

**THE POSSIBILITIES AND SUBVERSIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY
SELF AND DESIRE IN THE MODERN TURKISH NOVEL**

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Submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Sabancı University
Spring 2008

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Abstract

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Cultural Studies, MA Thesis, 2008

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Keywords: subjectivity, novel, desire, Turkish novel, modernity

This study aims to be a critical investigation of the modern Turkish novel focused on the textual analysis of four different works published between 1970 and 2002. It explores the possibilities and subversions of subjectivity in those works with the emphasis on the notion of desire. Identifying subjectivity as the ground of meaning for the modern project and as the essence of the novel as a literary genre, it examines the ways in which the Turkish modern novel reconciles with and subverts the textual modern self. Its objective is to trace the way modern Turkish subject is constructed in those literary works. It focuses on desire as a thematic component of subjectivity and analyses the various structures desire follows and constructs different forms of interiority. Each of the four canonical works corresponds to a decade, in parallel to the traumatic experience of three coups. *Tutunamayanlar* (1972) is the most striking attempt to express the condition of its own schizophrenia and belatedness. The novel shows an interesting structure of desire that corresponds to the imitative existence of the belated subject. *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları* (1984) represents collective experience that belongs to social strata that had been excluded from dominant discourse and by doing so, it shows that marginalisation from modernity brings desubjectivisation and silencing of desire. In *Gece Dersleri* (1986), on the other hand, there is an opening up of a thoroughly and essentially feminine and individual space through spontaneous desire derived from the immediate, the body. *Tol* (2002) articulates a political desire, a wish for revolution and it is a declaration of the re-convergence of language and politics.

Özet

ÖZNEELLİK İMKANLARI VE SINIRLARI MODERN TÜRK ROMANINDA BENKLİK VE ARZU

Özen Nergis Seçkin

Kültürel Araştırmalar, MA Tezi, 2008

Prof. Sibel Irzık, Tez Danışmanı

Anahtar Sözcükler: öznellik, roman, arzu, Türk romanı, modernite

Bu çalışma 1970 ve 2002 yılları arasında basılan dört eserin metin analizi üzerinden, modern Türk romanında eleştirel bir araştırma yapmayı hedeflemiştir. Bu dört romandaki öznellik imkanları ve sınırlarını arzu kavramı etrafında incelemektedir. Özneliği modernite projesinin ve bir edebiyat türü olarak romanın temeli olduğunu varsayarak, Türk romanının bu metinsel modern öznelikle hangi biçimlerde uzlaştığını ve onu reddettiğini gösteren bir çalışmadır. Amacı modern Türk özneliğinin bu edebi metinlerde ne şekillerde kurgulandığını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Özneliğin tematik bir parçası olan arzu üzerine odaklanarak, arzunun izlediği çeşitli yapıları ve farklı içsellikleri nasıl kurguladığını sorgular. Dört kanonik eserden her biri, Türkiye'deki üç darbenin travmatik deneyimine paralel olarak on yıllık periodlara tekabül eder. *Tutunamayanlar* (1972) kültürel şizofreni ve gecikmişliği anlatması açısından çarpıcı bir örnektir. Roman, gecikmiş öznenin taklitçi varoluşuna paralel olarak ilginç bir arzu yapısı gösterir. *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları* (1984) egemen söylemin dışında bırakılmış bir sosyal sınıfın kollektif deneyimini anlatır, ve bunu yaparken modernite tarafından dışlanmanın aynı zamanda arzunun susturulmasını ve öznelleşmemeyi de beraberinde getirdiğini gösterir. *Gece Dersleri*'inde (1986) ise beden üzerinden üretilen spontan arzu ile tamamen kadına ait ve bireysel bir içsel alanın açıldığı gözlenir. *Tol* (2002) ise politik bir arzuyu, devrim arzusunun anlatır; aynı zamanda dili ve politikayı bir araya getirme arzusunun metinsel ürünüdür.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Modern Subject and Novel

“Dünyayı korkulacak kadar şaşırtıcı yapan şey, sanki bir hikaye anlatmaya kalkmasıydı onun.”¹

The quotation above is taken from Orhan Pamuk’s novel *The Black Book*, from the story of the executioner and the crying face. All had been in equilibrium, in perfect order for the executioner where he didn’t need to feel responsible for the executions. A sense of justice, of duty, of irreversibility would balance his pity for his victims, until he saw the crying face of his last victim. Overwhelmed by the feeling of responsibility and guilt, the executioner woke up to a new world where everything is foreign to him and waiting to be discovered. The meaning of the world disappeared, leaving the executioner in absolute and painful solitude. He had to search for meaning in this unreadable world of signs. As opposed to the previous state of the world where a single story (of God, for instance, or the sovereignty of the Sultan) subsumes and justifies all action, a specific encounter with a specific individual (the crying face) engenders ethical responsibility and the need to know/justify oneself with one’s own story. This is both frightening and empowering, making the world a dangerous place since meaning is not immediately given, but also a surprising, exciting place since the self is to be discovered in it. Lukacs in *Theory of the Novel* asserts that the novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God².

The quotation tells more than the story of the executioner: it tells us of the heroes, the authors/tellers and of the readers of stories: a man (and sometimes a woman) in search of truth, of values, of love, of anything that gives his/her life a meaning and that renders the world readable; readers who identify with the (anti-)hero(ine) and whose world changes, gains or loses meaning; and a writer who builds or follows a discourse which gives the world its meaning. The tragedy in the sentence above lies in the absence of such a discourse: an individual thrown into the wild world and supposed

¹ Pamuk, 1997. p. 68.

² Lukacs, 1971. p.56.

to build his own discourse. It is a condition where the transcendental is lost, or God is dead and the individual takes up the role of meaning-giving cogito and of analyzing subject. The source of the loss is his sense of responsibility and guilt which overcomes the sense of order and divine justice. It is the discovery of consciousness, as Cartesian philosophy would put it. However, 'consciousness' is never an innocent concept, or an entity awaiting discovery, although we usually take it for granted. It belongs to a certain discourse built upon the possibility of self-knowledge and the self as a source of knowledge. Today we call it *subjectivity*.

The correlation between the emergence of Cartesian subjectivity and Kantian agency in Western philosophy and that of novel in Western literature is well established. Theories over the birth of the novel and of subjectivity date them back to the emergence of capitalist economy from the late seventeenth century on³. However, picturing capitalism as a prime mover would blur the interrelation of philosophy, economy, social change and literature. The move from vertical (hierarchical, inflexible) to more horizontal (negotiable, agency-driven) understanding of social relations, Cartesian philosophy establishing the primacy of the self-sufficient subject and the new literary genre that deals with the problematic heroes seeking authentic values are all embedded in the post-Renaissance European zeitgeist.

For Descartes, the cogito constitutes the only absolute certitude. This not only draws the line between the subject/individual mind and the object/world, but also places the analyzing subject at the centre of the universe. Then, instead of bringing one's action in line with a larger truth (as in tragedy), each and every human being has the responsibility of creating oneself and questioning, rejecting or accepting certain roles (like Hamlet who searches into the possibilities of his own subjectivity). With the Kantian understanding of agency, the subject is the self-certain source of all meaning and hence is the site of origin and foundation of knowledge. When man becomes the substitute for God, carrying endless possibilities of knowledge production about himself and about the outer world, as Foucault says in *The Order of Things*, he sees himself as

³ For detailed discussion on the relation between the birth of capitalist economy and of novel, see Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Harmondsworth, Eng. : Penguin Books, 1963. pp.36-62.

involved in the world and he enters into a strange relation with his own involvements (356).

The novel is both about this strange relation between the inner and the outer and just such a relation itself. It is both the story of man's involvements and a way of being involved in the world. The inner/outer, subject/object separation constructs a gap between the two and this gap continually gives way to further constructions. The novel is a subject-driven attempt to fill the gap or to make it visible, an attempt to render the world intelligible and fair, as in the novels of Dickens, or to show the painful isolation of the self by pointing to the gap, as in the novels of Kafka⁴.

A unitary understanding of the novel as above may fail to grasp the variety and elaboration (in form and in content) of works written in this genre. However, along with its form (or anti-form), all of those works, be it an early eighteenth century novel or a recent anti-novel, carry the same subject matter: individual experience. As many literary critics point out, the novel, from its very beginning, has had a reality claim. It was the genre of the positivist mind, the analyzing subject, who has no other essence than his own mind. From the twentieth century on it went through radical transformations and with the rise of the subjective novel (stream of consciousness), the novel form was brought to its logical end⁵. Even when the novel becomes narcissistic and talks only about itself, it cannot do so without an unhappy, pessimistic consciousness of the loss of the individual.

To clarify what I mean by subjectivity in the novel and to provide a possible method to analyse a novel in terms of subjectivity, a three dimensional picture of subjective experience would be helpful. A novel embodies three different forms of subjectivity, whose nature can be different for each novel. The first is the *writing*

⁴ Here we may remember *Le Plaisir du Texte* of Roland Barthes, where the source of pleasure can bridge up the gap. (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1973).

⁵ The parallelism between the emergence of subjective novel and Marx's notion of alienation and theories of reification is significant in understanding the transformation of subjectivity from the 19th to the 20th century.

subject, the author who is the discourse founder⁶ and who disappears in the domain he creates. For example, the sense of poetic justice and divinity in *Anna Karenina* are the footsteps of the writing subject. The (anti)hero(ine) of the story, the consciousness we encounter on the pages is the *written subject* who exists in the discourse and who sometimes blurs, contrasts, hides or mocks the writing subject. It is the main character or the persona of the novel. The last dimension is the *reading subject*, who is the receiving end or the imagined subject who is supposed to read. A novel can play on those dimensions and treat each of them differently, constructing different relations of power among them.

What is important at this point is the power the text involves. The novel involves power in its ability to produce and impose a legitimate vision of the world. As I said earlier, consciousness or subjectivity are not innocent concepts. A novel is a web of strategies of self-presentation which has a potential power to manipulate one's own self-image by creating and/or reproducing certain forms of subjectivity. Such imposition of the legitimate view is not only accomplished through 'political novel' or through the content of the novel but also through what I refer to above as three dimensional picture of subjective experience. The power of the text operating at the individual level builds upon certain methods like the play with the balance of writer/reader/character, or their parody, pastiche or the usage of different levels of individuation of the character.

If we focus on such subjectivity-construction, we can relate the strategies the novel applies to what Althusser calls ideological subjection. According to Althusser ideology designates a rich system of representations which helps forming individuals into social subjects who freely internalize an appropriate picture of their social world and their place in it (1994, p.121). The novel, in this respect, can be interpreted as an efficient system of representation, bound up with the growth of a commercial middle-class. However, imagining a larger design (or ideology) behind literary works (or production?) and dissolving the text entirely in its own socio-economic environment is not what is intended here. Rather than conducting sociology of literature, I will try to trace the possibilities/limits of subjectivity in the novel in its home (rather France and

⁶ See Michele Foucault, "Who is the Author?" in *Modern Criticism and Theory*. Eds. David Lodge & Nigel Wood. Essex, UK: Pearson Education Ltd., 2000. (173-87)

England) and compare the emerging picture with that of the non-Western, third world (Turkish in particular) novel.

The transformation of the literary production (roughly from romance to novel) which began to take place in the seventeenth century is closely related to changing social and economic practices and hence to the emergence of new power relations and practices. In Foucault's description of modern forms and institutions of power, the fundamental element of modern power is that it operates at the most intimate and individualized level. In *Discipline and Punish* he talks about the power in *ancien régime*, which was grandiose in nature, transforming into the disciplinary power, which has developed and institutionalized a technology of subjectivization, roughly in the nineteenth century. Going back to the early seventeenth century (keeping in mind that Descartes was writing and Machiavelli's *Prince* was very influential at that time), according to Foucault in *History of Sexuality*, a discourse around sexuality has been created and Western culture has been fixated around sexuality through confessional practices where the individual is supposed to examine his/her deeds and desires.

There are two significant aspects of the confessional practice: the first is that the subject is led to observe, analyze, interpret and recognize himself/herself *as a domain of possible knowledge*; the second is that the confessional practice situates the subject as an individual and states the boundaries of what's possible for him/her to think and say. In both cases, the subject is objectified for him/herself and for others. For Foucault, those practices produced the notion of a stable and unified subject, which he calls 'man of desires,' who identifies himself with his most private intentions, desires, fantasies and dreams. I believe that confessional practices were not confined to priest-prayer or psychoanalyst-patient settings; the novel has been the literary distillation of confessional practices. If we look at the novel in the light of *History of Sexuality*, it emerges as confession, as the locus of private desires and intentions of the person over against public actions. It is the domain where the self-conscious subject sometimes examines his/her desires to find his/her true motivations, where s/he produces knowledge of him/herself and where s/he is "attached to [his/her] own identity through consciousness" (41). Literary production both has responded to the transformation of "power" in that epoch and has created various forms of subjectivity constructions. It is

the novel this time that situates us as individuals and that silently marks the boundaries of what is possible for us to think and say.

The novel is both constituted by and constitutive of the construction of intimacy as the core of modern subjectivity. The indubitable/absolute was reduced down to human consciousness and the subject was established as the origin and foundation of knowledge and language. The modern and the post-modern sought, questioned, refused, mocked, reproduced etc. the modern subject. When the novel came to be about itself, when novelists became the critics of the novel, when the text became self-reflexive, and when it began to hold up a mirror and admire itself, what is reflected on this mirror was still Western subjectivity duplicated, humiliated, lost, painfully conscious, impotent etc. Because the novel is the story of the Western subject.

1.2. Translation of Difference

The central question of this work is what happens when the novel travels or when non-Western modernity produces a novel of the non-Western modern subject. We know that the novel has emerged and flourished in Europe; therefore, wherever it travels, its original, its ideal form will always be somewhere else, just like anything modern. When literary theory and criticism talk about the third-world novel (if such categorization is valid), it inevitably tells the story of an encounter: that of the modern project and non-western modernities. That's why the third world novels are closely related to cultural identity constructions.

Western modernity has marked those who are culturally different 'belated', 'under-developed', 'primitive' and 'traditional'. Such societies are left in a position where they have to define, reshape and defend themselves vis a vis the Western modernity. The universality claim of modern project forced them to accept their insufficiency and inability with respect to that which assumes to be superior. Constant feeling of lack and inferiority brought about the question of cultural identity, which sometimes led to obsessive rejection of the modern. The destiny of the modern project in cultures who are not 'ready' for it, is surprisingly varied. What they share is the internalization of the tension between the prototype and the copy, the center and the

periphery, the sovereign and the marginal. According to Jusdanis, this internalization gives way to a new type of modernity which imitates but creates at the same time, which follows but resists at the same time and which he calls *belated modernity*⁷.

The belated subject finds itself in between a position of imitation and creation; imitating that which is perfectly modern and creating to reconcile the local and the centre. In *Le Regard Mutilé*, Daryush Shayegan talks about this double bind of the non-western subject. He argues that the tensions between the emergence of new layers of reality and the ancestrally inherited resistances that pushed them outside or to the bottom of the realm of knowledge necessarily caused certain schisms in the consciousness, which he calls cultural schizophrenia in traditional societies. He supposes that there is an 'I' struggling against a conflictual double mystification squeezed between the sides that the schism has. This 'I' fights the mystifying image in the world still attached to the tower of collective memory and the attractive image of what is new and strange (3-11). Such interpretation of the non-western subject caught in the middle takes us back to my primary concern which is exploring the ways in which non-western subject compromise with and react to modernity as the essence and/or the effect of the West.

Following from Shayegan's discussion of 'lack', I would like to continue with the literary criticism in Turkey that has produced what Nurdan Gürbilek in her article "Dandies and Original" calls 'criticism of lack', which is 'an anxious effort of comparison programmed to discuss from the very start the deprivation, insufficiency and shortage of Turkish literature'⁸. Most of the critics of lack have focused on the assertion that Turkish novels lack spontaneous and original characters because the members of the society they live in do not have the private life which provides material for the novelist. Gürbilek in her article suggests that rather than constantly producing the discourse of lack and imitation, criticism should work with concepts that can

⁷ Jusdanis, Gregory. *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, c1991. p.24

⁸ Gürbilek, Nurdan. "Dandies and original: Authenticity, belatedness, and Turkish novel" In *Relocating the fault lines : Turkey beyond the East-West divide*. Güven Güzeldere, Sibel Irzik, ed. Durham, N.C. : London : Duke University Press, 2003. pp.559-229.

appreciate the accidents and traumas that make up the space we call self. Following her call, in this study, I analyse the construction of subjectivity in Turkish modern novels by looking at the possibilities and limits novel as a genre offers and subversions and multiplications the condition of belatedness bears.

The tools of subjectification novel carries can be categorised as the liberal/stable subject of the traditional novel and the displaced subject of the late modern and/or post-modern novel. Intense subjectivisations as in the novels of Proust or Kafka has not found place in the Turkish novel and it generally makes use of traditional narratives and forms which work against subjectivisation. However, it is safe to say that early Turkish novelists attempted to portray stable characters unsuccessfully. As Jale Parla and Berna Moran suggests, the novels from Tanzimat and early Republican period seek to depict the new individuals of the newly westernised/modernised society, creating second-hand superficial characters that serve for underlying ideology⁹. However, the failure to create stable subject does not justify the criticism of lack. What I suggest is that, in producing the character of the belated society the tools of the traditional western novel were not adequate. Turkish novel had to wait until 60s to verbalise its own displaced characters. As Shayegan points out, tradition, if there is anything left of it, cannot recapture the starting point that ontologically predates modernity. It is always strictly stuck to the post-modern period (1997, p.34). Therefore, I suggest that if Turkish novel has ever produced characters of its own, it's been done with the failure of the western subjectivity, in a post-modern/post-colonial position, where the subject is displaced and fragmented.

1.3.Disassembling Subjectivity: Desire

My project is more modest than a cultural history reading because of the many limitations involved in working on historical questions through the reading of literature. The discursive Turkish subject of modernity is made up of multiple and complex practices. Therefore, I stick to textual analysis of limited numbers of works chosen from

⁹ Parla, Jale. *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri*. İstanbul: İletişim, 1993, and Moran, Berna. *Türk Romanına Eleştirel bir Bakış*, V. 1 Çağaloğlu, İstanbul : İletişim Yayınları, 1995.

the period between 1970 and 2000. Examining subjectivity constructions with a comparative approach necessitates a focus, a track to follow in order to come up with a comprehensive analysis. Subjectivity itself comes to be constituted by various tensions and assumptions that build up its interiority. The most essential of them all is the tension between the individual's private experiences and desires and a public reason. Mind and reason are universal qualities while what makes one a subject is his or her desires.

Desire enables me to trace a structure of subjectivity in the texts. Armstrong suggests¹⁰, following Foucault's discussion on sexuality, that the discovery of desire as something hidden within the individual prompted an extensive process of verbalisation, displacing an eroticism that had been located on the surface of the body. Therefore, desire cannot be understood without its relation to language; it is not an essential category of human existence, it never comes prior to its representation. Literary representation of desire engenders a structure that organizes the narration and that constructs the internalised space of the subject. The correlation between ways of conceiving desire and of character is a central point of departure in the analysis of subjectivity in the literary texts.

I have chosen four canonical works from the period between 1970 and 2000, each work corresponding to a decade, keeping in mind the traumatic experience of three coups that marked the beginning of three decades.

Tutunamayanlar (1972) is the most striking attempt to express the condition of its own schizophrenia and belatedness. The novel shows an interesting structure of desire that corresponds to the imitative existence of the belated subject. Simultaneously, it expresses the sexual anxieties generated by feelings of emasculation by the West and the homoerotic repercussions of the reactions against this imagined experience.

I picked up two works by Latife Tekin, both suggesting radical subject positions very distinct from each other. *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları* (1984) is a unique work that

¹⁰ Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and domestic fiction : a political history of the novel*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1989. p.12.

represents collective subjectivity by defying traditional narration of privacy. It represents collective experience that belongs to social strata that had been either excluded from dominant discourse and by doing so, it shows that marginalisation from modernity brings desubjectivisation and silencing of desire. *Gece Dersleri* (1986), on the other hand, there is an opening up of a thoroughly and essentially feminine and individual space through spontaneous desire derived from the immediate, the body.

Tol, published in 2002 and written between 1996-2000, is a novel that received a lot of attention in the last years. The novel articulates a political desire, a wish for revolution and it is a declaration of the re-convergence of language and politics; of remembering and rewriting the silenced history of the collective imagination and revolution.

2. Borrowed Selves and the Modern Pride: The Lost/Failed Coordinates of Subjectivity in *Tutunamayanlar*

2.1. Introduction

A critical investigation of the novel in a national tradition and by period necessitates an examination of diverse and numerous works in the genre. Therefore, claiming to study the modern Turkish novel would be too ambitious. The periodization of the ‘modern novel’ as well as the labeling of a work as modern or post-modern may prove problematic; there will always be some works that remain exceptional. Hence, a short selection of modern Turkish novel will not necessarily represent the whole period and its inner dynamics. However, it is still possible to follow a pattern, especially with the emergent canonization of certain works of the period. I leave the discussion of whether it is the canon that follows that pattern or vice versa aside for the moment. Keeping this problematic in mind for my limited selection, I tried to choose canonical novels that would give me enough space for the concepts and themes I will investigate in relation to the ‘modern subject’.

*Tutunamayanlar*¹¹, in this light, is one of the most inspiring novels in contemporary Turkish literature. It not only centralizes the modern sensibilities of the emerging bourgeois intellectual in its subject matter, but also embodies tensions under its revolutionary structure with its multitude of voices and layers. It is regarded to be a striking break in the short history of the Turkish novel, opening new ways to the writers coming after; and it remains an inexhaustible text for literary critics.

The place *Tutunamayanlar* occupies in Turkish cultural history is another dimension that needs to be examined as much as its radical form and language. Published in 1972, it Oğuz Atay’s first novel. Although it was not well-received by the literary critics of his time and did not receive general attention from the reading public in the 70’s, in 1984 with its republication, it began to be widely read, generating an oscillated relationship between the novel and its readers since then. The novel was not welcome by critics in the 1970’s mostly because of the social and political atmosphere

¹¹ Atay, Oğuz. *Tutunamayanlar*: İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2006.

of the time and the role the intelligentsia played in this period. However, with the change of the cultural climate in the 1980's¹², the reading practices underwent transformation as well. It can be said that the intellectuals after the ultimate failure of the socialist project were now ready to face up and look at the mirror. Besides, a different conceptualisation of the self and the other emerged at the time and being marginal was discovered as a possible form of identity both for the self and for the other.

This chapter will consider *Tutunamayanlar* as the agent and product of a cultural change that promoted the liberal subject and enabled the self to become a dominant social reality. This approach includes not only the examination of the novel as a social discourse but also the use of psychoanalytic formulations that uncovers the dynamics of writing subjectivity. There are certain notions through which I analyze the coordinates of subjectivity in the novel. In determining those notions, I consider the patterns the written and the writing subject seems to follow in novel writing. Desire, in this respect, plays a crucial role in construction of the subject positions with respect to the other. The dynamics of loss, that is, Selim's absence, and of the desire perpetuated by this loss mingling with the desire for the 'West' constitute one of the main motifs of the novel, echoed in sexual anxieties and the fear of emasculation. The concepts of 'super-ego' and the 'ego-ideal' parallel the pattern desire follows and they point to the resolution of feelings of grief and guilt prevalent in Turgut's narration. Simultaneously, neither human desire nor the psychoanalytic resolution is independent of political and cultural history. Above all, the paradigm of privacy is a constitutive element of modernity through which the liberal subject enters into relations with the outside world. However, the paradigm of privacy is reproduced in different almost contradictory formulations in the novel, parallel to the alternative modern experience of its cultural background.

The influence of *Tutunamayanlar* on its mostly intellectual and educated middle-class readers has been incontestable. The certain form of subjectivity the novel seems to (or partially does) offer turned into a possible cultural and political identity.

¹² The reasons for that change have long been listed and cited again and again to explain numerous cultural phenomena in Turkey. I will turn back to the relationship of *Tutunamayanlar* to the cultural climate of 1980's (in Nurdan Gürbilek's terms) later in the chapter.

Being a disconnected constituted a certain form of political (or apolitical?) stance, a personal perspective of the world. How much of this remarkable impact of the novel on the post-1980 reader arises from Atay's work or from the socio-political atmosphere of the time is a problematic issue which will be discussed later.

2.2. Imitative Desire

Tutunamayanlar begins with the protagonist Turgut receiving the news of Selim's suicide. Being extremely moved by his friend's death, he finds himself alienated from the routine and burden of his usual everyday existence. His alienation from the bourgeois order, as he calls it repeatedly, parallels the harsh criticism of this society and its habits, which marks the novel's social criticism.

The death/ loss of Selim sparks Turgut's alienation and rejection of the everyday order. As his conformed identity shatters as well as his perception of time and space; he experiences a split of the self and embarks on a search for a redefinition of the self and for a new identity through his search for Selim, for the other¹³. The action the protagonist takes in this case is reading: Turgut reads texts written by and about Selim throughout the novel. The story begins with his reading of Selim's suicide letter. Selim remains an unfinished text with which Turgut struggles to find his self. Selim's story, on the other hand, is inscribed in Turgut's and he emerges as a character surrounded by texts, not just texts he and his friends have written, but an enormous literary cannon.

In this part of the chapter, I will examine the relationship between the subjective construction of the characters and the literary (and sometimes non-literary) texts that surround them. The first step in understanding Selim's personality is to consider the books he read since he was a child. His poetic autobiography named *Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* is the story of the early years of his life marking the time before he began reading novels devotedly and experiencing the outside world through those texts. It is also the story of his growing up or rather his early imitative development with idolized

¹³ For detailed discussion of the self and the other in *Tutunamayanlar*, see Suna Ertugrul's article "Belated modernity and modernity as belatedness in *Tutunamayanlar*". In *Relocating the fault lines : Turkey beyond the East-West divide*. Güven Güzeldere, Sibel Irzik, ed. Durham, N.C. : London : Duke University Press, 2003.pp.629-647.

older figures. He humorously divides his life into ‘ages’ of influence: “Taş devri, Sabri devri, Nihat devri, Tunç devri” (133) which belong to his childhood or primitive stage. Later on in the book a friend of his says “Hayatının devrelerle anılmasını isterdi Selim. Wilde devri, Gorki devri gibi” (368). The models he has chosen shift from people to literary texts but whatever the model is, there is an underlying structure which forms the basis for the subjectivity the novel narrates. It is the pattern of *imitative desire* which will allow us to perceive the dialectic between the Self and the Other and thereby the structural nature of the subject.

My discussion of imitative desire will be based on the theories of René Girard from his first major work *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*¹⁴, which is an important cornerstone in the modern criticism. According to Girard, imitative desire consists of a triangular composition in which a subject desires an object not spontaneously but through a mediator who desires the same object. Girard asserts that the great novels reveal the imitative nature of desire. He begins his discussion with Don Quixote as a typical example of the victim of triangular desire, then he moves on to Emma Bovary. What brings those two characters together is the fact that they cannot generate their desires with their own resources, but must borrow them from chivalric romances or second rate romantic novels.

In a Girardian perspective, Selim is a typical modern hero who cannot cope with trivial demands of everyday life while having big dreams about himself and the world in his mental life. The tragic existence of the modern hero squeezed in between great expectations and everyday trivialities is essentially a modern phenomenon bearing the contradictories central to modernity. In addition to this, on the other hand, there is the factor of being well-read, devouring books as if they compensate for the hero’s impotence in everyday life. Girard notices that the education of the characters is important and that *vaniteux* are very often spoiled children, who have been told to be happier than others, resulting in a broken promise (64). Although he talks about it in the context of Dostoyevsky and Stendhal, the promise of the books is a common pattern in novels cross-culturally.

¹⁴ Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*. Tr. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.

Selim leads his life through books. His self is accomplished through the act of reading and projecting what he reads into his everyday life. He seems to be as pathetic as Don Quixote in interweaving fact and fiction; he constantly invents ‘games’ in order to make life bearable, he says (41). We have to keep in mind at this point that the ontological ‘sickness’ of both characters arises from different grounding. In Selim’s case, there is a strong sense of anxiety and boredom. In any case, he responds to the question of the difference between himself and Don Quixote, saying: “Bana kitap kurdu, boş hayaller kumkuması, hayatın cılız gölgesi gibi sıfatlar yakıştırılabilir. Şovalye romanları okuya okuya kendini şovalye sanan Don Kişot’a benzetebilirsiniz beni. Yalnız onunla bir fark var aramda: ben kendimi Don Kişot sanıyorum”. (370)

One particularity of *Tutunamayanlar* that we have to keep in mind is that the text constantly suggests certain ways of reading, understanding and interpreting on the part of the reader and thereby creates a protected space, especially around Selim, sparing him from possible criticism and humiliation by humiliating him¹⁵.

Tutunamayanlar, Turgut being at the centre revolves around a circle of friends who once had close contact with Selim. The rest of characters who remain out of this male circle (with one exception) usually serve as contrastive elements to that circle. Selim is the one that believes in and run after ‘things that are grand and beautiful’. This phrase keeps being repeated in the text, Turgut especially uses it to depict his and Selim’s search in life. With respect to this noble cause, other characters have simpler desires, desires that simply involve the subject and the object and nothing else in between. However, those who desire the grand and beautiful things that simple people cannot wholly grasp are the disconnected. Leaving the binary of we the disconnected and they the connected aside for a minute, I want to point out the nature of desire being a disconnected subject implies.

Toward the end of the book we read Selim’s diary which covers the last months before his suicide. In a state of crisis, he blames his family for his bad education. Although he does it because he is looking for a scapegoat and later he drops the idea, he makes a significant confession: “Beni kötü yetiştirdiler. Annem de, babam da bana

¹⁵ For detailed analysis of this issue see Nurdan Gürbilek, *Yer Değiştiren Gölge*, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1995.

gerekli eğitimi vermediler. Yaşamak için demek istiyorum...bana her şeyin öğrenilerek yaşanacağını öğrettiler. Yaşanırken öğrenileceğini öğretmediler. Ben de kolayca razı oldum bana öğretilen bu yanlışlara”. (611)

For Selim, experience comes after what’s written on it, through a mediation. He is an amateur of life and he is destined to remain so. Although it is implied in the novel that it is people around him who are to blame for his ‘disconnectedness’, he shares a sickness common to almost all modern heroes: lack of spontaneity, which implies that subjectivity can never be divine in its autonomy; that it cannot exist outside of dialectic between the Self and the Other and, quoting Girard, that the testimony of the Other can easily overcome the actual experience (33).

Who is the Other in Girardian sense for Selim? Who is the mediator that triggers his desire to run after the things that are grand and beautiful? How can we draw the triangular design in which the subject desires the beauty and the divine in an imitation of a mediator? The answer lies in the difference Girard makes between the internal and the external mediation. In the *external mediation* the distance between the subject and the mediator is sufficient to eliminate any contact between the two spheres of possibilities while in the *internal mediation*, this same distance is sufficiently reduced to allow these two spheres to penetrate each other more or less profoundly¹⁶. One can produce infinite number of subdivisions of those two categories but for the purpose of this essay, the category of external mediation is sufficient to show that a desire different from ‘worldly’ desires, as in the case of Selim who seems to be after an artistic truth/self, is triangular as well. He says:

“Benim için oyunlar, romanlar, hikayeler herkesin anladığından başka bir anlam taşıyor. Bütün hayat, bütün insanlık bu kitaplarda anlatıldı, bitirildi. Yeni bir şey yaşamak, yeni bir kitap tanımak oluyor benim için. Kitaplarla ve onların yazarlarıyla birlikte yaşıyorum.” (370)

¹⁶ Girard, 9-10.

Selim has abandoned his ‘sovereignty’ over his ‘actual experience’ to the books and their authors in terms of romanticism or realism¹⁷. The experience of the subject in this type of mediation, is that of the defeated through and through. At the very source or the centre of subjectivity, there is always the Other mastering his desires. As a result of a certain tendency, common to all men, to compare oneself with others¹⁸, the Self chooses a model for himself whose desires he imitates. We find external mediation in Selim’s model, the mediator (books and authors) is distant from him just as his object, which allows him to talk freely about the nature of his desire and be self-reflective about his ‘ontological sickness’.

Selim likes reading the preface of the books, he reads the life story of the authors over and over again. He especially reads the collections entitled “His life and his work”¹⁹ where he finds the stories of unsuccessful years before they become well-known and hence he can easily identify with them. However, he says humorously, that sometimes the stories of the same author do not match, then he adds, “Kime hizmet edeceğimi şaşırıyorum. Onlara uşaklık etmekte zorluk çekiyorum” (394). The choice of words in this part reveals the sovereign character of the model over the self, where the self attend to the model as a servant. It also reveals the consciousness of the subject of his own mimetic structure. It is a recognition of the fact that “the Self has always copied Others in order to seem original in their eyes and in one’s own”²⁰. “Kitaplar yüzünden çok acı çekiyorum...Sanki hepsi benim için yazılmış. Bu kadar insanı birden canlandıramıyorum: hepsini birbirine karıştırıyorum. Gülünç oluyorum....Ben rezilin

¹⁷ Girard says that all dogmas of individualism, realism, romanticism, subjectivism, and objectivism are secretly in agreement to conceal the presence of the mediator. They all depend directly or indirectly on the lie of spontaneous desire. They all defend the same illusion of autonomy to which modern man is passionately devoted (15-16). I use individualist terms in commas here in order to refer to the ontological sickness that only *those subjects* (Don Quixote or Selim for example) are supposed to have but actually it is a basic structure underlying all novels.

¹⁸ For detailed discussion see Scheler, Max. *Ressentiment*. Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1994.

¹⁹ Trans. “hayatı ve eserleri”. All the translations from *Tutunamayanlar* in this section are my translations.

²⁰ Girard, 26.

biriyim ve rezilliğimi biliyorum...Peki ben etki altında kaldığımı kitapların beni mahvettiğini nasıl anlatacağım?” (384), Selim says talking to Esat, one of his closest friends. We can follow his ‘plays’ as he calls them through the novel: he acts like a great mathematician and asks Esat to act like a great jurist and the other ‘agrees to obey his desires’; one night he turns into a character in a play of Ibsen and sincerely believes it to the point that he is afraid of having the same illness with him; but mostly he acts like a writer and he writes. However he never lets us make out whether he is a writer or he acts like a writer. All the texts written by him (except for his diary because he did not write it as a ‘writer’), are surrounded by humour. He is scared to be taken seriously as a writer, just like “with the fear of hanging a bad picture on the wall, [he] never did; with the fear of living badly [he] never did²¹” (594).

Girard claims that the Self desires to absorb the being of the mediator. The intermediate stages are harder to detect but the desiring subject wants to become his mediator, he wants to steal from the mediator his very being of perfect knight or perfect writer in Selim’s case (54). The writers and the fictional characters belong to the sphere of the beauty and the divine, in contrast with the people of simple desires around Selim. His dreams of absorbing and assimilating the mediator’s being gets revealed best in his visit to Ankara as a representative engineer of the firm he works for. Struggling with bureaucratic absurdities in his daily life, in his diary he begins talking about Kafka without really building connection between what he experiences in the morning and Kafka’s writing. One morning in his hotel room, he sees a bug that disgusts him. In the next few days, he keeps repeating that he wants to write about the bug for pages but he doesn’t, and at the same time wondering how Kafka was ever able to write about it. However, after a few pages in the diary he says: “Ibsen de nasıl yazdı bu oyunu? Yazmaya nasıl dayanabildi? Ben nasıl yazdım hamamböceğini? O başka.” (610). Who wrote about the bug? Is it Selim, is it Kafka or is it both? Or rather, does it make any difference for Selim?

²¹ “Kötü resim asarım korkusuyla hiç asmadım; kötü yaşarım korkusuyla hiç yaşamadım” (my translation).

2.3. Question of Cultural Difference

Selim is carried away by the books he reads. He is enchanted by his model(s) that promise ideals for an artist's subjectivity. The triangular composition seems to be intact in Girardian perspective. However, there is a subdivision to be made under external mediation, a new category that would reorient Girard's theories in non-Western context: cultural difference²². Unlike chivalric romances of Don Quixote or cheap novellas of Emma Bovary, the models of Selim go through a different process of idealization because Selim does not read just any mediator of art and beauty. He is surrounded by Western texts, by the works of Western literary cannon. This indicates a hierarchy between the subject and the model in national, cultural or ethnic dimension.

However, such hierarchical structure in *Tutunamayanlar* is not as visible or as straightforward as in the earlier Turkish novels. For example, Orhan Koçak's article on *Mai ve Siyah* talks about a West that is idealised and defined in its foreignness at the same time; it is a discursive ideal nobody can fully know, a concept that is far and abstract. Hence, the hierarchy is self-evident and the follower of the model is always already marked in his cultural inferiority. In *Tutunamayanlar*, however, the issue of cultural difference and cultural identity does not resolve itself into a lucid East/West binary. On the one hand, the ideal of Selim carries western nature; his models range from Jesus to Underground Man. On the other hand, the text constantly points at the schizophrenic character of the culture; torn between failed modernity project and rundown past.

The aforementioned 'songs of disconnected', which is a parody of autobiography in the first part and of official national history in the second, is the part where one can closely observe the text's discussion of cultural identity with respect to East/West divide. It is not only a parody of Bildungsroman tradition, but also of the

²² Orhan Koçak in his article "Kaptırılmış ideal: Mai ve Siyah üzerine psikanalitik bir deneme" talks about the lack of cultural difference in Girard's theories. Any post-colonial critique of those theories would necessarily bring up the issue of East/West divide in this triangular nature of desire, which indicates both lack of perspective in Girard's writing and at the same time wide adoptability of his theory.

personal narrative of the third-world subject as ‘national allegory’²³. In the songs, the infant Selim emerges as a disoriented and perplexed child trying to find his way out of national hymns, Friday prayers, ‘alaturka’ music, sins, wars and ‘Marşal Amca’. Interestingly, the parody of those discourses can stand side by side with constant references to western culture; or rather, the two spheres stand together in a comparative paradigm which builds up the irony and humour. The father, for example, is first compared to imaginary Greek mathematician Panton Hipyos who overwhelmed women with his intelligence and then to Hun Turks who are said to respect first their guns then their women. ‘Dini bütün iki Türk çocuğu’, which is Selim and his friend pray night and day, summed up in this phrase ‘Allahın peşinde yirmi bin fersah’ (131).

The autobiography of Turgut written by Selim carries almost the same cultural references pointing at its irresolvable duality which is sometimes expressed in a plain joke like ‘Nasıl ezberlenir Allahım Arapça dua eden insanın Latince kemikleri?’ (126). Again going back to the problematization of the father, Turgut’s father Hüsni Bey, was a student at the law faculty and he kept failing a course where he has to learn about the ancient Greek law. The oral exam scene is one of the best writing on the infantilised state of the belated who wages a war to show that he can understand what is totally foreign to his experience. He ‘dared to list the sentences he memorised while he was struggling with the words he could hardly pronounce’; he was even about to be ‘carried out by the words he repeats without understanding’ (55). When it comes to name his son, Hüsni Bey demonstrates the same clumsiness: ‘Hüsni Bey pek dindar sayılmazdı. Turgut’un kulağına ezanı fısıldarken de gene, Kadim Yunan gibi, bilmediği bir düzenin

²³ The term ‘national allegory’ here is borrowed from Frederic Jameson. Although Jameson’s article was published short time before *Tutunamayanlar* is published and probably Oğuz Atay has never read it, the kind of narrative Jameson refers to had long been established, especially in the Turkish context with early examples of novel like *Sodom and Gomore* or *Mai ve Siyah*. The fact that Selim gets extremely ill when Atatürk was in his deathbed, or that he arrives in Ankara just like the Turks from central Asia arriving in Anatolia makes evident references to those kinds of narrations. Sibel Irzik claims that *Tutunamayanlar* takes the allegorical impulse to a parodic extreme, that the absurd abundance of biographies, identities, and histories creates a constant background noise which interferes with even the most serious attempt to find the essence, in in “Allegorical Lives: The Public and Private in the Modern Turkish Novel” *In Relocating the fault lines : Turkey beyond the East-West divide*. Güven Güzeldere, Sibel Irzik, ed. Durham, N.C. : London : Duke University Press, 2003. pp.551-567.

ezberciliğini yapıyordu. Doğu ve Batı kültürünün sembolleri, onun kafasında, bütün ürkütücü yönleriyle, birbirlerine karışmadan durabiliyordu' (56).

As Suna Ertugrul points out, that duality/duplicity of culture and the resulting lack of originary unity prompt the question of cultural identity, which is provoked by cultural difference²⁴. Here cultural difference Hüsnü Bey or the child Selim bear in their clumsiness, childishness and helplessness indicates that which refuses to be appropriated by the modern project. The subject can neither resolve into the exhausted past whose reconstructions suffocate him at present; nor can he come to terms with the modern ideal with respect to which he is always already late. But then again, Ertugrul says that the cultural difference exists as difference—that is, as a force of dislocation rather than a possible ground for an alternative world. The following passage from the Songs, through the imagery of 'Alaturka' music, conveys absolute and persistent 'difference' that refuses to be reconciled, that lingers like an incurable illness menacing the mental health of people:

“İster taşrada, ister İstanbul'da olsun / İster burnumuza mangal dumanı
dolsun
İster merdiven sahanlıklarınızda / Kalorifer dairesinden gelen linyit
kokusu,
Hepsinden daha kuvvetli ve etkilidir dokusu / İçinize işleyen
“alaturka”nın.
Küçük yaşta içirilir yavaşça / Derinin altında (çiçek aşısı gibi). Arkadaşça
Sokulur okşayarak, / “Sine-i suzanımı” eder helak. / ...
Saat beş oldu mu, bin altı yüz kırk sekiz metrede / Ve bilmem kaç
kilosikilada başladı mı yayına Türkiye Postaları,
Yatağında zevkle inletir hastaları / Hemen fasıl heyeti
Duyulur dört bucağında yurdun. Akşam nöbeti / Tutan sınırdaki erden,
İki kere mars oldu üst üste diye, terden / Pantolonu iskemleye yapışan
pişpirik İsmail'e kadar

²⁴ Ertugrul, Suna. “Belated modernity and modernity as belatedness in Tutunamayanlar”. In *Relocating the fault lines : Turkey beyond the East-West divide*. Güven Güzeldere, Sibel Irzik, ed. Durham, N.C. : London : Duke University Press, 2003.

Herkesin ciğerine mikroplu havayla dolar /...

Çıkmam kokusuyla alaturkasıyla beni kahreden / İçki evinden, ölmeden önce. / Bence

Alyuvarlar, akyuvarlar, bir de alaturka mürekkeptir kanımız.” (127)

The question of identity is explored through the parody of the national history which aims to construct a coherent national identity which comes after the imperial past and projects to modern future. The novel problematizes the narration of official history as well as certain political discourses of the time that aims at creating a coherent narrative of identity. The characters Selim invented like Fotoçu, Ziya Özdevrimsel or Düzgen Silig are each a representative of a certain part in the official history. Keeping in mind the fact that according to the official history, modernisation begins with the chain of ‘revolutions’ Atatürk made, Ziya Özdevrimsel (his first name is arabic, while as his last name he coined ‘Özdevrimsel’ which means roughly ‘essentially revolutionary’) is a mock figure of the modernisation process in Turkey and its history. Fo-To-Çu is an imaginary Turkish figure from central Asia, who actually discovered the photons in light and invented ‘Foto Kalem’ but as it has always been the case, the Europeans arrogated to themselves the important inventions of Turks. Considering the fact that pan-Turanianist movement reached its peak in 1970’s, Atay’s mocking of the pretensions of Turkism and their history writing comes as a critique of the contemporary political atmosphere. Likewise, Düzgen Silig’s diary and his group of friends who are supposedly the leftist intellectuals in the town of Ortu Alga around the 9th century is evidently a mock narrative of leftist groups, their formation and activities. This story, again, along with other criticisms of leftist organisations of the time that we can abundantly find in the novel, mirrors the politic life in the 60’s and 70’s.

The double bind of the non-western subject arises from the tensions between the emergence of new layers of reality and the ancestrally inherited resistances that pushed them outside or to the bottom of the realm of knowledge necessarily caused certain schisms in the consciousness, says Daryush Shayegan²⁵. He argues that non-western

²⁵ Shayegan, Darius. *Cultural schizophrenia : Islamic societies confronting the West*. Syracuse, N.Y. : Syracuse University Press, 1997. p.52.

subject is situated on the fault-line between incompatible worlds and that in this conflicting situation the two paradigms meet and disfigure each other by disintegrating their mutual images. *Tutunamayanlar* is a text which expresses the consciousness of that cultural schizophrenia: it overtly mocks the ancestrally inherited drives and parodies the condition of the disoriented non-western subject. Atay most skilfully expresses the double bind of the cultural difference; he shows that the ‘alaturka’ condition consists both of innocence and weakness; of sincerity and what Selim calls anger of the belated²⁶.

In this context, if we place the official national history as an attempt to recover the pre-modern and reconcile it with the modern on one side of the schism (the non-western paradigm) Shayegan talks about, the other side will presumably be the imagined western culture which Selim experiences through its canonical works. However, those two spheres of grounding seem to be separated and abstracted; unlike other narratives that go through undercutting throughout the text, western texts (which are exclusively literary and philosophic) is not problematized. It seems that there are certain parts which are protected from irony in the novel and the ideal of Selim which is fed by those texts is one of them.

The model of Selim is western through and through, but not in the sense that it is a desire to imitate western way of life (as depicted by consumerist friends of Turgut). It belongs to the psychic dimension of a cultural conflict. It is the thing to which the subject feels he’s running late. Selim who is enchanted by it, is in a condition of impasse getting carried along by an interminable aesthetic idealisation. Orhan Koçak, borrowing from Lacan’s concept of *metonymic slide*, accounts for such idealisation with the notion of *slide of the model*²⁷. He claims that westernisation is a slide of the model which signifies recognition of belatedness. It is the loss of the ground which opens up a gap between what is and what is desired to be; a gap which is defined with its impossibility of closure. Therefore, any effort to overwhelm it will result in subject’s captivation by the model.

²⁶ For detailed discussion see Nurdan Gürbilek. *Mağdurun Dili*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2008.

²⁷ Trans. ‘model kayması’.

The belated subject is in a position of lack and imitation, which echoes subjective experience of a child; the child's existence is his ability to imagine itself otherwise. A child is susceptible to guidance coming from outside; he lacks autonomy and looks for direction from his models, resulting in idealization of them. Childishness as described here is essential to Girard's theory of mimetic desire. What needs to be re-examined at this point is the dimension of cultural difference by simply asking why Selim makes a list of "Philosophers and Authors to be learned well" and why they are Soren Kirkegaard, Oswald Spengler, Franz Kafka and Friedrich Nietzsche (100). This is also the point where the quixotic ontological sickness of the modern heroes conjoins with the ontological and epistemological schizophrenia Shayegan talks about.

It seems that the gap caused by 'the slide of the model' is filled up by reading those authors and philosophers (and many others continually listed in the novel). Koçak associates the ideal with anxiety; it means constant suspense of the present and expectancy for the future. Therefore, the subject cannot easily settle in the everyday. In *Tutunamayanlar*, both Selim and Turgut are caught up in feeling that they are late and that they should read more to catch up with it. There is always a lack to be covered, an ideal that Selim (and Turgut) is trailing behind. However, different from Turgut, as an inborn *disconnected*, Selim's childlike and effeminate character adds onto the incompetent figure of the belated subject.

According to Freud²⁸, *ideal* is that which one man sets up in himself by which he measures his actual ego. Koçak uses this theory in order to examine the character Ahmet Cemil and characteristics of Edebiyat-ı Cedide period. He claims that in the case of Uşaklıgil and other late Ottoman modernists there is a disruption between a historically defined super-ego whose contents are given by State and Tradition, and an equally historical ego ideal formed through successive identifications with the "West". In *Tutunamayanlar*, however, the ego-ideal associated with Selim cannot stand for the ideal of society or for a larger social or cultural phenomenon. The novel does not allow for a reading that relates Selim's endeavours to identification with the West. Although Selim cuddles up to western texts, the ideal stands beyond the East/West divide that

²⁸ Freud, Sigmund. "Narcissism: An Introduction". P.F.L. 11 (1914).

seems clear enough to differentiate for late Ottoman modernists. Ahmet Cemil goes through a transformation at the end of which he recognizes his constructedness while Selim starts up with the consciousness of it.

Freud's notion of ego ideal is quite relevant to the issue of cultural difference and its psychic dimension in Selim's mimetic experience, however. For Freud, the ego-ideal is the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood. Hence, what the subject projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal. Such formation of an ideal heightens the demands of the ego and sublimation (the instinct's directing itself towards an aim other than that of sexual satisfaction) is a way out of the repression of meeting those demands. The ego ideal constantly watches the actual ego and measures it by that ideal which creates delusion of being noticed, that is, the feeling of constantly being watched and criticised.

The power of the watching eye is a familiar notion in modern art and literature as well as the modern existence itself. In case of Selim, the ideal/ the observing power has a cultural dimension which dislocates the subject from the parental and societal values (which can correspond to the super-ego) and he finds himself possessed of another perfection he finds of value. This other perfection is that which dislocates the subject and de-roots the ego ideal from its ordinary sphere (the cultural and ethical ideas of the society)²⁹. On the one hand there is the undefined multitude ("onlar") associated with the norms of the society and the *disconnected* looks down on them but is being repressed by its judgements at the same time. On the other hand, there is the ideal whose demands Selim struggles to meet. He says: "Hele bu yabancıların saçma tavırlarımı soğuk bir suratla değerlendirdiklerini sezmiyorum mu, ölmekten beter oluyorum. Neysem, ne olduysam daha iyisini dosyalarından çıkarıp burnuma dayıyorlar sanki. Az gelişmiş öfkeme de burun kıvrıyorlar, dudak büküyorlar." (657)

²⁹ According to Freud, the ego ideal rooted in the narcissism of the childhood and it corresponds to the thing the subject wants to be alike. It is an attempt to retain narcissistic perfection of the childhood and the subject seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal which is borrowed from the common ideal of a family, class or a nation. Modernisation in the non-West is the withdrawal of this ideal which results in dislocated subject's contempt of it.

2.4. Homosocial Desire

In *Tutunamayanlar*, there are two parallel lines of idealisation or two triangles that share an angle, forming a centrifugal force around the watching power. Selim's search for the things that are grand and beautiful echoes in Turgut's search for Selim. The story of Selim is told within the story of Turgut who struggles to reach that which is always already lost because Selim is dead when the story begins. He is the absence, the abyss that Turgut whirls around to bring it into life, into language.

After he finds out about the suicide of Selim, Turgut starts to feel alienated from his everyday bourgeois life; he goes through a state of enlightenment and uncovers the constructedness of his identity as an engineer, father, husband etc. He steps out of the order of everyday life while he enters into another order of responsibility and duty whose construction goes unproblematised unlike his bourgeois identity. Suna Ertugtul describes Turgut's experience of dislocation as follows: "The subject, by undergoing the unbearable pain of separation/absence, emerges as a response to a call to which it can never fully respond, in regard to which it is always late and always responsible"³⁰. Although it is true that the everyday order shatters with the violence of death and loss for Turgut, at another level, a new order begins that is defined in the subject's idealisation of a new model and his desire to become his mediator and to steal from the mediator his very being of perfect *disconnected*.

From the moment the mediator's influence is felt, the sense of reality is lost and judgement paralyzed, says Girard. The death of Selim creates a split in Turgut's consciousness; he gradually develops schizophrenic state of mind which follows his alienation from the everyday. Although Selim was influential on Turgut before he gets married, he becomes model for Turgut after his death. Selim is the mediator which promises Turgut a certain way of life and identity dedicated to beauty and dignity. The mediation in the novel occurs through the subject's reading of the texts by and about the model, in parallel with the text's references to Don Quixote.

³⁰ Ertugrul (2003).

Tutunamayanlar begins with Turgut sitting at midnight in front of his desk on which Selim's suicide letter stands, which is the moment the mediator gain a hold upon the subject. Afterwards, Turgut embarks on his adventure to trace Selim in the fragmented, incomplete, incoherent texts with multiple authors: "Okumalıyım, bilmeliyim, okumalıyım. İşin içine girmeliyim; kendime acı vermek pahasına. Ellerini yanaklarına bastırdı, okumaya başladı" (53). Selim becomes an immense text getting more and more complicated each day with letters, class notes, poetry, songs, conversations cited by his friends, records and diaries.

The fact that Turgut's fascination with the model comes after the model is lost for good bears analogy to the theme of the lost father and his son fighting for his honour in literature. Actually, if Selim is analogous to Don Quixote, Turgut is Hamlet whose dead father haunts him not with his spirit but with a suicide letter. As the ideal is always already lost, the subject will remain belated, he will never be able to achieve it. Death opens an unfillable gap between the subject and his ideal. Hence Turgut's search parallels Selim's belated condition. Turgut once remembers Selim saying: "Bir gün bu yazdıklarımızı arayacaksın; ama, yaşantınla onlardan öyle uzaklaşmış olacaksın ki, bulamayacaksın" (64).

The happy days spent with Selim do not belong to the actual time of the novel. Whatever Selim says or does remains to be a quotation by his friends and it is part of a mythic time that comes before the present time of the text. The shadow of the pleasant past falls on Turgut and it judges him for what he has done and burdens him to revive it. If we go back to Freudian perspective, we can say that the ego suffers from the desires and requirements of the super-ego. The image of Selim for Turgut is discomfoting, accusing, forbidding and punishing. Selim represents the thing which the subject is bound to be. Selim is a force that accuses him for not reading enough, for getting married, for turning into a bourgeois "mollusk"³¹, for leaving him alone and so on. That internalised burden renders him unforgivable once and for all. In the passage where Turgut compares Selim to Jesus, he says:

³¹ Trans. "yumulakça"

“İkisi de babası için savaşıyor. Kim beni memnun ederse, yukarıdaki babamı da sevindirmiş olacaktır. Hamlet, ben babanın ruhuyum... Ey zavallı ruh! İntikam alma meselesinde anlaşıyorlar. Ben, heralde Hamlet’e yakınım. Fakat Selim’in intikamını alacak yerde Ofelya Magdalena’nın bacakları arasında yatıyorum”. (286)

However, Turgut’s revenge for the death of Selim, which he gets on Metin in a brothel, does not go untouched by the ironic language novel employs; Turgut says right after the passage above: “Onu gülünç duruma sokanları rezil edeceğim. Ona vuranları parçalayacağım. ‘İntikam Kılıcı’nda başrolü oynayacağım” (287).

It is interesting that Turgut takes revenge of Selim on Metin in a brothel, keeping in mind that Metin is an important comparative figure in the construction of Selim’s identity. In brothel, Turgut plays a game, more arrogant and grandiose than those of Selim, for the ‘second coming’ of Selim, the prince of *disconnected*. Why does it have to be a brothel and with Metin? Evidently, the bond between Selim and Turgut not only indicates a relation of idolisation and duty but also hints at the fact that the fascination with the model has a sexual dimension. Metin and Selim used to be friends in primary school. They were in love with the same girl but, although we cannot know what really took place between them, Selim was unsurprisingly the loser in the game. They have a special bond due to not only their first love, but also their first visit to the brothel. It seems that it was a painful memory for Selim because he had to wait in the saloon for his friend to go out without making a ‘visit’ himself. What makes Metin a good target for Turgut’s vengeance is not merely his role in Selim’s sexual traumas; he is also a figure quite close to the *disconnected*. That is to say, those who are pushed around, who are too sensitive to be cold-blooded enough, whose childish sincerity leads their marginalisation in everyday life. If Selim is the prince of them, Metin is a cheater, a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Metin is a character who is fascinated by the novels he reads and he seems quite alike with Selim in this. What Metin reads, however, are cheap romantic novels written for his “over-sensitive soul”. He loves Turkish tangos and this makes him object of mockery for both Selim and Turgut. It is “the agony coming from the touching lyrics”

that Metin admires. Metin is a false disconnected, or rather he is a cheap, superficial figure that needs to be distinguished/extracted from the memory of Selim. He is also the figure that comes in between the desired union of Selim and Turgut. Keeping in mind that Selim is a feminine and childlike figure, Turgut seems to blame Metin for taking Selim to brothel, for sullying him. For Turgut, the scene in brothel with Selim waiting, is a source of anguish and anxiety:

“Sen Selim Işık, genelevin salonunda ne arıyorsun? ... Bak karıya nasıl dans ediyor? Nasıl yılışık bir gülümsemeyle konuşuyor...Çık dışarı Selim Işık! Temiz hava al biraz. İnsan, kötü şeylerle ne kadar az karşılaşırsa o kadar iyi olur ... Neden, dünyaya, yaşamaya karışmak gibi bir mesele çıkardın?” (265)

Moreover, Metin and Burhan who used to be Selim’s close friends, arise bitter jealousy in Turgut. The homosocial³² bond between Turgut and Selim is exclusive and any rival who is a potential disturbance for the bond is eliminated by Turgut through demasculinization³³. Turgut constantly refers to imaginary suspenders of Metin and even compares him to a young bride; or he imagines both Metin and Burhan being beaten up by his brutal friend Güner. In addition to those, there exists numerous references to the homophobic statements arising from the anxiety of homosexual tendencies between the two. Selim’s womanish jealousy for Turgut’s marriage is coupled with his dubious affair with Süleyman Kargı and Turgut himself. Selim has been an object of homosexual desire one way or another in the male society of disconnecteds:

“(Turgut) Kollarıyla Selim’i soluksuz bırakıncaya kadar sıkardı ... Havaya kaldırdığı Selim’i duvara sürüklerdi ... ‘Erkeğin kılları göğsündedir oğlum Selim’. Hemen gömleğini çıkarır ve boynuna

³² Here I borrow the term from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. She argues that “homosocial” describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, formed by analogy with “homosexual”, and meant to be distinguished from it. In fact, it is applied to such activities as “male bonding”, which may be characterised by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality.

³³ Turgut does not show the same jealousy to Süleyman or Esat, however. On the contrary, they become a part of the male society of disconnected. Turgut punishes merely those who hurt Selim.

kadar bütün gövdesini kaplayan kıllarını gösterirdi Selim'e ... Bir erkeğin yanında soyunmasından sıkılırdı Selim ... 'Beni aşığalara çekiyorsun Turgut. Senden kurtulmalıyım.'" (29)

Süleyman Kargı:

"Bir keresinde çok sarhoş oldu ve beni ilk gördüğü zaman hiç hoşlanmadığını itiraf etti. Öpüştük. Onu çok seviyordum ve şımartıyordum ... Ondan sorumlu hissediyordum kendimi. Selim de bu duyguyu, bana bilerek veriyor gibiydi. Sorumluluğum hoşuna gidiyordu ... onu çok üzmüşlerdi ... fakat gözlerime bakınca herşeyi unuttu ve affetti." (106)

Günseli, who had an affair with Selim before his suicide, is another author/producer of the texts on Selim. However her narration in chapter 14 and 15 is violently interrupted by Turgut in his desire to unite with the couple, or rather replace the voice/authorship of Günseli as the lover of Selim.

At this point, the homosexual and homophobic drives at the subjective level can be problematized by the examination of how the sexual relates to the social; how sex relates to a social and political relationship. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick asserts that in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power³⁴. The homosexual repercussions in *Tutunamayanlar* are very much related with the social projections and idealisations the novel suggests. The sexual relations in the novel be it the homosocial one between Selim and his friends, or the heterosexual marriage of Turgut have close connections with the binaries of childish innocence/ grown-up frailties; of sincerity/ aloofness; of underdeveloped/civilised; and finally the East/ the West.

³⁴ Sedgwick, 25.

2.5. Disconnectus Erectus: the Praise of Misfits

Above all, *Tutunamayanlar* holds a significant position in Turkish cultural production due to its criticism and rejection of bourgeois values of the contemporary society, its monotony and conformism. As a narrative of isolation from the everyday life and of the intellectuals who cannot come to terms with the norms of the society, *Tutunamayanlar* carries a promise or a claim of innocence, of justice and of ‘the divine and the beauty’. The critique of the bourgeois culture is practiced through the aforementioned binaries and whatever that is glorified with respect to the everyday is associated with the feminine. The disconnectedness the characters suggest can be attributed to the disconnectedness of the Turkish society in its ‘borrowed’ modern national identity. Hence, the adaptation of the habits of consumption and conformism of the bourgeois order is a sign of a hasty and superficial westernisation and cultural degeneration, which is severely criticised and mocked in the novel. Concomitantly, the gender roles and constraints bourgeois marriages bring along with the bourgeois way of life is coupled with a short-sighted passion for westernisation in the character of Nermin, Turgut’s wife. Selim Işık is a promise of reason and enlightenment (in parallel with his surname ‘Light’) while Nermin is a representative of the imprisoning and belittling ‘westernised’ way of life. The male members of bourgeois order are in danger of losing their individuality and surrender entirely to this feminine order. Here is an example of Turgut’s anxiety while talking about his bourgeois friends:

“Ben Kaya’yım, Kaya da Mehmet’tir. Turgut, Kaya, Mehmet, bir arada olduktan sonra... bir görüntünün üç aynada yansıması gibi bir olay. Mehmet’in karısı bana Turgut diyeceğine Kaya dedi. Ağzından öyle çıktı. İsimler, birbirinden farklı yaratıkları ayırt etmek içindir; bizleri değil. Biz aynı türün örnekleriyiz. Kayamehmetturgutgillerdeniz.” (331)

Nevertheless, Turgut is the only one who has been able to keep that ‘thing’ for himself, even in the first night of his marriage, he says that he did not surrender entirely, that there was that ‘thing’ which kept him sane and pure in his plain environment. That ‘thing’ leads him to the rejection of his current life and it marks the beginning of his schizophrenia with Olric.

The association of women with civilization (in its negative sense as a deprecating element) and with consumerism is often represented together with a male homosocial bond between two men who are trapped in the suffocating atmosphere. As Sedgwick suggests, male homosocial bond arises from the need to maintain patriarchal power. In this case, it is safe to say that the ‘borrowed’ westernised gender roles and way of life incite fear of emasculation in the male protagonists, but at the same time, the text is far from idealising the former or pre-modern social order. Hence, if we read *Tutunamayanlar* as a narrative of disconnected society, the call of Selim and Turgut’s responsibility for him and his ideals is not merely in the personal level but it is a call against the emasculation, the hasty westernisation, loss of innocence and sincerity in a larger picture. If Turgut’s efforts are for reviving Selim, Atay’s text is homage to the disconnecteds of the society and societal disconnectedness.

What is being *disconnected*? “Bırakılmış olmanın, anlaşılamamanın, yaşamamanın, baştan yaşayamamanın acısı[dır]”, says Turgut (321). As the prince of disconnecteds, Selim defines himself constantly with respect to the unnamed multitude ‘onlar’ (‘they’) who ignores, humiliates, rejects, criticizes, watches, judges Selim and at the same time humiliated and criticized by him. Whatever the beauty and the divine is, ‘onlar’ are not. “‘Size de, onlara da göstereceğim.’ Kimdi onlar? Bilmiyordu. ‘Böyle olmama sebep olanlar’, diyordu. ‘Her çağımda isimleri değişen ve aslında hepsinin aynı olanlar. Onlar işte!’” (400). Girard says that modern society is a negative imitation and the effort to leave the beaten paths forces everyone inevitably into the same ditch. Selim and Turgut, quite like other modern heroes, are anxious not to join the masses and lose their sense of uniqueness while they are conscious of their quixotic nature. Being ordinary is humiliating while the new bourgeois order forces them to be so.

Nurdan Gürbilek in *Mağdurun Dili* points at the recurrent theme of victimisation in modern literature, naming this condition “the underground world” after Dostoyevsky. Largely borrowing from Lukacs’ problematic individual, she says that the individual is trapped in between severe criticism of the artificial values essential to the society and the feeling of impasse arising from the inability to change those values; then she examines *Tutunamayanlar* within this paradigm. If we are to move from the inner dynamics of the novel and the characters to a larger socio-cultural level, we can put the

relation between the emergence of the marginalised intellectual as a popular theme in literature and the changing social reality.

Berna Moran claims that Yusuf Atılgan's *Aylak Adam* (1959) and Oğuz Atay's *Tutunamayanlar* (1971) are the first examples of Turkish novel which take the marginalised individual as their subject matter and which are inspired by the modernist Western literature³⁵. Why did the first examples of the isolated individuals come up in the 60's and the 70's? When did a novelist start to write the story of the subject who is in the position to defend personal unique self against a multitude marked in its banality and depravity? How did the modern proud subject come about in the Turkish context?

The answer to the question how emergence of such subjective experience relates to the mobility of the social power can be the transformation of the public/private paradigm with the exhaustion of the Kemalist modernism's promises. For modern individual per se, the private is a natural and free space while the public belongs to the space of obligations and duties. Hence, the moment the subject regards his private life as the evidence of his constitutive freedom, he enters into a different relation with the other. However, with the transformation of the public and private space in the Turkish context, I do not mean the emergence of a lucid and untroubled public/private binary. After all, thinking that consumption involves the deep penetration of the private by the public and that private space becomes dependent and conditional, talking about such clear binary may not make sense at all. Hence, it is the resort of the injured intellectual resisting to any pre-determined social behaviour, the 'underground' that constitutes the private space of the marginal subject.

The disconnected subject, in this context, could never come to terms with consumerism and yield into the joys of everyday existence. The privacy is experienced in the intellectual dimension, in the underground, in violent tension with the public. One has to keep in mind that we are not in the 80's yet and the private life as an object of confession that goes into an outburst is not in the picture. In the political atmosphere of the 60's and 70's, collective subjectivities constituted possibility for social change. *Tutunamayanlar* as the critique of the contemporary intellectual condition is a reaction

³⁵ Moran, Berna *Türk Romanına Eleştirel bir Bakış*: İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1990.

to such possibilities that ignores the unique personal experience of the modern subject who does not want to walk over the beaten paths. Therefore, disconnectedness never resolves into a collective, political project not just because of the danger of being ridiculous but because it is in and of itself antagonistic to such projects. That's also the reason why the novel was not well received by the critics and could not find wide audience in the 70's.

In 1984, with its republication, the novel reached great number of audience and received attention of the intellectual community. Evidently, middle class reading practices have changed in the 80's as well. The material conditions of book production and readership had significant effect on the increase in the novel's readers and number of publication. However, those conditions cannot account for the attention it received in the 1980's. The neo-liberal atmosphere after the coup as well as its traumatic effect on the left led people to feeling of impasse and to face up to the past. We can say that the audience was now in possession of the conceptual categories *Tutunamayanlar* employs; the marginal, the 'other' and hence the 'self' was rediscovered and being disconnected has become a certain political (or apolitical?) stance in life. The fact that the novel fosters an anti-consumerist stance and places the essential self in opposition to bourgeois sensibilities mostly reduced to consumerism seems to contradict the emergence of mass consumerism in the 80's. However, on the contrary, once the reading public becomes consumers, they can receive and appreciate the anti-consumer emphasis of the novel. Consumerism becomes a category that they have experienced and developed a sense of awareness. After all, the novel's wide appreciation after 1980 is a controversial question that needs further examination in relation to reception theory and its contemporary social discourses.

3. SUBJECTS IN THE MARGINS

Subjectivity in Latife Tekin's *Berci Kristin* and *Gece Dersleri*

3.1. Introduction

This part of the thesis explores the making of successively collective and women's radical subjectivity in Latife Tekin's writing through different realizations and conceptualisations of desire. Like the rest of the thesis, it studies the correlations between different structures of desire and different ways of conceiving characters; as well as how desire relates to the social. In the preceding chapter we have seen how desire that is modern through and through in its incompatibility with reality designates radical individuality and how the particular structure of desire is hierarchically ordered under ethnical and cultural difference. This chapter, through Tekin's two novels, focuses on two central questions. The first one that centres on *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları* asks what happens to subject when the language of desire is absent and/or unavailable and/or repressed. Finally, in *Gece Dersleri*, it examines the emergence of definitely feminine subject as a reaction to its reduction or final resolution to certain roles defined by ideology.

Berci Kristin is the second novel of Tekin published in 1984, followed by *Gece Dersleri* published in 1986. Although she continues to publish up to this day, Latife Tekin's early works had a deep impact on Turkish Literature into the 1980's. The reason why she is classified as an influential writer of the 80's may lie in the fact that her works respond to the disintegrated cultural and political atmosphere of her time. The dissolution of the socialist movement together with the loss of its former legitimate groundings and with its incapability to unite different resistive energies, partly due to the coup and to the movement's inner dynamics, paved the way for the breaking loose of diverse cultural identities from holistic ideologies. This emergence of the search for cultural identities disengaged from the socialist movement goes hand in hand with what Gürbilek calls the discovery of the third world within ourselves³⁶. She claims that 80's

³⁶ Gürbilek, Nurdan. *Vitrinde Yasamak*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1992. p 97. Gürbilek applies Frederic Jameson's analysis of the 60's in the West to the Turkish context here.

were a time of discoveries of those that had long been repressed for the sake of modernisation.

There are two main points to be followed in this historical account for the purpose of this chapter: the inclusion of the marginal /the periphery into popular discourse and the rising voices against dominant socialist ideology as it is practiced in the 80's in Turkey. Hence, we can frame Tekin's two novels and the subject positions they envision in this historical context. As one of the leading figures in Turkish literature after the 80's, Tekin gives the first example of the representation of a collective experience that belongs to social strata that had been either excluded from literature or objectified in realist and social realist works³⁷. In this respect, her novel *Berci Kristin* is different from the epic narrations (e.g. *Ince Memed*) but makes use of their techniques at the same time. Next to that, Tekin opens up a different perspective to the question of or rather to the tension between politics and individual that plague Turkish writing for years (as we have already seen in *Tutunamayanlar*). As I try to show further in the chapter, in *Gece Dersleri* there is an opening up of a thoroughly and essentially feminine and individual space through spontaneous desire derived from the immediate, the body.

3.2. *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları*

Lukacs in *The Theory of the Novel* talks about integrated culture where there is no essential difference between 'inside' and 'outside', between the self and the world (1971, p.29). The destiny of the individual and the community was not yet split, which suggests totality in life that is a whole within which everything is complete. Although Lukacs' views of epics and Greek culture mostly display his vision of the organic, unified, pre-capitalist world; his idea of the integrated culture may not be exclusively an ancient Greek phenomenon. Freed from its Eurocentrism, Lukacs' theory can apply to life and art of communities from different locations and different ages. His theory

She claims that just like the West was driven to acknowledge the Third World within, Turkey was compelled to acknowledge its periphery, the Kurds.

³⁷ For examples of social realist works as such, see works of Fakir Baykurt or Rıfat Ilgaz.

basically outlines a binary between epic and novel; and so between the ancient integrated culture and the modern culture. He describes novel as the epic of an age in which the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given; and yet, it is an age that still thinks in terms of totality. Therefore, he treats novel as a form of epic in a way.

In *Berci Kristin*, the community Latife Tekin depicts is very much close to Lukacs' integrated community, even if his depiction is idealised and illusionary of a pre-modern and pre-capitalist society. The life of community in *Berci Kristin*, is in no way pre-modern but it carries certain similarities with Lukacs' portrayal because *Berci Kristin* is the story of a people, a space and objects that are violently excluded from modern and capitalist society. Their collective character does not come from their pre-modernity but from their non-modernity, being beyond the limits of it and its excess at the same time. In parallel to the community represented, the narration techniques and the language of the novel makes use of traditional forms. The full title of the book, *Berci Kristin Tales from the Garbage Hills*, asserts from the very beginning that we are faced with a hybrid narration. Hence the genre and the narration go hand in hand with the community presented, producing a piece that is almost organically and densely interwoven and deviating from the novel tradition as a locus of private experience. Leaving the discussion on the genre of the work for the moment, I want to begin with the representation of the collective experience and then move onto the question of desire that marks that collectivity with the absence of it.

Berci Kristin is a tale of a 'gecekodu' neighbourhood. It is the story of transformation of a space and people living in it, which are almost inseparable from each other. Inside and outside are literally and metaphorically unified; individual characters are never placed above or beyond the community, nor are people distinct from the external world, the space, the objects, the wind etc. The houses made out of waste materials collected from garbage can hardly make a wall that separates the interior of the house from outside. In parallel to that, the categories of private and public simply do not or cannot exist in the community. *Berci Kristin*, in this sense, is not a novel of an individual search or transformation but a survival story of a community whose destiny or rather survival is inseparable from the destiny of the space that is garbage hills. Güllü Baba, an old blind man from the neighbourhood, announces

their destiny: “Çiçektepe kondularının altında kara derin harflerle, fabrikalar, çöp ve rüzgar yazılıydı” (29)³⁸.

The novel begins with the first ‘gecekondu’ constructions: “Bir kış gecesinde, gündüzleri kocaman tenekelerin şehrin çöpünü getirip boşalttıkları bir sepetin üstüne, çöp yığınlarından az uzağa, fener ışığında, sekiz konu kuruldu.” (1). From the beginning to the end, the novel progresses as a story of a space and people that come together around it. It is the story of the community’s struggle to turn the garbage hill into home; to settle down in it. Hence, the experience of the collective subject necessarily bears the integration of space and people; it gets to be represented through the interlacement of the space/ the world of objects with the community which is in constant interaction with it.

The sense of transition between the outside world and people is created not only through direct comparisons and similes (for example gradually resembling garbage hill with the dust and dirt), but also through the figurative use of language as well. The ‘kondu’s, the seagulls, the wind, the factories are personified both in the narration of the novel and in the poems and songs told by the people while people get objectified and compared to objects. When the factory next to their neighbourhood leaves strange and evidently poisonous white bubbles on the houses, the transformation caused by it is described in the following passage: “Üç gün içinde bu fabrika karı konduları kuruttu. Ağaçların dallarını sarkıttı. Tavuklar boyunlarını büküp büküp kıvrıldı. İnsanlar başlarını dik tutamaz oldu. Çocuklar hap yemiş gibi mosmor kesilip uykuya daldı.” (10)

The houses, trees, chickens and people are portrayed in the same tone, with short, simple and direct use of language. After the snow of the factory, the wind begins to menace them and their deformation again is no different from that of a tree in the face of wind: “[Çiçektepe’li erkekler] yan yana yürümeği, yürürken ellerini böğürlerine dayamayı, kafalarını öne yıkmayı alışkanlık haline getirdiler...bir kış günü de tümünden eğrildiler. Kar akşamı kondularına belleri bükülmüş, boyunları sarkmış döndüler...Hastalık boyunlarını daha da eğiltip, omuzları yamultup geçti.” (19)

³⁸ Tekin, Latife. *Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları*. İstanbul : Everest Yayınları, 2003.

The most salient personification is that of ‘gecekondu’s. They are not only personified but also frequently used as the subject in sentences as the agent of actions, which in fact adds onto the anonymity effect in the narration achieved through wide usage of passive voice. Next to ‘kondu’s as the centre of action, there are seagulls that seem to be significant figures in the tale of the garbage hills. From the birth of the neighbourhood, the seagulls are not only a part of life in the garbage hills but they are also watching over and passing judgements on them. Through their personification, the seagulls become an integral part of the community and even supposed narrator of songs. The experience of the community and theirs on the garbage hills are similar, which sometimes leads to a violent tension between them. When a teacher is assigned for children in the hills, he writes poems about the hills. His quixotic effort to distil an aesthetic representation from the garbage is defied by the seagulls who are familiar with violence, suffering and bareness of life in the hills: “Martular Şiirli Hoca’ya kanat silkti. Martulara göre çöp bayırlarının yazılacak bir tek şiiri vardı. Onu da çöp bayırlarındaki kondularda yaşayan insanlar çok önceden yazmışlardı. Upuzun değildi. Kıpksaydı. Çılgınlıklar, bağışmalar, taşlamalar arasında söylenen bir dizeydi: Çöpten kesilmek.” (85)

The interaction between the space and community is a determining factor in the formation of the collective subjectivity. It is far from the western modern subject that defines itself as essentially different from the outside world; that has an unbridgeable gap between the self and the external space of objects; and that builds his relation with this world through desire as a drive to fill the gap. It is again very much different from the majority of the Turkish novels whose male intellectual main characters prompt a narrative that exclude the world of objects from the narration. *Berci Kristin* is a successful attempt to place the collective subject at the centre of the novel by exploiting the genre’s hybrid character³⁹.

In *Berci Kristin*, we cannot see an individual character who keeps himself/herself aloof from the people around him; who asks questions and who is in search of his self keeping the tension between the self and the outside world. There are almost

³⁹ The genre of *Berci Kristin* is controversial within literary critic. Here, I support the idea that the novel as a genre has essentially a hybrid character. Tekin in this work combines traditional folk narrative structures with parody and irony, which gives rise to a strong novel.

fifteen characters whose name and a part of their lives we get to know but they never persist in the story; the novel does not have a focused circle of characters. The novel actually tells a condition, an existential state where answers come before questions. That is to say, having an individual voice searching for meaning or selfhood is not just an unavailable model for the self but most importantly it is necessarily repressed and banished; like in the case of Sırma or Lado who deviate from the communal order. However, the collectivity in question here cannot be regarded as a coherent, solid, authentic or frozen culture; on the contrary it goes through constant transformation in accordance with the needs of the community; just like ‘gecekondu’s in a never ending progress to become a house. It is a world of eternal becoming where their owners echo the houses; they do not stop until they reach the graveyard:

“Kondularda çakıp sıvama işleri hiç bitmezdi. Bir duvar onarılır öteki çöker, ardından da dam akardı. Bu yüzden konduların bir gün yanlarına teneke çakılır, bir başka gün açılan deliklere tahta sokulurdu. Ayrıca, ‘Konduların çitleri ay doğunca yürür, mezarlığa gelince durur’ diye konu dilinde bir laf vardı. Bu lafla kondular tahtalı konduların tabiatını anlatırlardı.” (65)

The collective experience in the novel does not propose or envision a collective identity where there is recognition of others that stand as selves. The self here is embedded in the collective language. It is not a type of collective subject that is constructed through a shared culture, religion, land etc. In *Berci Kristin*, people are organised around dislocation/ migration, around their marginality from the centre and around poverty. Here, what is at stake is the subject that is pushed to and stuck at this location. In the novel, it is not clear where those people migrated from; past seems to have never existed except for some adaptations of their former traditions. Hence, the community does not unite and act upon origin; it struggles to construct a collective subject that belongs to that location. The displaced subject does not base itself on an imaginary past experience as its origin. Through the novel, we bear witness to formation of an oral tradition, of rituals and customs. For example, the minaret of the first mosque constructed on the hills cannot resist the wind and flies away, which leads to the invention of a new Islamic commandment:

“Çiçektepe’de bu tartışmaların sonucunda İslamın beş şartına ‘Geceleri minare tutmak’ diye bir şart daha eklendi. Çocuklar, sakatlar, emzikli ve gebe kadınlar özürle kabul edildi. Onlara minare tutmak günah sayıldı. [...] Bu adetler Çiçektepe’de konan ilk adetlerdi. Zamanla bu adetlere işsizlik adetleri, rüzgar adetleri, çöp adetleri eklendi. Kimi yerini bulup yerleşti. Kimi de kalktı.”
(12-14)

The unity or completeness between the subject and the outside world cannot eventually embrace desire that assumes a distance between the desiring self and the object of desire. Desire is asking questions, it is a search for or suspension of satisfaction. At another level, the Marxist reading of desire asserts that capitalism is the universal medium of desire. If the emergence of the modern self as the locus of bourgeois experience coincides with that of capitalist economy, the desiring subject is a substantial category of self that capitalist ideology cultivates. Whether the psychoanalytic understanding of desire as the essential urge of the self pointing to original absence⁴⁰ is valid or it is a symptom of modernist ideology is a big debate. However, in *Berci Kristin*, the absence and marginalisation of the language of desire supports the Marxist assumption.

The community in garbage hills is, in simple terms, the other of the capitalist society living in the city. They live on the waste of the centre, right next to factories. The garbage tales reveal what is negated in, what is violently excluded from, what remains invisible to and at the same time what is essential to capitalist centre: the production and the disposition. The antagonist of capitalism, therefore, is necessarily devoid of, or rather, outside of the language of desire. Desire calls for the language of privacy, of the bourgeois individual that places himself/herself at the very centre of his/her world. The subject of the periphery, on the other hand, either defines himself/herself in (mostly hierarchical) relation to the centre or simply does not have tools to have any kind of relation with the centre.

⁴⁰ See Jacques Lacan’s *Mirror Stage* and Sigmund Freud’s *On Narcissism* for a detailed discussion of the relation between self, absence and desire.

In *Berci Kristin*, privacy is not an existent category. A commonly cited example from the novel⁴¹ on this issue is Lado's failed attempt to write his life story as a novel. Lado is a very lively character who is different from the community in his preoccupation with his appearance, in his amazing gambling stories next to his determination to write a novel. He was described as "Lado kanatları pullu bir kelebektir" (107). When the community⁴² hears about the novel, they think "haklı bir yanlış yüzünden" that the novel will be about the hills and they want to write "a beautiful novel all together" (109). However, Lado writes a novel about his life by shutting himself in his room for a month. The privacy and the pride Lado enjoys in writing his life story ends with the punishment he receives from his wife who burns the novel. "Lado için bu bir yıkım oldu. Karısını boşadı. Ama içinde açılan yaranın acısından ve göğsünü zorlayıp burnundan çıkan öfkesinden kalemi eline alamadı. Olanları unutmak için kendini yeniden kumara verdi." (110)

Although Lado divorces her for that, his wife accomplishes to set him aright by punishment for his misbehaviour. What he does is a violation of the collective culture, both in his attempt to write, to record the stories orally composed and in his demand to cultivate his privacy. The fact that he is too offended and furious to rewrite his novel signifies his recognition of the limit and of the indispensability of forgetting to be able to integrate again in the social order.

Another character who goes through a similar process of silencing desire is Sırma, a little girl who suffers from a nervous breakdown every time the huts are destroyed by the demolition trucks. While the others weep tears of rage as well, their sorrow does not last long; they immediately throw themselves into action redoing the huts. Sırma's rage and rebellious reaction to the destruction is considered exceptional and excessive within the community; her condition raises anxiety and it is decided that she should be cured right away.

⁴¹ See Jale Parla's article "Car narratives: A subgenre in Turkish novel writing" in *Relocating the Fault Lines*. Ed. Güven Güzeldere and Sibel Irzik. Durham, N.C. : London : Duke University Press, 2003. p.538.

⁴² Through the chapter 'hut people' and 'community' are used interchangeably to refer to 'konducular' in the novel; as in 'huts' referring to 'gecekondular'.

“Sırma, sağlam bir tuğlayı göğsüne bastırılmış, yıkık konduların önünde titriyordu. Öteki çocuklar tepenin dört bir yanında teneke ve taş toplarken Sırma’nın titremeleri arttı. Debelenmeye başladı. Göğsüne bastırıldığı tuğlayı yere koyup üstüne yattı. Saçlarını yolup rüzgarın önüne attı. Kadınlar gelip Sırma’nın başında halka oldular. Bir iple ellerin bağladılar. Kevenlenmiş saçlarından tutup sarstılar.” (6)

When Sırma repeats her reaction the next day, they take her to Güllü Baba, the oldest men in the neighbourhood to cure her. The moment Sırma sees Güllü Baba weeping with her, she becomes resigned to the destruction. It is probably the moment when Sırma ceases to isolate herself from the others; to be an individual whose ultimate reaction is violence upon her own body, which indicates desire to take control over her life. The scene expresses the opening of Sırma to the other that mirrors her grief and it marks the point where she submits to the order of the community.

Sırma’s breakdown does not arise merely from her reaction to the demolition of huts; it results from a long repressed and vital question that she poses as she thinks about the village life her family left behind. It is her disappointment with the promise of migration from village to city and at the same time, her reaction to their dislocation. However, she comes to realize that she does not have the privilege to ask questions and that, just like Lado, she has to forget about her desire to live otherwise. Her story ends with her giving herself over and coming to terms with the laws of garbage hills by building a miniature hut for herself and playing house.

“Sırma uyku tutmayan gözlerini karanlığa dikti. Karanlıkta upuzun bir yolu trenle geçti...en çok, şehirde, köylerdeki evlerinden daha küçük bir eve gelip girdiklerine şaşırıldı. Şaşkınlığından utandı. Babasının yanına o gün hiç sokulmadı. Sırma o gece amcasının evinde kaldıkları günlerde yaşadığı bir dolu şeyi daha düşündü. Düşündükleri sabahın ilk ışıklarıyla aklından uçtu. Sırma usulca annesinin koynundan çıktı. Koşa koşa evlerinin tepedeki yerine vardı...Topladığı kırık camlardan, iki

diři kalmıř eski naylon taraktan, düğmelerden, řiře kapaklarından ufacık bir konu kurdu.” (9)

Women’s sexuality constitutes another dimension of silenced desire in the novel. It may not be right to call it silenced in this case because sexual desire in *Berci Kristin* arises from imitation. Its repression does not lead to symptoms or neurosis; it just reveals the violent pacification of women by the patriarchal norms which seem to be more brutal and/or blatant in poverty. Fidan, the first whore of the hills, teaches women of Çiçektepe that women can also get satisfaction during sex. Women who ask for satisfaction following Fidan’s advice get beaten up by their husbands. After Fidan, cinema arouses sexual demand within women and it results in the same violent reaction of husbands. “Trintaz Fidan’ın gece derslerinden sonra keyif isteđine tutulan kadınlar bu defa kocalarının eline ayađına aşk isteđiyle yapıřtı. Kahvelerde kumar oynayan erkekler, aşksızlıktan hıçkırıđa bođulan, gözbebeklerini yana devirip bayılan, tir tir titreyen karılarını dayakla ayılttı.” (122).

Desire cannot easily reside in the narration. Desire is a deviation that needs to be corrected and silenced, which victimizes characters like Lado and Sırma and at the same time highlights the inevitability of collective existence. As individual subject gets eradicated within the narration of communal experience, the language of desire is not a possible and/or available mode of articulation. The voice of narration is already typical of the garbage hills rather than of a subject; the language is conventional and local. Not far from Deleuze’s conceptualisation of ‘free indirect style’⁴³, the novel’s idiom takes the voice away from the speaking subject to anonymous or pre-personal saying. Characters are produced by their way of speaking which is also a way of perceiving. The style of speaking, expressions, phrases and rhythms generate them and it is this style of life that create them as subjects devoid of desire. That is to say, certain modes of articulation like collective naming, conventional usage of words, short and simple descriptive sentences, all of which pointing out to the anonymity of oral tradition produce collective subject beyond any individual consciousness. Through such

⁴³ Deleuze talks about ‘free indirect style’ in the context of James Joyce in *Minority Literature*. Although *Dubliners* and *Ulysses* seem to be completely unrelated and alien to the context of *Berci Kristin*, Deleuze’s conceptualization unites such different texts in the local effect language makes in those works.

particular usage of language in *Berci Kristin* (which is called “kondu dili” in the book), Tekin tells a collective story of the way of moving through life and connecting with life. However, at the same time, the conventional and local character of the language does not give way to generation of a stable and conservative narration typical of traditional forms.

The language in *Berci Kristin* is far from the language of desire that principally delineates the western subject of modernity. Unlike a text of desire which grows bigger and more complicated as it looks into the subject and which projects the perceptions of subject when it looks out for description, the orally marked collective language of the novel is plain and direct. The whole narration is an indirect speech, mostly in passive voice ruling out its subject and ending with quotation signs like “anlatıldı”, “söylendi”, “ortaya atıldı” etc. At the same time, language in *Berci Kristin*, conveys a sense of completeness and harmony in its densely weaved organic narration.

Just like there is a parallel between desire and the production of modern individual, there exists a parallel between desire and literature (especially the novel genre). According to Leo Bersani, desire is a phenomenon of the literary imagination. Desire is an activity within a lack; it is an appetite stimulated by an absence and hence it is an appetite of the imagination⁴⁴. If this is so, desire is essentially part of literary production; it is born, flourished, hallucinarily satisfied in writing. Nancy Armstrong making use of Foucault’s theories on sexuality makes a similar point by saying that modern desire depends on language and on writing⁴⁵. It never comes prior to its representation.

In *Berci Kristin*, hut people have neither an individual voice⁴⁶, nor access to language of the centre that generates desiring subjects with its conceptual

⁴⁴ Bersani, Leo. *A future for Astyanax*. Boston : Little, Brown, c1976. p.10.

⁴⁵ Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and domestic fiction : a political history of the novel*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1989, p.14.

⁴⁶ Nurdan Gürbilek defines their language as ‘mırıltı’, murmur. It refers to a condition of completeness in which outside and inside has not yet separated, she says. At the same time, murmur evokes a sense of passivity which negates the individual voice.

categorisations and literary production. The community of the garbage hills is ‘at home’⁴⁷ neither in the migrated space that marks their ephemeral existence nor in language. Language is neither an area of war where subject fights for meaning; nor an area over which the subject has control and through which he/she can carve an individual space. As John Berger points in the preface to the English translation of the novel⁴⁸, both their and the narrator’s articulations are essentially rumours characterised by its anonymity and orality. The best example to anxiety the written word created and absurdity of literary representation of the hills in the language of the centre is aforementioned ‘Şiirli Hoca’ and his poems.

At this point, it can be argued with a modernist pride that nothing comes before language anyway; hence neither can desire nor sexuality nor violence be understood apart from the language. Although that is not an invalid stance up to a point, taking *Berci Kristin* as an example of something otherwise, we can say that the absence of the language of desire and hence desire itself points to that which comes prior to language: survival. According to Ernst Bloch, hunger and not Freud’s libido, is the fundamental human drive⁴⁹. He argues that it begins as a simple drive toward self-preservation and at the same time, it not only as psychological drive but also as a force of historical development is the basic energy of hope.

Without going into detailed discussion of Bloch’s argument, we can say that the source of energy and hope of the hut people that enable them to insist on their settlement by rebuilding the huts thirty times is their fundamental urge for survival. The desiring subject is not only a component of modernity but it also presumes a form of living in which hunger is no longer a psychological drive. The modern subject may desire to be rich or have better living conditions but only in one condition: his/her wishes determine his/her position compared to the others. In order to be able to talk

⁴⁷ Sibel Irzik in her article “Latife Tekin’de beden ve yazı” points to the usage of the word “mekanet etmek” in *Berci Kristin*, saying that, like the word ‘kondu’, it refers to temporariness, to inability to establish a home, to settle down although the words carry ‘konut’ (establishment) and mekan (locality) in their roots.

⁴⁸ John Berger, “Rumour” (Preface to *Tales From The Garbage Hills*), London: Marion Boyars Publishers, 1996. pp. 5-13.

⁴⁹ Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge, Mass : MIT Press, 1995.

about libido as the essential human drive, the human being in question and the theoretician need to be above or ignorant of fundamental economic constraints. Exemplifying Bloch's argument, in *Berci Kristin*, people who desire more than others are named as 'gönlü yüksek' and, apart from Çöp Bakkal, the height of their wish comes from their desire to send their children to school: "Gönlü yükseklerde olan insanlarsa bebeklerinin düşen göbeklerini sanat öğreysin diye oto tamirhanelerinin, atölyelerin, bir de uzaktaki bir okulun bahçesine gömüp götürdüler." (25)

In *Berci Kristin*, there are occasions in which people compete for anything new but this never turns into an individual ambition that detaches the subject from the others. However, at another level, the lack of individual voice or language of desire sometimes leads to the infantilisation of the community members. They show off with their new bank books or grandiose doors of old houses like children do with their toys:

"Albay'ın buzdolabıyla, 'Herkes neyini isterse koysun!' diye övünmesi, karısının konducu kadınlara, 'Allah Çöp Muhtar'dan razı gelsin, bankada paramız oldu çok şükür,' diye gıcık vermesi Çiçektepe'lileri sinirlendirdi. Herkes gitti, Albay'ın buzdolabı aldığı yerden buzdolabı alıp kondusuna koydu. Buzdolaplarını duvara dayayan konducular birer ikişer bankaya çekildi. Banka cüzdanlarını koyunlarına sokan konducuların yüreklerine şıp şıp sevinç damladı. Sevinç şıptırtılarından sonra Çiçektepe'liler arasında bitmek bilmeyen bir eşya yarışı başladı. Kim kondusuna ne eşya aldıysa ötekilerin bir kere görmesi yetti. Kısa zaman içinde satıcılar Çiçektepe'lilerin huyunu keşfetti. Bir satıcı Çiçektepe'nin tüm kadınlarına likör takımı satmaya başladı." (118)

They do not seem to accomplish maturity and be reasonable full-grown subjects, which is related to their inability to settle down and put an end to their effort to become something. Although their infant-like and sometimes idealised depiction does not overshadow the text, such depiction goes along with magical realism the novel is claimed to carry. Moreover, with or without techniques of magical realism, narration of a collective experience may in the end result in a narration of victimisation and idealisation. On the one hand the novel unsettles such idealisation via its accomplished

use of irony, on the other hand it builds narration around hut people's difference in their naivety, simplicity and unity.

When hunger and survival in the hills cease to plague lives of people of Çiçektepe, their way of living changes. As the quotation above about their competition exemplifies, they begin to buy things not to appreciate them but to show off. Wealth in Çiçektepe (although it is limited) comes with absurd consumption, gambling houses and night clubs. It creates a culture of waste. Women who buy liquor sets they would never use mirror men who gamble and lose their small money. Wealth beyond their fundamental needs is an excess. They do not save it nor use it to move towards the centre. They do not accumulate it; they cannot integrate in the system they have been excluded due to their poverty. Procrastinated pleasure of having more than what they need can not be fully appreciated; instead it takes a form of lavishness.

3.3. *Gece Dersleri*

“Senden istediğim uyumaman ve sesime birazcık izin vermen. Elime bir megafon alacağım. Şu seçim çalışmaları sırasında Şişli arkalarında bir meydan vardı... Abide-i... O meydanın tahta kürsüsünde gökyüzüne doğru açılmış genç bir kadın kanadı düşle.”⁵⁰

Gece Dersleri is the third novel of Latife Tekin, published in 1986. It is regarded as different from her earlier work in its attempt to put forward the disintegration of subject. As we have seen above in *Berci Kristin* and in her earlier work *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm*, collective identities still constitute possible subject positions, however hard it may be to hold on to them. *Gece Dersleri*, in this respect, carries the dissonant voice of a subject refusing to resolve into coherent identities. It certainly has a lot in common with her earlier works but within the scope of this paper *Berci Kristin* and *Gece Dersleri* will be in contrast. It may not be proper to include the two novels in one chapter as their subject constructions and the way desire relates to them is almost contradictory.

⁵⁰ Latife Tekin. *Gece Dersleri*. İstanbul: Everest. 2002. p.38

However, both novels give examples of different marginal or peripheral selfhoods, rendering Tekin one of the revolutionary writers in Turkish literature.

Gece Dersleri is one of the first and most impressive works that defies representative language and that embraces fragmentation in language, in narration, in time, in space and in selfhood⁵¹. It can be defined as a narration of reaction, rebellion, disgrace and anger; and through the hysteric language, it is a search for selfhood refined from layers of histories, identities, roles and norms. In this respect, it carries almost romantic assumptions about the self (like her vague belief in this process of refinement). At another level, however, the glorified fragmentation of Gülfidan's selfhood is also related to feminine identity. It conforms to the reactionary model of feminine subject rooting herself in the body and sexuality. The reaction is against patriarchal notions that limit, constrain and suffocate the female body, coupled with the intimidating socialist organisation of the 70's in Turkey.

The narrative structure of *Gece Dersleri* consists of fragments that do not follow a progressive line of time, space or events. The story line is completed only after reading through the book and uniting the fragmented stories. The poetic language, the abundance of rhetorical devices and analogies to eastern tales obscures the process Gülfidan goes through. Gülfidan migrates from a village to Istanbul and joins a socialist organisation at the age of eighteen. However, she feels alienated in the group mainly due to her class difference; meanwhile the memories of her mother keep capturing her. In the end, she is unable to cut out an identity for herself. She forces herself to face up to her multiple histories and refuses to live in one at a time. Disintegration of time, self and language comes along with her embracement of those multiple histories and she makes a map of her fragmentation: she says that her life turns its back on and leaves for three times.

The first time her life breaks of is when she becomes an accomplice to her mother's illicit love affair. The second time is when she joins the organisation and takes up the nickname 'Sekreter Rüzgar'. Her third trauma (one may call) is the 1980 coup

⁵¹ See Jale Parla's article "Yesem Örgütü beş defa bir demet yasemenle: *Gece Dersleri*" for detailed discussion of the work's non-representational narration, in *Don Kişottan Bugüne Roman*. İstanbul : İletişim Yayınları, 2000.

and the absolute defeat of the socialist movement. All of those constitute dislocating experience for Gülfidan and she organizes her narrative around them. Sibel Irzık describes the dislocation as follows: “[Gülfidan] her seferinde bir gerçekliğin dışına çıkar, toprak ayağının altından kayar, kendine yabancılaşır. Ama yine de her seferinde kendine bir varoluş alanı açar, bir güç edinir, bir aşkın dokunuşuyla dillenir” (213)⁵².

My aim in this chapter is to examine the ways in which Gülfidan opens up a subjective space of hers every time she goes through dislocation; and how this space is constructed through language excited by desire and the body. At the same time, those traumatic experiences incite reactionary positions in her against that which repress, limit and desubjectivize her. Gülfidan’s revulsion for her mother’s victimization and subjection, for her standardized militant identity and for the violent repression of the coup to wipe out her history; all of those interestingly open up a feminine sphere that takes its power and energy from the body. In fact, it is the body’s desire to take revenge that disintegrates her self and her history: “Belleğim, kışkırtıcı bir canavarın yerdeki ağzına doğru uzattı beni. Bedenim ondan kopup giden on yılın, tenindeki prüzlerin, hızla eskittiğim, iplik kıvrımlarında saklı sırlarının bedelini istedi. Kesin, kanlı bir intikamın peşindeydi” (80).

The sphere Gulfidan creates through her rejection of solid subject positions is surrounded by a tale like narration. Her realisation of a secret life hidden from the organisation and her determinacy to hold onto her secret leads her into its articulation in supernatural and mythical language. The defiance of representative language and of coherent and progressive narration overlaps with Gülfidan’s destructive or deconstructive anger at systematic silencing of her desires and simultaneously with the shame she feels her desires bring. The fragmentation of time that brings along the fragmentation in her personality reorders her history in time of tales; it signifies the break off from reality and a search for essence residing in self. At one point, ‘Sekreter Ruzgar’ says looking at Gülfidan who has already abandoned her: “Gülfidan’ı Dev Sefid’in zindanından kurtarıp yılan gibi ruhuma dolanan bu masal zamanından nasıl kaçırım?” (20).

⁵² Sibel Irzık. “Latife Tekin’de beden ve yazı” in *Kadınlar Dile Düşünce: Edebiyat ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet*. Ed. Sibel Irzık, Jale Parla. İstanbul: İletişim, 2004.

The first part of the novel begins with the following line: “Bu gece mahrem görüntülerim üstümde” (5). The word ‘mahrem’, that is intimacy, privacy in Turkish, suggests an opening of a private, secluded and individual area. She actually reveals that privacy to the women from the organisation and this exhibition of her privacy brings interminable shame to her.

“Bir utanma, üç öksürme, dört damla yaş beni gördü. Az yana kaçtım. Belimden üst yanıma seğirmeler dalayınca heyecanla çarpıştım. Yara bere içinde babamın traktörle tavşan avına çıktığı karlı gecelere saklandım. Karların üstünde büzülmüş soluklanırken atlılar takırtılarla üstüme gelince, annemin bahçemizden meyve filizleri topladığı eylül ikindilerine doğru koşmaya başladım. Kırmızı sular akıtan bir ırmak kenarında Bürümcekli devler karısı karşıma çıktı. Sürünerek yanına yaklaşip memesine ağzımı dayadım” (8).

‘Bürümcekli devler karısı’ is most probably the head of the organisation and Gülfidan does not leave her out of the language of intimacy and the body, which does not correspond to the standardised language of the socialist organisation that negates the individual and privacy.

Put in a chronological order, Gulfidan’s story begins with her mother’s love affair. It is the first time that her body communicates with her. She is not merely the witness and accomplice of her mother’s illicit love; her mother’s desire possesses her. The mother’s desire sets the daughter’s body on fire; Gülfidan grows jealous of her mother’s desire and/or of her mother as an object of desire.

“Sırtım onlara dönüktü. Yanağıma usulca dokunan bir esinti başımı geriye itti. Ateş ve baruta doğru. Annemin eli güneş tozlarının pırılısında birden kayboldu [...] Yüzüze çıkan alımlı gülümseme çabucak kasırgaya çevirdi [...] Kardeşimin kirvesinin gözleri kısıldı, ağzı da açıldı... Beyaz dişlerinden alev savruldu. Laleli divan örtüsü, kilim, sini, ekmek, bir yudum çay, titreyen dudakların arasından akan sıcak, kısacık su, kapı, merdiven sokak

yandı. Kirpiklerim ve saçlarım ütüldü. Burnumun üstü kavladı. [...] Annemin dudaklarının etrafında dolanıp burulan ve gözlerine yükselen kasırğa ardımı kovaladı [...] midemi hotumun içine çekip aldı. Gözlerimden dehşet saçarak kıskançlıktan kusmaya başladım ve annemin aşık olmasına sinirlenip çabuk çabuk ağladım” (32).

Gülfidan roots her self in the experience of mother’s desire that leaves traces on her body. She unites with the body of the mother through her desire. When her life gets disentangled, the first and most powerful history that she clings on to is her relation with the mother. Mother’s desire that connects her to her body is a source of energy that liberates Gülfidan and at the same time that fragments and haunts her.

The love affair actually brings subjectivity to both the mother and the daughter. The mother emerges as an agent, a powerful actor in Gülfidan’s life even though she’s already dead when she does that. The radical experience takes the mother out of her desubjectivised social role (motherhood) and renders her a subject is pursuing her desire. Gülfidan and her mother call it ‘love’ and every time Gülfidan talks about it, she uses rhetorical devices that jump around it, point to it but never really say it; and *it* is sexuality.

The bond between the two women, and between Gülfidan and two other women, has a sexual dimension that echoes in the homoerotic tone of the novel. The intimate, almost eroticised relationship between women goes together with Gülfidan’s rejection of clearly defined and sharply delimited identities. The story of the mother and her constant existence in Gülfidan’s mind signify the displacement of patriarchal order that constrain the female body. Gülfidan defies the language of patriarchy and its well-established tool of subjectivity: she rewrites the Oedipal story which is the key to the development of gender roles and identity. She rips the phallus of its centrality; it is not only in her story with the mother but also in her relation with other women and her

husband, love or making love is almost never associated with heterosexual intercourse⁵³.

“Yerlerde sürüklenirken, annemle benim tepelek masalına kurban gittiğimizi anladım” Gülfidan says (33). ‘Tepelek masalı’ is the law of the father that forbids desire of the mother and for the mother. Mother’s desire is supposed to be repressed; she has to go back to her silence, to desubjectivised mother role. “Tüm seslerini öldürdü ve içinin bilinmedik mezarlarına gömdü” (34). However, Gülfidan guards and keeps her feminine body and makes it emerge from silence and subjugation. Although she is dead, Gülfidan grants her mother the right to talk and to desire by giving her a voice⁵⁴.

As for the desire *for* the mother, Gülfidan does not come out of narcissistic stage. She does not stop being attached to the mother and does not become libidinally attached to the father. The father remains out of Gülfidan’s story. The little girl does not give up her love of and desire for the mother. She yearns for the unity with her, for almost a state of bodily indifferenciation:

“O benim aynamdı ve aynımdı. O benim taraklı ayaklarımdı. Serçe tırnakları gibi ince parmaklı iki elimdi. Hep içeri bükük utangaçlı boynumdu. Kemer Hala’mın parmak izlerini taşıyan burnumdu. Şeker pembe dilimdi. Taş yanığı, yaralı dizlerimdi [...] Ne çok aradım onu karanlık sularda, buldum sonunda bir çamur kuyusunda” (17).

Gülfidan’s return to the mother figure and to her childhood friend Mukoşka as a way of resistance to the oppression she suffers from being a member of the organisation gives way to a problematic binary in the text. It evokes the essential duality of body and mind; of nature and nurture; of emotion and reason that are coded as feminine and masculine. The socialist organisation of the 70’s is criticised for its sexism and

⁵³ With one exception: Gülfidan dreams that her mother sleeps with her husband. We will turn back to the significance of this dream later.

⁵⁴ The discussion of ‘desire for and of the mother’ in this part owes a lot to Luce Irigaray’s article “The bodily encounter with the mother” in *Modern Criticism and Theory : a Reader*. Ed. David Lodge. London ; New York : Longman, 1988.

reductionism on the working class. ‘Bilimin kırmızı ışığı’, ‘devrimin dindar öncüleri’, ‘akıllandırılmış düşler’, ‘üşüten, ürkütücü el kitapları’, ‘devrim tanrıları’; they all belong to the masculine sphere that regulates, reads, knows, standardizes, limits and rules. Gülfidan at one point stands out of this sphere and develops her identity in opposition to it. She says “inan bana seviyorum denklemleri, deli gibi seviyorum felsefi binalara baktıkça... Ama tuhaf bir açı var onlarla armada, canım... Ruhumun sızlamasından anladığım, çakışmayı çarpıştığım. Dalaşıyorlar bana” (150).

Her subject position emerges in the tension between those spheres; it presumes a reactionary position that essentializes bodily experience and sexuality. The duality is constructed through the alienation process Gülfidan goes through in the organisation. The novel actually draws picture of a misfit that is unable to and consciously refuses to reconcile with the community around her: first with her family and the norms of patriarchy, then with the socialist organisation and its totalitarian structure.

The ironic juxtaposition of the sacred theories and Gülfidan’s individual suffering in the following part reveals her intimate weapons/tools against ‘bir edici, daraltıcı kışkaç’: “Sevgili Başkanımız, durmadan kendine yeni tarihler yapan, teninde, ruhunda, beyninde biriken sesleri ayırmak için gerçek acılarını alet gibi kullanan bu militanın, içerdeki ölü annesine yalvar... Birkaç teorik metin oku, geldiği yere dönsün, dayanamıyorum” (105). The theoretical books, long meetings and discussions on revolution and the dignity of the working class do not correspond to her experience. Hence she insistently refers to her position as an outsider in the organisation as a woman who belongs to the class in question.

The socialist movement pushes Gülfidan into new relations with her class; joining the group and becoming a militant necessitate radical and alienating reorganisation of her life. She seems to be the only member who has really experienced poverty, which is both a criticism of the socialist movement of the time and the main reason of her isolation. Her hatred for poverty and her socialist identity that dignifies the working class lead to the fragmentation of her experience:

“Parkamın cebinde devletle devrim, gözlerimde alev gibi iki bebek, en son çıkan ideolojik marşları söylemeye gidiyordum. [...]

Halkımız için inim inim inliyordum. Kendimi usulca güneşe tuttum, kirpiklerimi süzüp baktım, kırık bir cama benziyordum. Dağıldı parmaklarım havaya, kısa bir müddet bayrak direkleri gibi çakılı kaldı kollarım omuzlarımda, kısa bir müddetten sonraysa yollarına düştüm cehennemin cam” (71)

In opposition to the totalising and alienating attitude of the organisation, Gülfidan places her intimacy, the bodily domain that will enable her to reach the essential that needs to be rediscovered and liberated. “İçimin yollarından geri dönüp geçerek ulaşmak istiyordum ilk halime. Dünya kurulmadan önceye götürmek istiyordum kendimi, kendime bile haber vermeden” (63). The text draws a distinction between essential human nature and the aspects of individual identity that have been imposed from outside. The biggest challenge of Gülfidan to the organisation is her rejection of abortion. She claims mastery over her body and her femininity. In the structure of the organisation that is sterilised from language of desire and sexuality, a woman that gives birth unsettles the collective body and individuates her position as a militant. However, Gülfidan have started to struggle to individuate her voice singing marches of ideology long time ago. For ten years, she maintains commitment to the organisation by bringing a physical dimension to it, through her love for ‘Başkan’.

“Tanrım bu sevişme fısıltıları da nerden geliyor. Kulaklarımı yakan bu çılgın aşık da kim? Ey sıcak uğultu, deliriyor muyum yoksa...Ah ne istersen yap bana... Ah ne istersen...”

“Yüzündeki o alaycı gülümseme seni kahretsin! Bir sevişme fısıltısı değil, örgütlenmiş düşüncenin sesi bu...”

“Ay benim çocukluk kalbim! O sesi sevişme fısıltılarına dönüştürmenin ilmini yaptı senin kız kardeşin... Nasıl geçirdi o on yıl, bedenimi sloganlarla cinsel aşk yaşamaya zorlamasaydım...” (84)

Why does she have to turn the language of politics into whispers of love? Why does she force her *body* to make love with slogans, even if she is being sarcastic? Basically, it is a reaction to the patriarchal order that hierarchically places the intellectual, the rational, the abstract (hence the male) over the bodily, the emotional and

the concrete (the female). Therefore, the form of subjectivity she cuts out for herself is female through and through. The fact that the selfhood of a woman is marked with the body and that it is reactionary rather than revealing a subjective world in self-peace is highly problematical. *Gece Dersleri*, in this respect, can be classified as a female writing and, like other works that carry a distinct woman's voice, it carries the danger of reproducing what it defies. In order to challenge the organisation of sexuality under patriarchy, the woman writer talks about the feminine experience, recreating the duality of the male/female domain. The result is the emergence of woman's subjectivity that is marked with its sexuality.

We would miss the complexity of Tekin's text if we read her simply reinventing the body/mind distinction and locating women in the body⁵⁵. It is true that she makes a distinction between feminine and masculine realm. But, in a culture that dominantly inflicts a spiritual struggle to free desire from any suggestion of physicality, the tension between conformity and individuality is constructed through acclaim of the body. Although it is true that desire and physicality have been insistently separated cross culturally, it is safe to say that non-Western cultures that are ambivalent to the Western organisation of gender and sexuality are trapped in the accursed triangle of desire, body and female identity.

This may also be the reason why Turkish women writers remain under the influence of second wave of feminism and promote the notion of an essentially female identity. It is true that Tekin's work is distinct within post-70's female writers that delineate middle class characters mostly in bourgeois sensibilities. Especially, *Sevgili Arsız Ölüm* is exceptional in this respect with a female artist existing in the periphery, in the marginalized culture of poverty. However, Tekin's 'subaltern' characters do not necessarily detain her from essentializing female identity. On the contrary, under those circumstances in which patriarchal organisation oppresses women more violently, the construction of female identity with a voice that is distinct and different from men is not unexpected.

⁵⁵ For example, Sibel Irzık argues that the search for the authority of the female subject in *Gece Dersleri* through unity of body, sexuality and language aims at "edebi türlerin, gerçekçi anlatıların, hatta dilbilgisinin kurallarını parçalayarak çizgisel mantığın baskısından kurtulmayı, annenin bedenine ve sesine yakın durarak bilinçdışının gerçekliğini dillendirmeyi hedefliyor." (Irzık, 2004. p.222)

Another dimension of the bodily sphere Gülfidan resides in is desire directed to other women in her life; to Mukoşka, her childhood friend, in the figure of a sister and to ‘Başkan’ in the figure of a second mother. As Irzık points out, it suggests a narcissistic return to the self. Gülfidan’s desire is for her self in parallel to her search for authentic interiority, for spontaneous bodily desire and for the sameness. Mukoşka is the main object of desire and seems to be the addressee of Gülfidan’s text in most of the parts. It is through her love for Başkan that Gülfidan devotes herself to the organisation; Başkan represents the organisation itself in the text. However, Mukoşka is closer to her than anybody else because her image mirrors that of Gülfidan:

“Mukoşka, öyle seziyorum ki uzunca bir soluk, beni senin sesinden başka hiçbir ses avutamaz artık. [...] Yalnızca sen benimle eş bir acı duyabilirsin gibi geliyor bana. Hem kadınsın (bu sözü yok sayanlar cehennem alevlerine sarılsın), hem sınıf kardeşiyiz ikimiz (bu söze bize biliç incisini taşıyanlar alınsın), hem de kendimi alnı göçük, burunsuz bir konumda bulana dek yol arkadaşımydın benim” (97).

The homoerotic desire in Gülfidan’s narration brings the reorganisation of the objects of desire. Love for women first of all excludes the male from the axis of sexuality; it suggests the refusal of objectified female body and refusal to be exchanged between men as a result of which Gülfidan’s mother suffers. Heterosexual love, although Gülfidan is married and gets pregnant, is removed from Gülfidan’s language of desire. The only moment she talks about her husband’s sexuality is when she dreams of him making love to her mother: “Kendime yönelttiğim öfke giderek öyle dayanılmaz bir hale geldi ki, yalnızca elleri değil, rüyalarımda annemle sevişmekten yorgun düşen bedeni, kısacık bir zamanda, parça ve parça şiddetin eklemi oldu” (109).

Gülfidan’s dream is part of a masochist state that she goes through and at the same time, it presents the masculine body as an object of exchange between two women. Gülfidan challenges traditional triangular model of patriarchy once more and at the same time creates great pain to get in touch with her feminine self.

Gece Dersleri is one of the first and best example of Turkish novel that delineates subject in fragments. The subject marks itself with its feminine identity and disturbs her memory, disrupts time, displaces space and unsettles language in search of self; of intimate sensations that connects to her essential self. It is not a story of recovery from fragments into the essence but the ways in which Gülfidan constructs her fragmented self points to the ancient binaries in the narrative. The novel is also one of the first narrative that faces up to the socialist movement of the 70's after the devastating 1980 coup. It brings significant criticisms to the movement and does not depict it as the wronged party falling victim to the state violence. However, in the duality Gülfidan creates between herself and the movement, in her isolated look to it and in her positionality as a misfit in the movement, she keeps herself distinct from the big mistakes, delusions or ignorance of the organisation.

4. *TOL*: Political Desire and Erotics of Violence

4.1. Introduction

The cultural history in Turkey has often faced disruptions with shocks and traumas that build a problematic relation with the cultural memory. Actually, from the nation building process to the dislocating prevalence of neo-liberalism, the cultural history has suffered from schizophrenia. Memories of the marginalisation of minorities, state violence, or ethnic conflicts have fallen victim to the conservative inclination to forget for the well-being of the society. In this respect, the cultural atmosphere in Turkey of the post-1980 coup that has been able to rearticulate everything in the language of neo-liberalism, has left out the witnessing and the experience of the mass resistance of 60's and 70's and the devastating violence of the coups of 1971 and 1980.

Facing that experience, remembering and documenting it have become a burning question within the intelligentsia. Literary representation of the era is the most controversial mean for re/membering, re/covering and re/constructing the transgressive experience that has been pushed out of the limits of cultural memory. The coup of 1972 was represented in numerous novels that focused on the tormented lives and bodies of the revolutionists. The unilateral and tendentious approach of those novels created a debate on the question of the representation of those traumatic experiences⁵⁶. Literature after and on the 1980 coup, on the other hand, had a different relation with politics: the language was stripped off its political possibilities; values and lifestyles changed dramatically. As Gürbilek points out, in the dominant discourse of the 80s, “ ‘emek’ ve ‘sömürü’ kavramları gözden düşmekle kalmadı, tümüyle bir çağrışım, bir ideolojik yükten ibaret kaldı; yok edilmek ya da bir an önce unutulmak istenen solculuğu, onunla özdeşleştirilen bir bölünüşü ya da iktidarı simgeler oldu”⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ For example, Murat Belge claims that the novels on March, 12 are essentially reliant on the balance struck between torture and guiltiness. According to Belge, the defence adopted by novelists in doing that was backed by the thesis that those who were tortured were innocent and law enforcers were acting unrightfully. In this literature which was based on propaganda, the reality that the victims had both good and bad sides, faults and inner contradictions passed unnoticed. See *Edebiyat üstüne yazılar*. İstanbul : İletişim, 1998.

⁵⁷ Gürbilek, Nurdan. *Vitrinde Yasamak*. İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1992.p. 25

In *Gece Dersleri*, in the preceding chapter, we have seen the tension between literature and politics; the subjective space keeps the political out of its limits and develops a language of the body, the intimate, the private. Unlike 12 March novels, it does not idealise the socialist discourse, nor the revolutionists of the time. *Gece Dersleri* delineates a specific kind of settlement with the socialist movement and with the coup in which both sides receives criticism. It seems that the novel focuses on the problematisation of the movement rather than the coup and the trauma it causes.

Tol, in this respect, has a distinct place in the post-80 literature. Written between 1996 and 2000, published in 2002, *Tol* is a declaration of the re-convergence of language and politics; of remembering and rewriting the silenced history of the collective imagination and revolution. It overtly takes the revolutionary movement and the massive state violence as its subject matter. It articulates a political desire, a wish for revolution; it performs political literature without yielding to social realism or linear subjectivity. Violence is rooted in its political desire for fundamental change and it is performed through shattering of the self, and at the same time through structural disintegration of the novel's design. And in the space of violence the novel constitutes, masculinity has a necessary stake.

This chapter will examine the alternative subject positions created by peripheralized people through resistance and the ways in which desire, politics and subjectivity converge. The collective desire for revolution gets articulated through marginalised figures which include not only ethnic communities but also bodily defects. The shattering of the self and of the body brings along the shattering of the narrative form. Thematic and structural excess are matched by an aesthetics of violence. Here, I wish to explore the ways in which the excessive display of violence and virility relates to the narrativisation of political violence; study how the political desire is articulated, transmitted through the pleasure of the text coming from violence and problematise the way the revolutionary movement of the 70's and 80's is remembered and constructed.

4.2. TOL

Tol has a striking beginning that also suggests a subtle foreshadowing: “Devrim, vaktiyle bir ihtimaldi ve çok güzeldi”⁵⁸. It reveals the central themes of the novel: the nostalgia for the time when revolution was a possibility and the wish for revenge, suggested by the subtitle of the novel as well⁵⁹. The story begins with Yusuf summarising his life story in first person narration. He first points to his lost origins; he is fatherless and his ‘hafif kaçık’ mother committed suicide when he was only a child. Then he tells how his self was split by the military violence continually, starting with soldiers’ parade in 1980 when he was in an orphanage:

“O askerin üniformasında, sonradan bütün hayatımı boydan boya çizecek, haki bir bıçağın bilenmeye başladığını nereden bilecektim? Çiğ kokusu hoş bir kokuydu, haki tuhaf bir renkti. Hep yarım kaldım, hiç tam doymadım, tam bağırmadım, tam dokunmadım. Bıçak ruhumda dehşet bir fisıltı gibi ilerledi ve ben tam ortamdan yarıldım. Ruhuma bir hayat yakıştıramadım. Oysa o sabahtan önce ben, henüz ruhubütün bir Yusuf’tum...” (11)

The disintegration of the self and its shattered image are common elements in *Tol* and *Gece Dersleri*, especially with their frequent usage of broken mirror metaphor. However, the traumatic experiences that split the subject are not as similar as it may seem. In *Gece Dersleri*, the subject is exhausted by being marginalised within the revolutionary movement and by the state violence as well. The subject does not attempt at complete recovery from its split state but uncovers the layers of identity to reach a language of the body that is fundamental and personal. In *Tol*, on the other hand, the violence incited on the revolutionists and the fear it causes create a discrepancy between the mind that desires fundamental change and the actual conditions that nullify any possibility of agency and action. The split is clear and perhaps due to the novel’s straight claim for the political, the narration is organised around the basic duality

⁵⁸ Murat Uyrkulak. *Tol: Bir İntikamın Romanı*. İstanbul : Metis Yayınları, 2006.

⁵⁹ The subtitle is “Bir İntikam Romanı”, “a revenge novel”. ‘Tol’ means revenge in Kurdish at the same time.

between the nation state/ military/ dominant order and the revolutionists/ misfits; between black and white; bad and good. Therefore, there is a possibility to recover the disrupted self, to restore the broken image on the mirror: revenge.

Yusuf and Şair takes their revenge in their journey to Diyarbakır while reading/ writing/ reclaiming the revolutionary history of Yusuf's father and Şair; and simultaneously Ada takes a violent revenge by destructing the temples of capitalism and the nation state. Not only the self image of the three main characters that symbolise the revolutionists but also the broken/ split image of the country is recovered during the journey: "Tren uçsuz bucaksız bir bozkırda ilerliyordu. Bir fermuarı çeker gibi..." (128).

The main concern of the novel is building a liberating engagement between art and politics that would restore the capacity for action and resistance. It aims to create a political language and to bring art and action together. The frame story of the train journey signifies such entanglement between art and political action: each story is followed by bombing attacks. In one story, Oğuz dreams of the political desire that accomplishes to overwhelm and unite with the language:

"Evlerinin önünde haytalar, tavla atıp ciğerlerinden ve öfkelerinden konuşuyorlar. Gece vakti, pencereden sokağa buğulu bir aydınlık dökülüyor (...) Nasıl sonsuz bir mutluluk, hafif, serin bir rüzgarla demlenen hikayeler, oyunlar, fısıltılar. Bir başka ülke orası. Milyonlarca kelimeyle dolu, kelimelerin sokaklarda gezindiği bir ülke. Kelimelerin insanı çaresiz bırakmadığı, tam tersine harflerin insanın üstüne elmaslar, yakutlar gibi döküldüğü bir ülke. Herkesin ayrı dilden konuşup anlaştığı bir ülke." (108)

The political desire of the collective imagination for revolution is articulated by three main characters who are bold, dissident and male; but most importantly, neither those main characters nor the language of the different stories (supposedly told by at least three different narrators) has distinct, individual traits that would create an autonomous subjective space. In the expression of political desire for and of the collective calls for a self-image that is violently fragmented; definitive in its reactionary position and transgressive.

However, the narration furnishes an assumed form of subjectivity that is directed to action, keeping intimacy and privacy at the minimum. In this respect, Gülfidan and Canan exemplify the sharp contrast between *Gece Dersleri* and *Tol*, especially in the parts where both of them are faced with the death of a comrade. Gülfidan cannot stand the militant discourse that normalizes and glorifies death and she is filled with grief and anger in the house of the dead while Canan is praised for her ‘masculinised’ character: “Kuru çocuklarla bağıra çağıra bahçeler dağıtışı, bir ölünün başında dimdik ve artık alışkın, çok ciddi ve her zamankinden daha korkutucu duruşu” (90). In *Tol*, as regards, there seems to be no distinction between personal and political or public and private; the novel rejects any comprehensive social practice and institution. The aesthetic of shattering the self challenges the ethos of individualism. Apart from gender codes, the subject positions are singular; the generations repeat that which precede them, the stories of Yusuf, Oğuz and Şair mirror each other.

The narration is thematically organised around binaries that conform to the duality between the rightful revolutionists and despotic sovereign of the state and military. The characters, locations and stories come in pairs and create subject positions in contrast or accordance with each other. Yusuf’s story mirrors that of his father’s; both were raised in an orphanage and devoted their lives to revolution. Şair and his brother İsmail, on the other hand, are in contrast; İsmail is an important officer in national intelligence agency and as Şair says once, he is the state itself. The theme of sibling rivalry symbolizes the central binary of the narration between state and revolution. Two couples in the story imply the possibility of revolution, Oğuz/ Canan and Esmer/ Şair, the former relation ends with the coup of 71 and the latter with that of 80. The list of binaries goes on and on: between the ones that went crazy and the ones that forgot and went on living, between Esmer and Sarışın; between Şair and Çocuk (the rich revolutionist) and so on.

The narrative of vengeance has a charge of emotional energy created by a sense of justice and it necessitates a wronged party and a wrong doer. Such unequal relation is constructed through centralisation of people on margins: ethnic groups marginalised by the nation state (with emphasis on Kurds), whores, gays, drunkards, disabled people, rags etc. The novel makes the claim to embrace anything beyond the limits or the norms

due to which they are victimised. It celebrates deformation, nonconformity and diversity. It praises excess and transgression while, on the other side, the dominator regulates, delimits and suppress violently. Such dual organisation of the revenge narrative serves to justify and legitimize violence inserted by the victims.

Canan and Oğuz before 1971, Şair and Esmer before 1980 organise rebellions in suburban neighbourhoods. In the latter, especially, the revolutionists are in perfect harmony with the local people. In both cases, the marginalised people of those neighbourhoods are depicted in an idealising and mystic manner: “Naralarla, sarhoşluklarla, kazalarla, sevişmelerle taşan sınırlar görkemli bir ittifak oluşturuyor, mahallenin ortasında ince, alaca bir dere hanlinde, hiç durmadan akıyor” (155). The space is split between “tepedekiler”, those on the hill belonging to working class and “aşağıdakılar” those who are below and bourgeois. Oğuz’s depiction of his neighbourhood on the hills, on the other hand, reveals the victimisation of those people accompanied with loss of masculinity:

“Çocukları kulaklarından, kadınları saçlarından, birbirlerini damarlarından tutup sağa sola fırlatan bütün o erkeklerinse, öyle öfkeli ve çarpılmış yüzleri var ki, dokunsan ağlayacaklar, cılız gövdeleriyle öyle gülünç bir kasıntı üzre yürüyorlar ki sokaklarda, fiske vursan dağılacaklar. Şehre inenlerin en az biri ikisi, her akşam ya ölü ya deli dönüyor geriye. Ve her akşam mahalledeki evlerden biri, tiz ağıtlarla göğe yükselip yükselip iniyor.” (86)

As a thematic technique, the appraisal of the misfits is achieved through the ironic adoration of dirt and filth. The house of Oğuz and Canan in the neighbourhood has spiders on the doors, rats in the kitchen and bugs in the toilet and the narrator says “iyi yani, karanlık, onlar gibi (...) çamurlu ve mutlular artık” (86). And it is revolution that can only purify them⁶⁰: “Tepedekilere gelince, onlar dört gözle bekliyorlar devrimi, çok da dürüstler bu hususta. Hırsızlar, fahişeler, katiller (...) Arınma devrimden gelecek. Devrim ölmeye kalmadan, kirden aklığa uzanan ilahi bir gelecek, ona çalışmak da en büyük ibadet” (154).

⁶⁰ The reference to revolution as a religion is a common theme in the book. Oğuz is often referred as a prophet of this religion and his words as the sacred text.

The structural and thematic elements of shattering and excess include centralisation of the body. The fragmented self that is isolated from the everyday order projects a subjective space between life and death, or conscience and unconscience through a bodily excess. The main characters are constantly beaten up, having almost masochistic relation with violence. There are long and detailed descriptions of the injuries the body receives, so much so that it determinately pushes reader to emotional discomfort:

“Ve sigarayı yakarken tosladım zulümkarlara. (...) Ne yapmam gerektiğini söylediler, şişeyi at bizimle gel dediler. Umursamadım, biri okkalı bir tokat geçirdi yüzüme, kalk lan dedi, orospu çocuğu. Çok doğru dedim. Bir kafa, sanırım o vakit yerine oturdu burnum. (...) Bekledim, darbeyi bekledim, tekme tokadı bekledim, bunu bir parça da istedim. Ama gelmediler peşimden, burnumdan akan kanla ılık ılık, tatlı duygularla oynayarak yürüdüm.” (114)

The body constitutes the object of violence in which masculinity has a stake. The state violence marks the body in such a way that its material fullness is deformed. The body is no longer total; it is attached to a number of images of injury and wounding. It almost becomes a political commodity as in Oğuz’s fragmented body that circulates as a sign. The narration of excess focused on the body is built on the transgression of bodily limits and on the threat directed to its unity. The frequent reference to the bodily fluids, for example, belongs to such aesthetic of excess that incites disturbance, even disgust in the reader. The obsessive consummation of alcohol and drugs, the constant state of unconsciousness engenders the same effect of bodily excess.

Violence is part of the political culture in Turkey, especially before the 80’s. In its literary representations, however, the revolutionary movement has usually been disassociated with the violence incited by almost the entire political groups. In this respect, *Tol* is an exceptional work that overtly claims and even legitimises violence for the movement. Violence here is not an effect that happened to passive recipients.

Nevertheless, this distinction does not render the novel distinct from left-as-victim narratives that exist subtly as a subtext in *Tol*.

The narrativization of political violence has a strong gendered dimension in *Tol*. Any analysis of violence inevitably takes masculinity into account and in *Tol* the excessive display of violence comes together with that of virility. The dirty and happy revolutionists are by definition bold, macho and brutal; and revolution is a manly business: “Ülkenin fena halde delikanlılığı tutmuş. İşçiler, kıyı insanları, çatlak köylüler, öfkeli azınlıklar polisle çatışıyor” (145). Actually, the entire story of rebellion is sexually coded, accompanied with recurrent use of slang. The preferred language of the narration, that is slang, is not only outside of conventional or standard language but also colours the text in gender: “Boşluk bulduğu an kafayı oturtuveren güçlü bir kavimiz” (150).

The promise of revolution connotes heterosexual union and a child. The relation of Canan and Oğuz; of Şair and Esmer and the two babies, Yusuf and Ada are matched by the struggle for revolution. Şair’s mystified and idealised description of the neighbourhood and of their struggle there is written in rhythmic, poetic and sexualised language; the part ends with orgasm of Şair and Esmer: “Küfürün, efsanenin, büyüünün bini bir para (..) Çocuklar kucaktan kucağa geziyor, hepsi gıdıklanıyor, bütün anneler gülüyor (...) Bense (..) elbette, şiir okuyorum. Kadınlar ağladıkça bir daha. Genç oğlanlar aşka gelip sıktıkça bir daha... Boşalıyorum.” (155) The sexual imagery and language merge with that of political desire; the success of the resistance is combined with sexual intercourse. Concomitantly, the defeated militant of a failed hope, Yusuf repeatedly says that he frequently masturbates and does not have any affair with a woman. Ada, the aborted child of Esmer, symbolizes the violently terminated possibility of revolution and it continues its life in the underground as a mystic and superhuman force taking revenge. On the other hand, the female figures in the organisation that fight with and at the same time that enchant the male revolutionists conform to the sustained presence of women as object of desire. “En güzel şarkıları, en güzel olan söylüyor. Herkes ona aşık: Selen. Peri gibi Selen, ufak tefek bir peri. Dokunulamayacak kadar bir peri, yağmurda ıslandığında kuruyamayacak kadar peri. Her devrime lazım bir siyah peri” (155). Another black fury of the movement is Canan:

“Bir vazgeçti bu kadın, bir talep, bir tercih talebi. Karşısında duranın içine doğru yavaşça süzülen bir atomlar toplamı (...) Duygunun ve zekanın en has bileşimi, bakışı dik, sesi tok, öfkesi kıyıcı üstelik (...) Her kim ki Oğuz ve Şadi ve Adnan ona hayran değildi der, ayıp eder” (90).

One woman between men serves to build a bond or balance between men, organising them around a desire. A second woman is intolerable; she disturbs the balance and causes rivalry. The story of the dissolution of Oğuz’s group almost ridiculously holds the second woman responsible indirectly. The legendary group of revolutionists breaks up because of this fickle woman:

“Polisler Bozkaya’daki merkezde sarı bir forta bindiler. Nur ayağa kalkıyor. Fort yola çıktı. Nur dans etmeye başlıyor. Fort Klapdere yakınlarında bir koya yanaştı. Nur, inanılmaz, kıvrak, ihanet gibi, yavaşça kazağını sıyrıyor (...) Canan gözlerini kapatıyor, içi buruşuyor. (...) Oğuz gözlerini kapatıyor, önü sert, içi ateş gibi. (...) Nur, Adnan’ın aşk ile çekilmiş erkekliğini ustaca mahmuzluyor. Kahpe. Şadi geri dönmedi. Adnan iki hafta sonra mahalleyi terketti. Dağıldılar. Adnan martta bir tepeden cansız indi. Şadi’yi mayısta astılar.” (91-92)

The sexual intensity of the passage and succession of unfortunate events after Nur’s seduction exhibit a sense of repulsion with a woman that reveals her desire, conforming to the highly patriarchal discourse in the novel.

The narration of the political violence incited on the revolutionists is built up with themes of rape and promiscuity. Beginning with Yusuf’s mother outbreak “bizi düzdüler”, the state violence is often referred as rape. Not only a community but also the space, the country is personified as female: a virgin that dates with a ‘delikanlı’. When the hope of revolution is crashed, she becomes loose:

“Ülkeyse, üç vakte kadar bırakıp gideceğini bilmeden şeker bir delikanlıya abayı yakan ve bir yığın git gelle karar bozduğu anda

dokunulup okşanılmadan kalan bir bakire misali, önce bunalıma girdi, bir müddet sustu. Sonra gözü sokaktan geçen ite uğursuza takılmaya başladı, kendini bir iki öptürdü, sonra üzerine bir hafiflik geldi, dillendi de dillendi, sonra da herşeyi unuttu, kötü yola düşüp bir fahişe kadar özgür oldu.” (220-221)

In conclusion, the main concern of *Tol* is to give voice to political desire and it aims to become narrative of (marginalised) masses. Its structural excess matched by its emotional demands enables the novel to fulfil its desire to have an effect on the reader. On the other hand, though not entirely superficial and straightforward, the narration and the subject positions it engenders are organised around certain dualities, which reproduces left-as-victim narratives and justifies its own violence. The masculinity is prioritised in subject construction, whose limits are delineated by violence, living on the bodily surface. A reader of the novel depicts it as “a revolver ready to fire in my library”⁶¹: it is a gun in its poignant effect left on the reader, in its language of excess, in its favoured violence, in its masculinity and in its aesthetics of shattering.

⁶¹ From ‘Ekşi Sözlük’, /sozluk.sourtimes.org/show.asp?t=tol/

5. Conclusion

The notion of desire in the study of novel and of subjectivity discloses a structure that delineates an internal space as the ground for the self and dynamics of writing subjectivity. It certainly has a special relation to the novel writing due to its making of individualized and internalised notion of the self. As each novel is in a way rewriting of other novels and each character is reconstruction of other characters, structures desire follows in each narration are recreations of what comes before. Hence, desire in modern Turkish novel both recreates and subverts that internalised notion of the self that is modern and western through and through.

Tutunamayanlar in this context presents significant and complex composition of desire that connects the work to modern canonical novels and that, at the same time, includes cultural peculiarity in self construction. The Girardian reading of desire in the novel reveals a pattern of imitative desire both in Turgut's mimicry of Selim through his texts and in Selim's desire for the beauty and the divine (of the western essentially) through the western canonical works. Placed in its contemporary social discourse, it displays national concerns of intellectuals, especially dominant in the pre-1980 period, that still idealize and model the 'West'; that frame the question of cultural identity through the discourse of belatedness and that carry cultural anxieties about westernisation process at the same time. This anxiety is coupled with that of emasculation by the West that intensify homoerotic desire as a reaction to it.

Berci Kristin Çöp Masalları is a unique work in its representation of collective subjectivity by defying traditional narration of privacy. It challenges the limits of novel and its individuation of the self with a collective subject bonded with the space it lives in. The work, in this sense, is not a novel of an individual search or transformation but a survival story of a community whose destiny or rather survival is inseparable from the destiny of the space that is garbage hills. The subversion of subjectivity and the possibility of collective subjectivity is formulated with the absence of the language of desire. Having an individual voice that desires and that constructs its interiority through

his/her desires is not just an unavailable model for the collective self but most importantly it is necessarily repressed and banished.

Gece Dersleri is novel that defies representative language and that embraces fragmentation in language, in narration, in time, in space and in selfhood. This fragmentation of selfhood due to traumatic experiences is also related to feminine identity. The woman opens-up a subjective space of hers every time she goes through dislocation with the language excited by desire and the body. Desire is directed to the self in this case, instead of the other and this creates a possibility of feminine subjectivity through spontaneous desire derived from the immediate, the body. The narcissistic direction of desire the self engenders homoerotic relations between women organised under the possibility of the self that is thoroughly and essentially feminine.

Tol is the narration of a desire for a political language and political subject. It subverts the language of privacy and essentially individual space as the locus of desires. It asserts a collective desire and/or desire for collectivity that emerge as a possibility for subjectivity for the fragmented self that once lost his/her political desire. Violence is rooted in the novel's political desire for fundamental change and the narrativization of political violence has a strong gendered dimension to it, which is a part of epic character of the narration and its masculinity.

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