-for-use as different circumstances push. A human being is a worker on the field, a wife in the household, a soldier at the time of war etc. The circumstances make the person available. They are voids filling the place of a number. It is beyond reification. Human beings become objects deprived of being objects by themselves (Heidegger 1992: 288). Such submission to be ready-for-use prepares the way for a capitalistic economy.

In this case, a human being is no different than a calf waiting to be slaughtered for its meat. *Sarı Öküz (Yellow Calf)* is precisely the story of this. As we listen to the concise auto-biography(sic) of the Yellow Calf from his own narration, we hear how his mother remarks that the lass around their necks is a symbol of humankind's distrust in the calves. We hear of the new regulations of property written on paper overrule the mere existence of a fence. We listen to his painful memories of castration and finally how he is taken to the slaughterhouse. Yellow Calf is equivalent to his use-value. This

is not merely capitalism. The personification (TR. *teşhis*) utilized here implies an ultimate equalization of “being” and use.

This argument needs to be extended. The story of Ustahmet is probably the most mind boggling of Şahin’s stories in this sense. On the one hand it presents the new age of machinery to be one despicable order and on the other, the story itself is a very – *very-* modern elegy. *Ustahmet Çeliği (Ustahmet Steel)* takes its cue from a real story that took place in the 70s. An American plane crashes onto the Taurus mountains on the south of Turkey. The setting is close to the village Şahin was born. Ustahmet, who is an ironsmith, scavenges the remains of the plane after it is abandoned by experts who investigate the accident. Taking the useful material, he works them into bells, hammers etc. What was once a destructive plane “which bombarded Vietnam months ago” was transformed into its “primordial, productive form” (Şahin, 2007: 123). There is an extremely ambivalent attitude here. Apparently, one side of the coin is that the opposition of production and destruction is the opposition of the traditional and modern societies. The other side of the coin is that Şahin’s praise of Ustahmet is also an elegy for the loss of that productive understanding. In other words, it is already a nostalgic approach towards such production, within the perspective of use. What do we mean by use? This is the decisive question.

Indeed it is a hard question to answer. Use is further ends. In a Batailleian sense, if every use is deferred/delayed for further ends, then the ultimate use is “uselessness” (Bataille, 1988a: 23; 1988b: 16, 128, 312). Ustahmet’s act does not enter this “human” paradox. The story gives an ideal. “If only we could work for productive ends...” is the dream. The challenge against modernity, so to say, is to reformulate the question into “What does it mean to work for ends?” Without further ado, we should redefine the modernity we talk about here. It is the total withholding of any possibility of human presence within a mathematics of reasonability. Dreams within human experience, joy within need, ability within service, capability within direction, irrationality within confinement, acts within rights, desires within accessibilities... The list could go on

forever. We are very much accustomed to this. This is what we mean by modernity for the sake of this work. A rationalization of the unreasonable in a sense.

To sum up this part, one other example will be needed. *Zaman Suçlusu (Convict of Time)* is the story of a peasant woman who dies in an accident while trying to pass the highway. The narrator mourns for the death of the woman talking to her, telling her how the whole situation will be processed by the police, the media etc. The lamentation ends in a wish that her death take place in her homeland in the mountains (Şahin, 2007: 197). The style in which the story is written is both apologetic and condemning. It apologizes from the “mother” for being so ignorant in being indulged with justification, paperwork, explanation and forgetting the significance of death. So much so that even death loses its meaning at the face of such horror of reason (Ibid 195). It condemns the modern society for reducing the corpse to a statistic. The beginning of the lament makes sense seen in this light: “In that homeland of yours, in that homeland beyond the snowy mountains rain was always called rain. Ice was ice, sun was sun” (Ibid 193).<sup>21</sup> They were not translated to that *which was reasonable*. They were not notes on the crime scene.

### 6.1.7. Capitalism

When it comes to the specific system of economy, capitalism relies on calculation according to the capital. Any “calculation” beyond the capital as its primary variable is overruled. Such calculations may vary from pride to life at stake. These overrules are the objects of focus in Şahin’s stories.

Now and again we observe Şahin writing parallel stories on very similar subjects. These stories sometimes provide strong contrasts between phenomena since he

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<sup>21</sup> *Senin o yurdunda, o karlı dağların gerisindeki yurdunda yağmura yağmur denirdi hep. Buza buz, güneşe güneş denilirdi.*

evaluates them in the same context. Sometimes they provide a Rashomon Effect, challenging the story to its essentials. One example of the latter is the famous parable of Çolak Osman Ağa told in three different narratives in *Ölüm Oyunları* ending in three different resolutions (Şahin, 2002). One example of the former is *Makam Taşları* and *Değişim (The Transformation; Şahin, 2009)* where the same new state erases the “birthgivers” of it on one and the traditional religious institutions on the other. This creates a stark contrast between the subaltern and the former sovereign forms during an era of change/transformation. The familiarity of *Bedvanlı Zülfo* and *Reşim* should also be noted in terms of injustice and response. One other example of this sort is *Acenta Mirza*, which we discussed above and *Hemşeri* (Şahin, 2007). In this story, we hear a peasant’s letter begging for a job from his countryman who has a job position in the city (TR. *Hemşeri*). This time, we do not read the reply letter. Instead, we listen to the same occurrences Mirza Ağa has talked about from the point of view of the peasant. How did the changes strike him? He has no land and he has no access to the judicial system for he speaks Kurdish – “as if poverty has place in Turkish but not Kurdish” (Ibid 70). He is invalid for the existing modes of production because he is injured working for patrons. He barely makes it out of the hospital. It is in such helplessness do the peasants seek a place to live in the new world.

And what of the “valid”? *Kanlı Garo* is one good example. Garo is a renowned criminal who has killed for traditionally reputable reasons. In the environment he works, his boss treats him like garbage, degrading him like the hairy ape of Eugene O’Neill. The coworkers pity him, for they know Garo is proud and does not bear with such disrespect. Yet, he does, for he has just got out of prison. He swallows his pride not to meddle with law again. He is utterly subordinate. Pride does not count.

On the other hand, Şahin does not refrain from sketching a rebellious story considering the same issue. *Tomruk (Log)* is the story of a lumberherd who herds felled lumber logs from the top of the hills via the river to the edge of the sea where other workers of the same company cover the mouth of the river with a net that accumulates the logs so that they can be loaded on trucks parked nearby. Nedim is the name of the

lumberherd who suffers great difficulties during the herding and almost dies among the heavy logs. At the end, he loses many logs on the way. His boss rebukes him and cuts his share low. Nedim gets so furious that he cuts the rope that holds the net and frees the logs into the sea. This story was adapted to an underrated masterpiece by the same name in 1982 by Şerif Gören. There are few scenes in the history of Turkish cinema that captures revolt so well. Nedim is played by Kadir İnanır, whose crying out *Tomruk! Tomruk!* before the climactic moment of cutting the logs loose pins the violence of capitalism to the one word that had mattered throughout the story. The object becomes the object of revolt. When the story is thought complimentary to the film, the meaning of the logs becomes all the more clearer. Nedim's whole existence is tied to the existence of logs. He is valuable to the extent of the number of logs he can bring. His rebellion is his self-destruction, the destruction of his labour.

This aspect of capitalism is not specific to the peasants or in general, the villager of course. Yet, Şahin sticks to the rural setting where the contrasts of the customary with the modern, human values with human use-value can be observed in its highest amplitude.

### **6.1.8. Gender**

Up to now, all the themes we have inspected have produced patterns that implied a change or transformation. The last three themes we will discuss will be different. They will allow us to rather focus on certain distinctions that hint at an understanding that is neither challenged nor threatened, but situated axiomatically. It is in this sense that we can treat what a woman means in Şahin's stories. Although we dubbed the theme as gender, the primary concern is obviously, woman. The man attains his gender only in opposition. This is, of course, not a general argument, but a choice contingent in Şahin's literature.

The characteristics of the prototypical women in Şahin's stories are not unfamiliar. There are two dominant prototypes. That of the mother-woman and that of the commodity-woman.

The examples of the mother-woman can be seen in *Odun (Wood)*, *Bebek (The Baby)*, *Ağzıkörler (Bluntmouths)*, *Ağız İçinde Dil Gibi (Like a Tongue in the Mouth)*, *Sarı Sessizlik (Yellow Silence)* and *Zaman Suçlusu (Convict of Time)*. All these stories produce the following arguments: 1- The mother speaks the custom and the truth of the custom. 2- The mother embodiedly signifies protection, preservation. Her presence is preservation itself. 3- The mother has the strength for "fearless speech" but lacks the rank for it.

The first argument can be observed best in *Sarı Sessizlik*. The dishonoured corpse (of the man<sup>22</sup>) is a violation of custom also sketched in *the Iliad* and *Antigone*. The mother speaks the custom of honouring the dead whoever they were. She further speaks a truth of it - the importance of mourning the dead as a possibility of peace (for further discussion see Krog, 2000: Chapter 16).

One different example of this is *Odun*. The protagonist is collecting wood from the top of the river with many villagers when one log he fixes his eyes on is also the target of another peasant. As they come to terms in sharing the log, the mother of the protagonist rebukes her son into giving up half of his share –which is supposedly his right- and cuts the log loose (reminiscent of *Tomruk*). Here, the mother speaks the custom of owning up to one's right no matter what. Consensus is failure. Consensus is subordination.

The second argument can be observed in the comparison of *Bebek* and *Ağzıkörler*. In the first story the father is trying to take his baby to a hospital kilometres away,

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<sup>22</sup> The difference between the masculin and feminin corpses is a matter beyond this study. We should add that the respect concerning the corpse always concerns a masculin corpse though.

carrying him over hills and through woods. There is not a single mention of the mother the meaning of whose absence we witness in the father's incapability to care for the baby. On the other hand, in the latter story, the mother and son walk to an improper grave to carry the corpse of the dead husband back to the village for proper burial. Here, the mother is fully in control of what is to be done and how. The second story presents an interesting detail as well. Although we know the names of the father and son, we never hear the name of the mother. It is not a coincidence. A mother is a mother more than an individual being. What's more, the father in *Bebek*, despite the emergency, hides by the road not to be seen when he sees that a woman is approaching. He tries to hush his baby saying that a woman should not see a man carrying his baby (Şahin, 2006: 90). The man attains his gender only in opposition.

The last argument is more widely observed. The mothers in *Odun*, *Bedvanlı Zülfo*, *Deli Hatice (Mad Hatice)* all speak fearlessly. In his seminal work *Fearless Speech*, Michel Foucault is noted to have defined<sup>23</sup> *parrhesia* (fearless speech) of the Ancient Greeks to have five characteristics. Firstly, the speaker has a relation with truth via honesty; secondly, he risks his life in speaking; thirdly, he sees it as a moral duty; fourthly, he prefers criticism than empty praise; and lastly, he prefers speech over silence and ignorance (Foucault, 2005: 17). A mother can fulfil all these criteria except for the risking of life. This criterion, Foucault remarks, implies equity between the speaker of fearless speech and the target of criticism. We may conclude thus, that the mother does not have the rank of equality with men in speech here. And still, they create a foil for the failure of man to employ fearless speech. As such, "as women speak, they speak for us who are too cowardly to speak" (Krog, 2000: 235).

On the other side, woman as a commodity has a strict meaning. Kuşde in *Musallim ve Kuşde*, Zala in *Zala Kadın*, Gülüşan in *Kör Gülüşan* bear the name of the story for a reason. They either are a target of preserving *namus (honour, nomos)*, forced marriage or utter pacification. Kuşde waits in a grave till her husband Musallim comes back from killing the man who has dirtied their name by raping her (Şahin, 2006: 110).

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<sup>23</sup> *Fearless Speech* is not written by Michel Foucault, but is rather an edited version of notes taken in a seminar of his.

She waits there for Musallim's decision to spare or kill her. Honour killings that have been a prominent issue for decades now, have been considered within this discourse of commoditized women. In an awkward way, the romanticized eponymy of these women continues to serve the attitude of commoditization. In *Namus Eri (Man of Honour)*, the wife first suffers because of a slander and then becomes a prostitute. Because the name comes before the person. It defines rank as well. Here's an argument that we are to remember later on: "*Choice* is given only in time, but *rank* is in space. Rank depends on birth, which is a spatial difference" (Bataille, 1988b: 250). The spatial difference of the woman is contingent with the spatiality of the "traditional society" Şahin demarcates. Gendered truths and differences relate to the meanings women enter body and soul.

### 6.1.9. Death

Death as a phenomenon bears an ambivalence that Şahin uses in the richest way possible. It would not be far-fetched to call Şahin an author of the image of death. Majority of his stories deal with death as an image that floats by the persons in crisis. Ranging from blood feuds to revenge, from honour matters to criminal cases, from natural death to sacrifice, Şahin's works are richly embroidered with all kinds of deaths.

That is why, it is hard and a possible mistake to classify them like we did in several other themes. The important characteristic of death is the admission of it. When is death admissible and when is it not? When can it be embraced? This is more or less the core characteristic of the image we talk about. If we remember Kuşde's waiting in her grave for her husband's decision and the lamentation for the woman in *Zaman Suçlusu (Convict of Time)*, we see the strong contrast. Şahin "interferes with" the meaning of death only when the death is *untimely* for the subject matter itself.

We are, then, talking about a temporality of death. Take for example, the Maraş massacre serving the background of *İzmir Bekir*. Bekir's death is untimely and although



the narrative seems to stick to an emotionless third person perspective, it bears the tonality of a narrator who suppresses his fury, and talks between grinded teeth, hardly keeping himself from crying out loud. Why such tonality? It is a protest against untimely death. The lamenting tone in the last sentence confirms this: “*He would be 93 if he lived*” (Şahin, 2007: 99).

The temporality of death then, has symbolic meaning. We have strictly evaded intertextual comparisons in between literary periods of Şahin. We will continue to do so, but we should add at this point, that this symbolic meaning is extended in later periods. Especially in the third period, death as a haunting will become a prominent theme.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, when the waiting for death is not concluded, a point is made: The death itself is not important. We see this in Kuşde’s case and in *Kör Gülüşan* and *Obruk Bekçisi* (*Guardian of the Pit*). *Obruk Bekçisi* is an investigation into the mind of a shepherd who awaits death. The story stands out among all the other stories with its psychological depth. This exceptionality also provides a contrast.

Yusufoğlu is a *yörük* shepherd who gets trapped in a deep and large pit during an ice storm. As he waits hopelessly for any help, he thinks of his presence in the pit. He thinks of how his possible death matches his poorness and ethnicity. There come moments of absurdity when he slashes cheese filled in *tulum*s<sup>25</sup> because they signify the rich *ağas* for whom he is working in this place in this cold and weather. He leaves one which belongs to a poor peasant like him out. As the moment of death approaches, Şahin cuts the story and leaves one paragraph for the concluding chapter. In that

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<sup>24</sup> In fact, in his last book, *Darağacı Avı* (*Gallow Hunt*), the eponymous story is precisely about this matter. No wonder he has mentioned this specific story to be his masterpiece in a newspaper interview.  
<http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?hn=177822>

<sup>25</sup> Goatskin used as bags.

paragraph, reality and hallucination intertwine. He hears voices of men and dogs and tries to yell out that he is there. The story ends there.

As we have mentioned before, omitting the conclusion is for the sake of isolating a condition. This is so for situations of death, but also applies to other situations as well. This is a stylistic choice. In this case, Yusufoglu being saved or not removes us from the truth of him ending up there. The road to dying and its aftermath are more important for Şahin than the moment itself. Of course, this is not a radical difference. However, the way he obsesses with the conditions of death is significant. This specific story is a powerful example of his literature's ordinary engagement with its subject matter. Moreover, it serves a second axis to the matter of death. Yusufoglu's death is not untimely, for he risks such death in his occupation and age. It is unhomely<sup>26</sup> and undeserved. Dying in one's own home at a time one would be content with is a great virtue in the land we deal with here. It is a matter of respect.

#### **6.1.10. Mourning**

We already said that the road to dying and its aftermath are more important for Şahin than the moment itself. The aftermath corresponds to mourning rituals and the possibility of mourning. The main classification of the themes as themes was a result of distinguishing them as oppositions binary or polynomial. Law as something embodied, accessible or not. State as the gathering of a supply-demand relationship. Custom vs Law in its all-embracing provision of practice. Religion and Feudalism vs Modernity and Capitalism in the transformation of the traditional forms of sovereignty. Gender as the charged presence of woman (her responsibility) and its opposition as man. Death is its timeliness and homeliness that reveals to man his existence in the world. And of all the themes that could be posited as a substantial/visible act or a sum of acts, mourning

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<sup>26</sup> Should not be mixed with 'uncanny'. 'Unhomely' here, merely means "away from home".

or its absence appear as the most frequent. This applies to the whole sum of works Şahin has written.

From the absence of the body to be mourned for to the disregard for proper mourning rituals, it appears in a variety of ways. To begin with, we know the importance of the possibility of it. *Ağzıkörler (Bluntmouths)* was precisely about this. Even if the injustices of the world were heavy on the protagonists, it was crucial to bury the father in his proper grave. The twist in the story is that we do not learn that the father is dead until towards the end. This keeps us thinking that they have not seen each other for eight years for some reason apart from death. At one point the mother exclaims that her husband's grave was left in the mountains and that it is enough of her husband being trampled under the feet of herds of sheep (Ibid: 16-17).

The importance of the grave itself is also underlined in *Irgat Erleri* (See part v. *Feudalism*). The loss of the child of the labourers is bearable as long as the proper burial of their child is accomplished. However, even when the burial is possible and proper, the loss itself may challenge the homeliness of it. As such, the mourning becomes a mourning for self - as in *Zala Kadın* and *Özlü Hamurlar*. *Zala Kadın* mourns for the loss of her beloved at his deathbed. They could never be together because of poverty. She goes by him saying that she is there nevertheless (Şahin, 2006: 119). The whole speech is broken when *Zala Kadın* is not sure whether he already died or not. This also reminds us of the ambiguity of the moment of death. Mourning envelopes that very moment in the before and after. The impossibility of togetherness marks its significance. It is similar in *Özlü Hamurlar* as well. The son mourns at the grave of his mother. The loss of the mother dominates the loss of identity. Both *Zala Kadın* and the son share the same loss. Mourning becomes the mourning for identity, a possible future.

What if the mourning is also the mourning by the mother? *Deli Hatice* and *Sarı Sessizlik* relate to this particular point. Mad Hatice is mad because the loss of her sons keeps her removed from an aim. She curses the earth for not taking her before. She cries: "Are you as poor? Are you out of shrouds?" (Ibid: 99). Even in death, there is no

justice. She mourns for at least the justice of death. It is not possible. The mother who cuts her hair and throws it in the face of the military officer reminds us this (Şahin, 2007: 203). The just indifference of death should be preserved in the possibility of mourning at the proper time and place. This is also one of the reasons why mother figures keep emerging as mourners in Şahin's stories. The abandonment of the village shows itself in its harshest form when it is the mothers who mourn. It is even worse when the mothers can not even mourn. It is total abandonment. This is also the true for the Saturday Mothers who seek their lost children who were under surveillance after the 1980 Coup d'Etat. The impossibility of mourning is the truth of the subaltern. Total abandonment lies in its essence.

## **6.2. A Second Person Addressee: Before the law, before the mother**

Osman Şahin restores the primary responsibility of sovereignty in a broken poetics. The sovereign listens. This is an essential and integral part of sovereignty. The sovereign not only listens but also hears the essence of the truth it listens to. *Oedipus Rex* is its ultimate example in Oedipus' failure. It is a listening. In this equation, sovereignty is having the subaltern at your disposal and not disposing of it.

One narrative correspondent of this is the interlocution. In many stories, Şahin allows the protagonist speak directly to a second person addressee. The protagonists of *Kırmızı Yel* and *Fareler* speak in court to the judge. The protagonists of *Deli Hatice* and *Özlü Hamurlar* speak to the dead at the grave. *Zala Kadın* speaks to her beloved at his deathbed. The letters in *Acenta Mirza* and *Hemşeri* seek advice and help from people who can provide it. In fact, Mirza gets an answer. The narrators of *Yörük Ana* and *Zaman Suçlusu* employ a nostalgic and lamenting tone to the "mother" that is lost. They speak to a mother that embodies all that is lost in terms of value and virtue.

*Özli Hamurlar* has the exceptional characteristic of using the third person perspective in parallel. That is why it also valuably contests the tonality of an interlocutor who addresses a second person. Such an addressing removes the gaze of the reader/writer and displaces it with an involvement. A third person perspective in this context is closer to a “story”. Once we are confronted with an addressing that holds us as well, we are closer to the ethnographic space. It is not a matter of proximity with reality. It is rather the aroused sense of physical proximity. A courtroom testimony is similar to a speech at the grave in this manner. There is a sort of confession that takes place next to our cabin. We see the confessor, although not clearly. We evaluate him/her, although not by ourselves but by the holy word of the story itself. The proximity present in the priest-confessor relationship is the type of ethnographic space we talk about here. We attend a sort of examination where there is also judgment. This is not to mean that the tone is didactic. On the contrary, the judgment is not substantial. There is only the right to judgment without the moment of judgment itself.

We need to expand on this moment. As we talk of the examples of protagonists addressing second persons, we also should mention that they also address issues that need resolve. It is in this sense they resemble confessions. On the other hand, they provide a picture of their case with details. They put a conflict forth. To exemplify, Resul of *Kırmızı Yel* argues that he made a pact with god to sacrifice innocent blood in exchange for the blessing of his crop. In *Hemşeri*, the peasant argues that he was crippled during work, and that it is not fair. Such conflicts are in all the stories mentioned. Yet, the addressees are all silent except for the reply letter in *Acenta Mirza* – which actually complicates the silence: Both letters address us. It is evidence for our case! And all these conflicts are in parallel with social matters. This is the ethnographic space we talk about. A graphic depiction from “first hand testimony” is at hand. The experience is that of the judge except for the moment of judgment itself.

To repeat, Osman Şahin’s literature is considered to be documentary-realist. The documentary aspect is this close kinship with ethnography. We have documents of reality which are not genuine documents *of an archive*. We may go further and claim

that one distinguishing aspect of this literature from ethnography is the refusal of the archive as the foundation of judgment. The absence of the second person addressee signifies that refusal. Şahin imagining what Resul would say in court is grounded in it.

### **6.3. Paradox of Living**

This part is comprised of elaborations on concepts that resist the criterion concerning the themes we explained to have been resulting from oppositions that create a conflict. Such as custom that occupies practice as a law. The conflicts in this particular case had arisen, for example, from the discrepancy between the signification of the act and the signification of the custom that the act took its source from. Lordship and an unfulfilled promise to give a larger share of crops to the peasants was one such conflict.

The appearance of the concepts here not only resists such conflictual definitions, but also pronounces their possibility in that resistance. In order to understand that resistance, we first expose the concepts to such definitive arguments and say, “observe the reaction”; and as such, argue for what they are. Therefore, the analysis in the following subjects will employ help from theoretical frameworks and comparisons here and there. Moreover, the main focus will be on certain stories that signify certain reactions.

#### **6.3.1. Sacred Bodies**

##### **6.3.1.1. Sacrifice and *the Red Wind***

The story of *Kırmızı Yel (Red Wind)* was, among other things, a study of feudal relationships from an ethnographic perspective. This makes the actual story of Müslüm

Koca, a *maraba* (peasant) from Erzincan, sacrificing his son out of respect for Allah's betterment of his crops create a political space for Şahin's literature. The concept of village literature in Turkish literature sees the frequent utilization of the clash between modernity and the village as a core theme. It is not so hard to deduct that this clash also served as a basis for relating to problematizations of sovereignty, socio-economical power relations and even the current political system of the time. The question could be boiled down to one specific concern: What Müslüm Koca's sacrifice scandalized was the impotency of the state in the face of the existing norms and living conditions. Thus, the intelligentsia would not hesitate to transform these scandalizing moments, events and phenomena into a call for a stronger and responsible state.

In return, the literature of the time, along with its cinematic accompaniments, or supplements, addressed the issue of eroding public trust and unity. Since this was already the case with the feudal and religious institutions, the literature made use of the common errors of all the three institutions of the state, feudal *ağalık* system and Islamic clergy.

As such, *Kırmızı Yel* addressed and accused all these institutions. And for this precise undertaking, the place is nothing other than the courtroom. In terms of a scandalized society, what happened in 1962 could be blamed on institutions that one stood against. The modernized metropolitan who trusted in the state would blame the *hoca*, the *ağa* would blame the state, the *hocas* would blame the *ağas* for ignoring the calls of Allah etc.

With his story, Şahin not only focuses on a space that none of these institutions would dare focus on, but also subverts a tradition of *ibret*. The Turkish conceptualization of *ibret* (literally *an example*) can be observed in many Islamic texts and narrations. Moreover, it can also be observed in the pro state narratives, especially those anecdotes concerning the life of Atatürk, the founding father whose every act was, in terms of the life of Mohammad, were *hadith* (literally *events*). To exemplify, if a *maraba* asks the *hoca* what to do against a neighbour whose face he loathes, the *hoca*

narrates the story of Mohammad who, in reply to two people (Ebu Süfyan and Ebubekir) which, consecutively tell him that they abhor and admire his face; tells those in his company that what they see is their own faces! This creates a myth out of Mohammad's presence, which, metaphorically speaking, is a mirror of humanity. If someone asks a cultivated man of the state (say, a History teacher), what to do in the presence of a higher authority in class (say, a headmaster), the teacher would account for the anecdote that Ataturk would not allow the class to stand up when he enters class, for the teacher is the highest authority in the classroom. These exemplifications smell of and inspire prides of sorts in the indoctrinated mind. Their basic flaw is that they are founded on presuppositions of the omnipresence of authority.

It is no wonder that many of the striking stories against authority were based on times of strife, decomposition, terror and even civil war. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Dostoevsky's *Demons*, Akutagawa's *Rashōmon*, Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Sophocles' *Antigone* are all important examples.

If we formed a link between the story of Iphigenia (based on Aeschylus' *Oresteian Trilogy*), the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, and the story *Red Wind* itself, the main idea is that the meaning of the sacrifice was transformed at each level. In the first, the fulfilment of the promise of gods anteceded the sacrifice; in the second, the sacrifice was an an ends to itself as a mark of faith; in the last, the fulfilment preceded the sacrifice as an inquirer of faith. It is important to note that the second did not exactly consist of a filicide, but an attempt of it. As a result, Abraham is rewarded by the intervention of god.

Historically speaking, what the story *Red Wind* did was, to subvert the traditions of sacrifice in order to question the presence of gods in the daily bread. In other words, this story, in all its discontent with modernity, also utilized the modern theme of disenchantment with the world. Basically, there were no gods left to tend to the poor and the needy.



The possibility of each and every one of the events present in the story were witnesses to the absence of divine, sovereign or patriarchal intervention. In almost all of Şahin's stories, we get to see the impotency of the authorities under the veil of indifference. Only those truly in control care for the needy. This is an elementary paradox concerning authority. Authority at once lacks the authority to care in order to be authority. And when there is care, authority loses its authoritative origin. This topic requires further scrutiny.

When an *ağa* cares for a *maraba* and grants him his wishes of obtaining land for work, the *ağa* loses his *ağaness* on the peasant. It is precisely when the *maraba* needs the *ağa*, is the *ağa* an *ağa*. The same formulation works with judicial power of the state and the mystic power of the *hoca* as well. The prayers of a person only work as long as the *hoca* preserves his position. The prayers by themselves are only performative indulgences. The same thing is true with the Judge, whose word is the only law – despite the presence of written constitutions and legislations. The word itself is meaningless without the interlocutor that is the Judge.

In sub-conclusion, *the Red Wind*, as a criticism of authority, is also an affirmation of the existing authorities and how they play on the life of the individual without access to these authorities.

What we shall dwell upon is the literary accomplishment of the story within its textual possibilities. After the first three paragraphs of the narration of the protagonist, namely Resul, the story shifts its focus on a description of the rural land where the story actually takes place. The two places is in parallels with the clash of the subaltern and the authorities in power. At once, we are absorbed into the unimagined context of the deed as Resul says: Let me begin from the roots of the word so that we can support the rest, *kurban* (Şahin, 2006: 9).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Şimdilik ben lafın tabanından başlayamda üstünü tireye kurban.*

In a long parenthesis, *Kurban*, ironically, means 'a sacrifice' and 'a beloved' at the same time. It is a word to relate to someone when you are speaking. Similar to *love* or *pal* in that sense. Speaking to the judge in that manner is further ironic, for it shows the way Resul sees what a sacrifice is. Anyone is a sacrifice in the face of god. It is a common perception. This infiltration of the daily use into the court marks the gap between the courtroom and the rural land. What he is being tried for is already rooted in his culture and custom... This may be also supported by how Resul addresses another governor (an engineer of agriculture). After the engineer remarks that he needs to report the situation about the infected soil to the higher authorities, Resul is puzzled about the bureaucracy. He says: O, man of God, you yourself is the man of the Ministry of Agriculture, so why need report and inform? (Ibid: 11).<sup>28</sup> Everyman is a man of god. It is the level of equality. As Resul treats all animals in equity, so does he all men in the face of god.

One other example is that both Resul and the other villagers call 'semen' as 'piss'. The sacred being of the child is a result of this 'piss'. This idiom(?) is used twice. Once when Resul is troubled by the ever increasing number of his offsprings. When he asks his wife why she keeps getting pregnant, she replies: "It's your piss, huh!..."<sup>29</sup> (Şahin, 15). The second time is when he has decided to sacrifice his son. When his wife tries to stop him, he says: How dare you keep my piss from God? (Şahin, 18)<sup>30</sup>

The interplay between the uncommon/sacred and the mundane/profane is also a mark of the gap I have started to investigate in this part.

What Şahin does is that, like an expert raconteur, he first devises the ending of the story the protagonist is about to narrate. The story begins *in medias res*, and we know it will end in court. However, before we even try to make out what the crime could be, we

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<sup>28</sup> *Ula Allahın adamı , sen kendin ziraat dayirasının adamısında, rapor yazıp duyurmana ne hacet.*

<sup>29</sup> *"senin sidiğindir ha.."*

<sup>30</sup> *Sidiğimi Allah'tan ne hakla sakınıysan?*

are distracted into the actual meaning of the crime, which is the conditions of the village. In a sense, we are “deviated into reason”. We dwell in the details about the harsh life of the village. A life so far and unreachable for the metropolitan – on the other hand, considering the life in the village as inherently harsh is, in my opinion, a pro-orientalist evaluation. Şahin's gaze shuttles between that of the native and the orientalist in this sense.

To continue, we hear the stories about the encounters with *ağa's* undertakings, the acts of the *hoca*, the encounter with the engineer and we forget about a possible act that could result in the courtroom. In between the lines, we are given the detail that Resul has to sacrifice pure/innocent blood of his own if god is to grant their wish for good crop.

Here's where Şahin shatters all the historical and political foundations of his contemporary society within the literary space. Simultaneously, he subverts the traditional sense of justice by god or any other authority, and the basic claims of the political system which is based on concepts such as citizenship, equality and sovereign villager<sup>31</sup>. All these foundations are speechless in the face of the one act that despises and reverses the sacred being of the citizen, the equal being...

To sum up, Şahin's first story has exemplary value for how literary irony can radically turn social structures against themselves by playing on the paradoxes those structures base themselves on. I already conceptualized the paradoxical structure of the authority the story stands up against. One other thing that could be added is that Şahin also works against the structure he talks within. The mere fact that the subaltern, as soon as earning the name Resul and being granted the possibility of talking in the court the way he does in the story, signifies the authority of the author as a granter of speech. Another god, so to say. The “actual” Müslüm becomes Resul, and Resul becomes “the real thing” (Henry James). He talks within the language of a mocking, accented, highly

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<sup>31</sup> *Köylü milletin efendisidir.* - Also considered to be a phrase of Atatürk.

idiolectic Turkish. However, Şahin does not indoctrinate his work with that of the statist, self-orientalist leftism which romanticizes the rural anomalies in favour of political agenda. I believe that there authors such as Bekir Yıldız (who was also a very close friend of Şahin's) who lyrically and dramatically radicalized the villager for the sake of agitation. Although he shows such tendencies later on, in this specific story, Şahin refrains from this and hangs onto the radical slippery space of literature where the reader, residing in the immediate relationship with the story, finds him/herself alienated and even in hatred of every authority possible.

### **6.3.1.2. The Disposable**

Giorgio Agamben defines the “sacred man” to be “the one whom the people have judged on account of a crime. It is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide.” (Agamben, 1995: 71). This Roman Law is the foundation of Agamben’s the proposition that “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” (Ibid: 8). The “double exclusion” that expels the biopolitical body from both the realms of divine and state/feudal/human laws justifies its expenditure (Ibid: 81). This expenditure is a sovereign gesture as such.

We went into the details of two *ağas* being sorrier about the losing of the wolf in *Kurt Aві* (see v. *Feudalism*). Although the peasants whose lives were easily spent had committed no crime whatsoever, they were always already rendered into that double exclusion. While *Kırmızı Yel* reminds us of the disappearance of the primordial function of the sacrifice, which is meant to have a sacred correspondence, the disposable entities of the feudal sovereign in *Kurt Aві* tell us of the structure of the sovereignty at stake. Similar examples of such foundations are present in *Fırat’ın Cinleri* and *Irgat Eրleri* as well. The rabid woman in the former is disposed of for the sake of an affirmation that keeps the religious authority intact – despite the knowledge that it may be rabies. The catastrophe of the dying labourers in the uncontrolled fire in the latter story clearly

shows the helplessness of the peasants. In fact, they affirm it themselves saying that the *Man of Labour (Irgat Eri)* is a *sefer i* (Şahin, 2007: 46).<sup>32</sup> The soldiers and the peasants are of same expendable substance for an *ağa*.

We have seen the challenge put on such dichotomy of divine and human law in the stories *Gömlek* and *Ocağına Düşmek*. In *Gömlek*, the *ağa* shared a shirt with one of the key rebels to include him in the space of divine law and was denied the gesture for the sake of an exceptional law. The rebellion had its foundations as such. In *Ocağına Düşmek*, the sacred space of the home could not be violated for a blood feud and *homo sacer* needed to be expelled spatially as well. We know that in actuality, the justified murder of the “guest” was done outside. In both cases, the challenge preserved the sovereign space. The disposable affirmed it.

How did this disposability change? The stories *Sarı Öküz*, *Makam Taşları*, *Ağzıkörler*, *Zaman Suçlusu* and *Sarı Sessizlik* tell us that it didn't. What changed was the mode of sovereignty rather than the disposability. The expenditure concerning *homo sacer* was transformed to refer to a different sort of sovereignty. That of a *nation state* at first glance. Consecutively, the yellow calf is an equivalent of the soldiers that fought for independence, their mothers, a woman that disobeys the modern laws of traffic (!) and the guerrilla who rebels for civil existence. They all are expelled from law for the sake of the law. Even the child that died in the fire in *Irgat Erleri* was considered to be a “martyr of the *ağa*” since he died in his land (Ibid: 47). The guerrilla whose corpse was brought to the village in *Sarı Sessizlik*, however, was not a martyr; he belonged to none of the laws. Yet, both the dead were deprived of proper burial. Both of the deceased signified sovereign bodies of decision making. The disrespect for their bodies signified both the unacceptability of their sovereignty and the foundation of it. This is their paradox at the causality of their institution. Both the “modern state” and the “feudal state” mark their affirmation with such disrespect, with such disposal.

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<sup>32</sup> Lit. *Soldier*. It is an equivalent of *er* (*private*), whose connotation of martyrdom is not a coincidence.

### 6.3.2. Strategy, Tactics, Resistance and Rebellion

In case there is a threat on the sovereign institution, different types of reactions surface. When we say a threat on the institution, we do not merely say it is on the authorities in charge. On the contrary, it means a whole body of persons involved with the institution from the peasant to the *ağa*, from the citizen to the president etc. For example, hunger, wars, heterogeneity of identity (i.e. minorities) are all salient threats on any institution we can imagine. On the other hand, they may just as well found or restore an institution as well. Although we are, at this point, considering the phenomena of crises in a progressive/developmental sense, the following arguments shouldn't be considered in the same way.

Resistance is a resistance against violence and rebellion is against the institution of violence. Strategy is “the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated” (De Certeau, 1984:35). The subject of will and power has an “externality”, a periphery the inside of which it can call its *locus*. Tactics on the other hand, are calculated actions “determined by the absence of a proper locus. No delimitation of an exteriority [...] provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other” (Ibid: 36). The calculation mentioned here deal with levels of violence that try to preserve, abolish or moderate the structure of the institution in question.

In the case of feudal institution, we find the examples of *Fareler* and *Kör Gülüşan* to be significant. In *Fareler*, the peasants stock up the crop hidden by rats to deal with their unjust share. In the blind woman Gülüşan's case, the three other wives of the *ağa* conspire against Gülüşan for better share of care and *ağa*'s interest in them (i.e. the return value of a child of him as an heir as such). Both cases speak of sovereignty as they visualize the tactics employed against the space of it, the *locus* of it. Let us expand

on this. The *locus* De Certeau talks about is a domain of influence without contestation. However, when “the other” calculates against it, what it does is contest that influence. In these cases, the *loci* are the crop and the wife-woman consecutively. The peasants in the former resist the violence of unjust share by hiding away the crops. The wives in the latter resist the violence of unjust share by attempting to kill Gülüşan. To repeat, the tactics here affirm the sovereign in affirming its locus. They do not rebel, but resist. Resistance as such, is a challenge within affirmation of sovereignty. At this point, we should remind ourselves that what we mean by sovereignty is traditional sovereignty that constrains limitless expenditure of the expendable to the embodiment of sovereignty (i.e. *Ağa*).

Rebellion then, comes as a refusal of mere contestation. It actually comes as a subversion of what De Certeau calls strategy. We have underlined the importance of symbols in three important stories that relate cases in this manner: *Bedvanlı Zülfo*, *Reşim* and *Gömlek*. Zülfo’s decision to sue the *ağa* and considering himself to be equals with *both* the *ağa* and a lawyer was symbolically a subversion beyond contestation. Surely, there is a contestation concerning authorities of different natures (modern and feudal-traditional), however, it was beyond the locus of *ağa*’s influence. Despite the fact that Zülfo gives up his cause, the mere admission of *ağa* about his influence on the lawyer and the transformation into a modern *locus* (state) was proof of the fading away of the feudal institution. On the other hand, the stories of *Reşim* and *Gömlek* both focused on the eponymous symbols whose refusals by the peasants were rebellious. The peasant refused the whole institution in the one gesture of throwing down the *reşim/gömlek*.

Further depictions of rebellion are extended to the modern *loci*. Nedim of *Tomruk* cuts the net loose: A luddite act par excellence. The total destruction of the product is the purest form of rebellion. For our concern, this act clearly signifies the new *locus* and the new sovereign domain that the boss represents. We may see this simply as an argument on capitalism however, the aim here is to observe what remains the same or changes in Şahin’s stories. Kanlı Garo, for example, can not even resist in the face of

the capitalist institution. He swallows his pride as he is totally subordinated by state law. The boss in the place he is working him can humiliate him at his own expense. He is no different than Bedvanlı Zülfo in subordination. Only the strategies change. Here we observe the cooperation of *ağa* and the boss with force of law in the face of which, the worker/peasant surrenders. The confusion the scatteredness of the force of law creates renders the subdued helpless. Their prides are unjustified in the modern system. Personal pride is not a part of law anymore.<sup>33</sup>

The protagonists of *Özli Hamurlar* and *Sarı Sessizlik* form a pattern of resistance and rebellion as well. The deceased in the latter story is a smuggler on the border. He resists by smuggling. As the state does not provide him with the means of survival, he creates them on his own. Against this, the state's strategy is to show his humiliated corpse to the village residents including his family – so that they know this is the “result” of their actions (Şahin, 2007: 203). The reaction of the mother who cuts her hair and throws it on the face of the officer transcends the borders of a tactic, and this time, reminds of a custom that the modern sovereign powers have forgotten about or neglected. This also may be called a rebellious attitude since the sovereign domain is challenged to its foundations. Despite the taunting humiliation of the corpse, they do not testify and face the perpetrating authority. The next step as such is the guerrilla in *Özli Hamurlar*. He totally withdraws from the domain of the military and the state. He wants equal opportunities to life from work and health to representation and language. As he complains to the grave of his mother about how his mere presence is considered a threat to the new society, he says that “*they* are alarmed for the preservation of what they have attained” (Ibid: 66 – *italics mine*). The “*they*” he talks about is nothing but the modern state and its nationalist agenda. Yet we do not know what that really means in this context. We are neither concerned with what happened historically nor what we think we know now.

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<sup>33</sup> Of course we should note that pride may only be a part of law if its punishment is a threat to the *locus* of modern sovereign powers as in the relationship between honour killings and patriarchy.



### 6.3.3. Evil-Sovereign

When we talk about violence and resistance, an inevitable question concerning evil arises. Even for the most indifferent reader, a sense of evil flashes up as a conflictual occurrence is observed. Diverse modes and depictions of evil in modern literature may play on that sense, but the sense remains as both urges and pathologies. On another level, the appearance of evil gives away certain aspects of the literature at hand. The more complicated and in depth it gets, the closer we get to modern-psychological genres is what common sense tells us – despite the obvious error of generalization.

Osman Şahin repeatedly puts a touch of evil on certain characters. What they have in common is the obvious position of authority. Most of the time an *ağa* has that touch (*Bedvanlı Zülfo, Kurt avı, Fareler, Reşim, Obruk Bekçisi, Irgat Erleri, Özlü Hamurlar, Gömlek, Beyaz Öküz*); second most salient is the sheikh (*Kırmızı Yel, Kurt Avı, Fırat'ın Cinleri, Özlü Hamurlar, Gömlek*); third, we have governors (*Opoletli Kardaş, Nüfus Sayımı, Ağzıkörler, Özlü Hamurlar, Makam Taşları, Zaman Suçlusu, Sarı Sessizlik*); then we have capitalists (*Sarı Öküz, Acenta Mirza, Tomruk, Hemşeri, Kanlı Garo*); and lastly collaborators (*Fareler, Ağzıkörler, Namus Eri, Özlü Hamurlar*).

The evil comes as a signature of sovereignty. The act of it comes as at the expense of the victim who is most frequently the protagonist. In a nutshell, the evil in Şahin's early literature is on a par with authority. If there is a conflict in the story, it is either based on "abuse" or absence of authority. We have dealt with all kinds of "abuses" of authority by the *ağas* and governmental authorities. We should at this point add that the *kolcus*<sup>34</sup> are mentioned numerous times in different stories. For example, the fathers in

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<sup>34</sup> Special military-police forces that keep order in districts in state of exception. Mainly southeastern Turkey.

*Ağzıkörler* and *Özlü Hamurlar* were killed by them. Both murders were mentioned to have been ignored. The absence as such, was the topic in stories such as *Kırmızı Yel*, *Bebek*, *Odun*, *Acı Duman* or *Kanın Masalı*. In these cases, the absence did not appear as absence of violence. Instead, it produced a violence that contested the institution which ignored the responsibility of provision it claimed behind its uses of violence. To exemplify, the state which claimed to use violence for the good of its citizen, did not provide help for means of living (*Kırmızı Yel*, *Odun*), health services (*Bebek*).

The characters which wield the signature of sovereignty as evil, without exception, appear as stock or flat characters. The collaborator/snitch Bilo in *Fareler*, the sheikh in *Gömlek*, the wives in *Kör Gülüşan* and the *ağas* of *Irgat Erleri*, *Obruk Bekçisi* and so on are all examples to this. They neither change in their emotions nor decisions.

In *Beyaz Öküz*, the protagonist's wife is chased and raped by the son of the *ağa*. In return, the protagonist kills him and hides the body under his white calf. As both he and his wife are haunted by the visions of the murder, he decides to kill the calf as well. The son of the *ağa* is always described to be this determined villain who is always "visible", "sure of himself", "unsurprised" (Ibid: 205, 206, and 210). The striking aspect of this story is that it is different in terms of its psychological investigation. In none of the stories of this early period in Şahin's literature do we see characters so deeply examined. However, the evil-sovereign remains as plain and flat as in many of the other stories which question the institution. This specificity is particular to this early period in focus.

The dead-end of the traditional forms of sovereignty resurface here. What makes such attitudes of evil worthy of attention? Why is it literature when the "centuries long" tradition was so anyway? Do the times it was written change anything? Is it because Şahin wrote these stories of violence and death in the time he wrote them that they became what they are? In a sense, yes. In a sense, no. The text itself reveals its temporality in the space it created. The task is to reside in that revelation. It is true that we find the clashes between the old world and the new in content. Still it is not enough.

The dead-end of the traditional forms of sovereignty is, as seen, seeing to its decline as it tries to preserve itself. Like the *ağa* in *Gömlek*, the preservation is impossible at the face of a challenge that shakes up the foundation. What's more, the strategies dealing with that challenge further reinforce it. A dead-end.

#### 6.3.4. Hospitality

Before we go into the discussion concerning the genre, we will deal with three more concepts that add to the questioning about authority and sovereignty. These concepts share the common property of having been depicted in the absence of authority. In this sense, the examples could be regarded the most humane! Let us see into it if there's a coincidence in their appearing this way.

We need to keep in mind the following rules of hospitality present in the stories: 1- No host can do ill unto the guest who asks for hospitality. 2- No guest can do ill unto the host who provides hospitality. 3- The host treats the guest better than himself. 4- The guest remains content with what he is served.<sup>35</sup> Any violation will weigh heavier than the conscience can bear.

*Ocağına Düşmek* is the prototypical story regarding hospitality. Despite the fact that Seyfo gets the chance to kill his enemy in blood who comes up running to his porch, he welcomes İsako to his home. Furthermore, he prevents the others who are also trying to kill İsako from entering. İsako asks for hospitality, saying he has "fallen into his mercy" (Ibid: 105).<sup>36</sup> As Seyfo prevents the other enemies chasing İsako from entering his house, he repeatedly tells them that he will not violate the law of hospitality

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<sup>35</sup> As in the proverb "*Misafir umduğunu değil bulduğunu yer*" (The guest eats not what he hopes for but what he finds).

<sup>36</sup> Mercy here is actually "ocak," which means home/stove. Except for this particular phrase, 'ocak' is never an equivalent of mercy in meaning.

(Ibid: 106, 108 and 110). Furthermore, when those who are chasing also ask for “hospitality”, he says: “Mercy cannot be fallen at twice.”<sup>37</sup> They almost have a gunfight over their common enemy. Seyfo does not yield.

On a different level, *Nüfus Sayımı* and *Beyaz Öküz* sketch two stories of the violation of the law of hospitality. The first story if we remember was that of a clerk who visited a village expecting service in plenitude (see *ii. State*). Instead, he is served plain bulgur and ayran. When he complains that he had such expectations, and he is ready to know if he has done something wrong to be served this way, he is obliged to hear the morbid story behind it. The *ağa* exclaims ecstatically, that there is a misfortune on the village. In fact, the village has lost more than ten children to hunger. *Ağa* feels the misfortune to his bones, adding that he wishes his own son had died as well (Şahin, 2006: 82). The most shattering thing is that, the children have not died of any sickness like the clerk guesses. They die of food poisoning since the villagers in all helplessness, serve them with soup made out of blood put away in the butcher house (Ibid: 84)... This unbearable image is cast upon the guest in such manner.

In *Beyaz Öküz*, the protagonist conspires against the son of the *ağa* who tries to court his wife. He feints to have left the village one day and allows his wife to welcome the son of the *ağa* in the house that night. He kills the son in the darkness of the house and buries him under his white calf. The dead haunts both of them in the image of the calf. This uncanny appearance is linked to the violation of the first rule. It is important that the son is welcomed to the house in the first place. The emphasis on the house turning into a grave is proof of this (Şahin, 2007: 222).

As such, both the fulfilment and the violations have their consequences. What do these laws tell us? The story of Baucis and Philemon who serve Zeus who comes to their house disguised as a beggar enlightens us. The guest is a guest of god. In fact, as is in this case, the guest may be a god. This pagan tradition of regarding the guest as

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<sup>37</sup> *Düşülen ocağı bir daha düşülmez.*

sacred goes noticed. What we have to ask is, then, the possibility of the parabolic nature of Şahin's stories. They reflect on rules of hospitality which have the characteristic of conditional morality that do not have those conditions any more. They are told not in a manner of teaching as in a parable, but in a manner of reminiscence – of something past. The crucial question boils down to: What do we call a parable that does not or can not function as a parable? We will return to this question later.

### **6.3.5. Forgiveness**

The delineation of the rules of hospitality in the stories above showed one thing that most of the other stories did not: Hope. A hope that arises from the possibility of a contradiction. Seyfo welcomes his enemy to his house. He welcomes one person that he could not ever welcome. The conditionality of it and the very fact that it does not “apply” any more isolates the act and offers a powerful argument of hope. Such hospitality has an impossibility of welcoming turned into a possibility.

It is similar in the case of forgiveness. The same story hints at it. Even if it is for the sake of a moral code, and even if it is temporary (we know the actual consequences), Seyfo forgives İsa.

*Kanın Masalı (Story of the Blood)* is the prototypical story on this concept. Kazo has been hiding away in a cottage from his enemy in blood. His enemy, Battal, has been lurking in the shadows around that cottage, waiting for a proper time to kill him. There's a lot of psychological tension present. He even leaves a soap and a neatly folded cerement outside of the house to indicate that Kazo's days are numbered (Ibid: 159). All calculations are done. Kazo has murdered a kin of Battal's and he has to pay for it. One day, however, Battal eavesdrops on Kazo speaking to his wife who is also residing in the cottage. Kazo praises Battal's character (Ibid: 167). Battal is moved. He knocks on the door as a guest. In Kazo's confusion, Battal tells him that his appraisal

was striking. He says that he had prolonged the day of the murder to instil fear in Kazo, which is worse than death (Ibid: 171). Finally, Battal tells Kazo that he has forgiven him for he has “praised him in the intimacy of the house” (Ibid: 172). The intimacy of the house which was the foundation of the rules of hospitality has also given way to a possibility of reconciliation. “Let there be no more blood,” says Battal, for one cannot “continue to be enemies with someone who praises him” (Ibid: 173).

As noted, both the acts of hospitality and forgiveness depend on a causality put forth by the tradition, the custom. This is what Derrida calls an affirmation of “some sovereign power” “each time forgiveness is effectively exercised” (Derrida, 2001: 59). “One only forgives where one can judge and punish”, so it becomes a supposition of a power, force, sovereignty (Ibid: 59). In his evaluation of the concept, Derrida finds a contradiction in such affirmation. If, at each point forgiveness aims to re-establish a normality, and forgiveness, in its ordinary form, is not an intervention or a tool of correction, then it should “remain pure”, and “should remain exceptional and extraordinary” (Ibid: 32). This extraordinary remaining is only possible when the exercise is unconditional, when it is not asked for. This is half of what we observe in *Kanın Masalı*. Battal may be speaking through a judgment, a law that allows him to kill Kazo. On the other hand, that same law also forbids him from forgiving Kazo. However, an extraordinary moment is reached when a humane proximity contests the law. Battal can not kill someone who speaks highly of him. It is not a condition that refers to a sovereign power. It refers to a human unconditionality. It is forgiveness unasked for.

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To conclude our work of analysis, a few last things need be said. We have considered a great deal of material within the context of their appearances in the text. The literature Osman Şahin has written afterwards change the meaning and effect of many of the themes and concepts we have dealt with. The fruitfulness of intertextuality is also a challenge in this manner. All the content we studied illustrated the fact that

many of the foundational aspects of the village underwent challenge, clash and change. Not to our surprise, they were basically about the tension between the modern and feudal states. The compromise was in modern state's favour. However, the literature itself hinted at a change beyond the political and societal. In a sense, it was economical. In a sense, it was perspectival. In any case, the change was captured in the genre itself, for the same plot in many stories could be plain parables of pedagogic meaning. The later works of Şahin prove so.

We left out only a few stories in this analysis. They will be recalled. Especially *Ağız İçinde Dil Gibi* and *Yörük Ana* will open up the discussion that leads to the yonder realm of this genre. The main argument here is that the genre of Şahin's work here bears witness to the change its subject matter undergoes or experiences; via form and tonality.

## CHAPTER 7

### VISIONS OF THE VILLAGE: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

When we say *village literature*, we generally mean a certain literary movement which takes the village as its setting, the villager as its protagonist, the feudal as its political mode and the pastoral as its mood. Although there are many variations on these criteria, works of village literature mainly comply with them. For example, earlier works such as *Yaban* employ an urban elite as its protagonist or later works like Orhan Kemal's *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* employ the city as a setting. However, they both keep the rural feeling of the village and the domination of the feudal values over the plot. Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's protagonist in *Yaban* is allegorically invalid (his arm is cut) in the face of the rural setting while Orhan Kemal's protagonists recreate the space of the village within the city as they rarely see the city apart from their work in the fields of Adana.

As such, we situate the distinctive visions of the village within such criteria. Moreover, village literature means the literary delineation of the village as a phenomenon that is slowly fading away in the face of modernization and urbanization. In this sense, it is a modern genre.

Chronologically speaking, village literature becomes a prominent genre following the second World War. Mahmut Makal is one of the earliest authors to mention. His *Bizim Köy* which was published in 1950 is dubbed to be the definitive work that initiated the prominence of village literature. It was a compilation of memoirs from



Makal's years in villages, coincidentally starting with the year when he was 17 as was Osman Şahin. Makal was born in 1930, ten years senior to Şahin and starting with 1950s, his friends in the intelligentsia included Sait Faik Abasıyanık, Yaşar Kemal, Orhan Kemal, Talip Apaydın, Fakir Baykurt, Bekir Yıldız, Fikret Otyam and Osman Şahin. His works ignited a wave of studies of the village which we now think as the first thing when we say village literature.

To provide a short chronology, following this work, Yaşar Kemal's *Sarı Sıcak* (1952) and Orhan Kemal's *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* (1954) extend the genre. While the former is a short story collection that influences many works including Osman Şahin's, the latter can be said to be the first novel of village literature that had a profound effect on the readers in Turkey. The year 1954 also sees the publication of the novel *Yılanların Öcü* by Fakir Baykurt. This book became very famous after it was adapted to the white screen in 1962 with the same name. In 1955, *İnce Memed* of Yaşar Kemal is published and it widely becomes a sensation.

Afterwards, as this generation of writers continue their production, the village setting undergoes various different perspectives ranging from Necati Cumalı's dramatic and psychological scrutiny in *Susuz Yaz* (1962) to Aziz Nesin's parodies as in *İt Kuyruğu* (1955).

On a side note, it may be said that the 1960s are affected by massive immigration from the village to the cities and also Europe, specifically Germany. Despite their productions concerning specifically the villages, authors such as Orhan Kemal, Dursun Akçam (*Maral*, 1964; *Taş Çorbası*, 1970) and Fakir Baykurt (*Kaplumbağalar*, 1967; *Tırpan*, 1970) also shift the focus onto migration or the new "rural" space in the suburbs of big cities. There are even examples that are in between a work of village literature and a work that focuses on the urban. Orhan Kemal's *Hanımın Çiftliği* is one such example. The feeling of anthropological study is obvious and we may add that these works create a period of recess for village literature (Bayrak, 2000: 124, 239).

Starting with the late 1960s, a second generation of writers, mainly graduates of Village Institutes join the genre and pave the way for a very productive period of village literature. Bekir Yıldız publishes *Reşo Ağa* in 1968. In 1970, as we may remember, Osman Şahin and Ümit Kaftancıoğlu win the TRT award together. Şahin publishes *Kırmızı Yel* the next year and Kaftancıoğlu publishes *Dönemeç*. Bekir Yıldız wins the Sait Faik short story award in 1971 with *Kaçakçı Şahan*.

It is at this time that village literature becomes a popular genre of the mainstream literature. Not only does it dominate a large portion of literary production but also replace the urban melodramas of the 60s with rural comedies and dramas in cinema as film industry undergoes a boost. In this environment, many authors conspicuously or immanently influence Şahin's work. In this thesis, we take up Yaşar Kemal and Orhan Kemal as two such authors. On the other hand, there are authors who share the generation and the generic indulgence of Şahin. We take up Bekir Yıldız and Duran Yılmaz as so. Although Yaşar Kemal and Orhan Kemal later establish themselves as novelists their styles and narratives provide a good starting point in delineating Şahin's accomplishment. The latter two on the other hand, serve two definitive aspects that infiltrate Şahin's short story production.

### **7.1. Yaşar Kemal (1923-)**

To begin with, we'll scrutinize a book that Şahin himself pays attention to in *Geniş Bir Nehrin Akışı* (2004). Yaşar Kemal's *Sarı Sıcak* is his first and only short story collection up-to-date. It is also his first book (1952). An instant image of excessive use of dialogues strikes the reader. This is interesting regarding Kemal's well known novels which indulge in detailed descriptions and introspective analyses. Many of the stories are excerpts from the daily lives of peasants. No particular theme or narrative style is omnipresent except for the deep humanism that emanates into both the descriptions and the rhythmic dialogues. The lyricism that later defines the characteristic of his major

works such as *İnce Memed* and *Demirciler Çarşısı Cinayeti* can also be observed here in a fragmented way.

Among the stories which resemble or resonate Şahin's style are *Süpürge*, *Yolda* and *Ağır Akan Su*. They provide certain aspects of story writing which we also observe in different stories of Şahin in his early period.

*Süpürge* resembles Şahin's inconclusive narratives and also his characters in search for work. In this story, the two protagonists are looking for work in a town when they are approached by Veli, who claims that he is the right hand of the *ağa*. Since the two men feel that they have to go easy on Veli if they want a chance at work, they start praising him, saying that they have been hearing his name in their village. Veli loses himself at his own façade of a right-hand to the *ağa* and boasts about his irreplaceability. He can "get them any job" he claims (Kemal, 1981: 91). As the story approaches its climax, Veli includes his wife in his lie, which disturbs her. She expands the lie in a sarcastic way. The story ends when the wife is fed up with Veli's boasting and orders him to sweep the floors contrary to Veli's repetitious exclamation that he is "no sweeper" (Ibid: 93). Veli takes a broom in his hand, saying that his wife would even get "the *ağa* to sweep the place" (Ibid: 93). The discrepancy between appearance and reality resembles Şahin's stories which deal with contextual authorities such as *Acı Duman*, *Odun* and *Acenta Mirza*. By contextual authorities we mean appropriation of authority when there is actually none. All these stories share this property. It is also an aspect of parables where men encounter men in the absence of authority and act as if there is. And yet, it is deceptive. The inconclusive ending as such, is a modern take on the hypocrisy of the "everyman", the regular peasant in this case. The desire for authority and its deceptive image is revealed this way.

*Yolda* is a story of a man returning to his home village on a cart after having done his trade in town. On the way home he encounters a woman who has just received her papers from court concluding a divorce. The simplistic dialogues are accompanied with minor descriptions about both characters and the fields and the roads surrounding them. As the man realizes that he has a chance at getting married to the woman, pushes her to

be with him. Also she resists up to a point, she agrees to it after learning that he has no one else and that he has property to feed both of them. From the beginning we learn that the village she lives in is two villages away from the one the man lives in. As they reach the first village which is her hometown, he stops the cart for a brief while saying that it is “her village” and she answers sarcastically “yes, my village” (Ibid: 169). They continue their trip. There are two striking aspects of this story. The first is the rarely encountered theme of divorce and the second is the powerful end dialogue. The significance of divorce is that it is a “modern” thing that is usually not considered within the rural image. The significance of the end dialogue comes from its rich signification. What does it mean to call the village your own village? The meaning of your village reverberates into various stories about honour/shame dichotomy as well as those about men looking for work pursuing nepotism from persons from their own village (*hemşeri*). In this specific context, as soon as the woman is “owned” by the man of another village, she also disowns her own village. This disowning can be observed in Şahin’s *Bedvanlı Zülfo*, *Acenta Mirza*, *Namus Eri* and *Kör Gülüşan*. The clearest similarity is in the latter two. The motivation for the possible honour killing in *Namus Eri* is that the protagonist feels he has to choose between his honour/village and the woman he loves. As long as he does not honour himself by killing his wife who is rumoured to have been prostituting herself, he is not a part of the village. The final sentences concerning his journey for the killing share this common aspect. No one says good bye to him for he has not “deserved” it – yet (Şahin, 2007: 63). *Kör Gülüşan* also repeats this aspect. She is owned by an *ağa* as a fourth wife. *Ağa*’s home becomes her home. In terms of narrativization, all these stories focus on the choice of the protagonists as admission or rejection of the home. *Zülfo*, *Mirza* and the woman of *Yolda* reject home while the man in *Namus Eri* tries to be admitted. *Gülüşan* on the other hand, is rejected. The loss of home we deal with in chapter 11 has roots in such an undertaking.

*Ağır Akan Su* follows a similar path with *Namus Eri*. The protagonist whom Yaşar Kemal knows personally (another aspect Şahin shares with him), sends his wife to Germany and learns that she has conceived a baby whose father is someone else. The

weight of this crushes him as the townspeople reject him his belonging to that neighbourhood. His honour is his belonging. In contrast to the latter story, however, we do see their encounter and the protagonist does not kill his love. The resolution is ruthless. His house is burnt down anonymously. This story provides a foil to the inconclusive endings of Şahin. When there is a conclusion, there is a commentary. Where Kemal sketches a tragedy which corresponds to a social agenda, Şahin refrains from commenting and leaves the story on its own. This latter gesture confines the custom, the law, or even the context to the particular situation and opens up a world of possibilities rather than defining a world of meaning. Maybe it is at this point Kemal approaches social allegory and Şahin refrains from it many times. Maybe it is in the nature of the allegorical to have a conclusion.

With regard to the language Yaşar Kemal uses in his short stories, we see a similarity on the surface and a contrast deep in the rhetoric. Yaşar Kemal's vocabulary and accented dialogues resemble Şahin's use of local language. Furthermore, the abruptness and the direct mediation of the raw image of what is going on in the stories is a common endeavour. For example, neither Yaşar Kemal nor Osman Şahin suspend any sexual tension nor hostility among protagonists until further mention. As soon as the encounter is there, so is the conspicuous tension. It is not hidden for later twists. This attitude relieves the story from a possible psychological play that it may become. We may add that both authors sometimes choose to enter such a play in stories such as Kemal's *Yatak* or a later work of Şahin, *Kötüş Hasan*.

The contrast in the rhetoric is mainly that Kemal's approach is romantic. The love and understanding for even the vilest act, the empathy that infiltrates the descriptions dominate Kemal's rhetoric. One of the best examples of this sort comes from his masterpiece *İnce Memed*. In the first volume of this work, Topal Ali, who is a scout, is a close friend of the protagonist Memed. However, when the antagonist Abdi Ağa orders him to find the track of Memed and his beloved, Ali can not resist his scouting instincts and traces them despite the fact that he can and wants to actually deceive Abdi Ağa by taking him the wrong way. His instincts and loss of control are stronger than his will.

To sum up, such empathy and radical psychological delineation do not enter Şahin's literature until *Mahşer* (1998). In this sense, his short story *Darağacı Avı* (2010) is his closest work to Yaşar Kemal's. In his early period, the psychological is not negated, but is distanced. Şahin refrains from both sympathy and antipathy for the sake of documenting his subject matter. This is the basic difference between Yaşar Kemal's and his early short stories.

## 7.2. Orhan Kemal (1914-1970)

Orhan Kemal's writings cover a span of almost thirty years from 1942 to his death. Although he is a prominent author of novels and unforgettable characters, his short stories are worthy of special attention. For our concern, a majority of his works are irrelevant since they take up urban issues of labour and working class problems. Deemed to be the precursor of social realism, Orhan Kemal's literature also enjoys a remarkable exuberance in entering the magical inner worlds of its characters. This is even more so in his short stories.

*Afaracı Hacı Ali*, for example, is the story of a peasant who is fed up with working the fields as an *afaracı*<sup>38</sup> (*Ekmek Kavgası*, 1949). Because he has little land of his own, he has to collect scraps of crop to provide for his family. He returns home to find that his one cow's been crippled for fun by the richest landowners in the village. He is furious so he goes to the teahouse in the village square to rebuke the guilty men. After a minor squabble, the villagers prevent a bigger fight and he returns home unsatisfied. His wife is worried about more troubles to come but he vaguely answers that he will speak his mind no matter what. This story published in 1948 is one of the simplest stories Kemal writes. He does not put a finger on a dominating issue with the village. Instead, he provides excerpts from Hacı Ali's labour, urination on the side of the road,

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<sup>38</sup> A peasant who collects the leftovers of the crop on the field (*afara*).

the discussion with wife and then foes. As with Yaşar Kemal's approach, Orhan Kemal also depends on dialogues as the backbone of the story. Descriptions only allow access to the mood of the environment with a few exceptions such as the description of the arteries of Hacı Ali to express his anger (Kemal, 1994: 50).

The inconclusive ending helps us in understanding Osman Şahin's approach better. For Orhan Kemal, the ending is not abrupt. Nor is it a climax. The story puts the character in the centre. It is the degradation of Hacı Ali's pride that pervades the fragments of his mundane experience. It is not violent like Şahin's stories. In fact, the subtlety of the impossible violence is hurtful and deep. There is a clenched fist that hangs in the air without knowing what to do. The equivalents of this feeling can be seen in Şahin's *Kanlı Garo*, *Nüfus Sayımı* or *Zaman Suçlusu*. However, Şahin does not take the matter as social-psychologic here. In his work, the act is not correspondent to a general act. In contrast, Orhan Kemal's delineation speaks a macro-level picture without mentioning it.

Orhan Kemal's novel *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde* (1954) needs be mentioned here. This masterpiece focuses on three peasants who pursue work in the newly industrializing southern city of Adana. One of the most important aspects of the production of the book was that it was based on pseudo-interviews of Orhan Kemal with actual villagers as well as personal experience. There are many social phenomena Orhan Kemal depicts in his novel, and among these happenings the allegoric aspect of his protagonists is conspicuous. They cover major characteristics of the peasants in their personas. Köse Hasan is the kind of peasant who is least liable to adapt to the immense change industrial modern society imposes on the villages. His early sickness and death correspond to the failure to adapt. On the other hand, Pehlivan Ali is the kind of peasant whose physical strength which would make him a very valuable asset to any *ağa*, is immediately integrated into the heavy workload of the new agricultural industry. He seems to adapt but in the incredible rhythm of the work, but his leg being mutilated by the haymaker is heavily charged with the meanings of violence imposed on the validity of a human being in the modern world. Finally, Yusuf is the kind of peasant who adapts

best as he learns how to construct walls and possesses a knowledge capital. This working of allegory empowers the whole story by juxtaposing the peasant with the ideas of the peasant.

*Av* from the book *Sarhoşlar* (1951) takes up allegory in a similar way. Three close friends, Efendi Mansur, Gdk Hasan and Tenekeci Sezai have a trip on the southern road in Adana for a rabbit hunt. They are on a “John Deere”, a tractor brand which is popular at the time. Mansur is characterized as a snob whose family is rich. He comments on everything without having proper knowledge on it. He talks about news “not having read it in the newspapers but having heard it on the radio” (Kemal, 1972: 85). He has a modern outfit and thinks himself an invincible *Johnny*<sup>39</sup> of the “Hollywood Air Force” (Ibid: 85). Gdk<sup>40</sup> Hasan is a bully who likes having fights despite his short build. He carries guns and knives. Sezai on the other hand, is “nothing like the other two” (Ibid: 87). He is an ostentatious man of religion who shows off by claiming the unforeseeable. They have an extravagant way of spending money and enjoying their lives together. On the way to the hunt they smoke pot and laugh for no reason because of their intoxicated state. The story concludes as they grow paranoid of a demon appearing in front of them first as the rabbit, then a donkey and finally a dog. They have an accident and fall down about forty meters down a slope. The extravagant meet an end they apparently deserve... Orhan Kemal’s caricaturization and sense of humour resembles Aziz Nesin’s parodies of the opportunist folk of Anatolia. This is rare in short stories considered within realist movements. If we sketched a crude spectrum of village short stories, we could claim that such stories stand on the far humorous end while Bekir Yıldız’s epic-dramatic stories stand on the far tragic end. Osman Şahin’s stories tend towards the latter. Even the funniest characters in Şahin’s stories are depicted with a macabre indifference and sympathy mixed with disgust. For example, the *eşkıya* Çukan in *Ölm Oyunları* is caught after years of hunting down by the military as a result of his irresistible urge to dance whenever he hears the drum. In

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<sup>39</sup> *Coni*.

<sup>40</sup> Meaning a ‘squat’ person.



no way does Şahin see a wider signification in such characters' peculiar aspects. In contradistinction to this, Orhan Kemal usually seeks out characters representative of a mass of people.

The final example of Orhan Kemal's stories reinforces this argument. *Naylon Hikaye* from *Sarhoşlar* is a story of two opportunists who enjoy the rise of prices in cotton sale. Veli and Abid are two ağas encounter each other in the city and converse about the opportunities. Abid provokes Veli saying that the prices will rise even more. Veli is sorry that he has already sold his cotton. They praise the party in power, which is the Democrat Party for introducing a more capitalistic free market. Orhan Kemal juxtaposes these caricatures of characters with a criticism of the politics of the mentioned party in such a way. As Veli is vexed by missing his chance of a higher profit, Abid takes him to a tractor sale. While Veli is further indulged in his "failure", Abid literally flirts with a red tractor, neglecting the salesman who is trying to flatter both of them into buying it. Kemal personifies the tractor like a courtesan in a red dress. The story ends in a concise description of the erotic joy Abid gets from touching the tractor's parts. Kemal provides a rare account of commodity fetishism as early as 1950.

### **7.3. Bekir Yıldız (1933-1998)**

Bekir Yıldız was born in Urfa and until he went to Germany in 1962 to work, he spent many years in different parts of Anatolia. After four years in Germany, he returned to establish his own publishing house where he published his first book. He was an active writer from 1951 to his death.

He presents a peculiar example when we talk about village literature. If Yaşar Kemal and Orhan Kemal were definitive for the village novel, then Yıldız was definitive for the village short story. His strength in dramatization, direct commentary on the social reality and flamboyant scandalization characterized both his literary and

intellectual persona. For example, his award acceptance speech in 1971 about Sait Faik Abasıyanık's (whose name was also the name of the award) overrated importance in the literary canon was received both as a shock and a late told truth. Abasıyanık's importance is undoubtedly strong considering literature, however, Yıldız's attitude was called for since it questioned both the neglect for authors and literatures of the village in Turkey.

For comparison, we take four exemplary stories from three different books of his. *Kaçakçı Şahan* from the eponymous book (1971) provides similarities with Osman Şahin's work while *Şahinler Vadisi* from *Mahşerin İnsanları* (1982) provides the crucial distinction between the two authors. *Reşo Ağa* is important in its scandalization, which reminds us of Şahin's *Kırmızı Yel* and similarly, *Gaffar ile Zara* is important in its similarity with Şahin's *Bedvanlı Zülfo*.

*Kaçakçı Şahan* is a story which is familiar to the ear of one who is more or less acquainted with village literature or even cinema. We have already mentioned this story when we took up the theme of law. Yıldız's description of a village not claiming the corpse of a smuggler who had been transgressing the border is very similar to Şahin's descriptions in *Sarı Sessizlik*. Both stories illustrate the silence as a mass attitude of suppression. Anger against authority embodied by the military floats in the air. While both stories sketch that anger silence as a symbol of suppression, Yıldız goes on to conclude with a dramatic effect, further including the psychology of the peasants to find ways to survive no matter what. Şahin does not focus on the survival instinct or the altruism of a smuggler. He isolates the suppression as it is.

*Gaffar ile Zara* are similar in this sense, since the protagonist Gaffar sees through the problem in the transformation in the village. He says he knows what the catastrophe that is haunting the village is: "It is the tractor." (Yıldız, 1990: 104). It is the motorization of agriculture that is killing the peasants and the *ağa* is complying with this transformation in collaborating with the new capitalist state. This problematization at once brings to mind Heidegger's infamous quote from his unpublished essay in

Bremen in 1949: “Agriculture is now a motorized food industry, the same thing in its essence as the production of corpses in the gas chambers and the extermination camps, the same thing as blockades and the reduction of countries to famine, the same thing as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs” (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990: 34). Interestingly enough, we have seen the significance of the tractor in Orhan Kemal’s works as well. It is a huge blow on agriculture beginning with the 1950s and is emblematic for the modernization of the village. We should add that Osman Şahin never focuses on the advent of the tractor in any of his short stories. This is coherent with his literary attitude in focusing on feudal values vs modern culture rather than events. One other similarity *Gaffar ile Zara* poses is that both the protagonist of this story and of *Bedvanlı Zülfo* of Şahin resist *ağa*’s suppression to go seek their rights elsewhere. Gaffar pursues working in Germany while Zülfo tries to sue the *ağa*. In both cases, the invalidity of a human being –a peasant- after he can no longer work is called into question (i.e. Yıldız, 1990: 110). And in both cases, the elders are ambivalent towards rebelling against the *ağa*, although at the end they all agree on the urgency for rebellion. The encounter with the *ağa* is also quite similar. Both protagonists are shuttling between angry and rebellious attitude and submission in the face of an *ağa* who sits high on his horse threatening them with death. It may be said that this is the closest the two authors get in their story writings.

*Reşo Ağa*, on the other hand, provides a complicated example. Similar to *Kırmızı Yel*, an innocent is sacrificed. Reşo Ağa kills his daughter for she has been kidnapped by a servant. Since her kidnapping is equivalent to adultery, Reşo Ağa has to clear his name. The story further dramatizes the situation by mentioning that the servant who kidnapped the girl was afraid so he let her go without touching her. The name/honour is above this fact. It is the feudal law from a western point of view although we can not go as far as to say it is orientalist. The empathy with the *ağa* which is present here can be contrasted with the empathy in *Kırmızı Yel*. Both protagonists spill innocent blood for a law. However, the protagonist of *Kırmızı Yel* is in a direct relationship with god, and he does not have a name/nomos to keep. This fact makes this latter story much more

radical than Yıldız's. The question of sovereignty in Yıldız's story is taken up to the extreme question of the sacred in Şahin's imagination.

Yıldız also deals with the sacred in his own way. One of his most powerful stories is *Şahinler Vadisi*. We should add beforehand that the dignity of the animal in the face of human beings enters Şahin's literature only later with *Kolları Bağlı Doğan* and *Saçlı Yılan ile Selvihan*. *Şahinler Vadisi* of Bekir Yıldız is about Gafur who takes his son to falcon hunting where they catch and tame a falcon by abusing the bird's proud obstinacy to never let bait go. They tie a string on a dead pigeon they serve the falcon with and the falcon is caught along with it. Afterwards, the protagonist befriends his familiar and talks to him until the bird is domesticated. The story takes a sharp turn when the fact that they have to sell the bird for living coincides with the *ağa* willing to buy it to endorse his majesty. Gafur gives the falcon to the *ağa* in a ceremonious ritual. The stories of a new born baby of Gafur and Ağa punishing a rebel intertwine with the central focus on the falcon's pride. The falcon is described to be disappointed with both Gafur's selling of him to the evil sovereign and the sovereign *ağa*'s abominable treatment of the rebel who is beaten to death. The bird flies away after he picks *ağa*'s eyes.

We may conclude that Yıldız's literature differs from Şahin's at this precise point. Yıldız enjoys the epic intermingling of the sacred existence of the falcon and rebellious nature of humankind. He sees virtue in nature under different shades of light. The imagery is much more polished and short-sighted in his depiction. He creates a feeling of removedness in his writing. It is as if you see the world in a state of flight as you are facing a terrifying monster right in front of your nose – everything around the things you focus on are blurred. In contrast, Şahin's imagery is sharp and naked under a blinding light. We can consider it like this: Both authors more or less look at the same picture of white star shapes on a black background. Yıldız sees shining stars on a pitch black night while Şahin sees star-shaped holes on a black wall that confines light. Where Yıldız sees romanticized symbols of human dignity, Şahin sees bitter losses of integrity.

#### 7.4. Duran Yılmaz (1942- )

Of all the authors that we have mentioned, Duran Yılmaz is the least known. The reason we deal with his stories is not the strength of his stories or an influence on Osman Şahin but his *yörük* background. Along with Demirtaş Ceyhun and Osman Şahin, he is one of the few authors who deal with *yörük* literature with inside knowledge. Also once a teacher like Osman Şahin, Duran Yılmaz publishes his first stories in 1972 – and he is active since. His *Yörük Hikayeleri* (1983) deals only with stories of the *yörüks*. All the eight stories in the book focus on certain catastrophic phenomena that the *yörük* tribes deal with. These catastrophes are the lack of a pasture for the herds, land conflicts with the settled *ağas* of the lower lands, suffering of the *yörüks* in the face of capitalist *ağas* buying out the best of the animals and lands, floods, thieves and diseases. Some end in a hopeful way and some in total catastrophe.

For the sake of discussion, we take up two stories. *Öğrek*<sup>41</sup> is about Kara Memet's disappointment at the loss of horse herds to the *ağas* of the lower lands. As he travels the highlands, he encounters herds of horses and asks the shepherds the name of the owners. As he learns that all of them belong to the same rich family which is not of *yörük* origin, he becomes furious. At the end, he abandons his own horse asking: "What is left of this big land to us?" (Yılmaz, 1983: 39). This final gesture is similar to Şahin's stories. It is an attitude that Şahin would find spectacular and worthy of a story. In fact, similar attitudes can be observed in *Tomruk*, *Gömlek*, *Reşim* and *Sarı Sessizlik* (See Chapter 6). The only difference is that it is not conducted in an encounter with an authority in person. The dignity of the protagonist is common, however, and the self-destructive act pronounces a sovereign remark. He is ready to give away his horse, which is equivalent of pride for a *yörük* peasant, in the face of such violence.

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<sup>41</sup> Horse herd.

The other story is *Başaklar Olgunlaşırken*. Koca İbiş is the exemplary *yörük ağa* par excellence. He does a clever deal with İzzet Ağa of the lower lands, making a promise of security for İzzet Ağa's crop in exchange for a minor part of his land. He even gets the paperwork done, which he explicitly loathes. He secures a place for his own folk this way. However, he refuses to exercise violence on the plunderers saying that the peasants actually deserve more crop for their labour (Ibid: 44). After İzzet Ağa passes away, he orders his folk to work the land they own. This act is immediately sued by the son of İzzet Ağa, who has been bribing the courts for suppressing the peasants. He further leads military officers to harass the *yörük* peasants. Koca İbiş shows the paper to the military officials, keeping his anger down. The story takes a utopic turn, where Koca İbiş's cunning comes to fruition. Since İzzet Ağa's sons do not have enough money to run the land in such insecurity of crops, the *yörüks* buy out the rest of the land threatening any competitors in the auction. Finally, Koca İbiş declares that everyone earn in proportion to the amount of labour they put in. Even the family of Ala Deli (comprised of thirteen people) are included in this sharing despite the fact that they have not put in money to buy the land out. What's more, he further includes the women in the count for they also aid the peasants by working at home. It is an incredibly anti-capitalistic and also communistic act. In contrast to Duran Yılmaz's other stories, this story stands out as astoundingly hopeful and charged with ideologism rather than simply critical. It tells what to do although not exactly how to do it. This ideological charge can also be seen in Yılmaz's children's book *Çoban Çocuklar*<sup>42</sup> where four *yörük* kids sketch a communal behaviour. We may say that Yılmaz is quite different from Şahin in dealing with ideologies. Yılmaz considers the appearance of, say capitalism, in its perception, similar to Orhan Kemal's protagonists. Osman Şahin, however, frames certain moments of encounter or clashes to isolate phenomena. This is actually more important than it sounds. While many authors provide structural delineations of societies as a platform for their stories, Osman Şahin, mainly in his early stories, deals with an immediate phenomenon as a revelation of the origin of the event

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<sup>42</sup> Exact time of the first time this book was published is unknown. Possibly 1991.

at hand. For example, Yılmaz makes the guard of the herd shoot thieves in his *Ayışığında Üç Karaltı*. Afterwards, he does an interesting thing and cuts off the ear of a sheep which also dies in the shooting. This is so that no one identifies the sheep as his. He does not want to deal with law because of the shooting despite the fact that he had to guard the herd from the thieves. It is a detail Şahin would also use to sketch the relation of the peasant with law. It is also for this reason that Şahin's *ağas*, even if they are good people, are not subject to such utopic possibilities, because the position itself is evil and its immediate contact is situated in that position. We may deduct from this that Şahin's stories approach the phenomenological in contrast to the other authors.

One other thing that is very important here is the language. Yılmaz and Şahin's languages are very similar regarding their ways of describing, their fascination with minor details that are representative of the characters, their vocabulary as well as the rhythm and shifts in the stories. Both authors make use of shifting centres which is typical of continuous oral recounts. The stories undergo abrupt changes to evoke a feeling of readiness to the surprises such violent life poses. Moreover, a constant performance of emotions pervades the stories as it does the life of a *yörük*. For example, the way both authors describe communication of tragedy illustrates this. As a tragic event happens, the acceptance is informed by the wife "looking at the grave" (Ibid: 74); the rejection of it is demonstrated by a "broken face" (Şahin, 2006: 18); the terror of it by "punches on the chest" (Ibid: 80); the helplessness by "a change in the eyes" (Ibid: 106; Yılmaz, 1983: 82); the inevitability by a "numbness of limbs" (Ibid: 33; Şahin, 2006: 63, 218). Such descriptions, of course, are not specific to the *yörüks*, however, the way they are handled are specific to such background.

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There are several conclusions we can derive from this comparative study. We have seen that Osman Şahin is quite familiar to his peers in the genre in terms of the subjects and concepts he takes up. Moreover, the issues he deals with lead the reader to similar conclusions such as the catastrophic nature of the transformation the villages go

through in the face of modernization, industrialization and state intervention. He shows interest in Yaşar Kemal-like moments of uneasiness which can be tracked back to social background such as tradition or honour codes. He also shows interest in depictions of synecdochical details that speak the mood of a person or even his social stratus as Orhan Kemal prefers to. We can argue that his closest kin here is Bekir Yıldız as both are fascinated by the normality of “extraordinary events” within rural context. This may be considered as a modernist (and ethnographic) attitude since the fascination relies on an urban-modern reader. On the other hand, the similarity of his language with Duran Yılmaz show that his *yörük* background may account for his rhythmic recounts that create a raw taste of remoteness the peasants are subject to in their stories. We are sucked into the pavilion of a *yörük*, as if we are listening to a story at night before we sleep. And it is in such a sense that we feel we have not heard the last of the story and we will probably not the next day.

In contrast, none of these authors, with few exceptional stories, deal with their protagonists as unique in their treatment of their issues or dichotomies. This is quite the case for Osman Şahin as is proven by his different takes on the same story. For example, if we encounter a blood feud, there is no possibility of forgiveness in any of the other authors. In Osman Şahin, on the other hand, we have examples of both ruthless execution (*Musallim ile Kuşde*) and miraculous forgiveness (*Kanın Masalı*). If we encounter an *ağa*, he is definitely not questioning the nature of his hierarchical position and is quite a flat character<sup>43</sup>; while Şahin provides *ağas* of all sorts, from the suffering (*Nüfus Sayımı*) to the opportunist (*Gömlek*), from the knowledgeable (*Fırat'ın Cinleri*) to the most ignorant (*Opoletli Kardeş*).

Furthermore, we do not see the inconclusive endings Şahin provides. Most of the time, the stories are allegoric in the other authors, as are Şahin's stories later on. However, in his early period, Şahin sticks to parable-like stories which resist pedagogic conclusions. The lack of conclusions is also a reason why most of the time we can not

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<sup>43</sup> *Yörük ağas* of Duran Yılmaz are exceptions. They are more *yörük* than *ağas*.



trace any possible allegoric nature in his treatments. We can say that the peasant as an idea encounters the dichotomies he presents, but that's it. We can try to say that the yellow calf (Sarı Öküz) is an allegory for the peasant, but similar to what Benjamin says of Kafka, sometimes a calf is just a calf. Şahin seems to refrain from allegory precisely because he prefers to see a character independent of other characters, but dependent on the major changes they are subject to. In fact, the spectacular acts of difference and autonomous decisions in certain contexts attract Şahin into writing the stories. This is why he isolates the custom of hospitality by not concluding with the usual honour killing in *Ocağına Düşmek*.

## CHAPTER 8

### SOVEREIGNTY AND THE LOSS OF HOME

Literature only continues the game of religions, of which it is the principal heir. Above all, it has received sacrifice as a legacy: at the start, this longing to lose, to lose ourselves and to look death in the face, found in the ritual of sacrifice a satisfaction it still gets from the reading of novels. In a sense, sacrifice was a novel, a fictional tale illustrated in a bloody manner. (Bataille, 1988b: 106)

What truth endures here? This was the question we asked some pages ago. The goal of the writer, Blanchot remarks, is not what he “makes, but the truth of what he makes” (1995: 308). That truth is a “ruination of action” in “making all of reality available to us” (Ibid: 316). “The realm of the imaginary is not a strange region beyond the world, it is the world itself, but the world as entire, manifold, the world as a whole” (Ibid: 316).

A totality is revealed to us in ruining action and decision retrospectively. The writer resides in an action which brings together, which unifies. What is unified is unknown to us. It is an unknowing that produces the unification anyway. We face the village, the peasant, the change, the state, everything as something unknown to us. In that unknowing do we face them, are we able to face them. We do this strictly in prose in our subject matter. This is one of the slopes of literature Blanchot explicates to be a concern for “the movement of negation” by which things are pushed/destroyed “in order to be known, subjugated, communicated” (Ibid: 330). And at the end, literature makes an “attempt to become the revelation of what revelation destroys” (Ibid: 328).

The truth of concealing the truth endures here. The indifference of literature to truth reveals that concealment. “You are that which creates the green in the arid, the word in the tongue”<sup>44</sup> says Osman Şahin, in his appraisal of mother earth in *Ağız İçinde Dil Gibi* (2007: 73).<sup>45</sup> It is a powerful negation. He communicates that which he denies in literature. His communication is consciousness that is “born” out of unconsciousness. The earth that he speaks to is at once the mother of all life, the provider and that which always remained in silence. The only obstacle present is the presence of language itself. It cannot speak the silence that “mother nature” is. Silence was gone the moment it spoke. The colossal ambiguity of the double negation embraces the vain attempt to attain “naturalness”. “Like how man can not be without language, can he not be without soil either” (Ibid: 75). Language works the soil like water. It is a production in negation. The dialectics of production does not see to a transformation. Soil does not turn into life. Soil, “the ancient of the ancients” grants life in its own destruction (Ibid: 74). The “advent of meaning” Blanchot talks about, the “activity of comprehension” negates the thing as the word becomes the thing in meaning (1995: 331, 338). “I come to you, I give you my name, let it be yours. I know the fire of the thousand-year-old struggle and longing...” (Şahin, 2007: 75).<sup>46</sup> The limits of the embracing of earth and the embracing of language collide. The longing for nature is the right to death at work. The limitless existence in the return to nature is non-existence in being everything. As one becomes everything in literature, one becomes no being in its limitlessness.

What man risks when he belongs to the work and when the work is the search for art is, then, the most extreme thing he could risk: not just his life, not only the world where he dwells, but his essence, his right to truth, and, even more, his right to death (Blanchot, 1982: 237).

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<sup>44</sup> *Kuruda yelili, dilde sözü yaratan sensin.*

<sup>45</sup> *Like a Tongue in the Mouth*

<sup>46</sup> *Sana geldim, sana verdim adımları, senin olsun. Bin yıllık kavganın, hasretin ateşini bilirim...*

Language is an extreme denial of giving a name -your name- to that which has no name. What's more, language is born out of that which that has no name. Literature brings language to a level of consciousness that lays that extreme denial bare. Language by itself is a consciousness that can bring about decisions and work - and sustainment of life after birth. On the other hand, literature is "*my consciousness without me,*" (Blanchot, 1995: 328).

An attainment of a flash of an image recurs in this literature. The "nature" that keeps being lost in oblivion is reminded again and again in that holding onto the flash of an image. Language is the "movement through which whatever disappears keeps appearing" (Ibid: 329).

We have said that Şahin tries to embrace language and nature at the same time, at their limits. It is an attempt for an "embrace" that "restores us, not to nature," "but rather to the totality in which man has his share by *losing himself.*" (Ibid: 119). This embrace, Bataille finds best, in the embrace of lovers. He finds the purest form of return in eroticism. Then, the failure is all the more conspicuous. Nature does not answer. Only two beings which say "I" can in correspondence find a share of such an embrace. The being which says "I" is not a person, "but always a *subject.*" He is "not a thing; vis-à-vis things, objects," he is "the subject that sees them, names them, and handles them." (Ibid: 138) One can say "it is" of a thing, but the thing can not say "I am" of itself; while one can say "he is" of a fellow being, whereas he can say "I am" of himself, in the same way that one does. (Ibid:138). Both language and nature escape the embrace as such, in not being subjects. Then what is Şahin's work, but an elegy for the impossible return?

Şahin returns to the postpartum speech that laments its mother but neither the speaker nor the birth-giver is there. Only the signification is left. Only the parting is left. This is the truth that endures. "I come to you, I give you my name, let it be yours." An impossible return. "Since man has uprooted himself from nature, that being who returns to it is still uprooted" (Bataille, 1988b: 90). The signification purified of its substance reveals the uprootedness, the thrownness. The loss of a home that was never yours.

Only an enactment of sacrifice in such literature (*I come to you*) can, for a brief moment, allow a return home.

### 8.1. A general economics

“Life beyond utility is the domain of sovereignty” (Ibid: 198). We studied this in many possible moments Şahin has illustrated. *Kurt Avı*, *Tomruk*, *Acı Duman* were all about this in content. There is a distinction that needs be made here. “The sovereign restores to the primacy of the present the surplus share of production, acquired to the extent that men submitted to the primacy of the future...” (Ibid: 242) On the other hand, “sovereignty is essentially the refusal to accept the limits that the fear of death would have us respect in order to ensure, in a general way, the laboriously peaceful life of individuals” (Ibid: 221). Therefore, sovereignty in the Batailleian sense differs from any act of a sovereign’s.

The peasant submits to the primacy of the future, plans for another year’s crop and seeks production for the sake of consumption in return. He sees production wherever he consumes. He sees the earth in the wheat. The *ağa* on the other hand, sees only consumption when he consumes. He does not foresee a future for which the act is directed at. Bataille repeatedly uses *consumation*<sup>47</sup>, a sacrificial consumption which seeks no return, in opposition to calculated, re-productive consumption which he finds typical of bourgeois consumption (Ibid: 431). The sovereign indulges in *consumation* – at the expense of the submitted objects of his rule. “The sovereign, if he desires, can live in the moment”, this is one thing (Ibid: 245). This moment deprives itself of imagining a possibility of future. “What matters, moreover, is not that [the sovereign] desires this, but that he is capable of it and that, being capable, he manifests that capability” (Ibid: 245). This is where all causal understanding of sovereign attitude is shattered. We often

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<sup>47</sup> The English translation just uses consumption or unproductive consumption. The French original is mentioned in the notes.

seek ideological, political, psychological, economical (in classical sense) motivations behind what we usually call a sovereign's actions. They may exist, but they don't matter. Our psychopathological inclinations towards "understanding" often fool us, having us interpret an equation where there's none. *Ağa* consumes unproductively, that is his essence in being one.

"The real sovereign is a product, no doubt an objective product, of conventions based on subjective reactions" (Ibid: 237). This subjective reaction is only possible to the extent that an object against which a subjectivity can be imposed. You say "you are my peasant", in order to negate the slave through which act you call yourself an *ağa*. This is the "clumsiness" of mankind (Ibid: 237). What does it turn into? Who is the peasant of the modern world, and who are the *ağas*? A different mode applies here.

Sovereignty on the other hand, "refers rather to deep subjectivity" (Ibid: 237). Bataille "restores" this domain of sovereignty to anyone. He calls it to be possible to not only the peasant, the slave, the subdued, no. As the traditional modes of sovereignties fade into the bourgeois mode of consumption (which, to repeat, sees further production in any consumption), Bataille restores the domain of sovereignty to the human "search" "from lure to lure, for a life that is at last autonomous and authentic" (Ibid: 153). In fact, he argues against the ambiguity created by the fact that a sovereign calls his "servants" his "subjects. In his view, "the *subject* is the *sovereign*", Bataille's subject "has nothing *subjugated* about it" (Ibid: 442). He sets one principle, of "sovereignty being the negation of prohibition" (Ibid: 254). We have seen this in *Kanın Masalı*, when Battal forgave Kazo. At least we had a glimpse of it. But "sovereignty is revealed internally; only an interior communication really manifests its presence" (Ibid: 245). This means, a radical subjectivity is called for. We cannot point to something and say, now this here is sovereignty par excellence. Only the (traditional) sovereign or a sovereign "act" can be pointed at, at the point of *consumation*.

So we oppose *the* sovereign to *being* sovereign in a domain of sovereignty. While the first may be embodied in an *ağa*, the second is "available" to anyone. To live

“sovereignly” is when “the representation of death is impossible” because death is the negation of a possible future. When a possible future is not sought, its negation (death), and the representation of such negation, are also impossible (Ibid: 219). It is an escape from “if not death, at least the anguish of death” (Ibid: 219). For Bataille, of course, this domain is the domain of art at its best, and only a sovereign art which “throws the responsibility for managing things back onto things themselves” can be in that domain. As such, sovereign art renounces and repudiates, “the functions and the power assumed by real sovereignty” (Ibid: 421). The similar aspect of the renouncing sovereignty of art (Derrida calls it sovereign operation, remarking that it can not actually be called anything) to renounced sovereignties (i.e. lordship), is that it makes “itself independent through the putting at stake of life; it is attached to nothing and conserves nothing” (Derrida, 1978: 334). It is distinguished as “it does not even want to maintain itself, collect itself, or collect the profits from itself or from its own risk; it cannot even be defined as a possession” (Ibid: 334).

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Our concern then is the concern for human autonomy. One’s availability to one’s self. The problem of “the desire for autonomy, without which there is no humanity, that determined the human attitude,” is that it keeps shifting one from one “dependence” to another (Bataille, 1988b: 150). Bataille puts “the *sacred* in a vague and impersonal form” to be a “new principle of pure autonomy,” however, he emphasizes the importance of consciousness, which he claims to have been missing in the sacred. The sovereign of the traditional world then, was a symbol of autonomy. Every modification from his rank by birth to the fulfilments of this rank, from cleanliness to aesthetic difference, was a politics of autonomy (Ibid: 84). The matter of class was subject to this as well. It is intuitively tied to the “consequence of disgust” against nature, from humanity is ripped away. “It is always a matter of denying the human being’s dependence on the natural given, of setting our dignity, our spiritual nature, our detachment, against animal avidity” (Ibid: 91).

That is why, the lifting of classes, the nondifferentiation proposed by the modern world, is a “negation of sovereignty”; that is “why sovereignty is not itself an end” (Ibid: 302). Everything having a price, is what Osman Şahin underlines in *Yörük Ana* (Şahin, 2007: 158). A nondifferentiation is feinted in the modern world as such. Yet, in the negation of sovereignty lies the destruction of the subject in its becoming a thing. A reification, so to say. What we see may be a villain of a feudal lord, but that image reminds us one thing: “Sovereign subjectivity remained linked to the universal, to the totality”. The ağa had the “function of claiming” it, and he further had access “to the power he believed he derived from the subjective sovereignty that the others attributed to him” (Bataille, 1988b: 417). Sovereignty as such, is impersonal. A personal value may be said to have been involved in a decision that sets accumulation against consumption. This is the “immediate pleasure” of the ağa (Ibid: 311)

In feudal society, rules kept everyone to their ranks (by birth, by space) the social positions kept the actions moderated and justified; and excessiveness was preserved to the feudal sovereign (Ibid: 347). The gift was a measure of this. Only the ağa was a bearer and giver of gifts. There was no maths concerning it. The gift was simultaneously his signature as a sovereign and his transgression of calculation as an affirmation of his rule. This is why, in *Acı Duman*, when a neighbour gives tobacco as a gift, it is a magic touch of sovereignty. For a brief while, the peasant is an ağa to his neighbour. Excessiveness grants such excitement, an effervescence whose value cannot be measured by the amount of tobacco you have for yourself. This is also why, when an ağa can not serve his guest well as in *Nüfus Sayımı*, when *excessiveness* is not available to him, it is of total significance: He is not sovereign anymore.

What the bourgeois world brings about, in contrast, is “tense of proportion”. In opposition to nobility, the modern bourgeois world kept everything in calculation and even the gift was measured by its return value (Ibid: 347). This is the *aporia* of ağa’s act in *Gömlek*. In order to preserve his authority, he abuses the custom of sharing a shirt while in truth he forgets that the custom is that of the gift of sharing ağa’s sovereignty. The act is an act of giving without return. However, he uses it to have a return value of



pacifying the rebellious. His confusion of the sovereign gift with bourgeois investment is his actual self-destruction, not Eno's refusal to wear the shirt anymore. "The thought that comes to a halt in the face of what is sovereign rightfully pursues its operation to the point where its object dissolves into NOTHING" (Ibid: 204). If that object (Eno?), is calculated as to remain within the cycle of input-output, supply demand binaries, then sovereignty collapses. Because, in "ceasing to be useful, or subordinate," *aĝa* would become *sovereign* in ceasing to be a subject to it (Ibid: 204). The economy of "ceasing to be" is what general economics reminds us. Destruction, gift, excess, uselessness and the like are *utilized* back into production in the new age of the men of great reason.

## 8.2. The Men of Great Reason

History approaches its end for all of us, according to Blanchot, in different ways. There are three different ways possible for "the men of great reason", "the men of small reason" and "the believers". "The man of great reason thinks of himself as the whole" and "he works without pause to make the world reasonable"; for the man of small reason, "the end is as though at each moment already given"; for the believer, "the beyond brings history gloriously and eternally to term" (Botting, 1998: 43). The believer, we understand indulges in an apocalyptic thinking, while small reason indulges in refusing an indulgence – it is an entrapment between a binomial allay of reason and mysticism. The man of great reason finds himself in a total calculation that he himself produces. This total calculation is the dominant form of modernity. That is why, Blanchot proposes, the "passion of negative thought" present in Bataille's conception of sovereignty, is a working towards a promise towards man's own end. An autonomy. It is a negative thought that negates indulgence totally. In all three cases, the calculation is either predetermined or set in determination – but at the end, always admitted and affirmed. This admission and affirmation is what we come to call "knowledge". Man "produces himself in producing the world" (Ibid: 44). Knowledge is the mode of production. Whether it is consciousness or instrumentality, it always refers

to an end. Bataille's conception on the other hand, creates a space that exceeds the end as it exceeds the subject and history altogether (see **Literature concerning essence of Technology**).

What does the knowledge of the world give us? It is a question covering economy, ethnography, history, mathematics etc. What does the knowledge of the village give us? We could say a control in terms of positivism; a redemption in terms of belief. Let us say, for a second, that it is a control, a taming of the untamed. A self-righteous production of a conflict between the urban and the rural relies on "the established fallacy that [...] associates the "uncivilized" peoples with the lower classes - or with fallen individuals" anyway (Bataille, 1988b: 67). It is a double relationship. From the rural to the urban, it is a modernization as knowledge that admits and affirms a reasonable world. From the urban to the rural, it is a negative affirmation that the uncivilized is closer to nature and thus, the greater the urban/modern is away from nature, the greater the difference between him and the uncivilized: A justification. There goes the paradox. Modern man needs the uncivilized for the sake of justification and at the same time, sees in fascination, the "roots" of his existence. As such, all the measures of the feudal society satisfy and even reassure his success as progress. His knowledge of it is part of the negation. This gaze on the village parallels "the abhorrence of animal needs, together with the repugnance for death and dead persons" for example (Ibid: 61). That is why, the more animalistic the image of the village is, the more justified the attainment of a reasonable world is. Labour marks the transition from animal to man, but what labour, which labour? Man negates nature through labour, "which destroys it and changes it into an artificial world; he negates it in the case of life-creating activity; he negates it in the case of death" (Ibid: 61). While this stands in the ordinary, the change in the mode of labour is just a further negation, a raise in the stakes. Nothing challenges the primordial negation in the mode of labour. If there is progress, then it is a progression of the negation, nothing else. Only, the sovereign man (of useless consumption) is able to negate this negation.

Bataille challenges modernity with a crucial question. When traditional forms of sovereignty are brought down and the modern man resides at its residue, what space is there for the exceeding of such history? What space is there in the world of the utilitarian man of which, “ultimately, sovereign man is the negation” (Ibid: 343)? Glimpse of an answer is found in the concepts of the sacred and the prohibition. Prohibition, for Bataille, is a refusal of a given: “Animality that no rule limited” (Ibid: 343). However, the radical refusal would end up in ceasing to be, suicide, for animality is originary and its total negation is the “limit of possibility” for man (Ibid: 343). Instead, only temporary transgressions are allowed.

All the moments of effusion, irrational behaviour (which is still rational) and transgression reaffirm the framework. In the modern age, the framework is that of use. And while “all *useless consumption*, all nonproductive spending, implies recognition of a sovereign value that justifies it” in a feudal village, the engagement in “nonproductive spending” in the modern world, “we are always, or very nearly, looking for some result” (Ibid: 312). There is still a submission to the primacy of the future. “Sometimes the bourgeois has resources at his disposal that would allow him to enjoy the possibilities of this world in a sovereign manner”, but it is a “furtive manner”, that still employs the disposal for the sake of future (Ibid: 198). This is why, in *Gömlek*, the attitude of the *Ağa* is already bourgeois without his knowledge.

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The modern man of great reason, attempts to conjoin the incommensurable forms of effusion which classical and recognized sovereignties (i.e. lord, king) did not try to or even dare to. These effusions have an unlimited list in Bataille’s discussion: “Laughter, tears, poetry, tragedy and comedy” to “play, anger, intoxication, ecstasy, dance, music, combat, the funereal horror, the magic of childhood” and “beauty [...], crime, cruelty, fear, disgust (Ibid: 230). They are not simply the emotional aspects of man as such. They are everything that escape history, escape a subjectivity-objectivity relationship. That is why a laughter for the boss for benefit is different. Bataille also adds the “sacred

- of which sacrifice is the most intense aspect” (Ibid: 230). The sacred, which is “given only in experience, as a fact [and] not as the result of a judgment” remains outside of a rational enframing. It is noted here that irrational behaviours “such as those ordinarily connected with a flag, a fatherland, a leader” cannot be linked to “a judgment of reason” for this reason (Ibid: 335).

So the question remains, what domination is there if it aberrantly changes the mode of labour and mode of knowledge and can not attain what it attempts to attain? It is not domination then. It is violence. It is a trick. Derrida introduces a different perspective. He reevaluates the “slumber of reason” Hegel talks about. A slumber of not “reason put to sleep, but slumber in the form of reason” (Derrida, 1978: 318). A slumber that tricks into the thinking of the world in calculation, in causality, input and output, supply and demand, progressive and regressive etc. It is the envisagement as such, rather than perception. The nature of its violence arises from thence.

### **8.3. *Bestand and Gestell***

In his questioning concerning technology, Martin Heidegger focuses his attention on the essence of technology. He begins by separating causality from his questioning and categorizes causality to be a part of technology as an entity, rather than a “factor” of its coming to being. Such thinking in terms of causality, he further proposes, illudes us into linking what we see before us to what it is in its essence. We find that there is a sharp distinction between the technological (tools, industry etc.) and technology itself. The *telos* (not aim or purpose but rather, destination) is not involved in the thinking of the thing. Therefore, “technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology” (Heidegger, 1992: 311). “Likewise, the essence of technology is by no means anything technological (Ibid: 311).

When we think of it in terms of tools and institutions that utilize those tools, we enter an “instrumental and anthropological definition of technology” where “it is a means and a human activity” (Ibid: 312). These two definitions go together, but technology itself is about a bringing-forth rather than the manufacturing that surfaces as a result/product.

In its origin, technology is a way of bringing-forth and it coincides with *poiesis* in this sense (Ibid: 317). *Poiesis* is a certain consciousness (not in the psychological sense) that brings what is not in the present to presence as a revelation. Its highest sense is further coinciding with the given, the natural: *Physis*. So every bringing-forth is grounded in revealing (Ibid: 318). In the questioning, rather than focusing on the brought-forth, we deal with the act or mode of bringing itself. As such, “technology is a mode of revealing” (Ibid: 319).

Heidegger also distinguishes the appearance of revelation in the two types of knowledge: *techne* and *episteme*. While *techne* (say, knowledge of use) in its etymology has revelation as its grounding, *episteme* (say, knowledge of entity) does not. We only consider the revealing in this manner.

When it comes to the question of modern technology, we encounter the same thing. Technology is not revealing *per se*, but a mode of revealing. It is different from *poiesis* despite the common ground. Modern technology, Heidegger says, is ruled by a revealing that “is a challenging [herausfordern], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy which can be extracted and stored as such” (Ibid: 320). This demand is what is “modern” about it.

Revealing, *aletheia*, is unconcealment of truth from whence it comes. Again, we do not speak of an instrumental or an entitative truth but its bringing-forth. The mode it is revealed differs from transformation to storing, however, it never comes to a terminable end and does not deviate to an indeterminacy either. What modern technology does is that it rests in the violence of the assumption/supposition of a

possible terminable end (a finality) and keeps hold of resources via regulation and security (a causality).

For this equation, an ordering is imposed. This ordering forces everything to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering (Ibid: 322). This, Heidegger calls, “the standing-reserve [*Bestand*]” (Ibid: 322). This standing-reserve exceeds the characteristics of a stock of resources in its readiness for use as it is also refused presence unless it is called forth. It is only an object, when it is called to be an object. It is a *bestand*, as it “no longer stands over against us as object” (Ibid: 322). There’s no autonomy possible to it. Heidegger finds parallels between how emotions unfold from the modal gathering of those very emotions and how self-revealing unfolds from the gathering of the standing-reserve. While the former is disposition (*Gemüt*), the second is dubbed *Ge-stell* (Enframing) (Ibid: 324). In simpler and cruder terms, there’s a parallel between how a person is angry about a friend’s harmless behaviour on a day he is sick and how a gun is produced at a time of peace. The time of peace is a bad example, yet it is, in a sense, a façade of a *ge-stell*.

*Ge-stell* is the key term in understanding what revealing means here. It “means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve” (Ibid:325). To exemplify, the modern technology is chronologically later than modern physics/science; however, the bringing together is beyond this chronology *historically*. The modern science that causally ended up in modern technology could be said to have been called to serve the demand of that technology historically. It is a double-feed circle which is in no sense vicious. *Gestellung* is precisely this calling upon that remains outside of the equation of the called upon. Maybe you are happy, but your disposition is beyond your happiness...

What better corresponds to this beyond than freedom? It is what makes the possible possible. It is what is home when all causality and its archeology depend on a

deferrent speech that delays and pushes a responsibility of an event, a happening to another that further delays and pushes. It is the essence of truth, of the revealing (Ibid: 128; see **Revelation and Truth**).

The essence of freedom is originally not connected with the will or even with the causality of human willing. Freedom governs the open in the sense of the cleared and lighted up, i.e., of the revealed. It is to the happening of revealing, i.e., of truth, that freedom stands in the closest and most intimate kinship. All revealing belongs within a harboring and a concealing. But that which frees—the mystery—is concealed and always concealing itself. All revealing comes out of the open, goes into the open, and brings into the open. The freedom of the open consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws. Freedom is that which conceals in a way that opens to light, in whose clearing there shimmers that veil that hides the essential occurrence of all truth and lets the veil appear as what veils. Freedom is the realm of the destining that at any given time starts a revealing upon its way (Ibid: 330).

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“The essence of modern technology lies in Enframing” (Ibid: 330). What does Bataille have to say about the *standing-reserve* and *Enframing*? Apparently, the relationship of *Bestand* and value is a relationship to death. When man becomes a thing, there’s the basic loss of value. Without death, we can not cease to be, we can not lose. Where there is nothing to lose, there’s no value. We are reduced to less than an object (Bataille, 1988b: 218).

What the feudal system proposed was a reduction to objecthood as servility for the peasant. A servant is one who fears death and puts the primacy of future in his labour. The servility in the form of service to the lord “bespeaks the sovereignty of the” lord and is at the origin of the silence and ignorance of the servile “to be reduced to” his service (Ibid: 135). Still, he is an object to his lord. He is the man “who does not put his life at stake, the man who wants to conserve his life, wants to be conserved (servus)” (Derrida, 1978: 321). The access to lordship, “to the for-itself [pour soi, für sich], to

freedom, to recognition” requires putting at stake of life, a risking of life against the anguish of death (Ibid: 321; Bataille, 1988b: 219). And this dialectics that modern man relies on entraps self-consciousness under the name of independence from this servility to the lord, “it liberates itself by enslaving itself, when it starts to *work*” for a *meaning* that is only “laughable” (Derrida, 1978: 323).<sup>48</sup> Liberation from the lord does not produce the liberation of the servile object. What’s more, the servile object further loses the objecthood with its servility as well. He becomes a source ready to use only when called upon: a *Bestand*.

The determinations concerning labour in its modern sense also revolve around a standing-reserve-ification. It does, in sense, share something in common with reification and commodification we are familiar with in Marxist theory. A standing-reserve, however, has no (possibility of) autonomy. Moreover, it is not just the suppressed individuals or even classes that undergo such a process, it concerns everyone indifferently, indiscriminately.

The determinations concerning labour in its modern sense does however, involve a structure that it shares with the former senses of it. “The basic determination, in the superstructure of a society, involves the use of the excess resources for the production of the means of production” (Bataille, 1988b: 291) All the use is concentrated on an accumulation which further determines the necessity of production. At the end, we do reach a vicious circle of use for use. Bataille considers communism (Soviet communism at this point) within the same perspective, so this utilitarianism is not specific to capitalism nor any other modern economic model. “All accumulation is cruel; all renunciation of the present for the sake of the future is cruel” (Ibid: 275). When the workers are involved in this vicious circle of accumulation and craze of production,

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<sup>48</sup> “Laughter alone exceeds dialectics and the dialectician: it bursts out only on the basis of an absolute renunciation of meaning, an absolute risking of death, what Hegel calls abstract negativity. A negativity that never takes place, that never presents itself, because in doing so it would start to work again.” (Derrida, 1978: 323)



they “emphasize the *necessity* that accumulation satisfies” preserving a servility present in former feudal/traditional models (Ibid: 296).

To this process, Bataille asks a crucial question concerning technology. What the sovereign body represented for the servile object was a totality of being, a myth that signified its absence on the servile object itself. This signification was of a lack of interest for the servile object. He did not, in any way, hold the privilege of having a use for himself. The change we talk about was situated on top of this. Practically, it is the change from the embodied sovereign to its dissolution as the state.

“[T]he State never means the totality to us” (Ibid: 160). Because it rejects or even fails to “*use up* that part of ourselves that comes into play in eroticism or in individual love”.<sup>49</sup> There is no care for an “interest” in that “share of ourselves” (the *accursed* share) (Ibid: 160). *Kanlı Garo* is a summary of all the things we talked about in this chapter. Not only was he a servile object in the traditional sense, but also –in transformation- an object who lost objecthood in total submission to the minor boss who represented the State (of things) in his helplessness. The change shattered him as it shut off everything within him that could stand upon the world as an object and potentially a subject. He was his function and nothing else. His pride, his sole potentiality for autonomy, was swallowed in the process. That pride is a significant part of the peasant, the labourer who can, in its name, bring about himself at the face of the *ağa* in even the feudal firmament with justification. Even the *ağa* can not play with the pride of his objects<sup>50</sup>, even though little space they may have for it.

Bataille sees a possibility in this determination. “Accumulation” and “catastrophic production” changed the human individual itself (the biopolitical body) and opened the way of a utilitarian man, who “strives rationally to get rid of anything sovereign within

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<sup>49</sup> These domains are, like in gift and excess, are domains of sovereignty for Bataille.

<sup>50</sup> On a sidenote, maybe this is why a lord may call his objects as his subjects, for this potentiality to presencing autonomy despite the rule.

him” (Ibid: 451). This was a curse that produced a possibility, of “a new man, who would respond symmetrically to the excesses of these industrial times and who would strive to rid himself of anything useful, of anything that is not sovereign” (Ibid: 451).

#### 8.4. The Danger

Even if, in the end, history were to justify thought, it would not do so without having given silent and painful lessons to those who presumed to define its *raison d'être* and its end (Ibid: 277).

The stakes put forth in modern society does not amount to anything. Maybe it is this fact that bothers us the most, that we can not in anyway reconcile with its absurdity that we pursue it to its bitter end. Maybe even the benefit of the possibility of a benefit is what we are content with. Hamlet stood over a hill, gazing on the troops of Fortinbras, trying to make sense out of how and why thousands of man surrendered into fighting for a cause that was never theirs (Shakespeare, 1992: 203). He found a renunciation of sovereignty in every one of them and it diminished his sight and affection. They found themselves in the image they fought for. It was the vision that meant the world to them.

*“[N]owhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence”* (Heidegger, 1992: 332). The indulgence in the Enframing as a claim is so immense that one does not realize he has stepped aside of himself, only remaining in the domain where he is part of the accumulation, a use for further use. It is again the question of autonomy, of subjectivity beyond the subject-object relationship. Enframing is a claim that entraps the human being in its addressing. It is a reduction to what one is called for and there is nothing beyond it. The challenge of surrendering to this sameness of standing-reserve does not come as a violence from outside. Man fails to see the revelation technology forbears as he is not concerned with it even as an object anymore. Technology, our knowledge of the use of the world, becomes our knowledge of

ourselves, this is where the danger engenders. Heidegger talks about two dangers. When “man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve”, “he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve” (Ibid: 332) Secondly, man is illuded to think that everywhere he encounters himself when what he sees is man become knowledge, use, data, calculation... The only conflict seems to be that between man and others. A -centrism that has forgotten what was at the centre.

Enframing bears two fruits at this point. On the one hand it “challenges forth into the frenziedness of ordering” and this ordering illudes us to have hold of the truth while in fact it “radically endangers the relation to the essence of truth”: There is no freedom (Ibid: 338).

On the other hand, *Enframing* grants man an enduring which preserves “the coming to presence of truth”. This preservation, Heidegger calls, “the saving power” (borrowed from Hölderlin) (Ibid: 338). The saving power is a potential for freedom.

Once again, the relationship with death marks both *Enframing* and the saving power. Death is in its expectation of it and how that expectation relates to the presence of a being, “as if we never received *being* authentically, but only the anticipation of being” (Bataille 1988b: 81).

As we get tangled up in the gathering of accumulation in a utilitarian sense, the excess is used up in only a meaningless way, Bataille had told us. In the world of utilitarian consumption, wealth cannot be used up “except through differences of rank and through war” (Ibid: 424). Moreover, even an “egalitarian consumption” can not alter this. “[O]nly renounced sovereignty ensures it” which is not available to the “mass of people always open to outstripping one another” (Ibid: 425).

What way out is present if this is a sort of imprisonment? Only renunciation of personal sovereignty (not *for* servility) can do it. In the feudal system, the renunciation

was “for the benefit of a sovereign,” where the servant could “identify with him” and, transpose their “sacrificed sovereignty onto him” (Ibid: 324). In the alternative, one can “renounce in a *sovereign* way, without bequeathing to another, not indulging but heeding/attending to a renunciation, “rationally, for their own sake” (Ibid: 324). Sovereignty is placed in their renunciation. Rationality is dangerous as only a mode. The danger lies in becoming it.

### 8.5. The Genre as Witness to Change

*Obruk Bekçisi* was the story of a shepherd, awaiting death at the bottom of a pit. The story speaks a primordial sensation of expecting death and embracing the outside as the boundaries of the body and its presence are blurred. A totality is revealed to Yusufoglu, and its sense “demands an extreme intensity of *the vaguest sensations, which reveal to us nothing clear or distinct*”, and an animality in the form of destructive will is brought about, “effecting the reversal” without which one “could not reach the totality” (Ibid: 119)

It is in this blur that we find the nature of being in transition. The comparison of the feudal and modern societies do not satisfy the capability to grasp being within history. It is in those moments of transition that the historical being is revealed to us. We find it in the submission of *Kanlı Garo*; in the sacrifice of *Kırmızı Yel*; in the begging letters of *Acenta Mirza* and *Hemşeri*; in the rebellion of the suppressed persons of *Bedvanlı Zülfo*, *Tomruk*, *Gömlek* and *Sarı Sessizlik*.

At each point, death meant its possibility as horror or risk. Labour and servility ignored the horror, while sovereignty took the risk. If we may remember, the further moving away from the animality of man was towards ignoring the horror in ignoring, staying away from everything that signified death from objects of disgust to base eroticism. Prohibitions ranging from cleanliness to sexuality were always in relation to

death. In time, the prohibitions signified proximity towards sovereignty. The whiter your shirt, the higher class you are, the more you are indulged in a future presence, the better you are at your work, the less animal you get. “[W]ork could well be the activity in which mankind's evolution originated, the source of the disgusts and prohibitions that determined its course (Ibid: 83).

Bataille sees a parallel with overthrown regimes and “the sovereignty that is implied in feudal society” (Ibid: 279). Bourgeois domination does not undergo a danger for it turns away from sovereignty like the plague, ignoring its importance. It does not risk and does not fall therefore. Sovereignty is important in its signification, not value or desirability. It is not an aim (Ibid: 281). Sovereignty is an exceeding of history and its negation signifies a deep indulgence in history (i.e. as progress, development, modernization etc) from which there is little space for return.

The change is towards this indulgence, this submission to “the selfevidence of meaning, to the force of this imperative: that there must be meaning, that nothing must be definitely lost in death” (Derrida, 1978: 324). It is also towards the belief that “a work must always be possible which, because it defers enjoyment, confers meaning, seriousness, and truth upon the putting at stake” (Ibid: 324). “All this work must mean something,” is a common cry of anguish specific to humankind.

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The change is towards this indulgence, but we focus on the transition. We have a setting, which is Anatolia. We have subjects which were living in a feudal environment. The major conflict was either that of a clash between understandings of tradition and modernity or within the traditional. The important thing was that in the latter conflicts, the issue came to presence precisely because it was beheld from the eyes of modernity: A spectacle.

The nation state was the name of the change that was prescribed for the Anatolian land and the consciousness of both the former and the latter was engrained in the literature on Anatolia. It symbolized the battleground of the change. “Iconography and mythography illustrate how this setting became a persistent element of narrative structure as a significant topos in both senses of the word: as place and theme” (Parla, 2007: 11). What many works utilized was the confrontation of the two worlds, the paternal state and the maternal Anatolian land. In the early years, it was hope and hopelessness intermingled (i.e. *Yaban*, *Günebakan*, *Ateşten Gömlek*). While history seemed limitlessly possible for a new nation, Jale Parla sees two discourses that shadow the creation of the new state: “The confrontation with the Anatolian reality and the impossibility of growing under the shadow of the father. The former is explicit while the latter often remains implicit” (Ibid: 12).

The genre we take up at this point reverses the confrontation. It is not the gaze of the urban, intellectual, modern, western, consciously nationalist, secular, masculine, independent individual here. However, it is not the opposite either. In fact, the (in a sense orientalist) characteristics of the above individual(s) are affirmed as an opposition. This modern man negates a negation (the feudal man) that he has created for that very negation. It is purposeful at its best. The genre we speak of, on the other hand, works like the virus. It is an inner vision, an inside knowledge. But is it that innocent? The gaze is internalized to say the least. The modern, “paternalistic nationalism” is interiorized in the genre of *village literature* as an “incongruous mix” of “Kemalism, nationalism, socialism, and communism” where the protagonists mark a significant difference within the genre between an exemplary modern Turkish person’s troubles (i.e. *Teneke*) and an exemplary feudal “not-yet-Turkish” person’s troubles (i.e. *Bereketli Topraklar Üzerinde*) (Ibid: 18).

The genre witnesses the schizoid form of the country as paternal-maternal, modern-feudal etc. It further witnesses the clash in between. As the struggle becomes more and more irreconcilable, the literature fades towards hopelessness; it undergoes a transition from the paternal idealism towards maternal mourning. The mourning utilizes

a content of the maternal/suppressed and a form of the paternal/suppressive. Could we, in any way, distinguish these two axes and say they do not match? On the contrary, we suppose a gap of reconciliation that does not exist. The genre surpasses both axes. This very surpassing allows the testimony to the irreconcilable nature of the two axes as change.

## 8.6. Revelation and Truth

As we studied *Ocağına Düşmek* and *Kanın Masalı* we observed contesting values and virtues that belonged to the feudal truth. They revealed themselves in each other's contestation. A rule of hospitality challenged a rule of blood or a praise overruled all rules. An unexpected thing happened and we attended a knowledge beyond knowledge, an impossibility showed itself as a possibility, but it was after all, a story. "Art has no other meaning, that art is always a response to the supreme hope for the unanticipated, for a miracle" (Bataille, 1988b: 206).

The running amok of knowledge and the expected against anticipation is revelation in relation to the present. Only when the present opens up despite the shadow of a future does a miracle happen. "Only unknowing is sovereign," says Bataille, this is "the principle of the *sovereignty* of being and of thought" (Ibid: 208). This unknowing is garnered in literature. This is in relation to death as well. Death as its anticipation also dissolves into nothing as with anticipation itself. The joy of surprise, the speechlessness at the face of it, the incongruence of its logic brings one to full presence. It is utter laughter in being present solely in the present. The "thought, subordinated to some anticipated result, completely enslaved, ceases to be in being *sovereign*" at such a moment (ibid: 208). No gathering withholds that moment's anticipation. The shocks and surprises of literature are minimizations of its supreme ability to transport speech to speechlessness, to joy (whether bitter, merry or else) without calculation. The relation to death also shows itself in this manner. This "sovereign exigency, which calls for the

*impossible coming true, in the reign of the moment*” un-founds the anticipation of death, the horror of loss of meaning and embraces meaninglessness as not a negation of meaning but its truth laying bare as nothingness (Ibid: 211). *Unknowing* exceeds knowledge; it is not a removal but a renunciation which we already talked about.

Consciousness of the moment is not truly such, is not sovereign, except in unknowing. Only by canceling, or at least neutralizing, every operation of knowledge within ourselves are we in the moment, without fleeing it. This is possible in the grip of strong emotions that shut off, interrupt or override the flow of thought (Ibid: 203).

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The essence of technology on the other hand, which we realized to be beyond its means, opens up to a “realm of revealing”, of truth (Heidegger, 1992: 313, 318). Its essence addresses the reign of the moment and endures to the beyond of the present when all the fascination with the revelation is over. One could try to comprehend this in the first fascination with a “revolutionary” tool such as the wheel. With the advent of wheel, men which beheld its magnificence could (rather than *probably did*) see the opening up of a whole new world, mighty and possible. They were history in its making with neither the need nor care for its historicity. The present moment grasped a totality of being that sought no future, no image of a future. The wheel endured both the fascination and the disappointment of the slave who pulled the carts that carried stone blocks for the pyramids. The wheel endured both the ruination of the cities that crushed under tanks and the anguish of the postman who was nothing without his bicycle. This is an oversimplification, but attests to what we mean by enduring. “All essencing endures,” essencing which is granted by “*that which endures primally out of the earliest beginning*” endures (Ibid: 336). This essencing, borrowing from Heidegger we already called *Enframing*. This is the revelation of technology: the gathering of all causes that make up the technological endure as truth. What was once a liberation become chains, what were once chains become a liberation.



In summary, we stand in the contrast between technology and the technological, sovereignty and utility. Technology and sovereignty are very different domains and concepts, but both man becoming technological and man becoming utility are in the servility of the primacy of future over the present. Technology as *Enframing* and sovereignty as “the absolute degree of putting at stake” reveal the truth to us (Derrida, 1978: 324).

Only “sovereign thought” could attain this truth in revealing its revelation. The realm of sovereign thought thus, is art, literature. It further “corresponds to the "man of sovereign art,"” with two aspects: the world of free subjectivity; and objectivity freed from subjectivity insofar as the latter frees itself from objectivity (Bataille, 1988b: 428). In Osman Şahin’s work we are called upon witnessing these two aspects at work. What feudal sovereignty produced was a domination of a subject-object relationship “in order to become the purpose of things” (Ibid: 428). Bataille’s dream, so to speak, is of a world “that would escape the control of subjectivity” (Ibid: 428). In the sketch of two “worlds” in transition, Şahin demonstrates the loss of control for a brief flash. This literature is a play on the “manifestation of meaning”, on discourse which is “loss of sovereignty itself” as servility is a mere “desire for meaning” (Derrida, 1978: 331). Only such play can pave the way for the renunciation of servility for a freedom.

## CHAPTER 9

### CHANGE AS ABSENCE OF AUTHORITY: THESES

It seems to me important that one should get rid of all, the unity, some force, something unconditioned; otherwise one will never cease regarding it as the highest court of appeal and baptizing it 'God.' One must shatter the all; unlearn respect for the all; take what we have given to the unknown and the whole and give it back to what is nearest, what is ours." This note from the posthumous papers of Nietzsche (*The Will to Power*, p. 187) sums up the whole movement of my thought (Bataille, 1988b: 459).

In the search for the authentic, unmuddled presence of a subject, we find an immediate surrounding of context, discourse and submission to language. It is never purely a subject we talk about. Logic follows different paths to attain knowledge that seeks cancellation of ambiguities. On the other hand, ambiguity itself grants knowledge beyond knowledge. In literature we enjoy this ambiguity. We enjoy it in its generic consciousness. The genre becomes our consciousness. We unlearn in order not to learn but to evade the conditioning that speaks the authentic and not authenticity. It is a matter of language, for example, when we contest the adjective against the noun. In practice, the noun seems to be the purest form of language where we call something that which it is. It seems to speak the raw material. Besides, the adjective seems to rely on it, while it speaks the subjunctive against the nominative. On the other hand, when an adjecting contextualizes and defines, it speaks the "raw material" better than the dubious noun that attempts to contain limitlessly.

The modes of literature undertake logic that follows different paths of comparison, convergence and divergence to tackle these challenges of speech. In fact, the modes reveal experimentation of signification. A metaphor, for example, takes the analogy of two different significations and compares the relationship. A metonymy keeps the signified in common and draws a comparison there between signifiers – they converge. An irony finds a discrepancy in signification, a divergence. Tropes of hyperbole, litotes and synecdoche play on the amplitudes of signification. In any case, the realm of signification becomes a domain of experimentation. Allegory as form is kin to metaphor in comparison while symbolism holds a similar kinship with metonymy. For the sake of our discussion, it is important to note the value of experimentation on the generic consciousness of literature. The model reveals the consciousness, the form of the bringing about reveals the bringing about.

When a work relies on a correspondence of significations, and further enhances the significations it sometimes takes the form of parables which seek pedagogy in its correspondence. The narrative holds onto the anchor points of conflict/dilemma, decision and resolution/consequence in a faithful manner. The parable, in its classic sense, claims to teach the world by unteaching the confounding and isolating the guidelines of ethics. In our analysis, we had mentioned the parable of *Baucis and Philemon*. In Ovid's story, the old couple were the only ones in a neighbourhood to welcome Zeus and Hermes to their homes and serve them thinking they were mere human beings. They realized who they were serving as they saw that the wine they were serving never finished. In their bewilderment, they were granted a temple as a home and the happiness of dying together.

The dilemma was to welcome strangers or not. Their choice led to rejoice. In Ovid's tale, this parable is told by Lelex to a circle of elites but to Pirithus in particular, who did not believe in the capabilities of gods (Ovid, 1983: 200). The story was a teaching of what Zeus and Hermes were capable of, but it also withheld a teaching on hospitality, on regarding the stranger (*xenos*) as god. It corresponded to a signification within the actuality of the present.

### 9.1. Parable as form

This genre of parable, literally a comparison, assumes a constancy of significations. It brings about, as consciousness, of meaning and difference. The constant becomes a meaning within the comparison of differences. Hospitality earns a meaning in the aforementioned parable in the comparison of gods and men.

In all senses of the word, parable works with the sacred. Only when a parable extends comparison to the disavowed, that which surrenders responsibility, does it become a parable. By the sacred we mean that which can not answer for itself and is answered for by an other. It differs from the “natural given, which the action that created things at first denied” because of this (Bataille, 1988b: 215). Mother earth is only sacred after the practice of work that denies it in creating things from it. Şahin’s works affirm this in the elegy of the mother (earth). This is also why, god is not sacred. A god is an impossible attribution of responsibility to that which can not bear that responsibility, that ability to respond.

Therefore, a sacred man is one whose responsibility of his own is either taken away from or given away by him. The parable, in this case, habilitates not the sacred man, but the man of responsibility, one who can decide, one who can ask and answer. The sacred man comes as a negation. The presences of Zeus and Hermes account for it. Their presences negate the presence of the sacred stranger. They answer/account for the stranger in whose absence they present themselves. This accounting provides the prohibitions of hospitality. What is done unto the stranger is what is done unto the gods. In contrast, transgression overrules the sacred in denying its essence, which is absence of responsibility. Transgression may be said to be, then, the uttermost undertaking of responsibility, an immense work of gathering all questions on to one’s self, like Oedipus

the King who says “I do condemn myself to suffer all the sentence I have just decreed” (Sophocles, 2004: 57).

“The prohibition guards the possibility of the transgression and, likewise, an extraordinary transgression guards the rigor of the prohibition” (Bataille, 1988b: 340). In between transgression and prohibition lies the domain of pedagogy that the parable preserves. Transgression and the prohibition work the sacred in its denial and rehabilitation. This double-play of denial and rehabilitation works the human world for it “is finally but a hybrid of transgression and prohibition, so that the word *human* always denotes a *system* of contradictory impulses” (Ibid: 342). In this sense, both transgression and prohibition enhance the sacred in its questioning. The parable resembles its geometrical U-shaped equivalent in geometry. It takes a contradictory movement of two trajectories and binds them symmetrically in comparison. In the case of our prototypical parable, *Baucis and Philemon*, it is their hospitality on one trajectory and the hostility regarding the rest of the city on the other. To remember, it was Lelex teaching Pirithus who inclined towards transgression in asking the crucial question regarding the sacred: Who answers for the sacred? This is the very question posited in *Kırmızı Yel*. It becomes a question of dignity, then, when we consider transgression and prohibition as two trajectories bound in one supposedly originary point. Yet, there is no origin but only a limit, like the geometrical equivalent. It is only an indeterminate point of converging where prohibition is “bound up with transgression, with the sovereign dignity, which has remained the basis of that *sacredness* with which the most wretched man is invested” (Ibid: 343). This (Oedipus-like) sovereign dignity resides in co-affirmation with the (Baucis and Philemon-like) dignity “which is the property of all men” (Ibid: 343).

Both dignities present a consciousness of life in the consciousness of death where they embrace responsibility or utter humility (Ibid: 82). Both embraces display dignity in their trajectories. It is the grey area in between that is not “dignified”.

In all cases, the parable feeds on allegories of subjects that can, could, should or would bear a responsibility. A parable is an allegory of decisions even when it talks about the failure of decision. This characteristic defines a particular aspect of the nature of the allegoric and parabolic in Turkish Literature. The indeterminacy of the parabolic means an indeterminacy of sovereignty. This was so for the state of mind proper to the Modern State-Anatolia tension.

Jale Parla observes this bipolar tension as she compares examples of the early republican novel with later novels of disillusionment. She takes up Fredric Jameson's argument on third-world novels which states that "the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (Parla, 2007: 13). For example, in *Ateşten Gömlek* of Halide Edip Adıvar, she quotes the aim to be to "cleanse and wash the population from all the dark and archaic things that have enslaved and reduced that population to its present misery" (Ibid: 15). This opposition of the modern and the archaic assumes a mission, that measures up to its subject matter. The modern is an unstoppable force that is capable and willing. The dark archaic is liable to change accordingly. However, Parla finds the outcome to be on the contrary. In the works of Orhan Pamuk and Yusuf Atılgan, she observes "a parable of existential incommensurability" that illustrates a shattered "deception behind the notion that existence is made up of opposites, or irreconcilables" (Ibid: 23). A parable is an allegory of decisions even when it talks about the failure of decision. Parla also studies a correspondent of this "failure of decision" in the psychoanalytic. In the irreconcilable tension between the paternal State and the maternal Anatolia, it is the "inhibition of the son's growth" that impedes decision under the shadow of existential incommensurability (Ibid: 26).

In Osman Şahin's work, we see neither the allegoric form present in the early novels nor the parabolic form in the later novels of disillusionment. It is trapped in between the allegory of possible decision and the parable of failure of decision, despite the constant study of it. Parable is a literary form of exemplary resolution. What if there is an absence of resolution as in Şahin's works? We can say that most of these works

resemble the parable in the sense that they take up moments of choice, decision, and dilemma, lack of choice, obedience, and disobedience in certain contexts that signify a correspondence to general behaviour. They also put in the centre not a protagonist (in fact, the centre shifts when it seems so) but a behavioural situation, a moment of decision which is also typical of parables. Then again, there is no consequence. What do we call a parable which does not study consequences?

This omission of consequences is similar to jokes that omit an ending for the sake of laughter. The stories end at the climax. However, even the stories that are “resolved” omit consequences that could *further* resolve the conflict into a teaching. We are asking what we make of a parable that no longer teaches or comments. We are asking what we make of a parable that no longer believes in the truth of its possible teaching. It all boils down to one question: What is a parable/comparison that can not compare?

## **9.2. The Story begins where the Story ceases to be written: Metabola**

Eight of the stories we have analyzed and studied bear characteristics that best summarize our concern for this parabolic form that does not justify the essential function of comparison. Not all stories lack this justification. There is a range of narrative which assembles another range into attention. The more vehement the presence and embattlement of authorities are, the less parabolic the stories get.

As far as our examples go, *Acı Duman* is probably the most parabolic of all the stories. When we break it down to the basic parabolic structure, the story goes like this: Neşo attempts to taunt his neighbour pretending that he has tobacco; his neighbour Hido overcomes his pride to ask for tobacco; Neşo, in order to preserve his own pride, gives away the tobacco that his wife has saved for days of need; Neşo loses the only tobacco he could have enjoyed because of his pride. As we can see, there is no presence of authority that unbalances the standpoints or attitudes of the characters. This is similar of

the classic parable as well, despite the appearances of gods, the classic parable responds to situations in which authority is absent. In fact, that absence of authority is a directly addressed issue of the parable.<sup>51</sup> The parable instigates authority where it is absent.

Similar stories that share this characteristic are *Çök Abuzer* and *Kanın Masalı*. In the former story, Abuzer is a mad peasant who plays with children and earns some tobacco for entertaining them. However, because he has hurt one of the children, he presses the tobacco on the boy's wound, as is custom. It is a teaching of impersonality and the mad are assumed to have direct relationship with the sacred (i.e. they can not answer for themselves). The fact that it is a common assumption that they are possessed by demons accounts for this. Once again, we do not see the violence of authority at play.

*Kırmızı Yel* can be taken to be a good vantage point for the other end which we will call something other than a parable. What the protagonist of this story does is ask a question concerning the sacred at the essential level of sacrifice. In a setting where famine and loss of all values bring about helplessness, the protagonist offers to god sacred blood. In return for the "favour" of good crops he accomplishes it. What we would consider to be a fascinating story in Ancient Greece is a tragedy of the modern times. The act concerning the decision of promise shatters signification. As we learn from the film adapted from the actual story (*Adak*, 1976), the actual person who has done this deed walks out of prison after serving many years, only to die in a matter of weeks as a result of emotional collapse. The inclusion of such an ending<sup>52</sup> would bring the story closer to a parable. Let us try to develop on the possibility of such a plot. Resul promises a sacrifice to god despite the fact that he is not on a par with a prophet; he matches his arrogance with the deed of sacrifice; he experiences emotional collapse...

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<sup>51</sup> Kafka's *Great Wall of China* is a tremendous study of this parabolic property among other things.

<sup>52</sup> This development happens years after the story is written, but this does not mean that Şahin could not have imagined such an ending. Then again, it does prove an important point that is discussed in the following paragraphs.



A proper teaching! On the contrary, Osman Şahin cuts the consequence for in this way, it lays the absence of authority, despite its seeming presence, bare. Presence as source of meaning and that of teaching is contested. Trajectories of transgression and prohibition have run amok. The “human world” is out of bounds.

*Ocağına Düşmek* undergoes a similar treatment. Although in actuality the guest is hunted down and killed outside of the sacred boundaries of the house (you can not answer for a murder within its limits), Şahin chooses not to write this consequence. It is beyond the teaching. There is an ambiguity here. If the proper elements of the classic parable are satisfied in this story, why do we not consider it that way? The answer is in the choice of comparison. One custom contests the other. The blood feud is overridden by rules of hospitality. Given the conditions, the protagonist acts in an exemplary way at a point of dilemma. However, when we ask the question of the sacred, the divergence from the classic parable reveals itself. The guest does not enter the realm of the sacred. The story corresponds to an exotic behaviour that is (put) beyond the reach of its narrativization. The act of hospitality is purified of its parabolic aura as the consequence of the decision is woe. Seyfo concludes the story as follows: “May fortune be blind, blind!.. It brought him to my hand at the wrong time. Very wrong!.. You saw me, my hands were bound just like that... May fortune be blind, blind!..” (Şahin, 2007: 112). The significance of this passage may escape us when we do not consider the parabolic form. Our indulgence in the age of greater reason may trick us into thinking it in terms of a psychology (there’s no doubt Şahin experienced this same thinking), however, this last disappointment renders the signification of the rules of hospitality and blood feud devoid of meaning. They are obeyed without content. The discrepancy between the old and the new worlds is, once again, revealed – only implicitly.

Recurring concepts of resistance and rebellion further reinforce discrepancies. Both resistance and rebellion are acts or disavowals of action that are connected to a will for or resistance against change. We have studied *Bedvanlı Zülfo*, *Gömlek*, *Tomruk* and *Kanlı Garo* in this manner. The first two were against the feudal systems while that

latter two were against capitalism. Their protagonists shared the same confused state of mind caught between the feudal and modern values, economies, politics...

The *change* is what obscures and impedes the genre's generic structure. *Parabola*, a throwing of side-by-side, is a comparison. *Syn-bola*, a convergence of throwings, is an embodiment of meaning. *Meta-bola*, on the other hand, is a throwing beyond, and literally, means a change, a burning out for the creation of something new. Same etymology works for metabolism. For the sake of better comprehension, we shall call this failure of generic structure *metabolic writing*.

*Metabolic writing* is a shell of writing that circumferences and circumvents change. Not only it acknowledges it, but admits it and also affirms it. This is its origin. It is a guide which can not guide –a guide that goes around ruins in an ethnographic way, telling their stories, but the ruins are not there. They become ruins in their writing. Two Turkish words stand for ruins: *Yıkıntı* and *kalıntı*. *Yıkıntı* is a ruin that is be-ruined while *kalıntı* is a ruin that remained. This double presence of the ruin hints at the janus-like aspect of history. It looks to the past as *yıkıntı* and looks to the future as *kalıntı*. Metabolic writing is a turning of the head from the past to the future as it captures the two images of the face as if they were different: An illusion of superimposed images on the same photographic paper. It is not history but a disillusionment of it.

A *metabola* in this case then, is a parable that signifies the impossibility of its own possibility. A comparison which speaks of the impossibility of comparison: Hence, a change, a *metabola*. Where a parable refers to a unity of presence, a totality of existence in a continuous form, the *metabola* reveals the chasms/asymptotes<sup>53</sup> of totality that one ignores for the sake of continuity.

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<sup>53</sup> Once again, it is more proper to take the geometrical meaning of asymptotes rather than the literary at this point. A geometric asymptote is the approaching of two lines in the infinity – they never meet.

In our analysis, we talked about the importance of timeliness and homeliness (i.e. of death). These were the criteria of the world of meaning. While the *metabola* challenges the unity of presence chronologically, it also takes the loss home as its primary theme. *Ağız İçinde Dil Gibi*, is the elegiac story of this. The protagonist of the *metabola* is one who sees his whole existence being swept away by history in the sweeping away of his home, and he does not see it as history –the literature does. The subject as such, becomes an object of history.

If “literature is language turning into ambiguity” and “fiction in itself is truth and also indifference to truth”, then metabolic writing is history dehistoricized (Blanchot, 1995: 341, 342). In turning its subjects into objects of history, it opposes history’s claim to be continuous. History is as continuous as wood turning into ash. Metabolic writing captures the fire that is the asymptote of history.

One important aspect of these asymptotes lies in the experience of the author. Şahin wrote his stories at the “time of their happening”. The dis-imagination of a conclusion/consequence goes hand in hand with this aspect. The stories approach history at the infinity: The stories do not end. As such, the testimony to the happening is removed from the archival aspect. It is similar to a testimony in court which informs the judge that the suspect took a gun in hand and directed it at his enemy but the rest was not witnessed; no gunshots were heard, and we do not know if the enemy was dead. This is exactly how some of Şahin’s stories end. What’s more, his novel *Başaklar Gece Doğar* ends in a very similar manner with the rebellious peasants facing a military squad with weapons in hand.

Metabolic writing is not specific to its relationship with parables. The hypotheses run thus: 1 – Metabolic writing plays on a genre which can not satisfy its generic structure because of its lack of synchronization and unhomeliness (again, not uncanniness). It is a genre in negation and most frequently the negation of the genre in its former modes is at hand (i.e. classic parable). 2 – It transforms its subjects into objects of history. 3 – It focuses on *sovereign operations* that exceed both modes of the

past and the future and these modes reveal the nature of both modes and their conflict. 4 – It subverts the misconstruing of history as causality as it reveals the essence of technology (Enframing- *Gestell*). 5 – Metabolic writing can give rise to a different genre which establishes its structure as correspondent of another world of meaning.

The fifth clause also responds to a major aspect of change as submission to power or will to power. In conjunction with the third clause, metabolic writing focuses on *sovereign operations* which stand against power and authority, since the subjectivity concerning sovereign action is refused in the claim to power. Authority has the characteristic suppression and control of action with power. “Power is to sovereignty what "potential" energy is to the possible radiation of light. But since it is *human*, power is the *refusal* of sovereignty: in the same way, a man who decides not to light his lamp refuses the light” (Bataille, 1988b: 352).

Therefore, we can conclude that in opposition to all forms of authority and power relations, metabolic writing as that of Şahin’s try to bring about a subjectivity which art and literature are capable of. In the transformation of the subject to objects of history, *this* literature studies the relationship of subject and history. Literature in general, has the capability of bringing the subject up as “an object *in question*, an object whose basic content is *subjectivity*, which is a question, and which its differentiated contents bring into play” (Ibid: 378). Metabolic writing on the other hand, takes the same object in question (subject) and by putting it into an impossible comparison, brings out the subjective content that *history* oversees as excess: “The *sovereign end* of objective activity” (Ibid: 361).

### 9.3. Rhythm is memory

How do language and literature interact at this point? Osman Şahin’s language is descendant of the oral tradition that the *yörüks* of Taurus Mountains carried over

centuries. It has the rhythm of a wailer and an invoked intonation that accompanies it. Each paragraph is a catch of breath rather than a change of subject. The best examples of this are the elegiac parts in *Makam Taşları*, *Ağız İçinde Dil Gibi*, *Yörük Ana* and *Zala Kadın*. “Language implies the necessity of ends, in relation to which it defines the means, but it cannot isolate an end and say of it, positively, that it is of *no use*” (Ibid: 316). There is no “apogee” “where nothing is *lost*” in language (Ibid: 316). This language as speech repeats the endeavour to reach an apogee only to remain silent in its enunciation. We discussed this intricately at the level of plot-related narrative.

When it comes to narrative style and rhythm, we observe an ever-fresh use of poetic *maqam*<sup>54</sup>. The interchangeable uses of questions and comments, the consecutive descriptions of actions in continuity, the shuttling movement from epic to the lyric, from speech to omniscience<sup>55</sup> form a rhythm that accounts for a memory against history. It is saying “I have the sense of being there” against “I heard that there once was”. Memory is engrained into the mouth of the interlocutor. The rhythmic aspect is the mnemonic characteristic of this literature. It carries the content into the mind of the reader and makes it home there. There are many passages that pursue this style to its peak. The translation is almost impossible, but we can try to demonstrate one of them (from *Ustahmet Çeliği*) by try and remain faithful to the rhythm:

Kalegediği was famous for its kindling wood. The apprentices gathered around as many kindled lumber, wood and roots as there were in the area. They laid them into a pile on the wreckage. They then lit one mad fire. The lumbers with thick kindles caught fire. It burnt for a day and a night. In the fire which turned crimson red some parts of the plane melted and fell apart. The cables and the wires came out one by one. The bolts and the nuts fell down like burs. However the main body, the engine assembly did not bat an eye at all the fire. It turned to pitchblack soot, coal and scraps everywhere (Şahin, 2007: 121).

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<sup>54</sup> Oriental musical scale.

<sup>55</sup> Especially the choice of shifting of registers from paragraph to paragraph in *Özlu Hamurlar* is a strong example of this.

Although the description is that of a wreckage of an airplane burnt down to its raw material by a blacksmith, it is as if we are described the death of a person –a witch burnt at the stake. Almost melodic, Şahin’s style captures a poetic drum work. When we compare this passage to a moment of anticipation of death (from *Obruk Bekçisi*) the similar style may prove worthy:

Voices reached his ear. He could not make out if it were a dream or real. What he knew was that one saw visions after visions as he froze. But these voices were not the voices of a freezing memory. There were barks of dogs and voices of gunshots. He tried to open his eyes like waking from a thousand year long sleep. He looked at the mouth of the pit. And, his eyes caught sight of gathered around shades. One of the shades grew and grew. As it slid down towards him from the far end of the rope which hanged, Yusufoglu, having raised his frozen, ruffled and old hands, was waving slowly towards the shade which neared, trying to inform of his place (Ibid: 25).

The similarity that is important is the timing. One can find such descriptive moments that related to a loss, burning, disappearance, fading away, death in many stories (i.e. Ibid: 17, 35, 55, 93). They have the common point of exhausting a breath of a time. The rhythmic style of the raconteur is embedded in Şahin’s writing. This aspect, in contrast to the psychological content typical of modern literature creates an oxymoronic, modern-ancient narrative. Language turns into ambiguity.

#### **9.4. Literature Concerning Essence of Technology**

An overview of what we have done so far tells us that there is a common ground to writing whose essence is change and writing that writes the subject which is an object in question. Heidegger says that the “essential reflection upon technology and decisive confrontation with it must happen in a realm that is, on the one hand, akin to the essence of technology and, on the other, fundamentally different from it.” (Heidegger, 1992: 340). Literature is akin to technology in its relationship to *poiesis*. They both gather and

bring about a causality that gives birth to a use of the world as consciousness. It is “art” that “does not shut its eyes to the constellation of truth” (Ibid: 340).

In addition, this writing has a sovereign form which interrupts “the servile complicity of speech and meaning”, as it puts language into ambiguity (Derrida, 1978: 337). “The putting at stake” of the subject-object relationship is “the space of writing” (Ibid: 337). It is also a reminder of humanity’s crucial aspect of being made up of incompatible contrasts, “for *humanity* would cease to exist the day it became something other than what it is”, as it indulges in a reasonable world fleeing its contrasts in terror (Bataille, 1988b: 18). Servility to calculation (prohibition without transgression) is the name of the indulgence humanity ignores and literature pulls out of oblivion as the primary danger. “[S]overeign thought is boundless tragedy,” “it exceeds the bounds of knowledge; it destroys the world that reassures, that is commensurate with man's activity” (Ibid: 381). For the modern age, science, the world of reassurance and technology, the bounds of knowledge, are exceeded only by the “unknowledge” that does not have scientific qualification, present in literature such as this (Derrida, 1978: 340).

*Kırmızı Yel*, one of three most prominent stories we discussed time and again, is a scandalous writing in fact. It asks the basic question of the sacred and the sovereign. Like among the pages of a dictionary there is no end to definitions, language which carries endless, recurring signification is only ended by that which has sacred meaning, that which can not answer for itself, “ultimately devoid of intelligible meaning (hence of any meaning)”; and most of the time “the prohibition of their use” ends that signification (Bataille, 1988b: 382). Once this chain of references is lost, it is an “abyss of a totality in which [one] dissolves” (Ibid: 386); and yet, “no one is - for a moment - sovereign who does not lose himself” (Ibid: 401). When the sacrifice in *Kırmızı Yel* is not accountable and when all intelligible meaning is evacuated, it is a loss, a profound loss that speaks (but *not* appear as) *unknowledge*. “The void opened up beneath the feet of anyone” who assumes this unknowledge, “experiences as his own dissolution the dissolution of the thing and of everything” (Ibid: 410). No work can come up and say,

“Unknow!”. It can only speak the unknowable. It shows a certain respect for the rule of a world which it bases itself on and takes pleasure in denying “to the point of ecstasy [that] world that is infinitely deserving of respect” (Ibid: 408). When a world in transition is subject to such respect and denial, the discrepancy not only expresses the dissolution but also illustrates the resolution that brings about the possibility of that very dissolution. You can not unknow, for example, god before you knew him, and the same goes true for unknowing the not-knowing of god before knowing that not-knowing.

To remember, once again, “the action that produces things is what negates that which is (the natural given), and the thing is the negation” (Ibid: 214). Only the negation of that negation reveals a truth the essence of which is freedom (Heidegger, 1992). “The world of things or of practice is the world in which man is subjugated, or simply in which he serves some purpose, whether or not he is the servant of another” (Bataille, 1988b: 214). It is “alienation” in the *Gestell* of modern technology for the modern man. The sovereign operation that exceeds this servility also exceeds the subject and finally, “history itself” (Derrida, 1978: 341). This is how man reaches back to the “non-alienated condition”, in our case that of “animality” which surfaces in the archaic, the feudal, the traditional in transition.

In summary, freedom opens up to the one who takes the already opened up “question of meaning” which describes the “effect of unknowledge” and enters a “relation to the loss of meaning” as writing of sovereignty places “discourse in relation to absolute non-discourse” (Ibid: 342). This placement is a contestation Blanchot talks about (Botting, 1998). If discourse is utter subordination to the mediacy of a world of meaning in between the subject and the world itself, then immediacy is the unknowing of that mediacy: a non-discourse. Metabolic writing, in this case, writes the transition between two mediacies and reveals the transition in its immediacy. Finally, it all boils down to a basic question of sovereignty: “How can mediacy and immediacy be transgressed simultaneously? (Derrida, 1978: 346).





## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSION

This study pursued the explication of the *metabolic writing* within Osman Şahin's bibliography which tended to be his first four books between 1970 and 1983. We discussed the relationship of literature, sovereignty and technology in their economics. The finality of such pursuit can not be pinned down to a definite conclusion but precisely that which can not be pinned down, that which is "not reducible to a means," that which is "sovereign" (Bataille, 1988b: 315).

The sorrows and the destitution observed in Şahin's stories soak the reader in forgetting and remembering. This constant shuttling is not about realizing the nature of things archaic or modern. On the contrary, it is about not realizing. The approaching of the most personal moment of death in *Obruk Bekçisi* to the *ağa* who is at a loss at the face of officers arresting him in *Opoletli Kardaş*, there's a world of loss along with which there's the loss of the subject in its loss of objectivity. All discourses considering the feudal and the modern worlds are in contestation. This is the primary strength of these works.

When we considered them as a literature of change, as a *metabolic writing*, they revealed to be parables of discordance, taking a genre as it faded away into something else. This generic fading away we found, to be the true witness of the change it underscored. It is either too early or too far-fetched to say whether this change is over or not, but we can say for sure that such writing does not necessarily remain *metabolic* for

it may transform itself into a genre after its non-generic take on its substance. In any case, it signifies an “*access to sovereign subjectivity independently of rank*” and removes the boundaries of speech and writing to envelope the world of meaning in its ambiguity. There are gaps between existing modes of meaning and those of the past (Ibid: 423). Metabolic writing takes advantage of it as it immerses itself in one and then the other. These gaps reveal the gaps in the presupposed unity of our historic perception of existence, and pave the way for an ahistorical entrance to the domain of sovereignty via literature. Nothingness is revealed at the point of speechlessness in the encounter with the abruptness of a change that pulls the ground of the world of meaning from beneath our feet. It takes away myth to reveal it as myth. One can do nothing but witness it in the hopelessness of having no one around to share it. One can do nothing but reside in the poverty of knowledge that worlds of meaning promise.

We said myth, we said genre and we said change. Let us define once again what they mean to us in conclusion. Myth is the grounding of a world of meaning. It gives it a totality and in its presence, appears as that very totality. Its absence is the truth of the world of meaning it produces. In art and literature we shed tears of our helplessness against the absence of a grounding of a world of meaning. Specific to this literature, we see the village in relation to this myth of the modern world. The proximity of the village to the “archaic man” is both desired and despised. The depiction of the feudal values as remote from the modern mindset serves this paradoxical relationship. We said before that the village was the myth of the modern elite (see *Politics of the Village*). Osman Şahin’s work was important in the sense that it observed the shift of the meaning of the village in its relationship to modes of sovereignty and technology. Considering the feudal village, what was once a self-determined world of meaning was threatened by an abrupt change and lost its values in transformation. For example, the rank that was determined by a spatial/royal position was replaced by a rank that was determined by capital, by a potential to produce within a modern-technological gathering. The *ağa* was replaced by the opportunist. Everything was forced to be a part of a calculation, to be on papers, to be on record. The village that was taken up by Şahin was crushed under the weight of such calculation.

Genre is the consciousness of the work at hand that reveals the meaning making. Osman Şahin's significance is very specific. He wrote parables that could not teach. The values these parables presented were incommensurate with the values of the modern world. They had no meaning whatsoever that could be measurable according to their use. Even the simplest concept of rights and freedoms of a modern citizen is radically void within the context of these stories. In the same manner, even the simplest custom that is observed is beyond the bounds of modern meanings attached to its enactment. Therefore, we argue that this discrepancy in the correspondance of the meanings of these two worlds present us not only the transition from one to the other, but also the nature of their construction. This is precisely why Şahin could not, even in the most possible circumstances (i.e. *Ocağına Düşmek*), have himself or us to believe in the possibility of an act that could be so meaningful so that it could be taught. He wrote in such a genre that allegory was impossible, because meaning was impossible. There was only disbelief and destruction.

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## ***Glossary***

*Ağa* – The feudal lord of tribes in villages of Anatolia

*Aşiret* – Feudal clan

*Avam* – Regular folk

*Hemşeri* – A person who is from the same city as one is

*İbret* – An exemplary act (usually a punishment to scare people into not repeating a crime)

*Kolcu* – Rangers that police territories considered to be in state of exception

*Kurban* – 1. Sacrifice 2. Victim 3. (Religious) Admiring servant

*Makam* – 1. Position of Authority 2. Post

*Maraba* – Ordinary peasant

*Reşim* – A totem that signifies the holiness of the crop

*Şih* – A sheikh or a local religious authority whose house is a holy place of gathering

*Tulum* - Goatskin used as bags that usually preserves food like cheese

*Yörük* – Turkic nomads who inhabit highlands (The settled yörüks are called Türkmens)