

PASAJ

*The Carriage Affair, or the Birth of a National Hero**

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Abstract

The Carriage Affair, written in the late 19th century and regarded as a “canonical” work of Turkish literature, is the parody of a mimic man produced by the Ottoman reform. The author Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem breaks with the familiar moralistic criticisms of the “Westernized snob”, which constituted a genre in the late 19th and early 20th century novel, and produces a surprisingly modern and lively literary text. Inventing interior monologue in a fascinating parody of the protagonist (who imitates the plot of the French popular romantic novel), while courageously dismissing the moral and logical alternative of a national subject of “true” mimesis, he also takes the risk of miming mimesis and falling into a void. According to standard literary judgment, the result is his *failure* to produce a proper narrative closure, to pass from *mimesis* to *diegesis*, i.e. to resolve the conflict which constructs the story. Reading the novel through its critical readings as well as a detailed discussion of the concepts of parody, mimesis and femininity, I argue that there is a paradoxical success in Ekrem’s failure. This unexpected literary work of its times virtually prefigures and preempt the later nation building in the 20th century. Most important of all, it demonstrates that any effort of representation and writing is always performed on a shifting ground.

Key Words: Tanzimat, novel, desistance, mimesis, züppe

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Araba Sevdası, ya da Ulusal Bir Kahramanın Doğuşu

Öz

19. yüzyılın en önemli romanlarından ve Türk edebiyatının “kanonik” yapıtlarından kabul edilen *Araba Sevdası*, Osmanlı reformunun ürettiği Batı taklitçisininin parodisidir. Yazar Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem, 19. yüzyıl sonu ve 20. yüzyıl başında bir edebi tür hâline gelen “Batılaşmış züppe” romanlarının bilinen ahlakçı eleştirisini terk eden modern ve enerjik bir edebiyat metni üretmiştir. Yalnız, ulusal öznenin “doğru” *mimesis*'ine dayanan ahlaksal ve mantıksal seçeneği cesurca reddetmekle ve iç monolog tekniğini icat ederek kahramanının çarpıcı bir parodisini yapmakla Ekrem “*mimesis*”i (taklidin, temsilin kendini) taklit ederek boşluğa düşme riskini alıyordu. Standart edebi ölçüleri izlersek, sonuç yazarın doğru dürüst bir anlatısal kapanış üretmemesi, “*mimesis*”ten “*diegesis*”e geçememesi, yani hikâyeyi kuran çatışmayı çözüme kavuşturamamasıdır. Bir yandan romanın eleştirel okumalarını okuyarak, öte yandan parodi, mimesis ve kadınlık kavramlarını ayrıntılı biçimde tartışarak, Ekrem'in başarısızlığının paradoksal olarak başarılı bir yanı olduğunu ileri sürüyorum. Çağımın bu beklenmedik edebi yapıtı, adeta 20. yüzyılın ulus kurma çabasını önceden canlandırarak etkisizleştirmiştir. Ama en önemlisi, her türlü temsil ve yazma girişiminin hep kaygan bir zemin üzerinde icra edildiğini göstermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tanzimat, roman, “desistance”, mimesis, züppe

“Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

Samuel Beckett¹

Araba Sevdası [hereafter *The Carriage Affair*], published in 1896, is regarded as a canonical work by Turkish literary criticism and history. *The Carriage Affair* is a powerful critical parody of the modernized Tanzimat bourgeois of Istanbul.² The author, Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem, is a progressive poet, writer and critic whose

¹ Beckett, 1999, p.7.

² “Tanzimat”, the “Reorganization” is the most important bureaucratic reform period in modern Ottoman history. For a conventional historical account, see Ortaylı, 1987.

literary activity and teaching prepared the most important literary movement of the late 19th century known as “Edebiyat-i Cedide” (New Literature).³ *The Carriage Affair* is regarded as a founding text of modern Turkish literature, despite that this has not gone unchallenged. Given the significant place of literature in forming a national culture, my purpose in reading this text is to offer a few introductory thoughts on the question of national subject-formation by way of an excessive and hyperbolic case.

Perhaps I should begin by underlining the impossibility of such a reading. The novel is written in the Ottoman Turkish in the 19th century. This is not merely old Turkish that could be rendered new by the expertise of a literary historian. It is a different language that requires translation into contemporary Turkish. A nation was built in the time span that separates the original in Ottoman Turkish and its translation in modern Turkish. The building of the nation involved the so-called “alphabet revolution”, an abrupt change from the Arabic to the Roman script in 1928, and, as the Ottoman Turkish was a hybrid of Turkish, Arabic and Persian languages, the accompanying purification of Turkish from the other “foreign” languages.⁴ This is then a singular condition in which the original is lost, or “archived,” and what circulates now is a translation in modern Turkish. How to

³ This movement was also known by the name of its most important journal “Servet-i Fünun.” Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem supported the journal published by his students. Although progressive in spirit and supportive of a new language, Servet-i Fünun did not support the purification effort which began in the post-tanzimat period. The journal has often been criticized for bringing the Persian and Arabic words back into literary language under an aesthetic ideology of art for art’s sake.

⁴ This is how Eric Auerbach, who taught at the University of Istanbul at the time, described the Turkish language revolution, in a letter to his friend Walter Benjamin: “The situation here is not exactly simple, but it is not without charm. They have thrown all tradition overboard here, and they want to build a thoroughly rationalized—extreme Turkish nationalist—state of the European sort. The process is going fantastically and spookily fast: already there is hardly anyone who knows Arabic or Persian, and even Turkish texts of the past century will quickly become incomprehensible since the language is being modernized and at the same time newly oriented on ‘ur-Turkish,’ and it is being written with Latin characters. ... The language reform—at once the fantastical ur-Turkish (‘free’ from Arabic and Persian influences) and modern-technical—has made it certain that no one under 25 can any longer understand any sort of religious, literary, or philosophical text more than ten years old and that, under the pressure of the Latin script, which was compulsorily introduced a few years ago, the specific properties of the language are rapidly decaying” (Auerbach, 2007, p. 749 -751).

read a founding or originary text of national literature, written in a language and alphabet foreign to the nation? Perhaps a law of archive is repeated here: the archive forgets what is archived as much as it shelters it (Derrida, 1995). In selecting, categorizing, placing and sheltering a document, the archive *authenticates* it. In our singular case, what is archived is a document or text whose very stake has to do with authenticity, and which thus finds its true, authentic place, an original in its original form, in the archive, beyond all the translations that have not failed to reach us. Therefore, also lost and forgotten. And yet, as much as it forgets in sheltering, the archive makes itself subject to future (such is its law), to the research which returns to it, and thus never ceases to grow in translation as well as in critical response. Joining this movement of the archive, the double movement of forgetting and maintaining, I will have to engage the previous readings of the novel and will establish a critical dialogue with them.⁵ I aim to show that a careful reading of this text's styles and levels of meaning can give chance to a demonstration of the singular way it prefigures and preempts the very violence that separates it from us as authentic. If, as we learned from Walter Benjamin (1996), translation is the survival of a language, we will have to ask *what it is that survives* in the survival of the lost/archived text (p.254).

First then, a brief synopsis: *The Carriage Affair* is the story of a mimic man, the critical parody of a westernized snob in the so-called post-Tanzimat (post-reformist) period in Ottoman history. The protagonist, Bihruz, is the only son of a *vizir* (an Ottoman minister). He has a superficial education. His father died leaving him a fortune, a mansion and a small house in the summer resort of Çamlıca. In a classic text, *Origins and Development of the Turkish Novel*,

⁵ I will use the most recent and the most expertly translation, full with notes, explanations and addenda, all of which unfold the text in unexpected ways, while also refolding it with new questions: Rezaizade Mahmut Ekrem, *Araba Sevdası* (2015). Fatih Altuğ's informed and responsible critical edition presents the text itself as archival, as a "file", including its "intertextual" references. In translating *Araba Sevdası* as *The Carriage Affair*, I follow Parla, 2003. I will discuss three important critical readings of the novel: Evin, 1983; Parla, 1993); to these classic works, I would like to add a recent brilliant study: Gürbilek, 2003. I want to underline here that I do not criticize these readings or their authors' positions in an oppositional manner, even though what I am going to say might sometimes be registered as criticism in this restricted sense. The way I approach a text is to inhabit it and *re-inscribe/re-mark* its force field, not to reject or accept it.

Turkish literary historian Ahmet Evin gives a fine description of the protagonist: “Bihruz’s sole interest in life is to appear in excursion places in his brand new, expensive carriage. ... He spends a fortune on his clothes and insists on speaking French with everyone regardless of whether they understand him. Typical of young men of his generation and background, he is employed in a government office where he rarely makes an appearance” (1983, p.158).

Bihruz’s major aspiration is to “live like a hero of a popular, romantic French novel of the mid-nineteenth century”, “in search of love (*“l’amour”*) in the excursion places he frequents” (Evin, 1983, p.158). A young woman he meets one day fulfills his fantasy. He assumes the woman and her friend to be from a wealthy and well-educated family. In fact, Periveş is an uneducated woman with an ordinary background. Bihruz meets her briefly two times. Once he gives her flowers and a second time an envelope, which contains a long love letter, and a poem he composed. But the woman pays little attention to him; indeed, she throws the envelope away as soon as he leaves. Bihruz spends all his time in the newly built, European style public park and excursion place of Çamlıca in the hope of finding her. A mischievous friend tells him that the woman has died. Bihruz now believes that, in accordance with the plot of French popular romantic novel, he must locate his idol’s grave.⁶ Meanwhile he is on the edge of bankruptcy because of his expensive life style and soon the creditors take his carriage away. The novel ends with his last short meeting with the woman. One evening during Ramadan festivities, Bihruz runs into her on a crowded street. They have a short conversation, and discovering that his beloved is alive and is not interested in his feelings at all, he fleets from the scene, lost and confused.

⁶ French popular romantic novel is itself classified as a particular genre which is distinguished by an *imitation* of high romanticism (Hugo, Lamartine or Chateaubriand). Popular romantic novels were particularly trendy in Paris between 1820 and 1840, and quite a number were translated into Turkish in the 1860s and 1870s. Having a vast knowledge of romantic as well as realist literature, Ekrem was familiar with the French literary scene. Despite his support of realism, he also admired romanticism—he translated and adapted Chateaubriand’s *Atala* for stage and wrote romantic poetry. Indeed his position is often found ambiguous. He must have definitely seen an association between the cheap, imitative, popular romantic literature and the superficial mimetism of the new rich. For French popular romanticism, see Smith, 1981.

The Social and the Literary

Post-Tanzimat literary and intellectual discourse was critical of the new social group the Tanzimat reforms produced. The criticism of the new rich was both social and cultural. It reflected the middle- and lower-class disapproval of the luxurious Westernized life style that appeared within the upper echelons of the emerging new bureaucracy. Speaking of the idea of an untrammelled bourgeoisie, Şerif Mardin (1990) writes:

Ottoman grandees who had borne the responsibility and the risk of initiating new policies had also developed Western European consumption patterns. Crinolines, pianos, dining tables and living-room furniture were new ideas, which the official class soon adopted, and these were often seen as foolish luxuries by the section of the population that had lived on the modest standards imposed by traditional values (p. 18).

The Carriage Affair belonged to a popular critical theme that had turned into a genre in the late 19th and early 20th century novel. The other classic examples are Ahmet Mithat's *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* [Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi] (1876) and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's *Şık* [Chic] (1888). These novels are based on the narrative of a social type that can be described as "westernized snob." The Turkish word, "züppe," which is often regarded as the equivalent of the English "snob," means pretension to and imitation of cultural as well as social superiority.⁷ The *züppe* novels reflect a critical engagement with mime-

⁷ In her "Dandies and Originals," Nurdan Gürbilek underlines that *züppe* is used for both dandy and snob in Turkish. Depending on René Girard's definitions (imitation of a superior other vs. pretension to self-sufficiency by exaggerated attention to personal appearance), she asks the reader not to attribute a significance to the difference in her essay. Interestingly, she seems to prefer dandy in her title and throughout her essay (Gürbilek, 2003, especially p. 626; Girard, 1988, p. 162-164). On dandy, see also Baudelaire's classic work (1972, p. 418-422 and 2010, p. 63-70). (His examples are Byron and Delacroix.) Although *züppe* might be closer to the snob than the dandy, I suggest that it must be accepted as a singular expression of Turkish, irreducible to either. I am not sure about Gürbilek's use of dandy for "züppe," because although the snob is no less obsessed with his personal appearance than the dandy, the latter's fundamental attitude is a cult of beauty, aims to destroy triviality in life, and might occasionally have a critical edge (for instance, Oscar Wilde) in a way the snob never has. To unfold our translation problem a little more, the most authoritative etymological dictionary of contemporary Turkish, *Nişanyan Sözlük* gives Greek

sis or imitation of West/modernity, with obvious political and social implications. The *züppe* is a “hyberbole” in the class of metaphors: the figure that intentionally *exceeds* what is necessary to get an idea across (here, an excess of mimesis). If an idea is hard to get across for it is both an object of desire (West, modernity) and is in conflict with other desires (native identity and tradition), hence a problem, then it goes through, what Freud calls, “repression.” We are therefore referring here to a conflict that is not simply external, but perhaps externalized, i.e. internal (given especially the historical fact of Western hegemony). No doubt, this kind of cultural conflict is further complicated by social class divisions and becomes part of ensuing struggles. Transforming the historical problems of social/political/cultural power and change into a discursive metaphor, the *züppe* is also a myth. The investment into this myth is a problem of representing as well as contesting West/modernity, which in the case of Ottoman-Turkish society was also a problem of class and gender as well as cultural difference.

Nevertheless it would be wrong to think that the figure or the genre is an exclusively Turkish cultural overdetermination. What is at stake here is indeed a *hegemonic* paradigm of desire. We need to keep in mind that the figure of *züppe* was a response given to the world produced by the Western orientalist power/knowledge spacing, or “worlding”, which is structurally related with the global and abstract logic of capitalism. The approach that I follow here assumes that orientalism is not simply an ideological error but rather the production of what we know as geo-geography (“earth-writing”), as a “scientific discipline,” i.e. a power/knowledge spacing, (therefore at the same time a *geo-politics*).⁸ This writing is *the blind spot* of so-

“*zoppos*” (retarded, lame, odd, nerd) and Italian “*zoppo*” (crippled, disabled, lame, shaky, rickety) as etymological roots of the Turkish *züppe*. Given the multilingual nature of Ottoman Istanbul (where both Greek and Italian were spoken in everyday life), it is highly likely that these words were rendered as *züppe* in the Turkish colloquial, shifting its meaning in these languages and giving it the singular sense of a type whose oddness is based on pretentiousness, imitation and arrogance. (<https://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=züppe>)

⁸ This is the way I approach to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). I do not mean to deny the distorting aspect of orientalism, but point to its *inscriptive power*. This approach depends on reading Derrida (1981, 81) *with* Foucault (1978), and most importantly, on Gayatri Spivak’s deployment of Heidegger for colonialism: “the worlding of a world on a supposedly un-inscribed territory” (Spivak, 1999, p. 211-212). The production of universality (of reason, knowledge, etc.) is not independent of global imperial power. See also footnote 14 as well as my criticism of Gürbilek below.

cial sciences and humanities (as we shall see below), because these sciences themselves are ways of forming, knowing and disciplining the world in “homogenous empty time” which culminates in Western civilization.⁹ Here I will examine two examples: sociology and literary criticism.

In a classic sociological account, Şerif Mardin (1974) reads *The Carriage Affair* as a paradigmatic example of the popular criticism of excessive westernization. Mardin considers a number of characters in similar novels as instances of what he calls the Bihruz Bey syndrome: “Felatun” in Ahmet Mithat’s *Felatun Bey ile Rakım Efendi* [Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi] (1876), “Satıroğlu” in Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar’s *Şık* [Chic] (1888), “Bihruz” in *Araba Sevdası* [The Carriage Affair] (1896), and “Suphi” in Nabizade Nazım’s *Zehra*. The literary character of Bihruz constitutes the cultural paradigm of “the over-westernized snob,” a stereotypical object of criticism of upper-class life style. Mardin then follows the track of this figure in Ottoman-Turkish politics and society.

Mardin’s attentive reading demonstrates the social and cultural relevance of the “züppe”, beyond a merely inappropriate figure. But for him this means a cultural conflict between East and West rather than a hegemonic power/knowledge spacing. He therefore maintains a certain transcendent normativity in the background. It is in this normalizing context that Mardin describes the figure of *züppe* in terms of “Bihruz Bey syndrome”, regarded as a case of excessive westernization. To give his approach its due, it is close in spirit to Freud’s theory of jokes as unconscious phenomena. If, as Freud (1976) shows, humour is rebellion against authority and liberation from its pressure, the myth of the “super-westernized” snob can be read as an instance of *displaced* aggressivity and criticism towards the upper class and cultural elite. I should like to note however that such a displacement is dynamic, moving along class and gender lines and goes beyond its apparent script. It is not a homogenous use of

⁹ “The concept of the historical progress of mankind cannot be sundered from the concept of its progression through a homogeneous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such a progression must be the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself.” (Benjamin, 1968, p.162)

symbolic means for given political ends (as Mardin seems to think), but always already divided and shifting. It is multiplied, captured and absorbed by various social forces and political discourses, having a degree of ambivalence. Although it definitely carries significant class implications (as Mardin accepts), still such a determination is not straightforwardly available, since the metaphor is highly “overdetermined” in Freudian terms. In conservative forms of nationalism and Islamicism for instance, the snob is feminized, but further it is closely associated with the infamous figure of “alienated intellectual,” which is a password for the progressive and socialist intellectual in the conservative, right-wing vocabulary.¹⁰

What is then the status of literary text in the production of this popular metaphor, especially if, as Mardin argues, a novel like *The Carriage Affair* has *explanatory value* for a sociological understanding of class and popular languages as well as the history of modernization, to the point of enabling the sociologist to give the metaphor a clinical name, “Bihruz Bey syndrome”?¹¹ Why and how does this social condition find its formulaic expression in a literary text?

¹⁰ This is why, although the *zümpe* can be read in terms of Georg Simmel’s concept of social type as a being cast in terms of expectations of others, one must be cautious of such a use (Simmel, 1950, especially p. 402-409 and 409-427). In respect of the *political overdetermination* of the metaphor in nationalist and Islamicist politics, one must particularly attend to the following points: first, working within a post-Kantian, phenomenological tradition of thinking, Simmel was careful in conceiving the social type as an element that is *both inside and outside* the society or group which defined it as such; and second, he was also empirically sensitive to the *specific* force field of meaning of each social type he studied. In a peripheral history over-determined by class, gender and cultural forces of immense complexity, such processes of subject-constitution as the production of social types do not always produce politically or ideologically homogenous results that can simply be opposed from a *transcendent moral position*, as if it is the sociologist who decides the social type... For an example of misreading Simmel especially on this last point, see Nalbantoğlu, 2003. In a regrettably aggressive re-writing of the well-known moral narrative, Nalbantoglu turns himself into a “critical” (!) Rakim Bey fighting straw enemies. For “social type”, see also footnote 14 below.

¹¹ Can we transform Mardin’s “Bihruz Bey syndrome” into a critical-clinical concept in Deleuze’s sense? (Deleuze, 1998). As syndrome means “concurrence of several symptoms in a disease” (OED), symptoms can be read as the words, gestures, affects and percepts, visions and auditions, or simply the micro-physics of a linguistic and gestural world called “Bihruz Bey,” brilliantly constructed in the novel. In Deleuze’s sense, the critical-clinical refers to an ethical rather than moral evaluation of this world. It does not assume a transcendent norm but points to the radical openness of a dimension that appears in (or as) literature and art. See also footnote 27 below.

Although Mardin's approach heralds the question of the role and status of the literary, i.e. that which produces the metaphor, his sociological determinism confines him to seeing the novel as simply the best instance of a general concept which is also illustrated in other discourses. The social determination of class and cultural conflict is expressed by this metaphor, according to Mardin, as a perverted form of "super-westernization." Mardin can show the social relevance of the metaphor at the price of a *transcendent normativity* over and above the so-called cultural excess, that is to say, by granting the metaphor of *züppe* a questionable integrity and legitimacy in explaining a presumed social reference. I would like to argue that the metaphor is neither innocent nor undivided, and *The Carriage Affair* is a singular text that effected a radical displacement in the economy of the popular metaphor of *züppe* by problematizing this assumption of a normal route to modernity, or of a normal subject of modernity or modernization.

A "Canonical" Text

As expected, literary criticism and history have been more attentive to the linguistic, literary and stylistic aspects of *The Carriage Affair*. A text revisited time and again by the discipline, the judgment about it is universal: a cornerstone in modern Turkish literary writing with its unusually innovative technique, originality and critical power. Building a canon is an essential aspect of national subject production. Having its origin in religion, and referring to "the collection or list of books of the Bible accepted by the Christian Church as genuine and inspired" according to OED, canon is a strong concept: it involves a law or decree by means of which texts are decided to be authentic or not. When used in secular context, it sets a standard, a basis for judging if a text is representative of a certain literary field. As we will see, although *The Carriage Affair* is now regarded as canonical almost unanimously, its status was also challenged because of the inauthentic nature of its protagonist for a national canon.

Interestingly, Turkish literary historians and critics have comp-

lained about the lack or delay of a novelistic canon until the 1980s.¹² What is meant often seemed to be a collection of texts already agreed upon rather than the criteria as such. In a recent essay, Jale Parla (2008) turns the complaint into criticism by arguing that the lack is paradoxical and puzzling. If the westernizing republican elite exerted considerable cultural and political coercion on all social practices, including the literary, why did Turkish literature remain “without a canon for such a long time”? For Parla (2008), it might indeed be the canonical language that impedes literary canonicity: “Just as it is true that canons are ideological formations, it is also true that overdetermination of cultural life by a monolithic ideology may inhibit canon formation” (p.28). She argues that, since the novel in Turkey has always been seen as a vehicle for social reform, political space annihilated the aesthetic space, and artistic innovation is given up for social engagement.¹³ Hence for Parla, it is the politicisation of

¹² We must also underline that, following this period, in the early 1980s well-known left literary critics Murat Belge and Fethi Naci initiated a debate about the lack of novel writing in Turkey. But the conservative writer and critic Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1992) expressed this criticism in an essay titled “Bizde Roman” (Our Novel) as early as 1936. Going beyond complaint, he formulated it as the question of lacking a novel that is *specific* to Turkish culture and found the reasons in the lack of individualism as well as the lack of confessional practice in Islam. For an excellent discussion of Tanpınar’s argument, see Gürbilek, 2003, pp. 601-602. The discourse of lack (of canon, of novels...) constantly returns in Turkish literary and intellectual life.

¹³ Parla’s criticism must be read together with Emily Apter’s fascinating account of Leo Spitzer’s and Eric Auerbach’s invention of comparative literature in Istanbul University (Apter, 2006, pp. 41-64). As is well known, with the Nazis coming to power, the Turkish government invited and accepted a significant number of political refugee intellectuals from Germany. First Spitzer and then Auerbach were invited to establish and run literature department at the University of Istanbul. Apter writes: “The new Turkish nationalism, and its repressive cultural arm, was certainly in evidence during Auerbach’s eleven year sojourn in Istanbul, but one could argue without really overstating the case that it was the volatile crossing of Turkish language politics with European philological humanism that produced the conditions conducive to the invention of comparative literature as a global discipline, at least in its early guise. A fascinating two-way collision occurred in Istanbul between a new-nations ideology dedicated to constructing a modern Turkish identity with the latest European pedagogies, and an ideology of European culture dedicated to preserving the ideals of Western humanism against the ravages of nationalism” (2006, p. 50). Parla’s and Apter’s readings can be given into each other. Where Parla sees ideological repression and imposition, Apter can be read as seeing a material possibility of the production of a progressive European discipline. As Apter emphasizes how every new job that went to a European émigré was a job taken from a Turkish scholar, the Turkish *governmentality* or *mode of institutionalizing* of cultural life becomes the *material ground*

literature (in the form of elite ideological imposition), which impeded literary canonicity.

The opposition Parla sets up between aesthetics and politics harms her own useful insight that it might be the desire for the canon, which makes it impossible. Why, indeed, is canon necessary? Why is it an unquestionable form of institutionalizing or organizing the field of literary writing? Further, why is novel writing necessary? Why is the novel an indisputable literary form, which must be taken as evidence of progress? In taking these ideas for granted, have we not already attributed an unquestioned intelligibility to novel, which is a highly contested and controversial form? It is not so much answering these questions than being able to keep them alive that is important in breaking with the linear history writing in homogenous and empty time of progress.

Although there is much truth in what Parla argues, especially in the context of the language revolution, it would be too passive a view of modern Turkish literature, culture and society to assume an ideology so monolithic as to be able to govern the scene of writing entirely, as if language is or constitutes a seamless reality (she herself emphasizes contemporary novels which resisted the dominant ideology in the 20th century). Parla argues that the early Turkish novelists of the nineteenth century adopted the genre from the West but used it as an educational vehicle to ensure the empire's safe passage from a traditional, Muslim, eastern community to a modern, westernized society. The question is precisely how *safe* that passage was from the point of view of its *writing*. While an early Turkish novel like *The Carriage Affair* shows that the passage was crossed in a mortgaged carriage, we cannot take it for granted that it has been secured by a linear imposition of dominant ideology or canonicity. I would like to argue that *The Carriage Affair* might in fact enable us to question the canonical, that is to say, precisely the normative, binding force of the law.

of European development of comparative literature. Of course, Apter also underlines the training of well-known Turkish scholars such as Mina Urgan and Süheyla Bayrav in the same context. Although I am somewhat skeptical of the role Apter attributes to new comparative literature, her careful and balanced analysis of the complex role played by the Turkish language and cultural policy in the invention of comparative literature is admirable.

While Mardin's sociological reading establishes the socially significant place of the metaphor of "züppe" in Ottoman-Turkish culture, the insistence of the metaphor, its passing or inheritance from one generation to another and its incessant re-writing and re-marking by literary criticism and history from Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar to Jale Parla, opens up the question of the constitution of the canonical in terms of *return*. I would like to argue that the canonical has to do with something *radically non-canonical* whose haunting return is the very concern of the normative force of law. I now want to go through literary histories and criticisms.¹⁴

¹⁴ In terms of national literature or literary canon, I must also refer to Ulus Baker's (2000) fascinating essay titled "Ulusal Edebiyat Nedir?" ("What is National Literature?") (p.159-186). Baker seems to suggest that we take Russian literature as a model for Turkish literature. In a later work, he re-articulates the same idea more clearly:

...sometimes the West can be a "dream" for the East. One should ask: it is evident that the Orient was a dream or "ideological theme" of a Western, Eurocentric discourse, searching to legitimize itself as a "progress" or as a "terminated" and therefore "open" life. But it is also true that the West was, for a long time and still today, a dream of the East: it was nothing but this for the *Idiot* of Dostoyevsky, or Young Turks, and if the West and its social, cultural, economic and political manners are considered in Third World countries—with somehow a "resistance" of masses and traditions, at any rate shadowed by "official ideologies"—as an "objective" to reach, the West remains there either as a "model" or as a "dream world", which is, from our viewpoint, just the same thing." (Baker, 2015, p.291)—I thank Harun Abusoglu for providing me with the English original).

Perhaps one could object to Baker that the "Young Turks" is a real political group, while the "züppe" is a popular literary metaphor. But this is a false objection because what is at stake in both is that they are metaphors of Westernized/Westernizing agent, and more importantly, Baker ingeniously demonstrates how realist and naturalist novel was ahead of social science in creating social types (Baker, p. 49). The problem with Baker's approach is elsewhere: in his tendency to see the Russian literature as a model to read Turkish literature (as another version of Westernisation), Baker overlooks the fact that such a modelling itself is already what is at stake in the novels (indeed the same criticism also applies for Baker's another favorable concept, the "social type", which has a lot to do with relations of typing and imprint or trace, of model and copy, etc.). It is striking, how, in the above quote, overlooking the hegemonic force of this relationship, Baker reminds that the East *also* desires the West. I find it strange for a thinker of difference to see this relationship in symmetrical terms and to balance it off by a fair attitude. It is *the force of the hegemonic desire* which established the relationship in the first place. The Eastern dream of the West is *legitimation in reversal*. Is this what Baker means when he says "from our point of view, just the same thing"? Perhaps, but without a *reference to the hegemonic nature of this relationship*, this is vague and misleading. Hegemony is a relationship which hierarchizes

Realism, or Progress

As I have already said, the “*züppe*” was a common literary theme, which turned into a genre, and almost a canonical genre, in the 19th and early 20th century Turkish literature. It is a “myth” in its oldest sense, i.e. the concept of plot, *muthos* in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The plot or myth of “*züppe*” was heavily didactic and moralistic. In Ahmet Mithat’s classic *Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi*, Felatun is the superficial westernizer and the prodigal son who destroys the family fortune, i.e. a false, pathetic figure of mimetism and aestheticism, whereas the authentic reformist Rakım is open to scientific reason and economic reform while keeping the best of his tradition and maintaining the good family name—in other words, a good nationalist, the figure of a true, scientific and economic representation or mimesis that achieves synthesis of modern and national values in opposition to the double and paradoxical figure of a mimesis that is both superficial and in excess. Hence the plot or *muthos* expressed the division of mimesis into two opposed poles: a rational, economic and truthful mimesis vs. one that is superficial, merely imitative as well as extravagant, uneconomic, over-consumptive, in excess.

The author of *The Carriage Affair* was well known for his literary and intellectual knowledge of European movements.¹⁵ I would like to argue that Rezaizade Ekrem’s literary genius was his *mutating* the figure and the narrative of the *züppe*. He made two major novelties: *first of all*, he introduced a strong element of romanticism into the

difference. What resistance reveals is difference, and not identity. The stereotype or type of *züppe* itself points to a legitimization in reversal especially *to the extent* that it implies a positive type such as Rakım Efendi in Ahmet Mithat’s novel as the ideal synthesis (precisely the Eastern dream of the West). Hence the significance of Ekrem’s dismissal of a positive type, as we shall see below. All this discussion demonstrates that the *züppe* has a distinctly postcolonial mark, which neither the dandy nor the snob has, and which can be deconstructed. It goes without saying that such a mark comes in articulation with class and gender differences.

¹⁵ Ekrem had a significant teaching career at the most prominent educational institutions of his time: Mülkiye (Civil Service School) and Galatasaray High School, where the medium of instruction was French. Among his many students were also the famous poet Tevfik Fikret. He published the first part of his reputable Mülkiye lectures under the title *Talim-i Edebiyat* (Literature Course), a thick volume of 398 pages, in 1882. For a detailed information, see Burrill, 1979-80.

constitution of the *züppe*. Romanticism here refers to the French popular romantic novel, which was itself often narrated as an *imitation* of the high tide of French romanticism, of especially figures such as Hugo, Lamartine or Chateaubriand. Ekrem saw in the popular romantic novel the instance of a cheap and fake sentimentality, which reflected the meager cultural formation of the new rich. Hence, the question of mimesis was not one of opposing reason to feelings, but the constitutive difference between a genuine feeling of romance and a superficial one. By implication this was also an early criticism of the emerging consumerist life style, but we need to underline that all these were also *literary* questions for Ekrem, or perhaps the question of an ethics transmitted by the literary. *Secondly*, Recaizade Ekrem made a radical move, which was not seen in any other example of the genre: by completely eliminating the true modernizer as the moral alternative of the *züppe*, he embodied the critical attitude in the literary style of parody—a gesture that echoes the romantic ambition of producing the concept as a work of art.¹⁶ The excess of mimesis, snobbism, i.e. the very opposite of an economic or true mimesis, is thus *located* in popular romanticism, *and* in a risky (romantic) move, by embodying the concept in parodic writing, the task of ethical instantiation is neither fixed in a morally appropriate character nor simply ignored but is given to the literary writing itself.¹⁷ There was none of the oppositional and didactic moralism of the earlier (and of the later) similar novels. Ahmet Evin (1983) underlines the author's mature realistic descriptions of places and people as well as his surprisingly early use of the modern technique of "interior monologue" and celebrates it as a modern moment which signifies a passage to realism in the history of Turkish novel (p.158-172). In his words, "the novel does not present a message by holding up Bihruz as an example, but is intended as an entertaining satire anatomizing a particular social type" (p.159). In her seminal work in Turkish literary history and criticism, *Babalar ve Oğullar*, Jale Parla also shows that Recaizade Ekrem's modernist technical innovation represents

¹⁶ For romanticism, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 1988, pp. 27-37.

¹⁷ For the concept of ethical instantiation see Spivak, 1993, 1994, 2004.

a significant break with earlier lyrical and allegorical forms, which maintained the older, traditional narrative epistemology (1993, p.129-153).¹⁸ *The Carriage Affair* thus represents a modern moment as well as an exemplary national literary work in opposition to more backward and immature (didactic, allegorical, traditional) forms.

Although literary history differs from sociological theory of modernization in seeing more than a stereotype in the novel, its conception of passage from traditional to modern literary forms is also informed by a paradigm of progress and maturation, in conformity with the general problematic of modernization. Literary history and criticism adopt this pedagogical, linear narrative of empty homogeneous time in terms of a passage from allegorical to realistic forms of narration. Evin's reading situates the novel in the context of a debate between romanticism and realism among Ottoman intellectuals in the 19th century,¹⁹ and reads the opposition Ekrem set up within the diegetic space of the novel between *fancifulness* and *reality*, fiction and fact as the author's literary embodiment of this debate. Ekrem's commitment to the principle of realistic writing is beyond doubt. In the preface to the novel, he argues that the difference between the comic and the tragic is only a matter of perspective, for, "when viewed from the point of view of poetry and wisdom, most of the exemplary events that come out of the everyday human experience around us are sorrowful" (Ekrem, 2015, p.46—my translation). For Ekrem subjects must be taken from real life and the power of imagination must be used in a particular way that enables the writer to be faithful to reality. If these precepts are followed then the novel reflects the real human experience. Yet Ekrem's concept of realism is not simply opposed to allegory. In the same preface, he describes realistic stories as reflecting a "mirror of *ibret*." "*İbret*" is an object lesson or a lesson learned through a misfortune. Having a moralizing tone, it implies the peculiarity or strangeness of the situation to which it refers. Ekrem's

¹⁸ Both Evin and Parla give Namık Kemal's *İntibah* as an example of the confusion of novelistic prose with poetry. Evin reads Ekrem's introduction as an implicit criticism of *İntibah*. As we learn from him, Namık Kemal, a prominent national reformist and critic of the Abdulhamid regime, was severely critical of Ekrem's earlier work for its sentimentalism.

¹⁹ This debate was initiated by the positivist Beşir Fuat's well-known essay on naturalism, and Recaizade Ekrem himself sided with realism and naturalism (Fuad, 2000).

emphasis in the preface is precisely that the reader must read his novel not as mere entertainment, but *allegorically*, as the serious lesson (*ibret*) beyond the comic look (2015, p. 46).²⁰

I would like to argue that Ekrem's whole ambition is *to capture mimesis, to pin it down in popular romanticism, in order to exorcise it*. And for this he needs a "serious" reader. Ekrem's reference to "exemplary events and situations that come out of human experience" implies a certain practice of *mimesis*: a pathetic form of mere imitation which is also paradoxically in excess, and which manifested itself best in popular romanticism. Evin too underlies the mocking and parodying of French popular romanticism as a pathetic or false form of *mimesis*: Ekrem's realism exposes Bihruz's unreality. Fashioning his life after the French novels he reads, Bihruz has lost all his touch with reality. Surprisingly however, Evin (1983) also notes, he is a convincing and lively character, "realistically depicted within his immediate environment and a representative type within the post-Tanzimat society" (p.160). In his words, "Bihruz's personality fully emerges in perspective as he stands, like a character in an *opera buffe* (to the tunes of which he is addicted), in sharp contrast to the realism of the novel" (p.160). The novel can and should also be read as a critical-realistic portrayal of the new rich in the post-Tanzimat period, but what does Evin mean by "the realism of the novel"?

Evin's reading depends on a binary and hierarchical relationship between the *two voices* he identified in Ekrem's narrative, i.e. "objective reality" spoken by the authorial voice (signified by authorial descriptions and other characters' speech) and the protagonist's subjective world of fantasy narrated by Ekrem's use of interior monologue. Evin gives the following description of the Çamlıca Park as an example of the realistic, authorial voice:

It was overcast and mild that day, a perfect day for an outing in Çamlıca. Rain three days ago had washed the dust from the streets. It also being Sunday, people had begun crowding the place early in the mor-

²⁰ The same point is repeated in the introduction to his famous comedy, *Çok Bilen Çok Yanılır* [The More One Knows The More One Errs] (Ekrem, 2003, pp. 17-19). Burrill also emphasizes that his literature course *Talim-i Edebiyat* also had a similar emphasis on comedy (1979-80, p. 127).

ning, coming from even the farthest sections of the city ... All chairs had been occupied and straw mats were spread on the ground to sit on. A clamor arose from this disorganized crowd as everybody was engaged in conversation. Amidst the din, occasionally waiters could be heard shouting orders to the man making coffee ... To which were added the deafening cries of such vendors as are never absent from excursion places, peddling ice cream, sweets, pudding, pistachios (and other snacks) howling their wares with sundry catcalls (Ekrem, 2015, p. 155-156 quoted and translated by Evin, 1983, p.166).

In what sense, is this description realist? If this voice is realistic, its power of observation is not merely objective, given the incredible attention to a multiplicity of details. Indeed, this is a modern scene made up of details without a center. It implies the opening of a world by a multiplicity of signs (rain washing the streets, the clamor arising from the crowd, discordant, deafening cries of vendors) that are *sensed*, i.e. distinguished by a new kind of sense or experience, which tends to become intimate while remaining at a distance. The noise, clamor and cries are disturbing, yet this very disturbance is inseparable from the festivity of a new kind. Writing cannot avoid such disorganization in its attempt of transforming it into a scene and mastering it. What is captured in language however, is not just captured: it is “amidst the din”, what is heard or seen is not simply delivered and made available to the reader’s imagination, but is already a sensing of something that by nature flees from experience understood as knowledge or cognition—more like a commotion than simple sensing, it is a small turbulence that is traversing the body of writing. Thus, what is often called the “third person omniscient” or “all-knowing narrator” is himself subjected to the overflow of a piercing *sensation*, which was vibrated in him and produced him as the writer.

As Evin defines the concept of realism in opposition to the allegorical or fantastic, his concern is to read this realistic authorial voice describing the urban scene in contrast with Bihruz’s false, distorted, fantastic vision of the social structure of Istanbul:

He could not bring himself to associate this elegant landau with Kadiköy. For as a result of some strange opinions he cultivated having

commerce with exceedingly *alafranga* (Europeanized—Mutman) gentlemen, he had divided the various quarters of the city into three classes: the first inhabited by the *noblesse*, that is to say by respected and refined *civilisé* beings like himself who belonged to the aristocracy; the second, by the bourgeoisie, that is to say by uncouth persons of mediocre means not having much knowledge of civilized thought; the third by artisans and the suchlike (Ekrem, 2015, p. 66 quoted and translated by Evin, 1983, p.165).

More striking examples of the protagonist's fantasy world can be found in the interior monologues, which was Ekrem's surprising literary invention. The following one is a good example as it also involves the pretentious French phrases and sentences out of the popular romantic novels:

This *insulte* cannot be forgiven or forgotten ... Driver! Don't you understand? Faster ... you see how Andon has bungled everything ... *Malheur sur malheur* ... I wonder what happened to the carriage ... what happened to the horses ... *Oui, elle avait sieze ans, c'est bien tôt pour mourir. Ah, pauvre fille!* (Ekrem, 2015, p.248 quoted and translated by Evin, 1983, p. 171)

Evin rightly emphasizes that the contrast between these two voices (an authorial, observing, neutral voice vs. a subjective, fantastic voice in interior monologue) allows the reader to read the fantastic, unreal nature of Bihruz's mind. However, while he praises Ekrem's successful portrayal of his protagonist's inner world as an instance of the author's technical mastery in producing a subjective voice, he leaves the question of the *invention* of the new technique unexplained. His notion of development and maturation of the novelistic form requires a transition, which involves three different passages: from a subjective to an objective moment, from a transcendent traditional authority to the immanence of the modern individual, and from moral content to formal mastery (as a result of which both pedagogy and allegory should change their nature). If the true modernizer was embodied in the character of Rakım Efendi as an element of story in Ahmet Mithat's *Felâhâtı Bey and Rakım Efendi*, this traditional morality in the old narrative mode might be described as transcendent, that is external and opposed to the false

modernizer. But the complete disappearance of the model or example in *The Carriage Affair* is risky and indeed frightening. We observe the model's becoming immanent to language in what must now be called its *literary* recoding or re-writing. How can this transformation be controlled and "canonized"? Evin's solution is exemplary: he keeps the model by an objectification of morality in the technical mastery of the author. The writer, Rezaizade Ekrem himself, becomes the true, exemplary modernizer—the possessor of the modern literary technique. In this conventional progressive view, the moral character (moral possession) is substituted with the technical mastery of the author (technical possession), which thus represents new morality. Does Evin not rearticulate Ahmet Mithat's concept of true, economic mimesis/modernity in terms of the successful exercise of a linguistic and literary mastery by the writer?

My intention here is not so much refusing Evin's reading as asking what exactly is involved in this technical-linguistic mastery. Ekrem's descriptions of Bihruz's dressing, manners and walking, or riding his carriage are constitutive aspects of his overall narrative. While Ekrem's authorial position implies a critical-realistic mastery over popular romanticism, Evin offers a homogenizing interpretation of the passage from traditional to modern writing. If Ekrem's literary operation was one of making a theoretical debate between realism and romanticism immanent in the structure of the text, that is to say, if these concepts are now embodied in language itself, I would like to argue that such an operation is not a mere application of a concept but, *first* of all, a literary invention, and *secondly*, an invention that is made on shifting ground. If it simply were a question of mastery, it would indeed merely re-inscribe the morality or ethos that it struggled to leave behind. Nevertheless we need to answer the question of invention. Why and how did the true modernizer disappear as a character? How was interior monologue invented?

Language in Crisis, Literature as Critical Work

The disappearance of the true modernizer signifies a productive *crisis* on the level of enunciation, which should be regarded as an effect of the immense *deterritorialization of language* in the Empire in

the second half of the 19th century: the gradual erosion of the old dichotomy of “royal language vs. local languages” and its replacement with an emergent public sphere in the new language of newspapers and literature (a linguistic transformation which was initiated by the Young Ottomans), as well as the multiplication of such public spheres and literatures in the multiple linguistic, ethnic and religious worlds of the empire, the increasing presence of foreign, especially European languages and schools as well as literary translations, the growing opposition to the absolutist rule (the Young Turk organization *Progress and Unity* was established in 1889), the deterritorialization of the imperial territory and its re-territorialization by nationalisms as well as a modernizing imperial center. By the time *The Carriage Affair* was written in the early 1890s, in the middle of the reign of Abdulhamid II, the linguistic deterritorialization must have reached a critical threshold.²¹ The increasing multiplicity of languages, forms of expression and words as well as a new public language which produced a scene of division, debate and argument over issues and ideas, made it increasingly difficult to establish a homogenous and stable referential world and to sustain a discourse of truth based on moral opposition. As a cultural reformist, Ekrem was part of a group of people who represented the new cultural and social condition. While the previous generation of Young Ottomans’ project was to create a new public language, purified and made closer to the spoken language while remaining still written, Ekrem’s response to this condition was unique among all his contemporaries, even though it is often reduced to the literary journal and movement *Servet-i Fünun* (to whose emergence he nevertheless made a significant contribution). Rather than producing a public language close to the everyday speech (an effort according to which language is a means of communication), he imagined language as a space of creative expression.²²

²¹ A couple of references for this complex history: Mardin, 1962, pp. 283-336; Levend, 1949, p. 96-308; Heyd, 1954, p. 9-18; Lewis, 1999, especially p. 5-26.

²² Especially Şinasi and Namık Kemal supported the view of a new language that must be employed in a public sphere to come. For Şinasi and Ekrem, literature was also a part of the same linguistic novelty that would help to create the public to come. Ekrem does not seem to follow this view of language. His emphasis is on literature as a creative and transformative site.

As an aesthetic realist, his emphasis was on the power of imagination and the value of literary language. In two other well-known examples of the genre, Ahmet Mithat's *Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi* (1876) and Gürpınar's *Chic* (1888), the protagonists are "züppe"s who imitate European ways, but neither of them are characters whose main preoccupation is to live a love affair which follows the plot of French popular romantic novel. Their mimicry is mere pretension, while Bihruz's nearly theatrical performance strictly follows a literary plot. As Ekrem opposed the moralistic kind of literature found in Ahmet Mithat, his realism, paradoxically closer to the art for art's sake approach, meant precisely that the truth must be produced *aesthetically*, by means of literature.²³

In this sense, Ekrem's text participates in the process of de-territorialization of language by liberating *a mimetic, performative dimension* in the emergent public sphere. If Ekrem's critical realist parody were successful it was because he invented a certain use or performance of language which constituted Bihruz as a hyperbolic figure. Recaizade Ekrem was not different from the previous writers in identifying a problem of false modernization and identifying it as one of mimetism (Bihruz too is outside the economy; an idler spending all his time in the park, he hardly goes to the office he works). In his general thinking, he would probably follow, like others, the paradoxical law of mimesis, which is to get rid of mimesis by imagining a *model* of appropriation of the self by the self.²⁴ But his ambition was to produce *literature itself as critical work*.

In *Felatun Bey and Rakım Efendi*, false mimesis is represented as uneconomic excess and failure, which is opposed to the authentic self who can capture the proper, economic form of mimesis as the protagonist himself is rooted in the property and propriety of his

²³ Whether Ekrem was a realist or a romantic continues to be a puzzle for literary historians and critics. If he seemed to have supported both, this was probably because his belief in the singular moral and educative power of literature came before the potentially misleading poles of a popular polemic, which put its stamp on the Ottoman literature in the 19th century. It is not unlikely that Ekrem was not happy with the terms in which the polemical debate was conducted, even though he sided with realists.

²⁴ For this concept of mimesis, see Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990, pp. 79-81.

own native self.²⁵ For Ekrem, the excess of mimesis cannot be simply represented by means of such a moral opposition; it should be created in *language*, as a *literary performance*. Representing Bihruz's *outer* speech and behavior would have been sufficient if the narrative were content with creating a moral opposition within the story, but it is not an effective literary representation (mimesis) of false mimesis. What is needed is a metaphor for embodying both the excess of mimesis and the radical interiority of the mind (and the almost natural connection between the two) in literary language. Ekrem finds this unique combination in the plot and language of the French popular romantic cliché. He decides that this is the form of narrative that gives lie to mimesis. Consisting of a world of dreams and illusions, popular romanticism underpins the *unreality* of mimesis: an attitude that implies the mind's radical separation from reality and immersion in a dream world. It also signifies a superficial form of mimesis (a romantic literary preoccupation is outside the serious) and excess (romanticism refers to an excess of feelings over rational behavior). The pretentious French words and expressions Bihruz is fond of speaking are doubly foreign as French language and as romanticism. Lacking proper education and lost in his fantasmatic identification, Bihruz has completely lost touch with reality. Rather than a modern man, he is a travesty, a parody of modernity in his romantic/mimetic excess. Ekrem's use of interior monologue makes Bihruz *repeat* or *mime* the popular romantic novel's characteristic turns of thought or phrase so as to make him appear ridiculous.

In a seminal reading of *The Carriage Affair*, which I will discuss in greater detail below, Jale Parla (1993) describes the novel as "a parody of the acts of reading and writing" (p.129). As different from Evin's reading of two voices in a hierarchical way, Parla app-

²⁵ This is in conformity with the later formulation of Turkish nationalism by Gökalp, 1918. Ahmet Mithat's "Rakım Bey" as well as Gökalp's argument can be read as instances of Partha Chatterjee's (1986) account of peripheral anti-colonial nationalism in terms of a Hegelian paradigm of synthesis of Western reason and national culture. Although Kemalism is characterized by a strong secularism and cultural Westernism, it remains within the same problematic. Once we approach the question in terms of the concept of mimesis, by putting history and metaphysics together, then the *zümpe* appears as an internal danger for nationalism.

roaches the text as a more complicated narrative. According to her, the authorial voice is used rather economically in the details of the story, whereas the narrative unfolds by employing a multiplicity of styles each of which “nullifies” the other (p.140). For Parla, the most common of these styles is parody (p.145). And, in a recent brilliant reading of the novel, Nurdan Gürbilek (2003) concurs with Parla’s judgement and describes the text as a “patchwork of styles” (p.599). Criticizing Evin’s reading of the novel as satire, Gürbilek shows that we cannot find a satirical voice in spite of the plurality of styles in Ekrem’s text. Satire ensures the true self by mocking the false other, whereas Ekrem’s authorial voice is rather hesitant, faltering, undecided, “wavering between the third person singular and the first person plural” (p.612). These readings should certainly not be considered as mere refutation of Evin’s reading of realism, but help us see the contrast (between fantasy and reality) as a *force field of voices*, in which no voice is simply subordinate. The de-valued voice of Bihruz is constitutive in that it enables us to read the other, authorial voice as representing reality.

Humour and Parody

The identification of *The Carriage Affair* as parody brings a new dimension to the reading of voices in the novel beyond the dichotomy of objective and subjective. In a little fine book on humour, Simon Critchley has shown that the work of humour is imaginative since it opens up a gap between “expectation and actuality” (2002, p.1). Humour does not merely repeat what it makes humorous, but it makes humorous by producing something unexpected, something new. Its mode of operation is displacement. A good example is the passage when Bihruz realizes that, having very poor command of classical Ottoman poetry, he mistakenly sent a poem to his blonde lover, in which the loved one is described as dark skinned. The discovery is made by a colleague in the office, when Bihruz asked about the meaning of a word in the poem. Surprised and embarrassed he runs out of the office while everyone laughs. A long passage of hilarious exchange is ended by an interior monologue in which

Bihruz grouches in anger and regret, and assuming that his beloved must have been upset, he tries to find a remedy (Ekrem, 2015, pp. 171-185). The whole episode, which involves long dialogues, as well as authorial descriptions and interior monologue, is masterfully ordered by Ekrem.

Indeed as the novel is, in a sense, a series of similar episodes, Ekrem's humour might be described in terms of what Gilles Deleuze calls "counter-actualization", that is a strategy of selecting a "pure event" out of a state of affairs, and isolating and constructing its "concept" by means of percepts and affects.²⁶ If we remember Ekrem's caveat in the preface, we might also read him as demanding that, as funny Bihruz might be, the stereotype must be approached seriously, that is to say, *conceptually*. The French popular romantic novel is chosen as the medium of the critical-realist concept-metaphor of mimesis, and like Mallarmé's mime, Bihruz does not give an image but constructs a *concept* in Deleuze's sense—a concept of the mimic man, or the *züppe* as the mime. Since, for Deleuze, it is always an "event" that is involved in this conceptual extraction or abstraction, the concept is inseparable from a non-conceptual aspect (or "drama"

²⁶ Deleuze, 1990, pp. 150-151. In a later work, Deleuze and Guattari write: "The event is actualized or effectuated whenever it is inserted, willy-nilly, into a state of affairs, but it is *counter-effectuated* whenever it is abstracted from the state of affairs so as to isolate its concept." (1991, p.159). And, a few pages later, speaking of Mallarmé's mime: "such a mime neither produces the state of affairs nor imitates the lived; it does not give an image but constructs the concept. It does not look for the function of what happens, but extracts the event from it, or that part that does not let itself be actualized, the reality of the concept" (1991, p.160). I interpret this conceptual construction as a counter-actualization effected by affects and percepts (which can be regarded as the components of the concept that is constructed), while keeping in mind Deleuze and Guattari's warning that aesthetic figures are not conceptual persona (1991, p.177). Although this certainly makes sense as a practical warning (concepts are grasped in forms, sensations are caught in material), I must add that the distinction cannot be so easily controlled by theory. Otherwise, why do Deleuze and Guattari themselves have to say, after giving Mallarmé's mime as their example of concept, that the mime (aesthetic figure) is an ambiguous term, and prefer instead the conceptual persona (philosophical concept)? Surely we also need to keep in mind that, for Deleuze and Guattari affects are not affections or emotions, and percepts are not perceptions. These do not belong to a human subject, but exist independently of the one who experiences them (1991, especially pp. 163-170). They write for instance that "affects are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man" (1991, p.169). As singularities, the affects or percepts can be seen as "heterogenous yet inseparable elements" of a concept. (1991, pp. 19-21). See also footnote 11 above.

in Deleuze's terms), produced by a force of multiplicity that remains *heterogenous* to the conceptuality of the concept, even though it is inseparable from it. I would like to argue that parody might be seen as what remains heterogenous to the concept in our case, even though it is inseparable from it.

Parody is usually defined as an imitation more or less closely modeled on the original, but one that is so turned as to produce a ridiculous effect. In this classic definition, the parodic transformation involves a particular kind of *repetition* that keeps the formal elements while introducing new content into them. Hence, we would have said, for instance, that when his mischievous friend Keşfi tells the lie that Periveş is dead and Bihruz begins to look for the beloved's grave to read poetry by the side of it, the romantic plot is repeated but given a further comic content. The concept of parody thus remains within the orbit of a classic concept of mimesis, assuming an original text.

In his well-known work, *Palimpsests*, Gerard Genette developed a complicated taxonomic definition of parody. Focusing on making distinctions between forms of textual repetition, Genette defines parody as a particular instance of hypertextuality, that is, a "playful transformation" of a "hypotext" (an original, or prior text) by a "hypertext" (a secondary text). Following Genette, we can read the French popular romantic novel as hypotext, and Ekrem's mocking as hypertext, which is a "transvaluation" (alteration in the mode of valuation) of the hypotext.²⁷

However, although Genette develops an intricate taxonomy in which no one text would sit comfortably in a single category, the *unity* of the prior text seems to have been assumed in his definition. Yet such a unity may not always be obvious. In our case, is it mimesis or romanticism that is parodied? Since parody mimes or parodies *mimesis as romanticism*, the narrative is not only split between sub-

²⁷ According to Genette, hypertextuality is "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Genette, 1997, p.5). Genette makes a highly complicated taxonomy of such alterations, which are either simple or indirect (also called "imitation"). Parody is transformation rather than imitation, but one that Genette describes as "playful" as opposed to serious and satirical.

jective mind and objective reality, but it is further *threatened* by a dangerous multiplicity of shifting levels of meaning and the loss of the unity of the parodied text itself.

Perhaps Russian Marxist literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of parody is more useful. Bakhtin (1982) saw parody as an "intra-linguistic" hybrid, which nourishes itself on the stratification of literary language into genres and tendencies (p.76). Bakhtin's definition of parody sharpens its *conflictual* aspect. According to him, "in parody, two languages are crossed with each other, as well as two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis two speaking subjects. It is true that only one of these languages (the one that is parodied) is present in its own right; the other is present invisibly, as an actualizing background for creating and perceiving" (Bakhtin, 1982, p.76). Seeing an *argument* between two languages or voices in parody, Bakhtin writes elsewhere: "In a hidden polemic, the author's discourse is directed towards its own referential object, as is any other discourse, but at the same time every statement about the object is constructed in such a way that, apart from its referential meaning, a polemical blow is struck at the other's discourse on the same theme, at the other's statement about the same object" (1984, p.195). This is what happens in Bihruz's interior monologue: "This *insulte* cannot be forgiven or forgotten ... Driver! Don't you understand? Faster ... you see how Andon has bungled everything ... *Malheur sur malheur* ... I wonder what happened to the carriage ... what happened to the horses ... *Oui, elle avait sieze ans, c'est bien tôt pour mourir. Ah, pauvre fille!*" (Ekrem, 2015, p.197 in Evin, 1983, p.171). Bihruz's parodied language is visible in these lines, while the author's polemic is hidden in the way he articulates Bihruz's language. The meaning is inscribed twice, referentially and parodically. Although this approach takes us a step further to understand parodic functioning of the text, we have to note that we are still within the classic problematic of mimesis (original-imitation).

As we have passed from Genette's formal definition to Bakhtin's Marxist perspective, Agamben (2007) takes us a step further by placing the struggle in a new perspective: going back to the etymological root of the word in Ancient Greek, he defines parody as inter-

rupting rhapsody, as “*para ten oiden*, against (or beside) the song” and “*para*” refers to “a space beside” (p.39,40). Agamben thus reveals Bakhtin’s concept of “hidden polemic” in a new way: the act of parodying (the comic parabasis) is not a simple repetition, but it interrupts and splits the (prior) text, points to its edge or limit and thus frees a space beside or alongside it. It seems to me that such an approach to parody is more appropriate to the non-conceptual or heterogeneous aspect of the concept of the mimic Ekrem aims to construct.

To repeat: the emphasis on the parodic voice in interior monologue does not mean that the novel is not realist. Rather we must say that the articulation of realism (or enunciation of reality) is *in crisis* in the novel. While a regular and limited notion of parody assumes that the text that is parodied is known and mastered as an indivisible reference, what we have in interior monologue is an uncertain reference divided between romanticism and mimesis. In such a singular case in which writing tends to produce an irreducible doubling, the opening of the parodic “space beside” must be threatening, as it should also take the author towards the edge of articulation. As the linear, pedagogical narrative of the nation needs a pure beginning or origin, literary-critical and historical discourse has to repress any division, doubling or complexity (which can be found at the origin). This is why, in order to describe *The Carriage Affair* as an important step in the maturation of the form of novel, Evin’s progressive literary history had to depend on a conventional model of realism and reduce the novel’s miming of its protagonist’s discourse to a question of literary technique and authorial mastery. This approach itself should be seen as a mimetic one which assumes a transcendent, ideal form of the novel, whose good application is then identified, found or not found, in the native, national writing.

Miming Mimesis

We have talked about parody in theoretical terms, but the heterogeneity it involves must be demonstrated beyond general observation on the plurality of styles, loss of truth, etc. We need to remem-

ber at this point that the text chooses mimesis as its “original” text, which is “exemplified” (represented) by popular romantic novel, hence already a doubling in the text “itself”—is there, for instance, a true mimesis for Ekrem, one that avoids the problems inherent in popular romanticism? We do not know. Or, is the problem popular romanticism, and not mimesis in itself? We cannot quite say, given the nature of the *züppe* as a mimic man. I have argued that, critical of the excesses of Westernization, Ekrem had a polemic with mimesis, but this conflict or polemic could not be conducted in a moralistic manner, externally and transcendently. It should have been articulated *immanently*, as a question in and of language. The necessity of embodying the concept in language implied *miming* (parodying, travesty) *mimesis* “*itself*.” Since this is not just a conventional parody, the paradox of miming mimesis initiates a movement in which control might be lost. Can the law and order be maintained by simply putting the blame on popular romanticism as a special and false instance of mimesis?

This might be the author’s wish, but the interior monologue he invented produces a paradox: since a mimic man like Bihruz should not have a true self, what kind of interiority is his? Ekrem has to assume that Bihruz has a mental life (a mind, a self) *and* lacks a true one (romantic cliché, copy) *at the same time*. Insofar as Ekrem considers Bihruz as artificial, there should be a truly internal or authentic interior for the novelist, which would be an interior in which the word is present to the speaking subject. *Paradoxically, this is also what happens in the interior monologue of the mimic man*. Hence the word is present to its solitary speaker, whether he has a true self or not. Once interior monologue is chosen as a technique of representing him, there is no way of distinguishing a true interior from a false one: an uncanny doubling of the self. Hence the necessity of external, realistic description (“his French is actually poor, etc.”), i.e. the god-like realist author’s voice as opposed to Bihruz’s internal voice. Surely, we need to put the two voices together to be able to go on reading the narrative. We can further say that indeed we are subjected to the same realistic principle in the interior monologue: Bihruz’s interior monologue is direct speech put in quotation marks (which serve the function of

mediation). And yet, by the very mimetic (literary, novelistic) principle of representing his mind in writing, he is self-present without any mediation: we enter his mind through the quotation marks, which erase themselves as soon as we are inside. Once we are there however, it is impossible to distinguish the true from the false, as I have demonstrated above. It is only in the interior monologue that Bihruz can be constructed as the *artifice* that he *is*, that is to say, as his doubling, his falseness, his *not taking place while taking place*. By the principle of embedding the concept in language, it is *only inside* him that the reader finds outside (romantic cliché), which is itself unreal. Certainly the realistic objective voice (itself already faltering, as Gürbilek underlined) is not as effective as the interior monologue. But the inventive choice of interior monologue produces Bihruz as the very figure of a hyperbolic movement of mimesis, which verges on the loss of ground, a *mis en abyme*, because in the interior monologue an act of representing is placed within itself.²⁸

Obviously this is not an easy moment. We now feel that there must be a price for getting rid of the true modernizer. For, as enjoyable as it must be to the author to invent this new form of representation (“interior monologue”), its singular condition of miming mimesis opens up a dangerous, threatening movement. No doubt, the author “controls” it by his realistic descriptions. What is at stake however is not just a morally unacceptable and laughable character, but an experience of groundlessness. Ekrem feels that his realistic descriptions are not sufficient; he has to prove that what seems unreal (mimesis, imitation) is no less real, or if it is not real, it is relevant at least, hence real. This is why in the preface he attributes a pedagogical

²⁸ “Interior monologue” has a philosophical counterpart in E. Husserl’s notion of “solitary mental life” (2001, p.190-191). While Husserl’s notion of solitary mental life depends on the immediacy of imagined word to the solitary subject in interior monologue, Derrida emphasized the *temporality* and *iterability* of the word, whether in empirical, actual speech or mental, interior monologue (1973, p.32-59). We might say that this is the status of the popular romantic novel mimed by Bihruz. In other words, when we say above that “the word is present to his speaker, whether he has a true self or not”, the word that is present is also not present because it is already altered in its miming by the protagonist (we are not reading a popular romantic novel). That the novelist’s desire to hierarchize all these modes of discourse does not quite work appears in his warning in the preface that the novel should be read as a moral allegory.

cal mission to humour and begs his reader to read the story allegorically, as “*ibret*,” an object lesson, lest the reader (mis)takes the comic exaggeration for mere entertainment and misses the serious (indeed “sorrowful”) lesson behind it. Hence the preface *supplements* the defect *necessary* to the parodic nature of the text (and this is a textual, stylistic necessity for the true character is dismissed). The supplementary preface is a serious substitute for a comic defect. However, since such a supplement appears in (and as) the preface, that is to say, outside the text in order to supplement and repair precisely the necessary defect inside the text, it can only be read as the evidence of a *structural emptiness* or void. Does it not therefore repeat the very movement that it claims to represent, the void of mimesis? Speaking of “supplement,” Jacques Derrida (1997) writes: “its place is signed in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up *of itself*, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy” (p.144-145). Before going into this vertiginous void, I need to go through another significant reading of the novel.

The Void Affirmed, or Joys and Sufferings of Literature

I will now focus more closely on Jale Parla’s reading of *The Carriage Affair* in her seminal work on early Turkish novel, *Babalar ve Oğullar: Tanzimat Romanının Epistemolojik Temelleri* [Fathers and Sons: Epistemological Foundations of the Tanzimat Novel] (1993, p.129-153). Parla’s ingenious analysis of the Tanzimat novel is now a classic work, which founded a methodological framework for a whole generation of scholars and critics, including the author of these lines. Parla offered a vigilant reading of the epistemological subtext of the Tanzimat novels, while putting such readings, in a clever twist, in the framework of relations of authority and inheritance in a tumultuous period of social, political and cultural change. According to her, the Tanzimat generation was born into a world in which the traditional authority of the Ottoman state was deteriorating under the newly risen cultural and political hegemony of European powers.

The young generation of “sons” had to negotiate a new form of writing such as novel in a world in which the old epistemological and cultural assurances were eroding fast, and the new one was not born yet. They were thus writing on a “shifting ground” between the traditional (“absolutist,” “apriorist”) epistemology and the modern (“empiricist,” “realist”) one. Parla gave a sharp description of this world without a firm ground, as “a house without a father.”²⁹ The result of being born into and living in such a house was unique: the sons turned out to be “authoritarian children who had to take on their own guardianship in search for a lost father” (Parla, 1993, p.20—my translation). They have become missionary modernizing writers and intellectuals *without* challenging their fathers’ traditional epistemology. Parla succinctly argued how this resulted in their reproduction of it in a singular form: the tutelage, the guardianship of the father is now attributed to the writer as modernizing agent. Hence in Parla’s framework, Ahmet Mithat’s highly moralistic tone and style would be a response given to the lack of firm ground. For Parla, the two interesting exceptions were the philosopher Beşir Fuat and the poet and writer Recaizade Mahmut Ekrem who, in their intellectual practice and ideas, were able to break with the absolutism of traditional epistemology and replace it with a modern one.³⁰

Parla’s analysis is refreshing and stimulating, but one wonders whether she overlooks the patriarchal complicity of the traditional and the modern—a complicity which her own analysis must have implied: the sons were able to maintain and reproduce their father’s absolutist position to the extent that the West/modernity already

²⁹ The argument is given in her first chapter: “Babasız Ev” [A Home without a Father] (Parla, 1993, pp. 9-21). In fact, Parla’s thesis must be read as a criticism of the hegemonic conservative-liberal thesis of “state tradition”. The notion of “state tradition” is meant to explain the history of repression and military coups in Turkish history from a mainstream point of view. By giving a founding role to an almost unbeatable “essential” tradition of tutelage and guardianship, this type of analysis justifies military coups as well as authoritarian statism (Heper, 1985). Focusing on the close reading of a few literary texts in a significant period of transition, Parla explains the re-coding of absolutist epistemology in *and* as modernity.

³⁰ Of course, while Parla’s focus on the place of the father is absolutely important, it should be kept in mind that the traditional role of the father does not simply belong to a traditional culture.

constructed itself as a *transcendent* discourse of truth and knowledge, i.e. the new father. Hence, for instance, Evin's reading constructs Ekrem as the *true modernizing father* who embodied realism in literary language and gave birth to a *canonical* text in the proper familial chain of inheritance. In this respect, Parla's close reading of novels is more helpful than her employment of epistemological generalizations (such as absolutist vs empiricist epistemologies).

As a critic who is attentive to the stylistic aspect of the novel, Parla (1993) makes a vigorous reading of *The Carriage Affair* as an abyssal text, written in a fatherless home, on a shifting ground between the old and new worlds: carriages, lovers, loves, letters, everything is lost, everything disappears into a void. Words and acts are repeated, events turn around an empty circle, and nothing happens in the end (p.130-131).³¹ Interestingly, for Parla it is the same lack of ground, which leads to Rezaizade Ekrem's literary success. While she praises Ekrem's construction of this shifting ground as a state of languagelessness or confusion of languages, she also argues that Ekrem's parody of romanticism demonstrates how the early Turkish novel, written on shifting ground, fell into a *void* (p.130). Hence, unlike Evin, she does not see Ekrem's critical realism as an instance of perfect realist maturation in novel writing. While she admires Ekrem for his literary power of representing the void left by seismic vibrations of shifting ground, she also sees him falling into the same negative state. In her habitual sensitivity to the narrative form of modern novel, Parla draws our attention to an important weakness of *The Carriage Affair*. The novel could have ended after the episode of the love letter. The rest is only "a repetition or variation on the same theme"—even though, she reminds, the textual irony is brilliantly intensified towards the end. I will go back to this judgment in my conclusion. (In a

³¹ I should also underline that Parla carefully distinguishes Ekrem's realism from his mentor Namik Kemal's. While in conventional readings of *The Carriage Affair*, Ekrem's detailed description of the Çamlıca Park is found superior over Namik Kemal's, in Parla's perceptive reading, the difference does not necessarily lie in the Ekrem's abundance of details but somewhere else: in Ekrem's truly realistic descriptions, Çamlıca is gray, abandoned, in ruins, whereas in Kemal's traditional mind, it is naturally beautiful, afresh in every spring, etc. Ekrem's Çamlıca is used, consumed and thrown away, not natural at all (1993, pp. 131-132).

more recent work on the modern novel, Parla somewhat changed her analysis in a positive direction by underlining that Ekrem posed “the fundamental question of representation in literature. If the author has no means other than words, then, whether he/she affirms or negates representation, he/she has to do it with words” (Parla, 2002, p. 344). Again in a recent article, she refers to Ekrem’s acute perception of a “mimetic crisis” which was “engendered by the cultural and linguistic chaos of his times” [Parla, 2003, p.538].)

The portrayal of a language-less non-subject, confused and lost between cultures, is not unfamiliar in intellectual and political criticisms of westernization or colonization. While the foreign language is not learned properly, the mother language is also lost in alien education or lack of education. The question is addressed in the famous episode of the love letter. Trying to compose a letter to his beloved, Bihruz attempts to translate a romantic French poem. The poem articulates a theory of metaphorical naming or language according to which “the word is in debt to the thing which it should picture” (Ekrem, 2015, p.114-117). Bihruz’s literal reading of the metaphorical rose in the poem causes a good deal of confusion and leads to a burlesque search of a unique kind of rose in the *Histoire Naturelle*. In a second attempt, he tries to find another poem in classical Ottoman poetry, yet we are soon made to realize that the classical Ottoman is no more familiar to him than the French romantic poetry.

Parla makes a close analysis of the episode of the letter, which she regards as a major sign of the intentionally intertextual and parodic character of Ekrem’s text (1993, p.141-151). *First of all*, lacking a sense of literature and reading the rose literally, Bihruz looks for its meaning in botanical works. But *secondly* and more importantly according to Parla, if Bihruz does not understand the poetic metaphor of “a word in debt to the thing it should picture” and hits “an epistemological wall”, because “the word’s standing for objects in the outside world, or the correspondance between words and things, is a problem of modern philosophy,” whereas “in the Tanzimat literature, words do not correspond to things, do not represent them, and the Tanzimat literature is not written with such an epistemology ... [in Tanzimat’s] “apriorist, idealist epistemological framework, ... as

words are produced from ideas, they should correspond to them, and not to the outside world” (Parla, 1993, p.147-148—my translation).

The relationship established between words and things here is somewhat confusing. If Bihruz turns to botanical works, it is because he thinks there must be an “object which stands for the rose in the outside world” in Parla’s own formulation. So he is either familiar with modern epistemology, or what Parla calls modern epistemology is in fact nothing more than the everyday assumption that words correspond to things (which is surely shared by Bihruz as a speaking subject). Accordingly, either Parla is oversimplifying Tanzimat epistemology in describing it as apriorist and absolutist, or she overlooks that in everyday language we cannot but assume that words correspond to things. Probably both are equally true, for Parla does not philosophically elaborate on what she means by absolutist, apriorist Tanzimat epistemology.³²

Why should we see the historical condition of deterritorialization in negative terms, especially if it is precisely the same condition that produces an astonishingly new and rich literary text such as *The Carriage Affair*? Perception of the shifting ground as a negative, poor condition which deprives the subject of his/her power of expression depends on the assumption that language is a *stable* system based on ontologically *secure* ground (words correspond to things). I suspect this is Parla’s notion of modern epistemology. It is certainly not unproblematical for several reasons. I will simply emphasize that crisis can *also* be considered as a singularly positive condition of transformation and productivity. This is indeed how the interior monologue is invented as I have already implied above. We must see the much-complained groundlessness or languagelessness, the shifting and ambivalent historical and subjective state, as *productive* of Ekrem’s literary-critical effort. In Ekrem’s robust refusal of a true, moral and economic subject of mimesis there is a radical moment of *affirming the void and desacralizing literature*. This is the democratic

³² Parla’s more recent interpretation of Ekrem’s main problem as one of literary representation is actually quite different than her reading in *Babalar ve Oğullar* (Parla, 2002, p.344). I believe that the problematic aspect of her analysis in *Babalar ve Oğullar* is her assumption that modern epistemology is privileged in providing a secure ground.

and liberating effect we owe to him. Hence his critical take might well be that what seems to be a suffering of the word is a freedom of language, a joy of the word.³³

This change of perspective is necessary for literary criticism and history, but it does not explain the writer's own paradox. It is not for nothing that the critics have to make these judgements, even though we find them problematical. There is a degree of *undecidability* here that we must carefully think about. For, although his refusal involved a radical affirmative moment, we cannot overlook the fact that Ekrem was *capable* of transforming language and inventing new literature *to the extent he regarded mimesis negatively*, in terms of popular romanticism, and its subject as pure travesty—hence we still need to ask whether there is a minimal residue of true mimesis (the idea of a mimesis that gets rid of mimesis) in his discourse, that is to say a residue of the discourse of the father in Parla's terms. It follows that his affirmation of the void must therefore be a controlled one. Surely this is why humour and parody are *both advantageous* as literary genres i.e. forms of discursive control, *and potentially dangerous*, implicating pure laughter, at the same time. Such a “pure laughter” is disparaged by Ekrem as “mere entertainment” without the allegorical lesson. As the distortions of the body and lack of control are aspects of the experience of laughing, the author needs a serious reader, one who can pull him/herself together after a good laugh. Although Ekrem seems to circumvent a merely entertaining reading, this implies the possibility of imagining a laughter so pure, so excessive that it takes one to an extreme state where one totally loses control, cracks up and falls from the edge of parody into the groundless void, the abyss (as in Agamben's reading of parody).³⁴ The question is then: *Where in the text do we find the trace of this control, or its failure, i.e. what I have described above, speaking of the (supplementary) preface, as “the mark of a structural emptiness”?*

³³ This seems to be more compatible with the positions expressed by the journal *Servet-i Fünun* and the movement of *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* in general.

³⁴ What I call “pure laughter” here is what Georges Bataille called “laughter,” which, according to him, goes beyond the comic and throws one into the depths of “un-knowing.” Laughter is an “inner upheaval,” in which the displacement (the comic effect of the unexpected) itself is displaced by a fall into non-knowledge. Bataille, 1986, pp. 89-102.

Before returning to this fundamental problem posed by *The Carriage Affair*, I want to go through another critical reading, which reads the novel as well as its conventional readings in terms of desire and mimesis and offers a sharp critique of *national subject-constitution*. In order to be able to understand what is involved in the pure laughter, especially its radical implications, we need to take a closer look at the constitution of the nation-subject.

Double Bind, or what is “Turkishness”?

Nurdan Gürbilek’s scrupulously written, thoughtful essay “Originals and Dandies” also begins by emphasizing the “traumatic shifting of models generally discussed under the heading of westernization” (2003, p.600). Gürbilek is concerned with literary criticism as well as the novel writing in modern Turkish literature. She draws the attention to a hegemonic literary-critical discourse of lack, which is programmed to make an “anxious comparison” with the Western model. She gives the novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar’s position as an example of this nationalist anxiety. Tanpınar’s denial of a canonical status to *The Carriage Affair* repeats the question of mimesis it rejects: after criticizing Ekrem’s character who, according to him, lives “a shadowy life, exterior to himself” and lacking “inwardly felt emotions”, Tanpınar has to admit that, if it is necessary for the Turkish writer to go back to authentic roots in order to produce an “organically composed and genuine cultural self”, this is primarily because such a “hollow man made up of borrowed gestures” as Bihruz can not and should not represent the national literature *for the Western gaze* (Gürbilek, 2003, p. 601-602, 606-607 *passim*. See also Tanpınar, 1992, p. 91).

Gürbilek’s critical reading focuses on a *double bind* which she sees as traversing the Turkish novel-writing as well as literary criticism: “snobbism vs provincialism”—hence her title “Originals and Dandies.” For her, the result is a “double deformation”: on the one hand, “the local self makes the foreign ideal appear as a deformed one”; on the other, “the foreign ideal has already deformed the local self” (2003, p.603). This is related to a brilliant criticism of nationa-

list authenticity: “the currently irremovable rift between a snobbish self and an authentic one” is what “the Turkishness itself involves at the very origin” (p.616). Gürbilek takes seriously Tanpınar’s negative description of Ekrem’s biographical and literary personality as a romantic snob himself. If Rezaizade Ekrem himself is a kind of Bihruz, we have a shift of perspective: when the Tanzimat writers, most of whom accused of writing cliches, looked at *their own world* what they saw there was “a deformed and distorted figure,” and an “inner world made up of accidents and traumas” rather than Tanpınar’s natural treasure of an organic self.³⁵ Hence Tanpınar’s desire to fix “a clear boundary between the genuine national self and Tanzimat’s snobbish one” is rather illusory (p. 607), and “the two divergent stances share the same nationalistic paradigm” (p. 603).

Parla criticized the Tanzimat writers because of their maintenance of absolutism in a perverted modern synthesis which re-coded patrimonial praetorianism into literary activity. Gürbilek’s criticism grasps the modernizing (canonizing, nationalizing) agent at the mimetic point of his yearning for identity (rather than the self-assured absolutist/modernist missionary zeal). The story of modern nation-building (and canon-building) is, after all, a story of *becoming-subject*. Gürbilek ingeniously spoils the game by demonstrating that the authentic is already traumatized. But I think her own critical strugg-

³⁵ We know that Ekrem took the same side with Beşir Fuad against romanticism, and this was also one of the reasons in Ahmet Evin’s reading of him as a precursor of realism. According to Gürbilek however, as a forerunner of the literary movement of *Servet-i Fünun* which depended on the principle of “art for art’s sake”, he was himself often accused of decadence. His contemporaries described his character as “self-indulgent, extravagant and snobbish”. He had no interest in Arabic or Persian literatures, was greatly influenced by the French romantics, translated Chateaubriand’s *Atala* and admired Alfred de Musset and especially Lamartine. This is also the portrait drawn by Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, who paid special attention to the postcard sentimentality of the romantic poems Ekrem wrote before *The Carriage Affair*. Gürbilek emphasizes how Tanpınar’s description of Ekrem resembles Bihruz: “the man empty inside, the puerile dandy incapable of developing an inner world of his own.” Taking this possibility seriously, she asks: “Hasn’t Rezaizade Ekrem felt that he has his share of “bihruzness” himself? Hasn’t he noticed that what he calls his *inner world* is also composed of romantic cliches, stolen similes and verbosity?” (Gürbilek, 2003, p.614-615 *passim*.) She suggests that reading *The Carriage Affair* as a mere satire on snobbism, prevalent in the literature course at school, might be a way of hiding the snobbism at the origin of our own identity, the original Turkish self. Gürbilek’s critical sensitivity has a great significance, especially in the teaching of literature.

le with the problematic of mimesis leaves a residue of ideality and normality. Gürbilek's critique of nationalist paradigm depends on two important theoretical sources: René Girard's concept of mimetic crisis and Gregory Jusdanis's concept of belated modernity (Girard, 1976; Jusdanis, 1991). Although Jusdanis's work gives a powerful critical account of the insertion of the story of Greece into the European master narrative, his concept of belatedness is not unproblematical. According to Jusdanis, all projects of modernization "after the Netherlands, England and France are belated" (Jusdanis, 1991, p. xiv). But is "the Western gaze" not left untouched in this assumption of a normal, timely development and a properly modern Western European subject in the Netherlands, England and France? In the concept of belatedness, the "foreign ideal" (i.e. the "Western gaze") preserves its historical form intact.

As for Girard, Gürbilek offers a historicist defense of his theory of mimetic crisis by arguing that, although Girard's theory does not take cultural and national difference into account, it "takes its universality from the fact that its object—desire itself—has already been universalized" (2003, p.619). To say the least, this universality is problematical because it involves a certain *direction* given to it by the concept of belatedness. Indeed, Gürbilek openly writes that it moves "from the periphery to the capital" ("Dandies and Originals", p.613), overlooking the *Western metropolitan desire for the peripheral Other*, which manifests itself in the Western hegemonic worlding of the world.³⁶ The double bind and double deformation she has ingeniously formulated has already implied that the desire in question must be more complicated than a unidirectional and linear understanding of desire for capital, for the West. In focusing on the invested misrepresentation of the Orient in European textual economy, Edward Said's *Orientalism* showed how the West produced itself as he-

³⁶ Gürbilek is similar to Baker in this reading of the orientation of desire. See footnote 14 above. As for Girard, this author's concept of desire depends on a highly simplified threefold model. Its apparent similarity to the psychoanalytic account, especially Lacan's, is rather misleading for the latter does not grossly homogenize desire the way Girard does. More importantly, Girard's Christian faith puts him in an awkward position: Jesus Christ is the only historical instance we do not have mimetic desire and rivalry! This is a very strong and deeply conservative Eurocentrism.

gemonic subject. I am also reminded of the literary historian Gerald MacLean's interesting work on the 17th century British travellers to the Ottoman Empire. These travellers had a consistent theme in their writings: the political strength and the administrative complexity of the Ottoman imperial state apparatus. Mac Lean describes the subjective state of these representatives of the emergent British colonial empire as "imperial envy": indeed, the British felt that they were *latecomers* to the business of imperial rule. Mac Lean's careful and detailed account of the British sense of belatedness and mimetic crisis shows that these are not merely "peripheral" characteristics (Mac Lean, 2001a, 2001b, 2007).

There is, however, a much more interesting aspect of Gürbilek's argument that potentially (though not entirely) goes against the residue of ideality in her discourse. She sees the carriage as the real protagonist of the novel and the appropriate "symbol" of a journey or promise of changing identity. However, she argues, this is a *broken* carriage, appropriated in debt and then lost. Indeed, for her, the novel itself can be read as a carriage in the journey of becoming-modern, hence the identity of the writer and the protagonist. In reading the carriage/novel as a *broken symbol*, Gürbilek (2003) opens an entirely new dimension: "the carriage turns out to be the very symbol of a modern technique that cannot be mastered, the symbol of the foreign toy called the novel bought at the same time from the very same place as the carriage itself" (p. 613-614). Contrary to Evin's reading of the novel in terms of technical mastery, and concurring with Parla's judgement about the weakness of the plot and the ending, Gürbilek argues that the symbol of modernity is broken, the *techne* or *mimesis* is not masterable.

There are two different ways of reading this broken symbol. *When it is read together with the concept of belatedness*, it implies that the carriage or the novel, that is the medium must have been mastered in the place where it appeared in due season, i.e. in the West where the unbroken, complete symbol comes in full circle and corresponds to what it symbolizes. This is the hegemonic reading. There is however *another way of reading the broken symbol*. Following Girard's criticism of romantic spontaneous theory of desire,

Gürbilek (2003) writes that the figure of the snob “reveals the mimetic nature of all desire,” that is desire is always mediated by the Other (p.619).³⁷ *This is a strategic moment.* We need to ask what is meant by the “Other” here, if especially the medium or mediation of desire is *broken*. How can such a *discontinuity* be considered? Perhaps, as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have argued once, “desire works only when it breaks down, and by continually breaking down” (1983, p.8). This would mean, minimally, that the so-called “Other” could not be a “model,” a “form,” a “gestalt,” a “symbol,” that is to say, the faultless, complete, normal and normative Western Subject/Man. Such a view (of the Other as model) is precisely the view of the envious, resentful nationalist “son” under the Western gaze.³⁸ The process of becoming-subject is more complicated than following the Western model of the nation (whether with a sense of belatedness or not). As soon as the Other is taken as a model (such as the West or Western nation), it will betray itself by being raised as such; for it is “itself” always already belated and broken, it is “itself” made up of *otherness* beyond cognitive or linguistic control. This *otherness* exceeds the subject and constitutes him/her in failing him/her. Reading the “other part” of the broken symbol can not have a telos of completing the meaning of the symbol (which can no longer symbolize); it is rather an invention of the *otherness* of the symbol in its breaking apart. In refusing a true mimesis, affirming the void and inventing interior monologue and parody, Ekrem found himself confronted

³⁷ As I have emphasized above (footnote 36) Girard’s theory should not be confused with Lacan’s. Although Lacan writes that “desire is the desire of the other”, he also sees desire as “the difference that results from the subtraction of the ... [biological need] from the ... [linguistic demand], the phenomenon of their splitting (1977, p. 58 and p. 286-287).

³⁸ This is where Lacan might *perhaps* be considered closer to Girard by elaborating a theory of mimetic identification, rivalry and aggressivity as the psychic basis of paranoia in his well-known theory of the mirror stage (Lacan, 1982, pp. 1-7)—though such comparison should move cautiously. Lacan uses the concept of “Gestalt” in order to describe *the image in the mirror*. As *Gestalt* is characterized by wholeness, such an image puts us in a life-long rivalry with ourselves. In a line by line, critical reading of Lacan, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen draws attention to the *frozen and statue-like nature* of this image in Lacan’s discourse (1991, pp. 43-71). Of course we need to add that, for Lacan, this imaginary identification must be replaced with symbolic identification, which is not identification with an image, nor with a model, but identification with a place. In our case at least, I have just shown that the symbol fails to provide unity.

with a movement in which the symbol is not copied and mirrored, but in fact broken apart, discontinued.³⁹

What we owe then to Gürbilek's reading is her showing us the broken nature of the symbol and the traumatic constitution of the subject in double bind and double deformation. But a restricted, Girardian understanding of mimesis confines her argument into an operation of revealing the conflictual nature of desire, of mimetic rivalry and the revelation of the identity of these opposing poles. When she asked questions such as "how can literature *go beyond* this double bind? Is there an original area between localness and foreign ideal?" (Gürbilek, 2003, p.603—my emphasis), she has already given the sign of dialecticization (even as a "between"), a *dialecticization* which reappears in her ending wish for "the moment in criticism when both modern arrogance and romantic pride may fade out" (Gürbilek, 2003, p. 625), that is, clearly, *a moment of resolution of the conflict*, the end or completion of mimesis. But then, would this not be the moment of the final and victorious constitution of a full subject, that is a *subject without traumas*, i.e. Ahmet Mithat's paradigmatic "Rakım Bey," while she so rightly demanded, just a line above, a "criticism" that "should work with concepts, that can appreciate the accidents and traumas that make up the space that we call *self*" (p.625)? What is needed is precisely a criticism that does not merely appreciate, but also looks for a productive condition in the accidents and traumas that make up the mimetic space of the national subject.

Haunting, or Mimesis and Femininity

Precisely in respect of mimesis, I would like to argue that the author might be a little ahead of his critics, though in a paradoxical way. When Parla and Gürbilek observe that *The Carriage Affair* is made up of a plurality of styles, we need to remember the *structural* connection between mimesis and plurality. What bothered Plato in

³⁹ Do I need to add that this is the inverse of the movement which produces Rakım Bey, the one who copies *in truth*, the nationalist or Islamist? Indeed "Rakım Bey" can be read as the "model" of the right-wing politician from Menderes and Demirel to Özal and Erdoğan. Who says literature is marginal?

mimesis was certainly not that it was imitation, but rather that it produces a radical pluralization (Plato, 1979, 397e). We find it in the patchwork of styles as well as the parodic *excess* in the novel. By pluralization here we do not mean pluralism. I have shown above how the excess points to a structural void and is the effect of a movement in which the symbol is broken and cannot be repaired. There must be a moment in the text in which this is *both* confessed and disavowed. This is the moment of pure laughter, *or* the moment of “failure control”, or the “structural emptiness” I have brought up above. A look into the abyss, a look full of fright and enjoyment, and a look which nevertheless marks the structural void in the hope of preventing the fall.

Before the moment of fall/control, of fright/enjoyment, I have to refer to a number of mechanisms of *distancing*. If Ekrem himself is a kind of Bihruz as Tanpınar and Gürbilek argued, is there an autobiographical aspect to the novel? If this plausible path of interpretation is followed however, one realizes that Ekrem’s question must be less the question of an autobiographical aspect (in the sense of a simple correspondence) than a question of fighting resemblance, especially resemblance to the form of persons, for what is at stake in Bihruz is the production of a concept of mimesis. No doubt this is why humour is so convenient. It is in this context that, in addition to the inscription of affects and percepts, we could talk about mechanisms of *distancing* as an essential part of Ekrem’s production of “Bihruz” as a concept. For instance, in order to construct Bihruz as a comic figure, Ekrem had to *overstate* the superficiality of his education.⁴⁰

Written in early 1890s, *The Carriage Affair* also went back half a century in time, to the Tanzimat period of early 1840s when especially the youth were influenced by the fashionable imitation of European manners and way of life. Such chronological fixing must be read as a way of controlling the mimetic moment of modernity as

⁴⁰ Due to his high bureaucrat father’s constant change of appointments from one place to another in the empire, Bihruz could not get proper education. There is already a criticism of the empire’s administrative instability and chaos in this, as well as the Ottoman bureaucrat’s own ignorance and poor judgment. Bihruz’s obviously insufficient education is interrupted by the father who found it satisfactory on examination, and he was placed in a government office. Ekrem, 2015, pp. 57-58.

if it happened once and for all. In the beginning of the novel, Ekrem introduces us into a bygone, past age when the Çamlıca Park used to be a prominent place, where we have ruins now. The present state of the park is uncannily described as “desolate, silent and gloomy” (Ekrem, 2015, p. 52—my translation). *The Carriage Affair* can be read as the effect of a certain *haunting*, which it tries to distance and control by means of writing. Bihruz is the haunting mimic whose very (non) nature is return, repetition, copy. The affects and percepts (words, gestures, sounds) that make up the figure of Bihruz are also what must be haunting their author and what he must therefore exorcise by turning into a literary allegory. Insofar as this haunting of the mimic is concerned, we need to remember Jale Parla’s keen observation of the *repetitive structure* of the text. Hence our mimetological engagement turns out to be “hauntological,” to use Jacques Derrida’s term. In fact, the danger of plurality that accompanies mimesis for Plato is also identified in the spectral problematic by Derrida. According to him, a spectre is by definition plural, *both* more and less than one.⁴¹ For Derrida, as a disappearing apparition, the incorporation of a specter is paradoxical. We would always like to identify a corpse, to bury it in the right place, to make sure that it will not come back. Derrida calls this process, ironically, “ontologization.” Bihruz immediately believes his mischievous friend’s lie and assumes that he must have broken her beloved’s heart. Following the plot of romanticism, he must visit and cry before her grave. But of course he must first find her grave, which does not actually exist, etc. Does Periveş not become a ghost in the novel, by a ruse of the plot?

We have learned much from the literary critical readings so far, but having solely focused on Bihruz as a literary figure and in their almost obsessive (so very Turkish!) concern with the accidents and traumas of the change from a traditional identity into a Western, modern one, the literary critics have missed the novel’s strange play of *sexual difference*.⁴² After all, one cannot not ask, is there a love

⁴¹ Derrida, 2006, p. 3.

⁴² Gürbilek comes close to it when she compares Bihruz with Madame Bovary as two bookish characters. In her more recent work she makes an extensive discussion of feminization. See her *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark: Edebiyat ve Endişe* [Blind Mirror, Lost Orient:

story that is not romantic? Romanticism is often considered as responsible for modernizing love in various ways: as the birth right of every individual, as a freely chosen relationship between lovers, and as the most exalted of human feelings. Like many in his generation, Ekrem too was severely critical of arranged marriages and in support of free choice of a partner.⁴³ Further, in his poetry and essays, he often took love as a particular kind of feeling that lies behind the interest shown in art and literature. Hence although I have argued above that the choice of French popular romanticism in writing a parody of mimesis was particularly useful in creating a peculiar individual world cut off from reality, this choice was also not unambiguous.

As we approach the most strategic textual moment, we need to ask: in the strange ebb and flow of romanticism and mimesis, *what is the role of women in the novel?* As Periveş and her friend are described as simple, ignorant and a bit “loose” women, we are made to feel from the very beginning that they are obviously not proper for romance. They are thus the ultimate *evidence* of the falsity of Bihruz’s illusory world. Hence although they have a marginalized and instrumental status in the narrative that is *conceptually* centered in Bihruz, the concept needs *evidence*. Paradoxically, lacking capacity to articulate a rational, referential discourse of truth, women come to articulate *the truth of mimesis* in their conversation. The medium (or, perhaps we should say the carriage) of the passage from the concept to its sensible evidence is the language of women. But this is also a threatening moment for conceptual construction: the necessary possibility of a structural void.

Literature and Anxiety] (Istanbul: Metis, 2004). Although Gürbilek goes through various different novels in this more recent work and makes a fine inventory, I think her account of feminization of the *zümpe* does not have the critical force of her reading in the “Dandies and Originals” and remains on a descriptive level.

⁴³ His famous play, *Çok Bilen Çok Yanılır* [The More One Knows, the More One Errs] was a criticism of arranged marriage. In fact, this has been a popular theme of the Ottoman-Turkish theater in the 19th century, since Şinasi’s classic *Şair Evlenmesi* [The Marriage of a Poet], which also criticized arranged marriage. This was considered to be a radical criticism in a cultural climate which is well described in Parla’s *Babalar ve Oğullar* (1993). For Ekrem, love was also a particular kind of feeling that was behind the interest shown in art and literature.

The passage occurs in the very beginning of the novel. After having spotted the two women and already struck by the beauty of Periveş, Bihruz finds an occasion for approaching them when they have a conversation by the side of a small lake in the park. Ekrem gives a long description of the lake and emphasizes how its shining surface reflects trees, plants and people around it *like a mirror*. We are already in mimesis. The reflective nature of the lake initiates a ridiculous conversation between the two women, listened to by Bihruz at appropriate distance and all ears. The conversation is a series of displacements which are caused by mishearing and ignorance. In order to give the sense of this constant shift of sense, I will put the shifting Turkish sounds in parenthesis. Looking at the lake, Periveş says: “Look, look, Çengi Hanım, the mirror of the earth (*yer aynası*)! Do you see yourself?” Çengi either pretends not to have understood, or does not really understand, or finds the metaphor rather unnecessary. She responds by a rhyme: “Mirror of the earth (*yer aynası*)? What is that? I know the ground apple (*yer elması*) but I’ve never heard of mirror of the earth... (*yer aynası*).” Assuming she does not get the point, Periveş teases her: “Just pull your tulle over, you will see two ground apples (*yer elması*) on the mirror of the earth (*yer aynası*)...” Çengi answers by refusing the metaphor: “What is there to look at? It is a muddy water! And those little red things must be Amasya apple (*Amasya elması*).”⁴⁴ Periveş continues her teasing: “They have diamond (*elmas*) in Amasya? That I have never heard...” Finally, Çengi protests: “Apple, I said apple (*elma*)! Not diamond (*elmas*). Everyone knows diamond and brilliant come in England! Are you looking for some entertainment, making fun of me?” (Ekrem, 2015, p.74-77).⁴⁵

First of all, the displacements: the shift from “*yer aynası*” (mirror of the earth) to “*yer elması*” (ground apple) by rhyme is relatively

⁴⁴ A kind of sweet, little red apple that grows in the Amasya region of Turkey.

⁴⁵ If there is nativity (in the sense of an “intractable difference”), it lies in the strange play of these suffixes, in the singular, idiomatic, fragmenting (a)rhythm of a language, and not in some identity as Tanpınar assumes. But I cannot not ask: Is this nativity (beyond Tanpınar)? Is there some ordinary mimesis (but if so, are we not back to Tanpınar)? Or, is it the loss, or better put (as we shall see below), “desisting” of the very nativity of the native? Ekrem’s fright before his (m)other tongue.

easier. The second one from “*yer elması*” to “*yer elması*” is a semantic shift made possible by the irregularity of Turkish suffixes. It is an instance of reading the same twice, pure parody, employed by Periveş. While both “*elma*” (apple) and “*elmas*” (diamond) get different suffixes (“*si*” and “*i*”) in order to belong to a specific category (ground apple or Amasya apple) according to the syntactic rules of Turkish, the resulting phonetic (and graphic) articulation is exactly the same: “*elması*” (which is why Periveş can pretend to have heard “diamond” instead of “apple”). *Secondly*, although the objective authorial descriptions construct both of these marginal figures as uneducated, empty-minded, light women and do not develop their characters further throughout the narrative, the conversation specifies a difference between them. Is this a class difference? We are under the impression that Çengi may be socially lower than Periveş. But although she bears the burden of the comic effect and she has to resort to the semantic difference in her last response, her answers skillfully displace sense throughout the conversation. It is also clear that, despite the bickering between them, the two women are having fun, employing the music of language rather playfully. By immediately shifting to Bihruz’s entirely false view of the conversation, the narrative ignores the possible social disparity, which it employed to create difference as well as the comic effect, and registers the passage as a meaningless conversation between two women.

The meaninglessness and emptiness of the conversation is reinforced by Bihruz’s completely false interpretation of it. He admires Periveş’s “finesse” (*Quel esprit! Quel fines!*) in creating an exchange that could have only meant to be a pass given to him as he is the only Europeanized gentleman around who could appreciate such things as diamonds and England! He immediately approaches the women and offers Periveş the white geranium on his collar, while giving a bombastic speech on the value of diamond and her beauty, full with French words. Bihruz is laughable precisely for taking seriously a conversation in which not simply the reference is lost but rather possible loss is not even taken seriously by the conversants—Çengi tries to fix the referent in a last effort to protect herself from the violence of the shift, which in fact she herself actuated. We read in women’s

behavior the signs of a parodic or mimetic movement getting out of control. *Ekrem encrypts the notion of mimesis in the conversation by metaphorizing the lake or the ground itself as mirror*, while the passage evokes the intimate association between femininity and mirror (Periveş asks Çengi if she sees herself in the mirror of the earth), not to mention fluidity, which is always associated with femininity. When the earth or ground itself becomes a mirror however, the mirror of “*ibret*”, of object lesson, might fail to produce proper reflections, and we might fall from the edge of parody into the void, the abyssal world of a deadly, mechanical, pure laughter, a hysterical crack up—like the one the women are often complained to fall into. This possible universe is one in which the lakes turn into mirrors, mirrors into apples and apples into diamonds. It is the void of mimesis, of untruth, of the quasi-mad movement of the copying of a model without model: a void in which the words are dissolved (in the lake) into fragmenting, shifting, spectral sounds—or, fragmenting, shifting, spectral sounds do not collect themselves in and form themselves into words which make sense. Although the comic effect is successfully controlled here, the passage is nevertheless significant for giving us a fundamental clue as to what kind of danger is at stake in mimesis: fragmentation, doubling, destruction, loss of meaning.⁴⁶

It is not for nothing that the dangerous possibility of falling into the void, the destructive possibility of pure laughter appears in the

⁴⁶ As the metaphor of the lake abolishes the Lacanian distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic by its mimetic, reflecting power, here one must refer to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. In reference to Lacan's concepts of the imaginary and the mirror stage (see footnote 38 above), he insists that *the image or the figure cannot be reduced to Gestalt*: “What should be noted here, with and against Lacan, and going back from Lacan to Reik, is that there is a constant though muffled breakdown of the imaginary, of the resources of the imaginary. The Imaginary destroys at least as much as it helps to construct. This explains, perhaps, why the subject in the mirror is first of all a subject in ‘desistance’ (and for example, it will never recover from the mortal insufficiency to which, according to Lacan, its prematuration has condemned it) .. The figure is never *one* . . . [There is] no essence of the imaginary. What Reik invites us to think, in other words, is that the subject ‘desists’ because it must always confront *at least* two figures (or one figure that is *at least* double:) ... this destabilizing division of the figural (which muddles, certainly, the distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic, and broaches at the same time negativity or absolute alterity of the ‘real’)” (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1989, pp. 174-175). The word “*elmasi*” in the above passage is precisely this doubling of the figure: *both* apple and/or diamond. I shall discuss Lacoue-Labarthe's concept of “desisting” below.

conversation between women. If Bihruz's investment into *her* truth is false and is a sign of his own potential femininity, this falsity, which is of great moral significance for Ekrem, is nevertheless a "truth" that cannot be shown otherwise. And if this truth (of mimesis) is false, opening up a dangerous, abysmal dimension, it is *only the figure of the woman* who can show it, like a metaphor herself, a transport or carriage for man, for, as every man knows, she is "naturally" mimetic and false... Behind these simple women, one wonders, if there is passing the shadowy figure of another woman who is laughing, no doubt "hysterically", at the man who, strolling on a street or sitting in a coffee shop in search for free love, deep in his thoughts, sees in himself "a deformed and distorted figure ... an inner world made up of accidents and traumas" (Gürbilek, 2003, p.614-615 passim). The ghost haunting and producing Ekrem's text is not simply Bihruz the *züppe*, but also woman or femininity conceived *as* mimesis, lack of truth, mimesis feminizing the son. I have said that *The Carriage Affair* gives birth to a new sensibility, a new language amidst the din, in the middle of the crowd, but now I must add that it gives birth to it in the middle of images and thoughts of Bihruz, that is to say a *man* who, in Nietzsche's words, "stands in the midst of his own noise, in the midst of his own surf of plans and projects," where "he is apt to see quiet, magical beings gliding past him and to long for their happiness and seclusion: women" (1974, p.123).

The appearance of women in public space was part of a historically new experience of modern urban living in Istanbul in the 19th century. Periveş's appearance, disappearance and reappearance in the end of the narrative can also be read as allegorizing the new urban experience. In accepting the story of her death, in following the romantic plot, may the hidden parodic text behind the visible parodied love story be hiding *another love story*? Perhaps that is what is lost/archived. If so, however, it would be rather hard to put this story together and narrativize it. We already feel that, lost for good, it might be resisting precisely narrativization, ontologization or canonization.

The Red Umbrella, or Love at Last Sight

Parla thinks that the novel could have ended after the letter episode, and the rest is mere repetition and variation on the same theme, and Gürbilek finds Ekrem's ending abrupt and literarily weak. Gürbilek articulates the demand for the basic narrative requirement, when she writes that, in the end of the novel, "the encounter with reality does not lead to a change, a conflict, a crisis, a fragmentation in Bihruz's static character" (2003, p.623). In fact, Recaizade Ekrem's ending perfectly gives a sense of complete failure (Bihruz is simply surprised, and his last word is a confused and naïve apology in withdrawal: "Pardon!"), but interestingly we are not given any further account, and the sense of resolution is left incomplete. The literary critic's formal expectation is that the protagonist must change by realizing the truth of his snobbism in the end, or at least, we should have a sense of his collapse. Parla is right in sensing that Ekrem himself might have fallen into the void. How to read Ekrem's abrupt ending without further account of his protagonist's expected psychological change following the discovery of truth? How to read this technical failure from an author who so skillfully invented new forms of expression?

Perhaps the question lies elsewhere. If I am right in reading *The Carriage Affair* in terms of haunting, then a proper narrative ending should imply that the specters are finally expelled, that is to say, they are identified, made visible and given intelligible form, which will also be the end of mimesis, of miming, reflecting, representing, imitating. The truth must arrive in the end. Periveş's re-appearance in flesh and bone, out of her grave, should mean that the ghost is now expelled. By encrypting the very concept of mimesis (representation, imitation, mimicry) in the scene of femininity, Ekrem confessed that he sees woman as the (un)truth of mimesis. This is at least one significant figure of woman in patriarchal inscription. Reading this figure among many other figures of woman in Nietzsche, Derrida writes: "There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of that abyssal divergence of the truth, because that untruth is the truth. Woman is but one name for that untruth of truth" and for Nietzsche, "truth is like a woman. It resembles the veiled movement

of feminine modesty” (Derrida, 1979, p.51). Woman has no truth because her veils (always many) never reveal but re-veil her absence of truth *and* truth is like a woman because it resembles the veiled movement of femininity.

Periveş’s re-appearance at the point of narrative closure, in the place of truth, is *the endless return of the untruth of the truth of mimesis*, which is the untruth of the truth of woman. Ekrem, now himself being dispossessed of truth, cannot resolve his protagonist’s unfortunate adventure in truth. The author cannot write a proper end, precisely because he cannot find one. This can perhaps be read as a literary weakness, improper or yet immature modernity, as Parla and Gürbilek somehow suggest.

Is there another way of reading this withdrawal, this “*pardon*”? There is certainly a patriarchal aspect of the novel. A figure of *castrating woman* appears in Ekrem’s view of mimesis.⁴⁷ The project of turning the question of mimesis into snobbism as false modernity and snobbism into false desire as romanticism, this double project cannot possibly be written without the marginal figure of woman. In going beyond the moralistic truthful narrative of the father and posing the question of narrative as ethical instantiation by humour, Ekrem finds himself confronted with an ineluctable mimetic *excess* he cannot but associate with women. He thus exorcises mimesis by projecting it on women, while at the same time he is unable to find the right man to correct this disorder.

A few speculations, then: Going back to Parla’s analysis, we could perhaps speculate that the “author-son” who refuses arranged marriages, that is emotional and sexual partnership under the sole authority of the father’s truthful, economic (modest and calculative) mimesis, finds himself *fatherless and free on the street*, alone with “quiet, magical beings gliding past him” and wonders how “to long for their happiness and seclusion.” In Bihruz’s all encounters with Periveş, her fundamental attitude is indifference to him. Perhaps the author-son fell down on the street, because of a “vertigo of hyper-

⁴⁷ Of course, woman, following Derrida’s reading of the figure of woman in Nietzsche, does not believe in the truth of castration and no more believes in anti-castration than castration (Derrida, 1979, p.61).

bole” like in Baudelaire’s famous example, and as his inauthenticity is now revealed, laughed at himself: this would then be an ironic laughter in Paul de Man’s sense, the author-son duplicating himself in the inauthentic, mimic man he parodies and laughs at,⁴⁸ but still trying to create an authentic literary space for himself by appropriating *her* laughter. But this is, I repeat, *speculation*—unless it is taken as a little fictional story immanent to the emerging urban everyday of modernity.

Therefore I should be content with an observation: the excess of mimesis can be read as having to do with an uncanny experience which makes itself felt in the emergent space of the modern city. In the last episode, a “fast carriage” threatens the passers-by, and Bihruz’s beloved disappears into the crowd under a “red umbrella” in the region of Pera, the most modern part and shopping area of Istanbul then. In this rather too familiar reading, Periveş, appearing in a carriage and disappearing under a red umbrella, is Baudelaire’s “passer-by” and Walter Benjamin’s “love at last sight.” The stage is Marx’s *Darstellung* as theater of the modern city, the very space of mimesis with its violent spectacle of commodities. As the author’s very attempt to represent the mimetic space can only succeed by miming that space in a vertigo of the hyperbole, he leaves us with a metropolitan crowd or mass which only exists in coming-to-pass, already spectral.⁴⁹ The controversial ending of the novel does not leave the space to the woman who turns out to be the truth of the non-truth of mimesis (for the castrated man, for the man who believes in castration), but it tends to identify her with the violent spectrality and theatricality of commodified urban space so that he will be able to keep her away from literature, keep her in exile, perhaps. Is this not the old story of the structurally missing object of desire, however veiled (commodity or phallus) it is? No doubt, in this sense the novel reproduces the given order of sexual difference.

⁴⁸ For the philosophical type’s self-duplication in the comic, see Baudelaire, 1995, pp. 147-165; and, Paul de Man, 1971, pp. 187-228, especially p. 213.

⁴⁹ For this notion of “coming-to-pass” see Weber, 1996, pp. 76-107.

De-constitution

And yet, perhaps for the very same reason, or in the same movement, the author-son also “knows” that his mastery cannot deliver a solution to the problem he produces, once any given moral alternative is dismissed. We owe this to Ekrem’s singular genius: there is no and there can be no “right guy” here, no “Rakım Efendi.” The problem of mimesis must be embodied in language by means of a parody of popular romanticism in the mind of a protagonist who mimes its plot. With this courageous literary decision, a decision in favor of the literary to come, of literary to be invented so as to instantiate the ethical, something has already moved, something little but in such a way that it devastated all... so that he could not construct the very concept he somehow constructed. In representing, or actually in *miming* Bihruz’s mimetic/romantic inauthenticity (his inessential essence, his improper propriety) in parodic repetition as interior monologue, Ekrem goes through *an experience of writing* in which the “I” is doubled, hence subjected to a radical undecidability, and an experience of writing in which there is no essence of and no proper to mimesis, hence also no improper to it either—an experience of writing in which mimesis is outside itself: all that is appropriated by mimesis, all that is proper or essential to it risks its property or its essence in an infinity of substitution.⁵⁰ Although this is projected on women, Ekrem nevertheless “knows” that “it” is very close to him, as close as Bihruz: his shadow, his ghost—and then *who is he?* A radical undecidability. It would not be wrong to say that the uncanny experience of doubling teaches him clandestinely (a clandestinity that nevertheless escapes him while marking him in his confessional encrypting) *another lesson* in the mirror of “*ibret*”—an “ironic” lesson in Paul de Man’s sense of irony: the knowledge of inauthenticity cannot overcome inauthenticity.⁵¹ While he asks the reader to read the novel allegorically, the other lesson of “allegory” (which means literally “otherwise-speaking”) turns out to be *other* than a moral.

⁵⁰ Lacoue-Labarthe, 1989, p. 116. I interpret Lacoue-Labarthe’s concept of mimesis in terms of a certain experience of writing here.

⁵¹ I am referring here to Paul de Man’s concept of irony: “it can know this inauthenticity but can never overcome it” (1971, p. 222). This is because ironic consciousness has to do with finitude.

Hence I would like to argue that the repetitive structure and the almost brutal ending of *The Carriage Affair* is not a question of literary or novelistic immaturity at all. It points to an ineluctable otherness beyond a mere denial of didacticism and moralism. Following Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's concept of "desistance" (or *désistement*), I would like to suggest that, in the absence of conventional narrative ending, of the celebrated (Platonic, Aristotelian and modern) passage from mimesis to diegesis, from imitation to truth, the subject *desists*. Or: the subject abstains from its candidacy for the national-authentic. This *désistance* is not the failure of a dialectical surmounting or narrative resolution, but points to a *literary displacement* of an immediate moral ordaining—even though helplessly asking for an allegorical reading and trying hard to re-institute its reader outside mimesis (indeed is the supplementary warning or request in the preface not for the very reason that the subject desists?). The author's desisting is the middle voice (neither active nor passive) of literature, of literary invention. The fact that the hyperbolic and exorbitant critical-literary space the *désistance* opens up is technicized and normalized by literary history, and that literature is thus nationalized, canonized and masculinized does not mean that it can be reduced to such narrativizations. Rather it means that these narrativizations themselves are produced on uncertain ground. The novel's disappearing figures, Bihruz, Periveş and others, continue to move amidst the din, in the middle of the crowd, always here, always with us.

This is why I should like to talk about *de-constitution* rather than mere withdrawal. We are far away from Evin's mastery and progress here. The de-constitution is an "event," which marks the subject without belonging to the subject. It is pre-inscription, but not in any sense pro-grammatic. All programs, whether political or literary, are supplemental and late efforts with regard to this pre-inscription. This is what Jacques Derrida (1989) calls the "ineluctable" in his introduction to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's work (p.1-42 and Lacoue-Labarthe, 1989, p.43-138, and 1990, 82-83). The ineluctable may refer to the future (impossible to avoid, on the way) but it may also refer to the past (something that had already happened without happening). This is the experience of writing I have described above (or that which returns in it, exorbitantly): it is ineluctable, it desists, it

de-constitutes—which is not the opposite of constitution. What *happens* then in the “failure” to end a story, to produce narrative closure, to pass from mimesis to diegesis in proper literary-critical and philosophical terms, is desisting or *désistance* of the subject of mimesis. Such ineluctable *désistance* points to a radical or absolute past, which seems to have something to do with femininity.

While the literary historian Ahmet Evin attributed a realistic vision to Ekrem, I have tried to show, following Parla’s and Gürbilek’s readings in a critical and deconstructive spirit, that the text’s realism is in crisis. Nonetheless *The Carriage Affair*’s success-in-failure prefigures and preempts the problematic of an emergent Turkish national identity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As this archived text *desists* the canon it is made part of (i.e. the law of narrating and of nation-making), following its author’s wish, its careful reading can perhaps teach us a valuable lesson of cultural, literary and artistic inventiveness on shifting ground.

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