

LITERATURE AND HEALTH:
AN ESSAY CRITICAL AND CLINICAL ON VÜS'AT O. BENER'S NOVELS

by
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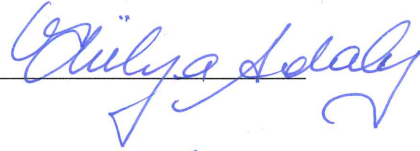
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ABSTRACT

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Thesis Advisor: Prof. Sibel Irzık

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In this study, I argue that modernist author Vüs'at O. Bener's novels *Buzul Çağının Virüsü* (1984) and *Bay Muannit Sahtegi'nin Notları* (1991) constitute productive cases for reflecting upon Gilles Deleuze's proposition on literature being an enterprise of health. Approaching the (writing) subjects of these novels as models of Bener's distinctive figuration of "sick" and "schizoid" subjects, I assert that these texts probe the question of subjectivity as a question of health, by challenging both in form and content the distinction between inner world and exterior world, individual concern and collective concern, private history and public history. The appearance of the act of writing in these novels as an impasse, but at the same time as a way-out, having not only personal but also political significations, I further argue, is a symptom of this problematization of subjectivity. I ultimately aim to show that Bener's novels, which have been deemed to be pessimist, indeed open a discussion on a new possibility of life.

ÖZET

EDEBİYAT VE SAĞLIK: VÜS'AT O. BENER ROMANLARI ÜZERİNE KRİTİK VE KLİNİK BİR DENEME

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Ağustos 2017

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Anahtar sözcükler: Vüs'at O. Bener, Gilles Deleuze, öznellik, şizofreni, sağlık

Bu çalışmada modernist yazar Vüs'at O. Bener'in Buzul Çağının Virüsü (1984) ve Bay Muannit Sahtegi'nin Notları (1991) romanlarının, Gilles Deleuze'ün edebiyatın bir sağlık girişimi olduğuna dair önermesi üzerine düşünmek için üretken vakalar teşkil ettiğini savunuyorum. Bu romanların (yazan) öznelerine Bener'in kendine özgü "hasta" ve "şizoid" özne figürasyonunun birer modeli olarak yaklaşarak bu metinlerin öznellik sorununu bir sağlık sorunu olarak, iç dünya ile dış dünya, bireysel dert ile kolektif dert, özel tarih ile kamusal tarih arasındaki ayrımı hem biçimde hem içerikte sorunsallaştırarak irdelediklerini öne sürüyorum. Bu romanlarda yazı eyleminin yalnızca kişisel değil siyasal anlamları da olan bir çıkmaz ama aynı zamanda da bir çıkış yolu olarak belirmesinin bu öznellik sorunsallaştırmasının bir semptomu olduğunu savunuyorum. Nihayetinde, Bener'in karamsar olduğu düşünölegelen romanlarının aslında yeni bir yaşam ihtimaline dair bir tartışma açtıklarını göstermeyi hedefliyorum.



Think of the author you are writing about. Think of him so hard that he can no longer be an object, and equally so that you cannot identify with him. Avoid the double shame of the scholar and the familiar. Give back to an author a little of the joy, the energy, the life of love and politics that he knew how to give and invent.

— Gilles Deleuze

Edebiyat yapıtları üzerine neden düşünelim diye soruyorsan... Dünyayı yadırgamamıza, onu başka bir dille konuşmamıza yol açtıkları için. Bizim de belli belirsiz hissettiğimiz bir şeye bir biçim kazandırdıkları, bu da bizi heyecanlandırdığı için. Bir yapıtın içindeki hemen duyulmayan bazı seslerin silinip gitmesine razı olmadığımız için. Edebiyat yapıtını biraz daha konuşmaya zorlarsak birlikte bir problem alanını netleştirebileceğimizi hissettiğimiz için...

— Nurdan Gürbilek

A note on “language”

In the main body of the thesis, the quotations from Bener’s texts (which have not been translated into English yet) were kept in their original Turkish. I referred to my own translations when citing Bener’s interviews as well as the critical pieces written in Turkish. In the footnotes, on the other hand, all the quotations from Turkish texts were kept in their original language.

I hope that this bilingualism would provide the reader with an opportunity to think of the works at hand in a comparative fashion, rather than producing (another) linguistic impasse.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. A Reading on “Tranference”

Unsatisfied by the tradition of psychologism, mostly that of psychoanalysis, that conventionally sees the writer as an isolated individual who sublimates her neuroses into her work, Gilles Deleuze offers that the writer “is not a patient but rather a physician, the physician of himself and of the world” (Deleuze 1997, 3). Deleuze writes these sentences in “Literature and Life,” a short yet solid text introducing his last published work *Essays Critical and Clinical*, where he reflects upon “the problem of *writing*” through a series of readings dwelling on the seminal works of modern literature. Deleuze’s critical and clinical readings on such authors as Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Samuel Beckett, and Herman Melville have as their tenet one single assertion, whose outline, as remarked by Deleuze’s careful readers, have been mapped out long before the publication of *Essays Critical and Clinical*.¹ According to Deleuze, any (modernist²) writer, as an inventor of “a foreign language,”³ constitutes a special *case* in her distinctive ability to “bring to light new grammatical or syntactic powers,” to “force language outside its customary furrows,” to “make it *delirious*”:

It is through words, between words, that one sees and hears. Beckett spoke of “drilling holes” in language in order to see or hear “what was lurking behind.” One must say of every writer: he is a seer, a hearer, “ill seen ill said,” she is a colorist, a musician. ... It is delirium that invents them, as a *process* driving words from one end of the universe to the other. They are events at the edge of language. But when delirium falls back into the *clinical state*, words no longer open out onto anything, we no longer hear or see anything through them except a night whose history, colors, and songs have been lost.

¹ Daniel W. Smith refers, among others, to what Deleuze said in a 1988 interview: “I’ve dreamed about bringing together a series of studies under the general title ‘Essays Critical and Clinical.’ That’s not to say that great authors, great artists, are all ill, however sublimely, or that one’s looking for a sign of neurosis or psychosis like a secret in their work, the hidden code of their work. They’re not ill; on the contrary, they’re a rather special kind of doctor” (Deleuze 1995, 142).

² Although his writings generally refer to ambiguously generic notions of “literature,” “author,” or “writer,” as Buchanan and Marks note, “Deleuze restricts himself ... to a largely modernist canon” (Buchanan and Marks 2000, 4). We will come back to Deleuze’s fondness for modernism toward the end of this chapter.

³ Deleuze takes this notion of “foreign language” from Marcel Proust: “Great books are written in a kind of foreign language.” He also quotes Proust’s saying “The only way to defend language is to attack it ... Every writer is obliged to create his or her own language ...” (quoted in Deleuze 1997, 5).

What follows these sentences is the motto of Deleuze's critical and clinical project: "Literature is a health" (lv). At first glance, this statement that bestows upon literary activity a kind of curative potential may not seem quite a radical idea, especially considering that it was one of the basic principles of psychoanalysis (and psychoanalytical literary criticism) that literature involves a certain therapeutic mechanism. It was Sigmund Freud, the founding father of psychoanalysis, who in his "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" pointed out a parallelism between *phantasy* and creative writing: "A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in the creative work" (Freud 1989, 442). The text, Freud says, by opening a creative space for the fulfillment of her otherwise unfulfilled desires, provides the writer with an opportunity to face and thus circumvent her psychic/familial blockages.

Indeed, there is a significant critical tradition that calls attention to a strong connection between literary practice and psychoanalytical practice, revolving around the concept of *transference*.⁴ Transference names the analytical situation through which there occurs an unconscious projection of the unconscious of the patient onto the analyst, resulting in an actualization, reexamination, and restaging of the repressed and unfulfilled, however illusionary this process might be. This attachment, by creating the possibility for a more palpable observation of the neuroses hidden in her psyche, provides the patient with a re-examination of what blocks her, while potentially invoking a cure of, but not a total recovery from, the psychic complex. The patient's transference might also pave the way for *counter-transference*, that is the unconscious process through which the analyst projects her unresolved affects upon the patient, which, by loosening the necessary distance between them, puts the psychic interpretation into jeopardy (Wright 1998, 15). Elizabeth Wright, who calls transference "psychoanalytic reader-theory," presents a plain articulation of how Freud conceptualized the term, possibly mindful of the above quotation from him: "In the analytical situation intense feeling, or 'affect', is transferred to the analyst ... and becomes organized around a group of hostile and loving wishes. ... The mechanism of transferring past experience onto the figure of the analyst is set in motion just when the repressed wish is in danger of emerging" (15).

⁴ I am indebted to Sibel Irzik's lectures for familiarizing me with this discussion.

Lacanian psychoanalysis will enrich this conceptualization of transference by defining it neither as a situation “where the patient is offered a chance to emancipate himself anew, by dint of a better compromise with authority” (14) nor as “the displacement of feelings from one idea to another” (15) but as a process, as a continuum, as a *lure*, that entails no mastery but an intersubjective dialogue. Jacques Lacan, according to whom “the unconscious is constituted by the effects of speech on the subject” and “is structured like a language,” defines transference as “the enactment of the reality of the unconscious” (Lacan 1998, 149). To Lacan, this enactment becomes possible thanks to a bidirectional process, in a way that both transference and countertransference will appear as helpful mechanisms during the analytical process. For Lacan, neither “the patient” is sick nor “the analyst” can cure her: Rather, Lacan’s analyst is “the subject *supposed to know*,” who is loaded with “the desire of the Other” (Piotrowska 2014).

Wright remarks that “with the influence of Lacan’s definition of the unconscious as structured like a language, the phenomena of transference in reading become all-pervasive” (Wright 112): “Reading, writing and criticism are part of a continuum whereby readers write in the act of reading and writers are shown to read in the act of writing” (113). What this re-conceptualization of transference implicates for a method of reading can be grasped more effectively through a glance at Shoshana Felman’s “theory of the reading effect as a transference effect.” Suggesting that “we enter the literary text only through transference: through the lure of rhetoric,” (Felman 2013, 30) she points out a paradox:

... a “literary” reading is one that cannot choose between the role of the analyst and the role of the analysand. That is, on the one hand, literary analysis (or the deciphering of the signifier) resembles—at least distantly—the work of interpretation that characterizes the analyst; but on the other hand, what is analyzed—the text—far from being a “patient,” is quite contrarily a Master. ... The literary reader thus paradoxically occupies both the place of the analyst (in the relation of interpretation) and the place of the analysand (in the relation of transference). (261-2)

The literary text, Felman proposes, is a “transferential structure” (178) in which no reader can master the hidden meaning as she inevitably gets caught in a “chain of signifiers,” while the act of reading, proving to be of no use in the proposed attempt to capture the text’s/the writer’s unconscious, turns merely into a reading *effect*.⁵ Felman

⁵ It may be good to note here Wright’s critique of Felman’s theory: “It seems almost as if Felman, in her desire to put psychoanalysis and literature on an equal footing, had reintroduced (repeated) the hierarchies of master and slave in

thus defines literature, in her reading of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, as "the Master's death, the Master's transformation into a ghost" (246). A "Deleuzian" reading, on the other hand, would posit that reading has nothing to do with "the deciphering of the signifier": "Reading a text is never a scholarly exercise in search of what is signified, still less a highly textual exercise in search of a signifier. Rather it is a productive use of the literary machine, a montage of desiring-machines, a schizoid exercise that extracts from the text its revolutionary force" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 106). What is at issue in the act of reading is "a question of seeing what use it has in the extra-textual practice that prolongs the text" (quoted in Smith xvi).

Gabriele Schwab, using a Deleuzian/Guattarian terminology, offers a "politicized" grasp of psychoanalytical transference. Enlarging the literature/transference couple in a way that it encompasses imaginary enactments that are not only personal but also political, not only intersubjective but also intercultural, she states that "Transference occurs whenever unconscious desires, fantasies, or patterns of being and relation are enacted in an interpersonal or intercultural encounter, including the indirect encounters between literary or artistic objects and their recipients" (Schwab 2012, 28). Schwab, therefore, reads literature as an aesthetic medium that can undo the cultural restrictions by projecting the cultural unconscious loaded with imperial desires, fears, and memories into a performative realm in which an alternative subjective/cultural imagination can be forged. Her reading of Franz Kafka's short prose "The Wish to Be a Red Indian" shows how Kafka succeeded to transfer the Western imperialist desires and fears into "the wish for mobility and traversal of *territorial* boundaries, and the desire not for conquest but for *becoming other*" (66; emphasis mine). Theorizing from her inquiry, she claims that "literature contributes in a significant way to cultural mobility, facilitating the emergence of new flows of energy, new ways of being in the world, or new forms of language, subjectivity, and life" (76).

Aidan Tynan argues that Deleuze's approach to literature and health that "goes beyond the purely diagnostic and symptomatological levels towards a vision of some sort of healing process" (Tynan 2012, 18) should be positioned not necessarily as an adverse of psychoanalysis. Although their writings have much evidence of the havoc they play with the psychoanalytic framework, Tynan recommends that we understand Deleuze and

her reading. The text lies in wait, ready to occupy the subject. The scene of reading has become the story of the capture of the psyche" (Wright 119).

Guattari's position (and the methodology they offer, that is "schizoanalysis") "not in opposition to psychoanalysis, but as psychoanalysis as immanent criticism" (16).⁶ The immanence hinted here lies in their effort to employ the notions of psychoanalysis while also pointing out how it abuses its own conceptualizations. In this line of thought, Tynan presses hard that Deleuze's proposition "literature is a health" has been shaped by an immanent dialogue particularly with the notion of transference. Deleuze, says Tynan, "severs this concept from any personological conceptions of the self, arguing that transference may be reconceived as a means for a purely impersonal life to express itself through experimental subjective modes" (8-9). Under the pen of Deleuze and Guattari, transference, as grasped in its relation to literature, is "the transference of the pathological elements of individual, oedipal subjectivity onto an impersonal, world-historical plane" (16). Let us look at how Deleuze and Guattari refer to the concept "transference" in their *Anti-Oedipus*. After another motto-like sentence we will continue to deal with—that is, "literature is like schizophrenia: a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression"—they reveal their immanent anti-psychoanalytical criticism in its relation to "work of art":

The work of art is supposed to inscribe itself in this fashion between the two poles of Oedipus, problem and solution, neurosis and sublimation, desire and truth—the one regressive, where the work hashes out and redistributes the nonresolved conflicts of childhood, and the other prospective, by which the work invents the paths leading toward a new solution concerning the future of man. ... From this point of view, there is no longer even any need for applying psychoanalysis to the work of art, since the work itself constitutes a successful psychoanalysis, a sublime "transference" with exemplary collective virtualities. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 133-4)

What needs attention here is Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of transference as an essentially political, collective, and even world-historical experience—in line with the motto of their "social and political psychoanalysis": "*There is only desire and the social, and nothing else*" (38). The health literature promises is thus never a personal health per se, but a health that pertains to *Life* as a force that transcends the personal concerns:

⁶ Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari have already defined their methodology, whose outline their *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* presents, as one that is immanent to psychoanalysis: "Schizoanalysis therefore does not hide the fact that it is a political and social psychoanalysis, a militant analysis: not because it would go about generalizing Oedipus in culture, under the ridiculous conditions that have been the norm until now. It is a militant analysis, on the contrary, because it proposes to demonstrate the existence of an unconscious libidinal investment of sociohistorical production, distinct from the conscious investments coexisting with it" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 88).

We do not write with our neuroses. Neuroses or psychoses are not passages of life, but states into which we fall when the process is interrupted, blocked, or plugged up. Illness is not a process but a stopping of the process, as in “the Nietzsche case.” ... Literature then appears as an enterprise of health: not that the writer would necessarily be in good health ... but he possesses an irresistible and delicate health that stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless giving him the becomings that a dominant and substantial health would render impossible. The writer returns from what he has seen and heard with bloodshot eyes and pierced eardrums. What health would be sufficient to liberate life wherever it is imprisoned by and within man, by and within organisms and genera?” (Deleuze 1997, 3)

This question that crystallizes the healing process Deleuze claims literature promises looms large in Deleuze’s thinking. In the 1988 interview where he discloses his will to write a “critical and clinical” study on some great authors, while answering a question that asks the connections he sees between literature and (his) philosophy—“I don’t know, I don’t recognize that difference” (Deleuze 1995, 142)—, he maps out this therapeutic potential of literature. The act of writing is not simply a product of transference whereby the writer’s disorders will be revealed but “an attempt to make life something more than personal, to free life from what imprisons it”:

The artist or philosopher often has slender, frail health, a weak constitution, a shaky hold on things: look at Spinoza, Nietzsche, Lawrence. Yet it’s not death that breaks them, but seeing, experiencing, thinking too much life. Life overwhelms them, yet it’s in them that “the sign is at hand”—at the close of [Nietzsche’s] *Zarathustra*, in the fifth book of the [Spinoza’s] *Ethics*. You write with a view to an unborn people that doesn’t yet have a language. Creating isn’t communicating but resisting.

The potential of the act of writing, Deleuze thinks, cannot be restricted to a phantasy-like solace of a neurotic writer or to an intersubjective communication: “Any work of art points a way through for life, finds a way through the cracks” (143). Let us notice a sentiment that has been repeated in what we quote from Deleuze (and Guattari): What *Anti-Oedipus* dubs “collective virtualities” and what appears in this interview of Deleuze as “an unborn people” reflect an attention to political/collective functions of “fabulation”⁷: “Artists can only invoke a people, their need for one goes to the very heart of what they’re doing, it’s not their job to create one, and they can’t. Art is resistance: it

⁷ Deleuze takes the notion of “fabulation” from Henri Bergson: “We ought to take up Bergson’s notion of fabulation and give it a political meaning” (Deleuze 1995, 174).

resists death, slavery, infamy, shame” (174). We know that this idea positing the work as the creator of a not-yet-existing collectivity, of “this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life” is also pertinent to Deleuze’s “literature is a health” formula: “Health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people who are missing. It is the task of the fabulating function to invent a people” (Deleuze 1997, 4).

Thinking particularly in relation to the art of writing, this perspective will appear as a rather pragmatic grasp of literature, that calls for seeking the power of text less in textuality than functionality, as Deleuze asserts rather provocatively in his study on Proust: “The modern work of art has no problem of meaning, it has only a problem of use” (Deleuze 2008, 95). This emphasis on the “use” of modern literature, while being informed by the havoc he plays with the hermeneutical methods that seek to decipher what the text truly means, does not call for an appropriation or instrumentalization of literature either. Creating new possibilities for (psychic/personal/collective) life, literature embodies and performs its own use by “demonstrating for our benefit an eminently psychotic and revolutionary means of escape” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 134).

Gregg Lambert, in his article “On the Uses and Abuses of Literature for Life,” dovetails this emphasis on the use of literature with Deleuze’s critical and clinical project, offering a method of reading Deleuze has avoided offering as plainly as his careful readers: i) “certain writers have invented concrete semiotic practices that may prove more effective than psychoanalytic discourse,” ii) “certain literary works can be understood to produce a kind of ‘symptomatology’ that may prove to be more effective than political or ideological critique,” iii) “certain modern writers can offer us a manner of diagramming the potential forms of resistance, or ‘lines of flight’, which may be virtual to these new arrangements” (Lambert 2000, 135).⁸ A plainer yet more intense formulation has been proposed by Tynan, according to whom “the principal hypothesis of a clinical criticism” is that “certain authors have a weak health, but literature, by gaining a perspective on sickness, is capable of transforming this weakness into a creative power” (Tynan 1).

⁸ A concept frequently used by Deleuze and Guattari, “line of flight” (or, “line of escape”) connotes “a path of mutation precipitated through the actualisation of connections among bodies that were previously only implicit (or ‘virtual’) that releases new powers in the capacities of those bodies to act and respond” (Lorraine 2010, 147). A relatively plain articulation of the concept has been offered by Aslı Özgen Tuncer: “Deleuze’ün ‘kaçış çizgisi’ (*ligne de fuite*) kavramı, kabaca iki düzeyde işler. Fransızca *fuite*, Türkçeye ‘kaçış’ olarak aktarılsa da aslında hem kaçış, ayrılış hem de akış anlamını taşır. Bu bakımdan hem bir öznenin gerçekleştirebileceği bir kaçış hem de bu edimin yeni bir dünya yaratmasına yol açacak bir sızıntıdır” (Tuncer 2017, 17). Thanks are due to Arda Çiltepe for bringing this helpful definition to my attention.

1.2. Vüs'at O. Bener: "Quite an Interesting Case"

One of the studies in *Essays Critical and Clinical* is devoted to Walt Whitman, as he is one of many American writers Deleuze praises for the ability to demonstrate "lines of flight." Deleuze notes that the fragmentary writing emblematic of Anglo-American literature, more specifically of Whitman, not only mirrors "the American experience" that is fragmentary but also is functional as it carries "the immediate value of a collective statement" (Deleuze 1997, 57). This flourishing of the collective statement is due partly to Whitman's (or, Anglo-American literature's, or any "minor" literature's) problematization of the idealized Cartesian subject:

Kafka said that in a minor literature, that is, in the literature of a minority, there is no private history that is not immediately public, political, and popular: all literature becomes an "affair of the people," and not of exceptional individuals. ... The simplest love story brings into play states, peoples, and tribes; the most personal autobiography is necessarily collective, as can still be seen in Wolfe or Miller. ... And from this point of view, the Self [*Moi*] of the Anglo-Saxons, always splintered, fragmentary, and relative, is opposed to the substantial, total, and solipsistic I [*Je*] of the Europeans. (57)

These sentences are of importance for my study, not because my endeavor here is to analyze the texts of an Anglo-American writer, but because I find in Deleuze's approach to literature a thought-provoking and promising vision that can be translatable into other literary experiences forged by a recalibration of a major language—by a delirium of language. For the problem of language is immanent to any act of writing, and "minor" is less a categorical adjective than the name of a potential, insofar as "minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 18). The "case" through which I will be thinking of the revolutionary conditions of literature Deleuze and Guattari refer to is Turkish modernist author Vüs'at O. Bener's novels *Buzul Çağının Virüsü* (1984) and *Bay Muannit Sahtegi'nin Notları* (1991).⁹ An artist who—and whose protagonists who are also artists—had "slender, frail health, a weak constitution, a shaky hold on things,"¹⁰ Vüs'at O. Bener has been praised for his

⁹ Hereafter *Virüs* and *Sahtegi*. In the main body, quotations from Bener's novels will be indicated in brackets respectively as "V" and "S."

¹⁰ It is promising here to note Nurdan Gürbilek's comment on the thematizations of senility in Bener's texts: "Geçip giden, dağılan, çözülen şeyleri anlatır Bener. ... Hepimizin yaşadığı, ama edebiyatın artık pek anlatmadığı şeyler. Kolay kolay yüceltilemeyecek şeyler. Yalnızca ruhsal çöküntü de değil, arıza çıkaran bir beden, yüksek tansiyon, damar

subtle, unabashed narration of the problems and chaos of individual life, through a style marked with experimental, rather unruly use of language, leading many a critic to point out the density of his works. The below portrait of Bener, presented by Reyhan Tutumlu, is a good glimpse at his literary persona:

A respected avant-garde author during the last half of the twentieth century in Turkey, Vüs'at O. Bener focused his keen eye on the disharmony between the individual and society, narrating this troubled relationship ironically. ... Bener attracted readers and critics with the innovative techniques he used in his works, which include fragmented and multilayered narration, and his language, which was experimental while also being emotionally intense. While he occasionally referred to the social circumstances of his era, Bener was primarily interested in representing the individual's inner world, portraying alienation, contradictions, inner interrogations, and fears and anxieties experienced. His manner of narration blurs the distinction between what is real and fictional and encourages the reader to rethink the differences of the genres. Bener used many autobiographical allusions in his texts, so knowing the details of Bener's life history gives significant clues for interpreting his works. (Tutumlu 2016, 44)

Briefly put, my study will aim to demonstrate that in Bener's modernist novels, not only the distinction between reality and fiction, but also the one between "the individual's inner world" and "the social circumstances of his era" is challenged: In these texts, the inner life of the subject is presented as a realm that is already mediated through a problematization of the exterior world. Bener's novels, I argue, present archives that call into question, both in form and content,¹¹ the split between "private history" and "public, political, popular history," to the extent that literature's capacity to communicate this amalgamation of the histories will also be questioned. In other words, I will argue through a reading of his novels that the concern for politics, history, or collectivity is not a background to the plots of Bener's works, nor are they mere reference points providing the texts with a context—they are immanent to the experience of the subject, his inner world, his unconscious, and his desire-production. The claim that in Bener's novels the inner world of the subject appears as the space of "interrogation" and "negotiation" and eventually as—borrowing from Maurice Blanchot—*the space of literature*, has already been uttered (Gümüş 2000, Koçak 2004, Tutumlu 2010, Tutumlu 2016, Şen 2016); what

sertliği, sırt ağrısı, gırtlak hırıltısı, bağırsak gurultusu. Ne çok ilaç adı geçer anlatılarında. Ne çok hastalık adı. Kuşpalazı, köpek memesi, kan çıbanı, bronşektazi; anfizem, glokom, paranoya, dipsomani" (Gürbilek 2004, 42).

¹¹ "Form and content in discourse are one," writes Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1981, 259). Orhan Koçak has evoked this inseparability of form and content in relation to Bener's modernist aesthetics: "İçerikle biçim arasında, niyetle icra arasında bir ayrım yapamayan onulmaz bir 'modernist'ti Vüs'at O. Bener" (Koçak 2005, 123).

I am after is the politics *in* and *of* this inner interrogation. We will also ponder how the immanence of the political to the personal will render “the problem of *writing*,” which is already addressed by the texts, a thornier question. Orhan Koçak says that in Bener’s works “the question ‘why write’ is the work’s own question” (Koçak 2004, 23); we will probe into the political and (world-)historical ramifications of this question.

This study will thus attempt to demonstrate that in Bener’s novels the question of creating, capturing, or challenging the experience of “I,” i.e., *the question of subjectivity*, while being the primary realm of writing, also appears as a political question. I deploy “subjectivity,” rather than psychology-oriented terms such as “selfhood” or “consciousness,” for better signifying the dynamism between what is *inside* the person and what is *outside*, between the psychic/personal realm and the public/political realm, in line with the definition offered by Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman: “the felt interior experience of the person that includes his or her positions in a field of relational power” (Das and Kleinman 2000, 1). This definition is helpful as it accentuates interiority while also emphasizing a certain dialectic between inner and exterior lives, between personal and political experiences.

“Politics” and “the political,” on the other hand, will be used in their widest possible senses. In my readings of Bener’s novels, I will particularly give attention to those passages where politics is negotiated by the subject in his inner world. This scrutiny will prepare us to see politics *in* Bener’s novels. Yet, I will also strive to capture the politics *of* Bener’s novels—even when they seem to be free from any “political concern.” If, I propose, their schizoanalytical/critical and clinical study could lead Deleuze and Guattari to argue for “a Kafka *politics* that is neither imaginary nor symbolic,” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 7) one should likewise be thinking of the politics of other literatures traditionally coded as “apolitical.”¹² Hence, the essential questions on our agenda are:

¹² While pondering Fredric Jameson’s assertion regarding “third-world literature”—with which we also will deal in this chapter—Koçak makes a comment that is pertinent not only to a certain “politics of literature” but also to Deleuze and Guattari’s experiments in this regard: “... Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Kafka veya Robbe-Grillet gibi ‘apolitik’ sayılan yazarlardaki politikayı aramak ve deşifre etmek de mümkün. Deleuze ve Guattari bunu Kafka için yaptılar” (Koçak and Sökmen 1997, 106). In an interview, Bener himself reveals how his works have been deemed to be deprived of “political concern,” saying reproachfully that there is a negligence toward “what he writes”: “Şimdi ben ne yazmışım, ona bakılmıyor da kahramanlar kötümser, siyaset kaygısı yok vs. Yani kahramanlar mı kötümser, ben mi kötümserim iş karışıyor. Onun için neme lazım, ben zanaatçiyim, diyorum” (Bener 2005, 106). Gümüş (2004) and Tutumlu (2010) have already pointed out politics in Bener’s works as part of their plot analyses. Koçak’s comment on Bener, which is important for the purposes of my reading as well, goes one step further: “Vüs’at O. Bener’in Türkiye sosyalizminin 1945 sonrası serüveniyle bazen birleşip bazen ayrışan yolculuğu, bu iki tarih hakkında da epeyce şey anlatır, anlatabilir. İsteyen, bunu *Virüs*’te okuyabilir, *Mızıkalı*’da veya *Kara Tren*’de veya *Kapan*’da (hatta *Sahtegi*’de, eğer sahiden istiyorsa). Orada hayal edilmiş veya yüceltilmiş bir tarihin yanı başında, yaşanmış ve maruz kalınmış bir tarih de bulacaktır” (Koçak 2005, 123). Şen, on the other hand, raises the possibility of reading *Virüs* as a coup d’état novel (Şen 154).

How is politics implicated in the question of subjectivity in Bener's novels? What happens to language when its agent finds himself in a position where the interior experience seems to be incommunicable in deteriorating personal, social, cultural, and political circumstances? How does the subject narrate the complexities and contingencies of this experience without ignoring their implications in the performance of writing as well as in the lexicon, syntax, and grammar?

As these questions address a problematization of politics, rather than an unproblematized textualization of politics, we will be reflecting on the passages from Bener's novels where politics/collectivity/history appears as an impasse negotiated by the (writing) subject. I claim that "impasse" is a relevant term for a reading of Bener's novels, since these texts revolve around personally, politically, and even linguistically¹³ intolerable and exhausting situations that block the subject, that make it unable to determine how to proceed, while also triggering new forms of action, creation, and resistance—new "ways-out."¹⁴ *Virüs* and *Sahtegi*, I argue, present archives of, adopting Lauren Berlant's conceptualization, "the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on" (Berlant 2011, 8).

Yet, before all the others, there is a foundational impasse in any work of Bener that any reading needs to come to terms with: If what we understand from Roland Barthes' famous formula about 'the death of the author' is biography's absolute absence from the text, then, one can argue that in Bener's works *this death* has never occurred. Or it may be that the author has always been alive, inescapably presenting what she lives in what she writes; yet, in the case of Bener's works, it is even harder to think of the text as an entity entirely independent from the life-story of its creator.¹⁵ Koçak's thought-provoking

¹³ In many an interview, Bener talks about a certain "wrestling" [*boğuşma*] with his maternal language: "Yani sözcüklerle, dille boğuşan bir aile ortamı sanıyorum bizi de kendi aramızda sürekli tartışmaya hazırlamıştır. Dille çok boğuşmuşuzdur" (Bener 2004, 137); "Yalnız *Buzul Çağının Virüsü* romanı çok başka bir oluşumla dünyaya geldi. Garip bir biçimde, ben orada artık dille feci bir şekilde boğuşmaya başladım. Dille boğuşurken metin de tabii ona göre değişimli oldu" (151). Proust's assertion ("The only way to defend language is to attack it.") may also resonate here: "Öğretilen dil, hele doğu dilleri, kavramlarıyla karmaşıklaşmışsa, anlatım gücünüzü çok daha zorlamak gerekiyor; deyim abartılı belki, ama düşman bellediğim için boğuşup durdum dilimle, hâlâ da yenik düştüğüm kanısındayım" (Bener 1992, 12). Bener's wrestling with language can also be thought in tandem with Deleuze's assertion "she ... is a musician": "Zaten dille çok uğraşıyorum. Dil ile müzik arasında... ben kendim müzik dinleyerek yazmıyorum ama dili müzik haline getirmek gibi bir saplantım da var. Müzikten dile geçmek gibi bir saplantım var" (129); "Bütün romanın [*Virüs*] büyük bir müzikal gücü olması dileği ile başlanmıştır ve öyle götürülmeye çalışılmıştır" (151).

¹⁴ Borrowing this term from him, Deleuze and Guattari ceaselessly refer to the situations where Kafka "invents a way out of this impasse" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 10). Commenting (otherwise not quite positively) on Deleuze and Guattari's work, Wright writes: "Kafka's way out is to write" (Wright 152).

¹⁵ As I will show in my readings as well, Bener's playful texts reveal a certain self-reflexivity in relation to this interplay between autobiography and fiction. This self-reflexivity reaches its peak in "Yanılgı mı?". A short story published in

essay on Bener's works bears this point in its title. In "Fiction and Autobiography in Vüs'at O. Bener: Does Writing Save?" he asks a question that has no clear answer: "Is it that Bener presents his own life as a fiction in the form of autobiography or that he writes a fiction that resembles an autobiography?" (Koçak 2004, 26). "Not that there is no attempt at fiction," Nurdan Gürbilek comments on Bener's works, "but it is as though the memories complete each other through works [and] the narratives that are almost entirely written in the first-person singular signal a primary source, a life that precedes the work" (Gürbilek 2004, 34). In one of his writings on Bener, Semih Gümüş uses the phrases "fiction drawing on autobiography" and "textualized living" (Gümüş 2004). The most thorough intervention in this discussion was Tutumlu's *Yaşamamız Yazabilmek: Vüs'at O. Bener'in Yapıtlarına Anlatıbilimsel Bir Yaklaşım*, where she traces the parallelisms between Bener's biography and his oeuvre with a narratologically-informed, and at the same time somewhat journalistic methodology. This rigorous study has led her to the conclusion that Bener uses different methods to "fictionalize his life" (Tutumlu 2010, 129), which brings out the question of genre: She proposes that *Virüs* is an "autobiographical novel" (138) and *Sahtegi* is a "memoir-novel" (140).

It is thus an almost uncontested reading that in Bener's works there is a distinctive interplay between autobiography and fiction.¹⁶ Or, one may want to say that in Bener's works there is a sui generis exchange between "literature and life."¹⁷ We know that writers re-create reality by resituating it in the work, even when they seem to merely represent it. Jacques Rancière contends that "the labour of fiction" lies more in "the re-framing of the 'real'" than in "the constructing of an imaginary world." Fiction can thus be defined as

his *Kapan*, this text starts with a reader's address to a writer: "Sizi tanımıyorum. Adınız dışıca biraz. O nedenle 'Sayın Bay Yazar ya/da Bayan Yazar,' diyemiyorum." The reader then starts to comment on a text previously written by the writer, entitled "TUZAK." (Yes, Bener has a story entitled "Tuzak," published in his *Siyah-Beyaz*.) The reader's comment on "TUZAK" reads: "Bağışlayın elimde değil – yaşlı adamla size özdeşleştirmeyi yeğledim. Yeğlenmesini istediğiniz için belki, ya da yapay da olsa sergilediği içtenlik bu yargıya ulaştırdı beni, övünme payı size! Yanılmıyorsam kurgu da olsa, okurlar, belki yanılıdır ama bencileyin bir yargıyı benimseme yolunu tutarlar" (Bener 2014, 16).

¹⁶ To my knowledge, Bilge Ulusman's reading of *Sahtegi* stands as one single rejection of the autobiography thesis. In her study, referring to what we will soon refer to, she says: "Koçak'ın ifadesiyle 'öznelğin istilası', Vüs'at Bener metinlerinin otobiyografik olduğu sanısına düşen okurların gerekçesidir. Fakat Bener'in 'öznenin yekpare ve katıksız' var olabileceği bir otobiyografi yazmaya yanaşmayacağı, aksine, modernizmin kutsal öznesinin öldüğüne inandığı açıktır" (Ulusman 2016, 110). I want to accentuate that what is at issue in my study is not to forge another discussion on how autobiographical Bener's texts are. Yet, in the face of numerous allusions to his life—the allusions that make themselves felt even to a reader who is ignorant about his biography—and especially after Tutumlu's study, to think Bener's texts as autobiographical texts is not *hallucinatory* either.

¹⁷ Pun intended but Tutumlu, without uttering the name of Deleuze, has already pointed out what is intended here: "Edebiyatın yaşamla bağı bir yandan pekiştiren, diğer yandan da sorunsallaştıran bir yazardır Bener" (Tutumlu 2010, 13).

“a way of changing existing modes of sensory presentations and forms of enunciation; of varying frames, scales and rhythms; and of building new relationships between reality and appearance, the individual and the collective” (Rancière 2010, 141). Embodying as well as problematizing this relationality between literature and life, Bener’s works question not only the boundary between reality and fiction but also what is to be understood as literary performance. In “Literature and Life,” Deleuze writes: “Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived” (Deleuze 1997, 1).¹⁸ It is as if Bener’s works constitute a case that perfectly testifies to Deleuze’s claim; yet, my aim here is not to further complicate this discussion. Rather than showing how Bener transfigured real life to the life of fiction, I want to look at this unruly interlacement of literature and life through the questions already outlined: *Can we see this distinctive relationality between fiction and reality, between literature and life, as a signal of the questioning of subjectivity, politics, and the act of writing?*

While pondering these questions in my readings, Deleuze and Guattari will continue to be the central reference points. In this attempt, what I am after is neither to “use” Deleuzian philosophy to “understand” Bener’s texts nor to reach a perfect match between theory and text, but rather to forge an experimental reading that interrogates whether Bener and Deleuze/Guattari can be read in tandem. Neither at issue here is to argue for a “Deleuzian” *influence* in Bener’s works—we do not know if 1922-born francophone Bener actually read one single sentence from 1925-born Deleuze. Still, it is thought-provoking to see that the names of Deleuze’s philosophical precursors with which he had been in an “immanent” dialogue throughout his thinking flash here and there in Bener’s texts. As we will soon dwell on, one of his lately published stories is named “Biraz da Ağla Descartes,” and ironically challenges the Cartesian cogito. “Spinoza’dan, Kant’tan dem vurmanın sırası mı?”—we read this sentence in *Virüs* (V 153). The title of the Turkish philosopher Cemil Sena Ongun’s book in which he experiments a philosophical narration in praise of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* also appears in this novel, possibly offering a certain Nietzschean passage in Bener’s

¹⁸ Let us not forget that Deleuze has uttered these sentences while elaborating on his thesis “literature is a health.” Smith’s comment will make this connection clearer: “Put differently, the question that links literature and life, in both its ontological and its ethical aspects, is the question of *health*. . . . It is true that the writer is ‘inspired’ by the lived; but even in writers like Thomas Wolfe or Henry Miller, who seem to do nothing but recount their own lives, ‘there’s an attempt to make life something more than personal, to free life from what imprisons it’” (Smith 15).

universe of thought: “*Ne okuyordum o zamanlar? ‘Ahuramazda Böyle Dedi.’*” (V 50).¹⁹ (An indistinct appearance of Bener’s autobiography/fiction impasse: We know that Cemil Sena Ongun is Bener’s uncle.) What we certainly know about what is in common to Bener and Deleuze, however, is their literary archives. Albeit not stunningly, some authors on which Deleuze (with or without Guattari) worked appear as influential authors for Bener as well: Kafka, Beckett, Miller.²⁰ Thus, another essential question I have been pondering since I first imagined this study is the question of *What would happen if Deleuze (and Guattari) could read Bener’s novels?* Trying to answer this question, I approach *Virüs* as an appropriate textual realm for interrogating the claim of *Anti-Oedipus* that “literature is like schizophrenia,” while arguing that *Sahtegi* lends itself to be thought more in tandem with the claim in *Essay Critical and Clinical* that “literature is a health,” although there is less a differentiation than a complementary relationship between these two mottos, or between (Deleuze and Guattari’s) “schizoanalysis” and (Deleuze’s) “critical and clinical” methodology.²¹

1.3. Bener’s Subject

Remembering what we quoted from Deleuze’s reading of Walt Whitman, we can infer that an interrogation on “the felt interior experience” is already implicated in the notion of literature as an enterprise of health. Although what Deleuze offers—that is, a distinction between “the Self [*Moi*] of the Anglo-Saxons” and the “I [*Je*] of the Europeans,” between a “splintered, fragmentary, and relative” experience and a “substantial, total, and solipsistic” one—may seem too radical a distinction, it is still

¹⁹ This possible Nietzschean influence becomes palpable in Bener’s “Dönüşsüzlüğe Övgü,” published in *Kapan: ‘Nietzsche Ağladığımda’yı okuyorum günlerdir. Hâlâ umutsuzluğun doruğunda değilim. Oysa İpin Ucu’nda umudun nice soytarı, aldatici olduğunu belirtip, oyunun kahramanlarına buluşlarını alkışlatmıştım. Nietzsche ile bunca yakınlaştığımdan önce. Kendimle savaşta hep yenilgiye uğradım*” (Bener 2014, 9). Notwithstanding this sense of absolute “defeat,” Nietzsche will appear as a resisting figure: “Bilmiyorum. Nietzsche, böyle bir yenilgiye boyun eğmeyecek sanırım” (10).

²⁰ “Kafka’yı bunalımlara girerek okuduğumu iyi biliyorum. Şato’yu filan. ... Fransızlardan Maupassant, Amerikalılardan da bir iki yazar var. Henry Miller, Caldwell gibi” (Bener 2005, 109); “Kalkıp kendimi Samuel Beckett’le karşılaştırmak gibi aptallıklar da yapıyorum bazen, başışlayın yani” (Bener 2004, 152); “Düşünüyorum da kendimi Samuel Beckett’e yakın buluyorum! Bak hele! Ayşegül Yüksel’in incelemesini okuduktan sonra, bu benzerliğe daha çok inanır oldum. Her şeye karşın, yaşamayı sevmesem de, yaşamaya katlanacağımı sanıyorum” (Bener 2012, 26). Let us also notice the appearance of a certain “wrestling” with language again: “Çetrefil kitaplar ilgimi çekmiş ve onlarla uzun zaman boğuşmuşumdur. Başucumda durmuştur, ama işlevi tamamlandı mı yerine başkası gelir. Ama zaman zaman yine çetrem, çözümümü güç kitaplar yine gündeme gelebiliyor. Kimler, diyeceksiniz? Beckett, Borges, Cortazar gibi. Bu yazarlar zaman zaman gerçekten önemli” (Bener 2005, 112).

²¹ Answering his own question (“*Is Critique et Clinique Schizoanalytic?*”), Garin Dowd argues that “Deleuze’s final volume of essays, *Critique et Clinique*, represents a more appropriate volume by way of which to approach the question of the conjunction of schizoanalysis and literature over the career as a whole, albeit in a language shorn of the idioms of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*” (Dowd 2015, 120).

appropriate to think of the attention to (the dissociation of) subjectivity as one rubric of the thesis on literature's promise of health. If, as Smith says, "the question that links literature and life ... is the question of *health*," this question seems to be pertinent to a certain question of subjectivity as well.

Subjectivity, indeed, has been a privileged rubric of study in the critical reception of Bener's works. While it is arguable that literary criticism in Turkey did not give Bener's works, particularly his novels, as much attention as they deserve, the relevance of a certain question of subjectivity to his literature has already been uttered—on small scales and with different vocabularies. In *Vüs'at O. Bener: Kara Anlatı Yazarı*, the title Gümüş chose for his reading of Bener's novels was "Dissociation of Personality and the Rise of Writing" [*Kişilik Çözülüşü ve Yazının Yükselişi*]. In line with this focus, Gümüş offers regarding *Sahtegi* that there is "an *I* from which Mr. Sahtegi excludes himself" (Gümüş 2000, 39). The subtitle Tutumlu chose for her reading of *Sahtegi* resonates with what Gümüş offers: "The Monologue of 'I's" [*"Ben"lerin Monoloğu*] (Tutumlu 2010, 76).

Koçak furthers Gümüş's analysis and posits the question of subjectivity as the dominant path of Bener's literature, regarding "the origin of the subject as an inner division, and the groundlessness that comes thereby" as "Bener's precipitating path" (Koçak 2004, 20). What needs attention in Koçak's reading is his claim that Bener's subject does not refer to an idealized selfhood. Referring to a sentence from *Virüs*, he says that in Bener's works "it is as if writing has been invaded by subjectivity." Yet, "even while talking to others, he [the subject] talks to himself, he talks *against* himself: 'Yanıtacağım onu. Ben yokum bu oyunda, çirkin gururum var!' ... Even while registering the invasion of subjectivity, these texts are free from the illusion of a pure and monolithic subject" (19). Reconstructing Gümüş's analyses, Koçak names the grammatical expression of subjectivity "as an inner division" in Bener's works "multi-positional sentence" [*çoğul konumlu cümle*]: "A sentence that tends to contain more than one ethical or intellectual positions that are usually in discrepancy while preserving their separate and contradictory existences" (23).

Bener's works, thus, embody a certain problematization of the experience of "I" not only thematically but also on the level of language. A question of subjectivity, indeed, lies at the heart of language, insofar as we perceive the latter in the linguist Émile Benveniste's terms: "Language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a *subject* by referring to himself as *I* in his discourse" (Benveniste 1971, 224). Yet, the

relation between language and subjectivity is more complicated, and finds its most challenging (or, productive) expression in the experience of the subject's narration of herself: The utterance of "I," while presumably constructing subjectivity in language, simultaneously deconstructs it, as it inevitably gets caught in the tension between *I* and *me*, between *Je* and *Moi*—between the subject narrating herself ("the subject of the enunciating") and the subject being narrated by herself ("the subject of the enunciation").²² Terry Eagleton presents a prudent exploration of this problematic:

When I say 'Tomorrow I will mow the lawn,' the 'I' which I pronounce is an immediately intelligible, fairly stable point of reference which belies the murky depths of the I which does the pronouncing. The former 'I' is known to linguistic theory as the 'subject of the enunciation', the topic designated by my sentence; the latter 'I', the one who speaks the sentence, is the 'subject of the enunciating', the subject of the actual act of speaking. In the process of speaking and writing, these two 'I's seem to achieve a rough sort of unity; but this unity is of an imaginary kind. The 'subject of the enunciating', the actual speaking, writing human person, can never represent himself or herself fully in what is said: there is no sign which will, so to speak, sum up my entire being. I can only *designate* myself in language by a convenient pronoun. The pronoun 'I' *stands in* for the ever-elusive subject, which will always slip through the nets of any particular piece of language; and this is equivalent to saying that I cannot 'mean' and 'be' simultaneously. To make this point, Lacan boldly rewrites Descartes's 'I think, therefore I am' as: 'I am not where I think, and I think where I am not.' (Eagleton 2007, 147)

"I cannot *write myself*," Barthes paradoxically *writes* in a fragment called "Inexpressible Love," and asks: "What, after all, is this 'I' who would write himself? Even as he would enter into the writing, the writing would take the wind out of his sails, would render him null and void" (Barthes 2001, 98). What is at issue in this discussion on "enunciation," however, seems to go beyond a mere concern on language's incapacity vis-à-vis the subjective experience. Let us open a parenthesis here to see another rewriting of Descartes's law of cogito. One of the late stories of Bener is entitled "Biraz da Ağa Descartes," and starts with a captivating sentence: "*Kırk yıl öncesinin İstanbul'unda yürüyorum*" (Bener 2015, 235). The "I" of this sentence tells the reader a story dominated by the conversation between him and his friend named Descartes: "... Cogito Ergo Sum *de bir daha unutmadıysan, kokusuz ince terini sil, poker-play'dir yumuşak tüylü*

²² There is a confusion regarding the usage of these terms in English, supposedly resulting from different attitudes of different translators. There are some sources (among which is Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*) where the duality of "the subject of the enunciating"/"the subject of the enunciation" ("*le sujet de l'énonciation*"/"*le sujet de l'énoncé*") appears as "the subject of the enunciation"/"the subject of the statement."

yanaklarımızda gezinen, Ay'a gidilemeyeceği kesindir. ... Hangisi mi Descartes? Şu, arkadaki çatık kaşlı, seçebiliyor musun sımsıkı ağzını?" (236). Being friends from school, both the subject and Descartes are now soldiers, strolling through Istiklal Street. After a kind but firm exclamation—"Ne tuhaf adamsın sen be!" (237)—the subject opens a conversation on their fathers:

"Sonra sıkılırdı, çok sıkılırdı, kapkara sıkılırdı, çok içerdi, bol bol tabanca sıkardı beynine! Tatlı bir deli olmalı. İleride kimbilir, belki ben de deli olurum."

"Zor. Delirebilirsen iyi. Benimki elmaları dizer. Ben bakardım. Elmalar yükselir, kule olur, bıraksan göğe dek. El ustalığıyla, yordamıyla değil. Denge yasalarını biliyordu o. en büyük rakamları kafasında çarpar, böler, sonucunu sana söylerdi. Öyle bir kafa işte."

...

"Çözüyorsun da anlayamıyorsun."

"Doğru."

"Denemeli. Denemedikçe olmaz. Deneyelim. Deneyelim mi?"

"Bilmem. Denersem anlar mıyım?"

"Neyi anlayacaksın? Duyarsın be! Düşazdığım olmadı mı hiç? Ya da düş kurup kendi kendine? Benim üst ranzadaki Ahmet'le kapışmıştık sonunda. Sallanır durur her gece. Uyuyabilirsen uyu. Pis, pis. Tek başına pis. Utandırıcı. Ben ikilisini merak ediyorum. Güldüğüme bakma, sinirden."

"Denerken düşünebilir miyim? Ya da düşünürken deneyebilir miyim?" (237-8).

It is in the middle of this conversation that we hear Descartes uttering a sentence we will want to remember later: "*Delirebilirsen iyi.*" Let us contextualize this conversation that goes beyond a talk on fathers: The unnamed subject tries to convince his dear friend Descartes the Morose ("*çatık kaşlı*") to go to a brothel house. Descartes, "analyzing but not understanding" the possibilities that untimely appeared on the horizon, seems suspicious. The subject, on the other hand, is provocatively insistent on the promise of "experimentation." The subject's preference of "sensation" over "understanding" ("*Neyi anlayacaksın? Duyarsın be!*")²³ could not satisfy Descartes, who seems to be paralyzed in the face of a resistance against his *cogito*: Can one understand if he experiments? Can one think while experimenting? Can one experiment while thinking?

²³ If, as I will implicitly or explicitly be arguing throughout the thesis, there is a (virtual) dialogue between Bener and Deleuze, we are passing through such a promising moment that fortifies this argument. After reading "Biraz da Ağla Descartes," it is not hard to replace Deleuze with Bener('s subject) in the following sentences: "Where Descartes situates reason at the heart of his method, as shown by the role of thinking in the cogito, Deleuze emphasizes sensation. ... Deleuze holds that no thought is free of sensation. The cogito cannot be self-evident, because sensation always extends to a multiplicity of further conditions and causes. The Cartesian hope of defeating systemic doubt through the certainty of the cogito must therefore fail" (Williams 2010, 52).

This tension between the subject and Descartes culminates upon the former's recounting of the day Mustafa Kemal died: "Ata'mızın öldüğü gün, sınıfta mıydın sen?" It turns out that everybody in the class—including the psychology teacher ("Ruhyatçı")—but the subject and Descartes burst into tears upon hearing the bad news. The memory of that day now makes the subject feel "sad, shameful," while he continues to provoke Descartes and his "law":

"Kolayını bulmuşsun, düşünmek için düşünüyorsun sen arkadaş. Kızmadın ya? Bunun da yasası vardır herhalde. Sen düşünüyorsun. ... Demek bir sen, bir de ben... Ama hâlâ çok utanıyorum, üzülüyorum."
"Üzülme. Düşün. Varlığını kanıtla kendine."
"Öf be! Düşünüyorum, öyleyse yokum tamam mı! Amma içim sıkılıyor. Şu sokağa bir girebilseydik." (240)

Bener's (subject's) rewriting of Descartes's law of cogito is followed by the narration of how that day ended: They finally could enter "the street" but the sergeant catches them. The captain punishes the "the rascals": "*Yahu savaş kapımızda. Hitler denen pis bıyık eli kulağında sokacak başımızı derde. ... At nezarethaneye şu soysuzları*" (241). While they end up in the jail, the story finishes with another captivating sentence:

"Aldırma. Yüzbaşı gene de haklı..."
"Hangi konuda."
"Pis bıyık konusunda."
Hep böyle kal aklında Descartes ne olur, hoşçakal, ama istersen biraz da ağla. (242)

We do not know if Bener could read Lacan, either, but "Biraz da Ağla Descartes's" ironic rewriting of the law of cogito strongly resonates with Lacan's formulation. What this story problematizes, however, goes beyond an attention to the workings of language or to "the symbolic realm" or to the question to what extent the "I" can express experience. Bener's discussion on the relation between the subject of the enunciating and the subject of the enunciation is mediated through a problematization of the relation between thinking and sensing, between reason and desire. As we will see below, at issue is never a linguistic/psychic concern per se.

At this juncture, where Bener seems to be an author who is invested in a problematization of Descartes's cogito, playing havoc with the rigidity of the distinction between the subject of the enunciating and the subject of the enunciation, we should remember one of the most stirring commentaries on Bener's oeuvre. This commentary is valuable not only for it has been uttered in a time when the critical canon in Turkish

literary criticism hardly embraced Bener's works but also for it, I argue, has paved the way for a line of critical practice that pays attention to Bener's attention to subjectivity. As early as 1952, Bilge Karasu, another demanding author of Turkish modernist literature, writes that there is an "economy of I" (Karasu 1999, 46) in Bener's short stories:

In each story, one of the persons is "I." ... While these "I's more or less resemble each other in each story except for "Havva," the idea that [these "I's] think differently within the aura of the whole may seem to us reasonable. Yet, on the contrary, the thinking "I's rule out some little incongruities of the speaking "I's. This thinking "I is the same person in each story. While drunk, he either mocks himself as in "Damdaki" or mulls over philosophies. A pessimist, a schizoid. (47)

The echoes between Karasu's reading of Bener ("the thinking 'I's ... the speaking 'I's...") and Lacan's as well as Bener's rewritings of Descartes's law of cogito is attractive. But I want to focus on another echo: It is thought-provoking that a Turkish author has uttered the word "schizoid" while expounding the texts of another Turkish author long before Deleuze and Guattari wrote *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* from which we already read that sentence: "literature is like schizophrenia: a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression." It is about the reception of this book that Deleuze has asked: "Is it our fault that Lawrence, Miller, Kerouac, Burroughs, Artaud, and Beckett know more about schizophrenia than psychiatrists and psychoanalysts?" (Deleuze 1995, 23). It is in this book that we read the following definition: "the great artist is indeed the one who scales the schizophrenic wall and reaches the land of the unknown, where he no longer belongs to any time, any milieu, any school" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 89).

While mapping out the project of literature as an enterprise of health, Deleuze has evoked "delirium" as the symptom of a (non-pathological) way of creating life anew, not as a clinical category. The discussion of "schizophrenia" in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (and in other works written by the duo, such as *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Kafka: Toward a minor Literature*) can be seen as being not so far away from the point of Deleuze's assertion "illness is not a process but a stopping of the process." What they are after is to produce a positive reading on schizophrenic experience—not as an illness but

as a *process*: “Could it be that the loss of reality is not the effect of the schizophrenic process, but the effect of its forced oedipalization, that is to say, its interruption?” (123)²⁴

Schizophrenia appears in Deleuzian/Guattarian philosophy as a limit-experience of subjectivity, a state of relationality, a modality of life, that, stripped of its pathological connotations, promises a “deterritorialization”²⁵ of the established logic: “The little joy lies in schizophrenization as a process, not in the schizo as a clinical entity” (113). The joy evoked here refers neither to a state of euphoria nor to a recklessness nor to the experience of an isolated individual who lacks the necessary connection to the social/collective world (or, to the Lacanian “symbolic realm”) but rather to the recalibration of “desire” in a personally/politically significant manner. The way Deleuze and Guattari envision schizophrenization as a process maps out an anti-capitalist, revolutionary experiment, as this unmanageable state of delirium appears as a threat to the hegemonic regime of political, economic, and social codification executed by capitalism: “Schizophrenia as a process is desiring-production, but it is this production as it functions at the end, as the limit of social production determined by the conditions of capitalism” (130).²⁶ The promise offered by “schizo” as a becoming in the process, rather than a clinical category resulting from a certain lack, lies in its ability to navigate between multiple subjective modes and produce creative crafts in the (capitalist) system: “The schizo knows how to leave: he has made departure into something as simple as being born

²⁴ Daniel W. Smith presents a genealogy of Deleuze and Guattari’s grasp of schizophrenia as a process: “The definition of schizophrenia as a process has a complex history. When Emile Kraepelin tried to ground his concept of *dementia praecox* (‘premature senility’), he defined it neither by causes nor by symptoms but by a process, by an evolution and a terminal state; but he conceived of this terminal state as a complete and total disintegration, which justified the confinement of the patient in an asylum while awaiting his death. Deleuze and Guattari’s notion is closer to that of Karl Jaspers and R. D. Laing, who formulated a rich notion of process as a rupture, an irruption, an opening (*percee*) that breaks the continuity of a personality, carrying it off in a kind of voyage through an intense and terrifying ‘more than reality,’ following lines of flight that engulf both nature and history, both the organism and the mind” (Smith 178).

²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of “deterritorialization,” with its artistic, psychoanalytical, and political connotations, “as a movement producing change.” Adrian Parr offers a plain description: “In so far as it operates as a line of flight, deterritorialisation indicates the creative potential of an assemblage. So, to deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organisations” (Parr 2010, 69).

²⁶ Boxing their theoretical/practical attempt into an ambiguous pole of “postmodernist theory,” Eagleton could not find Deleuze and Guattari convincing: “In this apodicticism of desire, of which the schizophrenic is hero, there can be no place for political discourse proper, for such discourse is exactly the ceaseless labour of *interpretation* of desire, a labour which does not leave its object untouched. For Deleuze and Guattari, any such move renders desire vulnerable to the metaphysical traps of meaning. But that interpretation of desire which is the political is necessary precisely because desire is not a single, supremely positive entity; and it is Deleuze and Guattari, for all their insistence upon desire’s diffuse and perverse manifestations, who are the true metaphysicians in holding to such covert essentialism. Theory and practice are once more ontologically at odds, since the schizoid hero of the revolutionary drama is by definition unable to reflect upon his own condition, needing Parisian intellectuals to do it for him. The only ‘revolution’ conceivable, given such a protagonist, is disorder; and Deleuze and Guattari significantly use the two terms synonymously, in the most banal anarchist rhetoric” (Eagleton 1985, 69). Considering that Deleuze and Guattari’s “schizo” is more than able to reflect upon his own (and the world’s) conditions, it is sensible that Eagleton not only criticizes but also distorts their conceptualization.

or dying” (131). We see one of the plainest articulations of this schizoid promise of “the breakthrough—not the breakdown” in *Anti-Oedipus*’ discussion on what we already saw Deleuze (and Bener?) admired:

Strange Anglo-American literature: from Thomas Hardy, from D. H. Lawrence to Malcolm Lowry, from Henry Miller to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, men who know how to leave, to scramble the codes, to cause flows to circulate, to traverse the desert of the body without organs. They overcome a limit, they shatter a wall, the capitalist barrier. And of course they fail to complete the process, they never cease failing to do so. ... But through the impasses and the triangles a schizophrenic flow moves, irresistibly; sperm, river, drainage, inflamed genital mucus, or a stream of words that do not let themselves be coded, a libido that is too fluid, too viscous: a violence against syntax, a concerted destruction of the signifier, non-sense erected as a flow, polyvocality that returns to haunt all relations. (132-3)²⁷

Deleuze and Guattari go further to offer that “schizophrenia as a process is the only universal” (139). We already know that this grasp has a strong connection with the act of literature. It should be noted, however, that what Deleuze and Guattari intend while grasping (modernist) writing as a promising activity in its almost essential relation to schizophrenia seems to be drastically different from what Fredric Jameson, in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, calls “schizophrenic disjunction or *écriture*” (Jameson 1991, 29). Jameson proposes that among the symptoms of the “new systematic cultural norm” postmodernism promotes is a “weakening of historicity, both in our relationship to public History and in the new forms of our private temporality, whose ‘schizophrenic’ structure (following Lacan) will determine new types of syntax or syntagmatic relationships in the more temporal arts” (6). Based on Lacan’s description of “schizophrenia as a breakdown in the signifying chain,” (26) Jameson offers that the cultural productions of “late capitalism” have reduced the schizophrenic experience “to an experience of pure material signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time” (27). With the postmodernist works’ appropriation of the “schizophrenic fragmentation as their fundamental aesthetic” (28), Jameson offers, “the morbid content we associate with terms like schizophrenia”—such as “heightened intensity,” “loss of reality,” (27) “euphoria,” “an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity” (28)—has turned into a hegemonic “cultural style” (29).

²⁷ It must be this emphasized masculinity of Deleuze and Guattari that leads Schwab, in one footnote of her reading of Beckett’s *The Unnamable*, to note “that Deleuze’s and Guattari’s schizosphere is a decidedly masculine sphere—despite its ambition to transcend the boundaries of gender” (Schwab 1994, 264-5). We will remember Schwab’s comment while reading *Sahtegi*.

What Deleuze and Guattari offer by grasping schizophrenia as a process and in its relation to modernist literature does not address a textual mode or a literary strategy (“*écriture*”) but, if pun be allowed, a mode of living or a survival strategy. Rather than a psychic/linguistic “break-down” or a literary tactic, Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of schizophrenic process draws attention to this experience’s capacity to “break-through” language, subjectivity, social norms, and ways of organizing politics, as well as personological/familial dramas in which we find ourselves stuck. Plus, far from promoting a “waning of historicity,” Deleuze and Guattari’s grasp of “schizo” provides us with a mode of subjectivity that is intensely invested in history: “No one has ever been as deeply involved in history as the schizo, or dealt with it in this way. He consumes all of universal history in one fell swoop” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 21).

It is in the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, that is *A Thousand Plateaus*, that this Deleuzian/Guattarian reading on the schizophrenic process appears as an experience that is pertinent not only to literature, politics, or history but also to “language.” This so-called schizoid philosophy of language embraces “indirect discourse” as the foundation of any language: “The ‘first’ language, or rather the first determination of language, is not the trope or metaphor but *indirect discourse*” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 77). This emphasis on “(free) indirect discourse” as the engine of language is linked with an emphasis on “collective enunciation,” as it inevitably leads to a certain multiplicity: “There is no individual enunciation. ... [E]nunciation in itself implies *collective assemblages*.” (79-80). It is also here that we see another rewriting of the law of cogito:

To write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call my Self (*Moi*) ... A schizophrenic said: “I heard voices say: *he is conscious of life*.” In this sense, there is indeed a schizophrenic cogito, but it is a cogito that makes self-consciousness the incorporeal transformation of an order-word, or a result of indirect discourse. My direct discourse is still the free indirect discourse running through me, coming from other worlds or other planets. (84)²⁸

Now I can utter the principal thesis of my readings of Bener’s novels. Keeping in mind Deleuze’s motto “literature is a health,” and putting Gürbilek’s (“not only a mental

²⁸ Deleuze and Guattari here refer to David Cooper: “Cooper comments that ‘the language of “hearing voices” ... means that one becomes aware of something that exceeds the consciousness of normal [i.e., direct] discourse and which therefore must be experienced as “other”’” (quoted in Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 525). We will remember this “language of ‘hearing voices’” in our reading of *Sahtegi*.

collapse, but also a dysfunctional body”) and Karasu’s (“schizoid”) diagnoses into contact with the echoes between Lacan’s, Deleuze and Guattari’s, and Bener’s rewritings of the law of cogito, “Bener’s subject,” I argue, appears as a “sick” and “schizoid” subject who continuously plays havoc with the distinction between the subject of the enunciating and the subject of the enunciation. *Virüs* and *Sahtegi*, I further argue, present appropriate textual grounds for a scrutiny on this Benerian regime of subjectivity and its personal, historical, and political ramifications. The question of subjectivity in these novels, I will ultimately argue, is a question of health.

1.4. The Politics of (Turkish) Literature

Is “Biraz da Ağla Descartes” a *political* story? We know that Bener was performing literary criticism before writing stories, novels, and plays.²⁹ Yet, one can argue that Bener never forgot about criticism. His reading of his “Biraz da Ağla Descartes,” will, I guess, surprise the reader with its critical focus: “Let us come to the story ‘Biraz da Ağla Descartes.’ What is emphasized in this story is when fascism, about which one should truly worry, began” (Bener 2005, 113). Is what is emphasized by Bener the Critic here just “Biraz da Ağla Descartes”’s allusion to “*pis bıyık*” Hitler? Why, one can wonder, did Bener select a conversation in which Descartes’ law of cogito is challenged via an emphasis on “sensation” as the appropriate ground for a literary discussion on the (historical) sources and beginnings of fascism?

As already alluded, the use of literature Deleuze and Guattari constantly evoke points out a political use as well. Provoking us to rethink what literature can *do*, they say: “How poorly the problem of literature is put, starting from the ideology that it bears, or from the co-option of it by a social order. People are co-opted, not works, which will always come to awake a sleeping youth, and which never cease extending their flame” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 133).³⁰ For a more *textual* discussion on the relation between literature and politics, however, one should refer to Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*—we already quoted them evoking “a Kafka *politics*.” One of the most productive arguments of this reading centers around the keyword “diabolical.”

²⁹ “Eleştiri yazıları yazdığımı anımsayan pek kimse yok sanırım. O yıllarda tiyatrolara, senfoni orkestralarına gidiyoruz durmadan. Sevgi Sanlı, Devlet Tiyatroları’nda dramaturg. *Forum* dergisinde, Bilge’nin [Karasu] zoruyla eleştiri yazıları, tiyatro eleştirisi yazıyorum. Birkaç yazım orada çıktı” (Bener 2005, 105).

³⁰ It may be good to keep in mind that Deleuze and Guattari wrote *Anti-Oedipus* as a response to the May 1968 events. For a discussion on *Anti-Oedipus* “as a May ’68 book,” see Buchanan (2008), pp 1-19.

Deleuze and Guattari say that Kafka succeeded to create “the diabolical power of the literary machine” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 29) so that the “creative line of escape vacuums up in its movement all politics, all economy, all bureaucracy, all judiciary: it sucks them like a vampire in order to make them render still unknown sounds that come from the near future-Fascism, Stalinism, Americanism, *diabolical powers that are knocking at the door*” (41). Emphasis is not mine but may be functional for a reading of Bener(’s “Biraz da Ağla Descartes”) as well. This word appears in their discussion on Kafka’s “linguistic” wrestling in his letter-writing as well: “let us distinguish a subject of enunciation as the form of expression that writes the letter, and a subject of the statement that is the form of content that the letter is speaking about (even if I speak about me). It is this duality that Kafka wants to put to a perverse or diabolical use” (30).

It is also in their reading of Kafka that Deleuze and Guattari offer the concept of “minor literature” as an essentially political literature. With a reconceptualization of the term “minor” in a way that it connotes less a prescribed category defined quantitatively (“minority”) than a movement *toward* minorization (“becoming-minor”),³¹ Deleuze and Guattari utter three characteristics of minor literature: i) “in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization,” which they think finds its figuration in Kafka as an “impasse”: “the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise” (16); ii) “everything in [it] is political ... [and] its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it” (17); iii) “in it everything takes on a collective value. ... [and] literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation” (17).³² *Anti-Oedipus*’ dictum “*There is only desire and the social, and nothing else*” seems to resonate here with this

³¹ Schwab notes: “It makes sense, then, that Deleuze and Guattari should write a book about Kafka in which they read him as the initiator of a “minor literature” (*une littérature mineure*). *Mineure* connotes “minor,” “minority,” or “minoritarian” at once. But in Kafka’s work “minor” or “minoritarian” always generates a radical deterritorialization rather than supporting the identity politics of certain minority literatures” (Schwab 2012, 66). Let us also note here Gürbilek’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s work: “İnsan nasıl kendi dilinin azınlığı, göçebesi, çingenesi olur? *Kafka: Minör Bir Edebiyat İçin*’in en güzel bölümleri dilde bir firari hat çizmekten, bir dilde söylenemeyeni söyleyebilmek için o dilin içinde bir yabancı dil yontmaktan, bir dilin bastırılmış niteliğini baskıcı niteliğinin karşısına çıkarabilmek için dili şimdiye kadar duyulmamış iç yoğunluklara açmaktan söz ettikleri bölümlerdir” (Gürbilek 2016, 92).

³² It is after this somewhat analytical exposition (which answers the question “What is a Minor Literature?”) that we read what we have already quoted: “We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature.”

conceptualization of “minor literature” as one that essentially connects the inner life with an exterior life, desire with the political.

To me, Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of “minor literature” is important *not* because it allows for a classification through which some writers or some works will be singled out and celebrated as “minor.” In the face of abundant yet loose reference to this concept, observable also in Turkish literary criticism, it can even be argued that “minor literature” has lost its conceptual depth. Yet, especially after passing through some basic tenets of Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) schizoanalytical/critical and clinical methodology, I deem it necessary to keep in mind that Deleuze’s approach to literature has always been in search of a new grasp of politics of art, calling into question the relation between the individual and the collectivity, between the personal concern and the political one, between creation and resistance.

Let us recall Fredric Jameson one more time here, as his argument in his 1986 article “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” well echoes with the preceding discussion.³³ Here Jameson argues that the literary texts produced in the third-world—the countries “which have suffered the experience of colonialism and imperialism” (Jameson 1986, 67)—perform a “very different ratio of the political to the personal”: While “the western realist and modernist novel” promotes “a radical split between the private and the public, between the poetic and the political,” third-world texts reflect a blurring of this split, debunking the “deep cultural conviction that the lived experience of our private existences is somehow incommensurable with the abstractions of economic science and political dynamics” (69). For Jameson, what allows the embodiment of this productive transfiguration of the personal to the public is third-world literature’s urge to allegorize singular characters and their stories. This thesis leads Jameson to argue that the individual story in the third-world is always already mediated through the story of the nation: “Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society.*” The third-world text, Jameson offers, has an essential relation to the (national)

³³ I am again indebted to Sibel Irzik for bringing to my attention this connection between Deleuzian/Guattarian concept of “minor literature” and Jameson’s conceptualization of “third-world literature.”

politics, while politics in the Western text remains “according to Stendhal’s canonical formulation, [as] a ‘pistol shot in the middle of a concert.’”

Jameson fortifies his comparative analysis with a discussion of different notions of subjectivity, criticizing both “the subjectivizing and psychologizing habits of first-world peoples” (76) and the Western/capitalistic narrative championing “the illusions of a host of fragmented subjectivities” (85). The tendency to split the political realm from the personal realm results according to Jameson in “the poverty of the individual experience of isolated monads” and “dying individual bodies without collective pasts or futures bereft of any possibility of grasping the social totality” (85).³⁴ One realm of application he chose for this theory is the Chinese author Lu Xun’s story “Medicine.” Notice Jameson’s (*pre-* but at the same time *pace* Deleuze) “critical and clinical” attention: “As a writer, then, Lu Xun remains a diagnostician and a physician” (73).

In “Allegorical Lives: The Public and the Private in the Modern Turkish Novel,” Sibel Irzik endeavors to complicate Jameson’s theory by testing its validity through an analysis of some major works of the modern Turkish novel. Criticizing Jameson’s model that sees in the third-world text an unproblematized translation of the individual experience into the national one, Irzik contends that “the notion of national allegory is not so much in need of confirmation as it is in need of complication, and even, in a certain sense, reversal and irony” (Irzik 2003, 555). Irzik’s readings of the works of Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Oğuz Atay, and Orhan Pamuk show that these texts subvert “the compulsion to allegorize” even when they comply with it. This analysis leads her to the conclusion that “a dialectics of the public and the private,” rather than a transfiguration of the latter into the former, may provide a more comprehensive grasp, also regarding modern Turkish literature. Notwithstanding this critique, she offers, *pace* Jameson, that “even in the modern Turkish novels that place themselves more squarely within the mainstream Western novelistic tradition of narrating the evolution of an ‘authentic’ subjectivity, politics is never a ‘pistol shot in the middle of a concert.’” (555).³⁵

³⁴ This description of the mode of subjectivity Jameson thinks the first-world promotes may remind the reader of Eagleton’s pejorative comments on Deleuze and Guattari’s “schizo.” Jameson, however, embraces Deleuze and Guattari’s (*Anti-Oedipus*) “conception of desire that is at once social and individual,” praising their approach as “one of the more powerful contemporary denunciations of this split [“between public and private”] and this habit” (Jameson 1986, 79).

³⁵ In her reading on Turkish novel in 1984 and 1985, Gürsel Aytaç makes a very similar point: “En bireyci ve en özel görünümü romanda bile günümüz Türkiye gerçekliğinin izlerine rastlamak mümkün” (Aytaç 1990, 76). Still, it is important that the only politics Aytaç sees in these texts is the national one. She mentions Bener’s *Virüs* in her discussion: “1984 Adam Yayını olarak çıkan ‘Buzul Çağının Virüsü’nü (239 s.) O. Vüsat Bener, [sic] Oğuz Atay’ın

I hope that this study, while trying to show, among others, how politics is not a pistol shot in the middle of a concert but rather the very repertoire of Bener's novels' attention to subjectivity, serves as well to "give back to an author a little of the joy, the energy, the life of love and politics that he knew how to give and invent," possibly offering a productive discussion on the relation between literature, subjectivity, and politics.



anısına adanmış. Kendi içinde bağımsız anlatı birimleri içeren romanda birimlerin birinden ötekine geçiş, zaman, çağrışım, olay dizisi gibi tutarlı bir ardardalık ilkesi izlemiyor. Bu anlatı birimlerinin çoğunda alaycı ya da gülmece tonunda çizilmiş insan manzaraları var, ve bunların tümü birarada okuyucuya söz konusu kişilerin yaşadığı dönem ve toplum hakkında genel bir imaj yaratıyor" (84).

CHAPTER 2

BUZUL ÇAĞININ VİRÜSÜ: A SCHIZOPHRENIC FLOW

İç, çoktan dıştır.
— Orhan Koçak

Prologue: Reading, an Impasse

Critical readings of *Virüs*, albeit constituting a relatively scarce archive, have converged on one specific point. It seems that anyone writing on *Virüs* needs to come to terms with a problem that has different degrees of difficulty: the problem of difficulty. As many a prudent reader of Bener has uttered so far, *Virüs* is one of the densest texts ever written in Turkish. Notice various superlative degrees conferred upon this book so far: Gümüş notes in 2005 that *Virüs* is “the most arduous [*çetin*] text” he has met since the beginning of his writing career (Gümüş 2005).³⁶ To Koçak, it is “the most arduous [*çetin*] love story in our language after *Hüsn-ü Aşk*” (Koçak 2005, 122). Yıldız Ecevit mentions Bener’s *Virüs* along with Bilge Karasu’s *Gece* and Barlas Özarıkça’s *Ters Adam* as “the extreme examples of the pursuit of form in the 1980s.” In addition to the novelty of their form, these novels have also “shattered traditional texture,” focusing on “people who lost meaning in the dark sides of life” (Ecevit 2005, 20). Enis Batur contends that *Virüs* is “one of the most ingenious examples of our literature,” and might baffle “the ready-made reader” [*konfeksiyon tipi okur*] (Batur 2004, 63). The question that has turned into a subtitle in Sevgi Şen’s study on *Virüs* is also telling: “Can *Buzul Çağının Virüsü* be read?” (Şen 7).

It, thus, seems that this non-canonical text of Turkish modernist literature has produced a critical canon, one that posits, with different vocabularies, the problem of difficulty as the most apparent, if not the dominant, “problem of *writing*” *Virüs* implicates.³⁷ How to account for this density, of which its creator is more than aware?³⁸

³⁶ In the very end of his *Vüs’at O. Bener: Kara Anlatı Yazarı*, Gümüş has one more confession: “*Buzul Çağının Virüsü*’nde bazı bölümleri nasıl yorumlayacağımı, karabasansı boşluklar içinde, düşündüm durdum. İki, üç, dört, olmadı, beş, altı kez okumak zorunda kaldığım bölümleri, bir de kuşkusuz başka bölümlere bağlayarak anlamlandırmaya çalıştıkça, niçin saklamalı, çaresizlikler, sıkıntılar içinde kaldım” (Gümüş 2000, 136).

³⁷ Notwithstanding this recognition, not that every reader has celebrated *Virüs*’s density. As repeatedly noted by readers of Bener (Koçak 2004, Tutumlu 2010, Şen 2016), Füsün Akatlı’s comment is a well-known, rather cynical disapproval of *Virüs*: “Bener’in romanında tek ve tüm ağırlık, yazıyı sökmenin ‘güç’lüğü üzerinedir. Gerisi yufka” (quoted in Tutumlu 2010, 53).

³⁸ Let us remember Bener’s “wrestling” with language in *Virüs*: “Yalnız *Buzul Çağının Virüsü* romanı çok başka bir oluşumla dünyaya geldi. Garip bir biçimde, ben orada artık dille feci bir şekilde boğuşmaya başladım. Dille boğuşurken metin de tabii ona göre değişimli oldu.”

In her study, Şen emphasizes the relationality between form and content as the determining factor behind this problem of difficulty. She points out an “obligation” [zorunluluk]: “Such a form of writing arises out of a realm of obligation, rather than a play of language. An obligation out of the inability to express what is to be told in any other form” (23). This emphasis on an “inability” resonates with what Gürbilek says in regard to “style” which she claims is not an “ornament” but an “obligation”: “We tell something that way because otherwise we could not do so. We tell something that way because we think all the given roads have been congested” (Gürbilek 2015, 21). At this junction, one may also want to remember Judith Butler’s reflections on “style.” “Certainly,” she says, “one can practice styles, but the styles that become available to you are not entirely a matter of choice. Moreover, neither grammar nor style are politically neutral” (Butler 2002, xviii). She asks some questions that strikingly resemble those asked by Koçak³⁹ in relation to Bener’s style: “Are those who are offended making a legitimate request for ‘plain speaking’ or does their complaint emerge from a consumer expectation of intellectual life? Is there, perhaps, a value to be derived from such experiences of linguistic difficulty?” (xix). Let us also invite Deleuze in this conversation on the promises of “style”: “Style, in a great writer, is always a style of life too, not anything at all personal, but inventing a possibility of life, a way of existing” (Deleuze 1995, 100).

2.1. The Question of Subjectivity: An Exercise on Style

Virüs’s question of style, I propose, is inevitably linked with its question of subjectivity. One does not need to go further to see this; *Virüs* presents a distinctive configuration of narrative voice from its very start:

Buzlucam bölmeli dikdörtgen odanın, penceresiz, kapısı loş koridora hep açık üçte birine sıkışık, ayaklarından birinin kırığı takoz destekli masasına abanmış, sabah çayına eğri simidini daldırıp çıkarıyor. Ağzının kenarında yerleşikliğini inatla koruyan kabuk tutmuş uçuğu koparıp atarsa, çamaşırlıktan bozma barınağını bölüşmek zorunda olduğu çılgının gardiyanlığına gittikçe sıklaşan delirgen, kimi yalvar yakar başkaldırıları gevşer belki. Önündeki şişkin, eprik dosyayı karıştırmaya kalkışmamalı hemen, cermen türü kalorifer böcekleri hızla dağılır.

³⁹ “‘Zor görünme’ isteğinin dışında hiçbir nedenselliği, hiçbir güdülenmesi yok mudur bu türden cümlelerin? ‘Basitliğin’ hep prim yaptığı bir kültürde, bu isteğin kendisi bile, başka etkenlerde birleşerek, yorumlanmayı ‘hak eden’ bir güdülenme oluşturmuyor mudur? Yetersiz ve sahteleştirici bir iletişim olarak basitliğin, hatta düpedüz iletişimin eleştirisi olarak da görülemez mi bu zorluk çıkarma çabası?” (Koçak 2004, 23).

Gölgesi kıpırdadıkça koruk donuğu patlak gözlerini, boncuk ter kaplı kel kafasını imgelemekten kurtaramıyor kendini: Özlük İşleri Şefi. Kalkındı galiba koltuğundan, bakalım ne buyuracak.

“Gel birader! İçinden çıkamadım. Yirmi dört yılı tutturamıyorum.”

Hırt. Savurdu rastgele gevelediği kurşun kalemi.

“Geldim.” (V 9)

The reader starts to read *Virüs* without knowing who is talking to whom, about whom. At first glance, it seems that the narrative voice is organized in a way that a third-person narrator describes what a person (possibly the protagonist) does at that moment: “...eğri simidini daldırıp çıkarıyor.” When we come to the point “gevşer belki,” we understand that this narrator is not only authorized to describe what is to be seen from outside but also knowledgeable about the inner thoughts of this person: “...çamaşırlıktan bozma barınağını bölüşmek zorunda olduğu çılgının...” The following sentence seems to have been constructed on a transitive membrane positioned between the narrator and the character: “...kalkışmamalı hemen, cermen türü kalorifer böcekleri hızla dağılır.” Whether the voice we hear is the voice of the narrator or the character’s inner voice is ambivalent.

In the second paragraph, the same ambiguous voice introduces to us a second person. He, we understand, is the person about whom the first person was negotiating within his mind in the first paragraph: “Özlük İşleri Şefi.” Then, the voice seems to be the inner voice of the first person, rather than the narrator’s voice: “Kalkındı galiba koltuğundan, bakalım ne buyuracak” should be the enunciation of what the first person we were introduced to thinks in his mind. After the reported speech of Özlük İşleri Şefi (“Gel birader!”), the narrative voice returns to the interface it was previously positioned on: “Savurdu rastgele gevelediği kurşun kalemi.” Does this voice belong to the narrator, or are we reading what the first person thinks what Özlük İşleri Şefi does? It is unclear. We have so far heard the same narrative voice narrating i) what the first person does (“daldırıp çıkarıyor”), ii) what the first person (or, the narrator) thinks (“kalkışmamalı hemen”) ii) what the second person (“Özlük İşleri Şefi”) does (“kalkındı”), and iv) what the first person (or, the narrator) thinks what the second person does (“rastgele gevelediği”). As we proceed in the “fragment,”⁴⁰ the ambiguity grows:

⁴⁰ As Şen pointedly discusses, the building blocks of *Virüs*’s narrative is “fragment.” For a discussion on the functions of “fragment” in relation to *Virüs*, see Şen pp. 12-16.

“Kıyırık bir memurdun. Şef yardımcısı yaptık seni. Daha ne istiyorsun. Çalıştıracak karı da bulmuşsun. Açtırma kutuyu, bilmediğimi sanma şu meseleyi.”

Çalıştıracak karı, bunların kocaları boynuzludur demek. Bulaşmaktansa anlamazdan gelmeyi, sineye çekmeyi yeğliyor herkes, bu tür yarı kapalı çamur atma yöntemlerine, aşağılık dokundurmalara. ... Tamam, anladık ben de müstahdem kadrosundan ücret alan bir zavallıyım. Ne olacak yani, yetti be! (10)

After the reported speech of *Özlük İşleri Şefi*, for the first time (in the fragment and thus in the book), we hear the voice of the speaking subject as uttered by the pronoun of “I.” This is important: The “he” of the first paragraph is now “I.” What we call the first person is now the first-person singular. The narrative voice, that is the voice we have been hearing from the very beginning, has dissolved into the voice of the first-person singular who simultaneously speaks and thinks: “...bir zavallıyım.” Then, we would deduce, it was nothing but this voice of the first-person singular, it was this “I,” that narrated what he himself did (“*daldırıp çıkarıyor*”) and thought (“*çılğının*”) as if he is the narrator who narrates himself from outside, while also narrating what *Özlük İşleri Şefi* does (“*Savurdu*”) and what he himself thinks what *Özlük İşleri Şefi* does (“*kalkındı galiba*”).

Virüs welcomes the reader to a linguistic impasse, which will appear more arduous in some other passages, where this multiplicity of voices will take different forms. Let us continue our scrutiny with the paragraph below:

Ayakkabısının kalkık burnu kayıyor sağa sola, fırça vuruldukça sert sert. “Sıkı bas amca.” Nereye basayım oğlum. Ne zaman, ne demeye koydu ayağını şu saz benizli oğlancığın eabil kuşlu boyacı sandığına. Soluyor burnundan. Köftehor! İnsan bir bakışta anlar karşısındakinin ne halde olduğunu. Anladı anlamasına, gelir mi işine. Akşama fakirhaneye buyurmalıymışım. Fakirhane Kalamış’ta. ‘*Kalamış’tan bir vapur kalkıyor, kalkıyor.. beresini yaan giymiş..*’ Gelirim, dedi. Beklesin dangalak. Bozulmamış saflık ha! Ağzının kenarıyla fırt tükürdü, sıyırttı tükürük kalantor bir herifin tiril tiril pantolonunu. Yiyecek gibi bakıştılar. Hele dıngırda, otuz iki dişini vereyim ellerine! Çekti gitti inek. Tükürük atma ustalığına bayıldı kara oğlan, ayna etti pabuçlarını. Keçi saçlarını okşa. İçinden geldi madem. Öyküleri birbirine benzer. Sormaya gerek yok. Sodalı sularda kırk yıl kaynatsan çıkmaz yavru ellerinin karasarılığı. Sana ne babalık! Haklısın çocuk. Milli Piyango’dan sana boş yok. Sülüs yazısıyla, ‘*El Rızk-ı Teâlallah.*’ Bozdur bozdur harca. (85)

The third-person singular subject whose shoes twist and turn on the shoeshine box as narrated by the narrator in the first sentence is the same subject who enunciates “*Nereye basayım oğlum*” within his mind in the modality of the first-person singular’s interior

monologue as if responding to the shoeshine boy's "*Sıkı bas amca.*" Although we would expect the continuation of this narration of the first-person singular, as we proceed we read another interplay between the voices: Instead of "*koydum,*" we read "*Ne zaman, ne demeye koydu...*" The first-person singular subject becomes the third-person singular: "*Soluyor burnundan. ... Gelirim, dedi.*" Yet, the first-person singular subject continues to speak in his mind: "*... otuz iki dişini vereyim ellerine!*" Not only an interior monologue of "I" ("*Akşama fakirhaneye buyurmalıyım.*") but also an interior dialogue between "I" and "you" ("*Keçi saçlarını okşa. İçinden geldi madem.*") and a dialogue imagined in the interior experience of the subject ("*Sana ne babalık! Haklısın çocuk.*") have already started.

What is more, this multiplicity of voices will be observable even in such cases where the whole narration seems to be constructed in the first-person singular modality. In the following passage, we see how there appears within a first-person singular narration some other voices that addresses the "I" as if it is a "you" or a "he":

Koşar adım yürüdüm. Sezai Rodoslu'nun köşkünsü evinin önünde durdum. Cevizlik iyice şehir dışı sayılır. Üç beş açlığı haklı kasaba delikanlısı düşer mi düşer peşine kolcu ya da sırtında kepenek, '*hayatı şairane*' bir çoban. Ne yaparız? Gerçi ilçede bu tür olaylar duyulmuş değil. Karmıklı'nın dağ köylerinde, Çukurca bucağında tasarladığımı gölgede bırakan birkaç *Amok* saldırganlığı olduğunu duymuştu, ama binde bir rastlanır soydan, iyice orta malı kadınların paylaşılmaması yüzünden. Yok canım, sanmam. Allah korusun. *Athée* geçinen kaltaban. Sıkıştın değil mi? Bilgiçlik taslamaya da başladık. Tanrıtanımaz desen, gradon mu eksilir? Bozarım fiyakanı bak, karışmam sonra. (146)

Multiple voices coming from multiple positions in one single voice: "*Yürüdüm*", "*Ne yaparız?*", "*duymuştu*", "*sıkıştın değil mi?*" *Virius*, even when its subject narrates what he himself does and thinks, continues to follow the same subject from both inside ("*sanmam*") and outside ("*duymuştu*"). As we proceed in this fragment, we also see that *Virius* reveals a certain self-reflexivity regarding this interplay between subject positions—to the extent that the speaking subject we have been hearing from the beginning appears as the writing subject who is aware of his text's "economy of I":

Ağaç altları bomboş. Burası *Uranus* mu? Otlar kurumaya hazırlanmış gibi. Hani kara bulutlar, şar şar yağmur? Zamanlama yanlışları, birinci tekil kişiden, üçüncü tekil kişiye geçiş dalgınlıkları! Kıh, kıh! Kekik kokularını bırakıp gitti esinti. Kır çiçekleri dirençli daha solmamakta. Issızlığımı dinliyorum – gözlerim açık, doğanın. Çök bakalım şuraya, kurut terini.

Hafifim. Duraladı çarpıntım. Islıkla gene bir ezgi tutturabilirim. Ne söyleyeyim? Gelmiyor aklıma. (147)

After passing through such passages where an unfinalizable dialogue between “I,” “you,” and “he” dominates the whole narration, it will be interesting to read how *Virüs*’s creator once disclosed a certain inability on his part. “Somehow,” says Bener in an interview, “I could not go for narrating in third-person singular” (Bener 2004, 145). Somehow, however, *Virüs* succeeds to get over this inability, as we already saw and will see more clearly in the quotation below:

Ne işi vardı aralarında? Dillerinden düşürmedikleri *D. H. Lawrence*’ın Türkçe’ye yalan yanlış çevrilen birkaç romanını o da okumuştı, ama neden öylesine ayılıp bayılıyordu bu yazara, pek akli kesmemişti. Kişiliğini oldukça bulmuş saydığı yirmi, yirmi beş şiiri o dönem dergilerinde boy göstermiş, bir kitapçığı da yayımlanmıştı. Herhalde bu yüzden ilgilerini esirgemiyorlardı ondan. Sustum. Gırtlak derdine düşerse insan böyle olur. Söylentiye bakılırsa, *Musorski*, soğuktan donayazarken bile notalarını duvarlara, kapı arkalarına yazarmış. *Vivaldi* yoksulluk içinde ölmedi mi? *Orhan Veli*’nin, *Orhan Kemal*’in, kıyasıya verilen savaşımına, başarılarına karşın, yaşam öyküleri daha mı az acıklı? Sözün özü, kişinin doğası, yüreğindeki ateşi sürekli canlı tutabilecek harlı çakımdan yoksun olmamalı! Gerisi palavra. Göle mala çalmanın laf olsa beri gelesi. (V 38)

What can this humble exercise on *Virüs*’s style offer?⁴¹ *Virüs*’s “multi-positional sentence” strives to capture the experience of “I” as transparently as possible. Yet, what *Virüs* performs goes beyond the attempt to keep a record of the complexities of the inner life—at least formally. *Virüs* registers, with the utmost caution, all the voices that traverse the subject’s mind, while also adjusting the narrative voice in accord with a certain multiplicity of subject positions between which the textual flow navigates. Within this oscillation between a first-person singular and a third-person singular, the speaking subject performs a bifurcation as well—at least syntactically.

Then, what sort of “a way of existing” does *Virüs* invent? In her meticulous study, Şen proposes an answer by pointing out “the performance of remembering” in *Virüs*, which she considers as a “memory narrative” (Şen 26). Based on Dorrit Cohn’s theoretical framework, she argues that it is the “conversation” between a remembering subject and a remembered subject that determines the narrative shift between “I” and

⁴¹ A formalistic reading on six passages may, of course, be seem insufficient to have a claim about the whole book. As we will see below, one can find in *Virüs* rather simple first-person narrations as well. What I am after, however, is to show what I consider as the radical examples within the boundaries of which *Virüs* performs its form of writing. These passages, these “impasses,” are some “extreme examples of [*Virüs*’s] pursuit of form.”

“he.”⁴² The last quotation we read above may constitute a case that supports Şen’s argument: The subject that enunciated “*Sustum*” (now) seems to be the same person who is referred, as a third-person singular subject, by the sentence “*Ne işi vardı aralarında?*” (past).

Şen’s focus on *Virüs*’s being a “memory narrative” as the determining factor behind the interplay between “I” and “he” leaves unnoticed the radical spontaneity of this narrative shift. It is true that the subject in *Virüs* always remember while—as we will discuss above—also writing; yet, we must also see the multiplicity of voices that traverses the inner life of the subject in one single moment. What is more, this shift occurs not only where a (writing) subject seems to look at and thus intervene into his past, but also within the temporal space of the past—as the very first passage from *Virüs* shows: We read how the subject who dips his *simit* into his tea appeared, within the boundaries of the same temporality, as the “I” of the narrative: “*Tamam, anladık ben de müstahdem kadrosundan ücret alan bir zavallıyım.*”

I thus want to draw attention to the spontaneity of such utterances as “*Nereye basayım oğlum*” and “*Soluyor burnundan,*” or “*Koşar adım yürüdüm*” and “*Sıkıştın değil mi?*” as radical moments of *Virüs*’s distinctive modernist style, where, rather than a tension between a remembering “I” and a remembered “I,” “a perverse or diabolical use” of the subject of the enunciating and the subject of the enunciation is at work. It seems that the solution *Virüs* produces regarding the tension between “the thinking ‘I’” and “the speaking ‘I’” is to have recourse to a form of writing whereby a multiplicity of voices will become the dominant style.

We can continue to get help from the reader who first detected Bener’s attention to subjectivity: “schizoid.” These radical moments, I will propose, are also the moments where *Virüs*’s form of writing, which almost works against the tendency of its creator,

⁴² The relevant passage from Şen’s study reads: “... anlatılacak olanlar, birinci kişi anlatıcının olayları anlama biçiminden etkileyecek ya da Cohn’un Proust üzerinden dediği üzere ‘zamana ayarlı bir teleskop’ üzerinden gerçekleşecektir. Bu zamana ayarlı teleskop ise üçüncü kişi her şeyi bilen anlatıcının kullandığı gibi karakterlerinin her birinin panoramik bir biçimde görünmesini sağlayan ve böylelikle olayları kusursuz bir şekilde uzaktan anlatan bir teleskop değildir; aksine böyle bir teleskopik bakış tamamen yıkılmıştır. Bunu sağlayan şey ise birinci kişi anlatıcının anlatısının şimdisindeki beni ile geçmişteki beninin sürekli bir konuşma içerisinde olmasından; başka bir deyişle birinci kişi anlatıcıların geçmişe bakışlarının bir bellek anlatısına dönüşmelerinden kaynaklanmaktadır. *Buzul Çağının Virüsü*’ndeki anlatı da böyle bir noktadan açılmaktadır. Hem odaklanılan karakter hem de romanın birinci kişi anlatıcısı Osman, bir hatırlama edimi içerisinde yaşadıklarını sunmakta, romanı bir bellek anlatısına dönüştürmektedir.” (Şen 26). Deleuze and Guattari would have disagreed with this reading (on Proust): “Memory plays a small part in art (even and especially in Proust). It is true that every work of art is a *monument*, but here the monument is not something commemorating a past, it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves and that provide the event with the compound that celebrates it. The monument’s action is not memory but fabulation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 167-8).

potentiates its discussion on subjectivity. Notwithstanding our utterly formalistic methodology, we already witnessed how *Virüs* challenges not only what is inside the subject (“the felt interior experience”) but also the distinction between what is inside the subject and what is outside (“his or her positions”)—at least at the level of syntax. *Virüs*’s attention to (the dissociation of) subjectivity, already detected by readers, is not an attention to the registration of the inner world as an isolated sphere: We do not read a “stream of consciousness,” or an “interior monologue,” or an “interior dialogue,” all of which would be in the service of a transparent narration of the inner world. Neither does what Koçak offers regarding “Bener’s technique” suffice to account for *Virüs*’s style: While laboring to present “an interior conference that resembles a civil war,”⁴³ the subject cannot help but want to watch *the war zone* from outside. In *Virüs*, there is no subject of enunciation that is not interrogated by a subject of the enunciating; there is no subject of the enunciating that is not hearing the voice of the subject of the enunciation. In *Virüs*, the inner life is never truly “inner” due partly to a sort of “schizophrenic cogito” that is at work—at least in the form: “A schizophrenic said: ‘*I heard voices say: he is conscious of life.*’”

2.2. The Individual Concern: Osman Yaylagülü

It seems that critics, for a good many reason, have converged not only on the point of *Virüs*’s density but also in relation to the *treatment* of its subject. Critics have tended to point out how “alienation” [*yabancılaşma*], “dissociation” [*çözülme*], or “fragmentation” [*bölünme*] are not only “Benerian” themes but also central to the plot of *Virüs*, more specifically to the psyche of its subject who has explicitly or implicitly been identified with a certain disorder: “*Buzul Çağının Virüsü* focuses on the feelings of alienation experienced by Osman Yaylagülü, a man with a crippled age” (Tutumlu 2016, 47). We already saw how Ecevit noted a certain “loss” on the part of the subject of *Virüs* (the loss of meaning in the dark sides); we already mentioned how Gümüş captured a “dissociation of personality” in *Virüs*. Let us also add here Aytaç’s comment: In allusion to Oğuz Atay’s *Tutunamayanlar*, she argues that *Virüs*’s subject is “a kind of ‘disconnected’” (Aytaç 84).

⁴³ While discussing how “Bener’s subject” is averse to “the illusion of a pure and monolithic subject,” Koçak rejects “stream of consciousness” or “interior monologue” as possible names of Bener’s technique: “İç monolog mu demiştik; değil: İç savaşı da andran bir ‘iç konferans’tır sürüp giden. Özne, hiçbirine tam inanmadan, hiçbirinde rahatlayamadan, ama hepsini tartarak, ağırlıklarını hissederek, kendi içindeki farklı duygusal ve ahlaki konumlar (A, A1, A2, An) arasında gidip gelir” (Koçak 2004, 22).

This sense of psychic/bodily/social trouble that is deemed to be dominant in the subject-(de)formation of *Virüs* seems to be inevitably linked with a sense of negativity it embodies. Gürbilek, while pointing out as well as trying to circumvent this sense of absolute negativism in Bener's writings, could have also mentioned *Virüs* in the following sentence: "I am aware that 'a decent, full, good life' is not an appropriate starting point for the writer of *Yaşamaz, Bay Muannit Sahtegi'nin Notları, Kapan*. For Vüs'at O. Bener is the author not of decency, fullness, or goodness but of the indelible lack, the absence, the disbelief, the gloomy contents, the details that are vulgar, adverse, loutish" (Gürbilek 2004, 33).⁴⁴ For neither is it easy to gloss over a sense of "negative theology"⁴⁵ in rigorous passages of *Virüs*, which, to Batur, is a "concerto of sadness" (Batur 2004, 62). Below is one such passage:

Epeyce bir ödün insanları olmamak'la, ödün insanları olamamak arasındaki ayırım önemli.

İşlevlerimizi tam özümseyememek, alışmaya yatkınlığın kanıtı değil mi? Gitgide bukağısını yaşamının ayrılmaz parçası sanabileceği anlamına gelmez mi kişioglunun katlanma yeteneği? Can simidine sarılırcasına, susturulduğumuza yapışmamızı nite yorumlayabiliriz? İnsan gerçekten susturulabilir mi? İç diyalogunu nasıl denetim altına alabileceğiz?

Seni bilemem, susturuldum diyemiyorum ben. Sustum düpedüz. O, neyse 'dev gibi bir şey' olduğu için şişeye tıklandı. *Chanel No: 5* şişesine sığıdığı için tepildi içerisine. Ne gereği vardı sırt sıvazlamamanın.

Oblomov'un korkunç direnmeler, heveslerden sonra o insanı çıldırtan bezginliği, bilinçli tükenişe, salt çözüme beyaz bayrak çekmesi sevimli bile geliyor şimdi bana. Bir gün böylesine bir düşüşü, kimbilir belki de yücelmedir – katıksız benimsersem şaşılmaz. (V 58-9)

The subject on whom *Virüs*'s "economy of I" operates is Osman Yaylagülü, or "Osman Nijad," or "Osman the Lame,"⁴⁶ a public servant/lawyer, who—as we will see below—is also an artist, a writer (and, the writer of the letter a part of which is quoted above.) In *Virüs*, an almost forty-year episode of Yaylagülü's life, between 1945 and

⁴⁴ Gürbilek borrows the phrase she uses from Bilge Karasu, who says in his *Gece*: "Bir yapıt yaratmak, büyük bir iş başarmak, iyi, dolu, güzel bir yaşam yaşamasını bilmiş olmaktan, başarmış olmaktan daha önemli sayılabilir mi hiç?"

⁴⁵ What Deleuze and Guattari said regarding Kafka seems to hold for Bener as well: "Negative theology (or the theology of absence), the transcendence of the law, the a-prioriness of guilt are the dominant themes of so much Kafka interpretation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 43). Indeed, Şen, via Graham Ward's reading of Jacques Derrida, already used this term in her study. In regard to Faik's death, she says: "O halde tüm bu bağlar, romanda konuşulmayan, sessiz bir alan olarak kalan, negatif bir teolojinin ürünü olarak okunmaya açılmayı; bu teolojinin içinden nasıl bir alegorinin düşünülebileceği alanını tartışmayı gerektirmektedir. O halde bu aradaki bağ, konuşulmamasıyla beraber mistik bir bağı da yaratmıştır. Peki bu bağı sağlayan, sessiz olanın negatif bir teolojiyle başka bir yere bağlanmasını sağlayan, ulaşılamayacak bir alegoriyi kurmasını sağlayan şey nedir?" (Şen 140).

⁴⁶ "Topal Osman'dı bana takılan tarihsel, doğru ad" (V 23).

1982, is narrated/written by Osman himself. *Virüs* does not present a chronological register of its temporal organization, which renders the text's stylistic density even denser. Fragments from Osman's life go back and forth not only in temporality but also in spatiality, through the narratives navigating between Akçay, Ankara, and Istanbul.⁴⁷ Plus, they occasionally exhibit a certain temporal superimposition within themselves by evoking the temporal gap either between the events narrated or between the events narrated and the event of writing. The flow of narration, if there is any, is also interrupted by love letters inherited from Osman's unfinished ("arduous") love affair with Şükufe Alp (nicknamed "Viola" by Osman), who is married to Dr. Doğan Alp (nicknamed "Prens Mişkin" by Osman), the town doctor of Akçay. Tutumlu notes that "the political turmoil of the era" is also textualized in *Virüs* via "Osman's close friendship with Faik Deniz and public prosecutor Kemal Yurdakul": "Bener follows Osman's life until 1982, including his arrest in Ankara for political reasons. While Faik commits suicide and Kemal ends up in an asylum, Osman endures like a 'virus' despite mistakes and defeats" (Tutumlu 2016, 47).

The above quotation from the letter, written by Osman to Viola upon the suicide of Faik, is crucial. It is there that we read a key sentence that crystalizes one of the thorny problems *Virüs* addresses: "*İç diyalogunu nasıl denetim altına alacağız?*" Osman seems to say that even in the face of death, even when there is nothing but grief, it is the subject's inner dialogue that would remain as the uncontrollable realm of existence. The inner dialogue appears in *Virüs* as that which cannot be contained, that which cannot be manageable, that which insuperably answers to life that brings nothing but loss, death, and pain. Bener's (or, *Virus*'s) attention to inner experience, then, seems to be linked with a certain invention of way to cope with life: "To endure life" proves to be nothing but "to

⁴⁷ The text does not provide the reader with these details as precisely as I present here. We have a relatively clear temporal/spatial map of *Virüs* thanks to Tutumlu's studies. She offers that there are "five intermingled stories [that] appear in the novel: the love affair between Osman and Viola; Osman's arrest for political reasons; Osman's life in Ankara after the eventful decade of the 1960s; a daily trip by Osman to Istanbul, in which he meets a woman—possibly Viola; and the story of Ahmet, Viola's uncle who brings a letter to Osman from her" (Tutumlu 2016, 47). Still, even her narratological operation could not account for the whole map of the novel: "Romandaki 73 bölümden 65'inde anlatılan olayların bu sıralamadaki yerleri belliyken 82'sinin ise tam olarak belli değildir. ... [B]uradaki olayların hangi zamanda geçtiğini tam olarak saptayamadık" (Tutumlu 2010, 66). Tutumlu's map is not uncontested, however. Regarding the "episode" that narrates what she dubs "the story of Ahmet," Tutumlu says: "Bu bölüm dikkatle okunduğunda bu cümlelerin burada anlatılan kişinin (Ahmet'in) iç monologları olduğu, olayların zaman zaman Ahmet'in bilincine odaklanan, her şeyi bilen üçüncü kişili bir anlatıcı tarafından atarıldığı anlaşılır" (69). The fact that "*birinci şube*" that appears in what Tutumlu calls "the story of Ahmet"—"*Birinci şubede suratına şaklayan tokat. Belkemiğine inen nalçalı kundura. Oysa apaydın kafası, baygın sınırları, şaşılacak kadar*" (V 28)—also appears in Osman's inner dialogue—"*Gene neyse, 'Moskof tohumu!' demedi. Birinci Şube Müdürü kadar kaba değil*" (33)—may prove that what Tutumlu calls "the story of Ahmet" is indeed a part of Osman's story. Without having a discussion on this point, Şen also reads *Virüs* in its totality as the story of Osman.

get used to gyves of life” and “to stick with silence,” while “the inner dialogue” appears as the single possible act of coming to terms with life as well as of resisting against it.

But the relation between (the inner) experience and (the exterior) expression is never left unproblematized in *Virius*. In another letter written to Viola, Osman reveals a certain “wrestling” with language: “*Of, bu sözcüklerin çekirdeğini parçalayamamak, bekletilmek gerginliklerde, cimriliğini geniş getirmek*” (V 81). Language, while appearing as the single medium through which an inner dialogue can be forged as well as transfigured into the text, inevitably carries a certain impossibility: Osman wants to “dismantle the core of words” as words could not help him to communicate what is going on in his inner world, while inevitably having recourse to those useless words.

Inner dialogue is that which is unmanageable yet words prove to be no help—still, as we will see below, Osman continues to write, to the extent that he pushes the limits of his subjectivity and “dismantles” interiority. What happens in Osman’s inner dialogues truly resembles a “civil war,” whereby the inner interrogation tends to turn into an inner destruction. That what is unmanageable thus always possess an unabashed self-questioning:

Ne yazıf, ne süprüntü herifsin sen. Gizlenecek delik kaldı mı artık? Bin bela muştası yedi, kıyıldı baltasında umarsızlıklarım. Anladık, bir kolayını bulup sıvıştın, kaçtın hep unutma. ...

...

Ama, sızıntısı dinmiyor kuşkulu kanının içinde ığlayan, iblise teslim olmuş inançsızlığı; boğsa da tükürüklere o çatal dilli, kuruklu zebani sırtıyor, zifir bağlamış kazma dişlerini göstererek.

Bir onluk diazem daha almalı. (V 13-4)⁴⁸

Ah, ben ne yanlış adamım, atılacak safrayım. ... Oysa şu tırtıllığına bak. Bir ezimlik. Hiç sızlanma. Önüne atılan kemiği havada kapıp ktır ktır kemirmeli, güdük kuyruğunu habire sallamalısın ‘daha da var mı’ ya.. (16)

Hohho! Kimim ben kardeş? Yanılmayalım ama. Bozgun doymazı, kendi kendinin at sineği. Anlatamadım galiba. Demek sapasağlam görünüşüm. Öyleyse tek hünerim bu. Akıllı geçinenlerin ortak körlüğünden yararlanabilir, ortama uyum sağlayabilir kişiliğim! Neymiş, neymiş? Bukalemunca konuşuyorum herhalde. (96)

Ah, önüne gelene *Spartacus* güzü sallayan kafa, yıktın, berbat ettin her şeyi! Şimdi, onun adına gülüyorum. (141)

⁴⁸ If there is one single word that signifies Bener’s “sick” subject, it should be “*diazem*.” We will read this word in *Sahtegi* as well.

What is more, we will see that Osman's inner destruction may literally be a destruction. It seems that Osman's civil war is also pertinent to a certain bodily war, one that revolves around what Şen thought-provokingly referred as "corporeality." In her study, Şen showed that this sense of inner destruction in the inner dialogues of Osman also carries a certain destruction of mind/body duality to the extent that body appears as a "realm of assay and investigation" [*tahlil ve tetkik*] (Şen 5). Departing from Gürbilek's already quoted diagnosis on Bener's obsession with inoperative organisms, Şen argues that *Virüs* opens a space for "a scientific examination on body" (86) and "a genetic deformation" (98). This leads her to argue that *Virüs*'s fragmented *body* is not a textual fragmentation per se; it also is related to a certain decentralization and disintegration of Osman's *body*, which has now become a "recorder," registering "illnesses" and "fully dismembering its organs" (81). She particularly draws attention to (some sentences from) the following passage:

"Kendi kendime konuşurum ben. Evde, sokakta. Tersyüz edilmişimdir aynada ... Arka, yan duvarlara birer içbükey ayna daha koyduracağım. Böylelikle sayısal yönden değil sadece, biçimsel, dolayısıyla tinsel başkalaşım açısından da artı sonsuz çoğalacağım. Nasıl değerlendiriyorsunuz buluşumu? ... Nasıl anlatsam bilmem ki? Canlı insan yüzü kaç değişim gösterir? Say sayabildiğin kadar değil mi? Oysa önemli mi bu? Oynamakla yaşamak arasındaki sıkı bağı araştırmalı. ... Ben neyin tutsağımı bilmiyordum; oynarken oynadığımı ayırımsıyorum desem, hayli aşırı kaçacak, yaşadığımı ayırımsayamıyorum desem, kendime bile inandırıcı gelmiyor; test sonuçlarına bakılırsa *nymphomanie* galiba hocam, şey Komiser Beyciğim. ..."
" (V 45-6)

Let us detect Osman's self-reflexivity regarding his own question of subjectivity—in a way that is reminiscent of Koçak's analysis ("he talks to himself, he talks *against* himself"): "*Kendi kendime konuşurum ben.*" To read in this paragraph Osman's disclosure of his tendency to "talk to himself"—a mode of subjectivity traditionally (clinically?) identified with a sort of "madness"—is significant especially if we consider what follows this sentence. Albeit not sure if he can tell it, Osman talks about an "invention": He wants to "multiply" his body not only "quantitatively" but also "in terms of morphological thus spiritual metamorphosis." Şen's comment on the above passage is remarkable: She dovetails "Osman's will to multiply [himself] ad infinitum by breaking his image" with "an infinite event that would possibly happen in the body": "He does not want to come into the field of view limited by a skin, but rather labors to understand the infinite potential that occurs within the body" (Şen 39).

Osman, then, wants to dismantle not only “the core of the words” but also his organism as the core of his body—“the skin.” Indeed, what is read by Tutumlu as “the story of Ahmet” (that is, the story of Osman) provides the reader with an inventory of what Şen pointedly names in her reading: “to think the moments of the realization of a potential as the limit of the body” (39). Osman “questions” his body to the extent that he exhausts all the “potentials” that expand the limits of “the perceptible.” Let us ponder some more passages that reflect Osman’s bodily interrogations that carry a schizoid interrogation as well:

Şakaklarına sürekli vuran ebonit tokmak. Bağırsaklarında uyuyan tatlı su yılanı, alacasız, kaygan. Kanım kırmızı değil. Boşaltıyorum, emiliyorum.

...

Bütün evlerin, apartmanların kapılarını çalacağım, çıkanları darağaçlarında sallandıracağım! Yiyahhu! Hadi geçirin deli gömleğini sırtıma. Damgalayın böğrüm, cazırdasın! Korkmayın komşular, duvarlarım açık hepinize. Sinmeyin perde arkalarına, söndürmeyin ışıklarınızı. Yangın, lav, bora! Hey hovarda, lüle saçlı güzel Tanrım! Uzaya saldıgın piç yıldızlarıyla övün! Kanım kırmızı değil diyorum, anlasanıza! (V 27)

What we read is less an “*écriture*” than the flow of an uncontrollable inner dialogue whereby Osman pushes the limits of the perceptible. Osman is aware that this sensibility will most probably be coded as a mental disorder: “*Hadi geçirin deli gömleğini sırtıma.*” Indeed, his neighbors want to “straitjacket” Osman. The context of this bodily war is significant: What we read above narrates the scene that almost turns into a “catatonic” *break-down*: “*Kalın cama girmiş, bilmiyor bileğini. Sıyrtarak çekiyor geri. Hiçbir ilkeye adayamadığı cömert kan, koyu kırmızı, kas yırtıklarından yayılıyor çaresiz avcuna.*” (V 27). Upon this psychic/bodily outburst, his neighbors get suspicious about his “going mad” and call the police officers. Before his address to “*Komiser Beyciğim,*” he had a conversation with the police officers who came for taking him to the police station (“*birinci şube*”). His (inner) questioning of the “not-red” blood of him appears in his conversation with the officers as well:

“Biz aklını kaçırmış birini beklerken... Ev sahibiniz telefon etmiş. Çok sakın bir beydir, delirdi galiba demiş, koştuk.” Biraz geç kalmadınız mı?

“Denedim, görüyorsunuz başaramadım.”

“Peki, neden? Kırılıp dökülmedik eşya bırakmamışsınız. Ne olacak şimdi? Bereket komşulardan şikâyetçi yok.”

“Kanımdan kuşkulandım. Başka bir şey dolanıyor gibi geldi damarlarımda.”

“Ne gibi?”

“İrin gibi, sidik gibi bir şey.”
“Estağfurullah.” Ne incelik. Toy! Adam olmaz bu delikanlı. Beriki alıyor sözü. Dik sesi. “Çok mu içtin arkadaş? Ayık görünüyorsun ama...”
“Bir dostum vardı, demişti, *delirebilirsene iyi*.” (V 29; emphasis mine)

Let us remember who that friend of Osman is: Descartes (of “Biraz da Ağla Descartes”). While we may want to keep in mind a certain echo between the subject of that enigmatic story (who prioritizes “sensation” rather than “understanding”) and Osman of *Virüs*, it will be more promising here to remember not Descartes but Spinoza, who we know has a place in Osman’s philosophical archive. Although Osman thinks otherwise, it may be “the right time to mention Spinoza”—and Deleuze: These passages of Osman’s bodily wars, especially after Şen’s reading, lend themselves effortlessly to be thought in tandem with “Spinoza’s dictum that ‘no one knows what a body can do’” which “Deleuze is fond of quoting” (Baugh 2010, 36). Osman’s body seems to be a “*schizo body*, waging its own active internal struggle against the organs, at the price of catatonia” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 150).

The concept that most effectively conveys Deleuze and Guattari’s fondness for Spinoza in relation to the body and its “intensities” will indeed continue to help us see through *Virüs*’s bodily wars: “Drug users, masochists, schizophrenics, lovers—all BwO’s pay homage to Spinoza” (154). “BwO” stands for “Body without Organs,” the conceptual tool Deleuze and Guattari borrow from Antonin Artaud for signaling the extent to which one can experiment with “the body.” The connotations of “body” in Deleuzian/Guattarian lexicon, however, go beyond the realm of biology and expand into a concern on the social, political, and collective bodies. “The BwO:” they say, “it is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them. A long procession” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 150). This bodily war against organism (not against the organs per se), while carrying serious dangers (as crystallized in Osman’s bleeding hands), promises a new way of perceiving the relation between bodies and engaging with the “affects” they convey. The BwO, unless it be “overdosed,” suggests a new experiment, a new sensation: “Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor.” Notwithstanding this promise of novelty, experimentation, and transgression, Deleuze and Guattari never stop to warn against “the paradox of those emptied and dreary bodies.”

At issue is never to experience a total breakdown or an annihilation: “You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn . . . and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality” (160).

Indeed, this discussion on BwO carries us to one productive territory that can help us make more sense of Deleuze and Guattari’s grasp of schizophrenization as a process. The duo will go further to recommend that we produce our own “BwO”—as the relevant *plateau* of their work bears in its title: “How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?” Their answer reads like a self-help prescription that provocatively yet calmly calls for experimentation: “how necessary caution is, the art of dosages, since overdose is a danger. You don’t do it with a sledgehammer, you use a very fine file” (160). While reading the below prescription that pertains not only to the body but also to subjectivity (to the blurring of their distinction, indeed), we may want to remember not only Osman but also the subject whose insistence on “experimentation” and “sensation” disturbs Descartes:

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. . . . You have constructed your own little machine, ready when needed to be plugged into other collective machines. (161)

In the next subsection, we will interrogate to what extent Osman, who now succeeded to rescue his “schizo body” from turning into an “emptied and dreary” body, will manage to “keep small rations of subjectivity” and plug himself “into other collective machines.”

2.3. A Communist Schizo

If, Deleuze provokes, “we feel the need to read in [great books] anguish, solitude, guilt, the drama of communication, the whole tragedy of interiority,” it signifies nothing but “our own decadence and degeneracy” (Deleuze 2004, 257). Although *Virius*, by constantly evoking a sense of helplessness, seems to put up a resistance against this Deleuzian evocation of “schizo-laughter” that “springs from great books, even when they speak of ugly, desperate, or terrifying things,” it is still possible to capture some joyful passages in *Virius*.

One such passage flourishing out of the gloomy *Virüs* is the one that presents “*Gerekçeli Karar*.”⁴⁹ Upon learning the “arduous” love affair between Osman and Viola, Kemal, the public prosecutor [“*Yargıç*”] of Akçay, embarks upon writing a fake “justified decision” involving “*Şükûfe Alp (Nam-ı diğer Viola)*” and “*Dr. Doğan alp (Nam-ı diğer Prens Mişkin)*” as the defendants and “*Osman Yaylagülü (İlçe Mal Müdürü)*” as the intervenor. The lawsuit is for the proposed divorce of Viola and Dr. Doğan Alp: “*Dava: Cumhuriyet Savcılığı’nın, 1947/327 Hazırlık Dosya No.lu olup açılan davaya esas teşkil eden iddianamesine göre, davalılar arasındaki evlilik bağının yol sayılmasına karar verilmesi isteminden ibarettir*” (V 171). In the end, “it is considered by the court that”

Türk Ulusu adına karar vermeye yetkili mahkememiz, düzenlenen iddianameyi, dosyada mevcut delilleri inceledikten sonra, davalılar Şükûfe ve Dr. Doğan Alp’in evliliklerinin iptaline yeterli delil bulunamadığı cihetle, açılan kamu davasının reddine; ... Müdahil Osman Yaylagülü’nün; gerçek halk iktidarı için verilecek savaşında, Şükûfe’nin kendisini ve dava arkadaşlarını kayıtsız şartsız destekleyeceğine güveni tam ise, hiçbir engele kulak asmayarak, bu yürekli kadını dağa kaldırmayı başarması halinde, hakkında kovuşturma yapılamayacağına bilinmesine ... verilen karar ... okunup anlatıldı. (174)

Osman reads this fake report written by his friend Kemal and says: “*Hiç güleceğim yoktu*” (174). What needs attention for my reading, however, is less this untimely laughter than how Kemal thinks *Doctor* Doğan Alp would *diagnose* Osman. Kemal’s presentation of what he imagines Dr. Doğan Alp would say in the court reads:

Dr. Doğan Alp; eşinin, yukarıda özeti çıkarılan ifadesini dinlerken çok geçirdiğini, küçük dilini yutacak hale geldiğini, kendisine sarsılmaz bir aşkla bağlı bulunduğunu, müdahil Osman’ın gözlem altına alındığı takdirde şizofrenik bir ruhsal yapıya sahip olduğunun ortaya çıkacağından kuşku duymadığını, karısının, bu tür delillerde kolay ayırt edilemeyecek olan kandırma yeteneğini, şayet aklını başına toplarsa her şeyi bağışlamaya hazır olduğunu, açıklamıştır. (172)

Kemal thinks that Dr. Doğan Alp would see Osman’s case as a case of schizophrenia that needs to be hospitalized (“*gözlem altına alındığı takdirde*”): Osman, Dr. Doğan Alp would possibly think, is a “mad” who needs to be clinically treated. *Virüs* portrays “Dr.” Doğan Alp, via Kemal’s fake report, as a possible personification of the

⁴⁹ Aytaç refers to this fragment of *Virüs* as a “summary” of the novel: “Romanın bir bulmaca mantığı içinde işlenen olay dizisini ironik ama derli toplu özetleyen bir bölümü var: Osman Yaylagülü’nün arkadaşı M. Kemal Yurdakul’un kaleme aldığı ‘Gerekçeli Karar’” (Aytaç 84).

medical institution that would label Osman as “the schizo as a clinical entity.” Are we to read Dr. Doğan Alp’s probable medical judgment on Osman’s schizophrenia as a sign that fortifies our evocation of Osman’s “schizophrenic cogito”/“schizo body” or does this possible judgment reveal a possible pathologization and a subsequent suppression (or, “re-territorialization”) of Osman’s lines of flight (or, Osman’s “deterritorializations”)? “Is it schizophrenia as a process that makes us sick, or is it the self-perpetuation of the process in the void—a horrible exasperation (the production of the schizophrenic-as-entity)?” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 68).

Let us open a parenthesis here to understand more effectively what Deleuze and Guattari mean by differentiating between “schizophrenization as a process” and “the schizo as a clinical entity.” What they are after is to liberate the schizophrenization from the clinical/personalological box it had been squeezed into by the medical establishment as well as by the psychoanalytic tradition. Deleuze presents a relatively plain articulation of this idea in “Schizophrenia and Society,” a text published in *Two Regimes of Madness*. It is here that the description of literature as a realm of action that is more promising than psycho-logical and -analytical practice is repeated: “We must get used to the idea that certain artists or writers have had greater insight into schizophrenia than psychiatrists or psychoanalysts” (Deleuze 2006, 25). What Deleuze offers here is to capture schizophrenic experience not “in negative terms or in terms of a lack (dissociation, loss of reality, autism, foreclosure)” (25) but “in positive terms” and as a creative, productive process that “has nothing to do with an inner life cut off from reality” or with “loss of reality”: “Rather than conceptualizing schizophrenia in terms of the havoc which it wreaks in a person, or in terms of the holes and lacunae which it reveals in a structure, we must grasp schizophrenia as a *process*.” (27).

To Deleuze, the schizophrenic experience is not a disorder that stems from what we lack but rather the production of “an almost unbearable proximity with the real,” (27) an “active line of flight,” a “self-decoding and self-deterritorialization” (28). What follows this seemingly individualistic picture is the social and political signification of the grasp of “schizophrenia as a process”: “If schizophrenia seems like the sickness of today’s society, we should not look to generalizations about our way of life, but to very precise mechanisms of a social, political, and economic nature. . . . The schizophrenic is like the limit of our society, but an abhorred limit, always suppressed, always cast out.” Deleuze, speaking in praise of R. D. Laing whose name we saw Smith has already uttered, will tie this emphasis on psychic yet also political “process” with some questions that will be

significant for my reading of *Virüs*: “What can we do so the break-through does not become a break-down? How can we prevent the organless body from shutting down in a catatonic stupor? How can the acute state of delirium overcome its attendant anxiety, and yet not give way to a chronic state of exhaustion which, as we too often see in the hospital, ends in a state of total break-down? ... And in what type of group, what kind of collectivity?” (28) Unless it (needs to) be hospitalized, the schizophrenic experience is more *curative* than in need of a *cure*: “The problem of schizophrenization as a cure consists in this: how can schizophrenia be disengaged as *a power of humanity and of Nature* without a schizophrenic thereby being produced?” (quoted in Smith xxi).

We know one answer to these questions: “... when delirium falls back into the *clinical state*, words no longer open out onto anything ... Literature is a health.” Tynan’s answer, too, will be helpful here: “literature is a means of articulating and experiencing this delirium in a non-pathological way, in a way which sidesteps the calamity of psychotic breakdown” (Tynan 158). The differentiation between “schizophrenia as a process” and “the schizo as a clinical entity” is thus translatable into a perspective on “the break-through” (with its promises to “deterritorialize” language, life, and the political) and the lack thereof that results in “the break-down” (which promises nothing but unproductivity, loss, and hospitalization). Kemal, thus, thinks that Dr. Doğan Alp, a figure whose portrayal in the novel does not lead the reader to sympathize with him, would want to imprison Osman’s attempt to “break through” by boxing him, his sense of life, his “way of existence,” into a pathological “break-down.”

This grasp that differentiates a non-pathological break-through from a clinical break-down will also help us make sense of one of the many significant stories inserted in *Virüs*. The relationship as well as the contrast between Osman and his friend Faik has already been analyzed by readers (Gümüş 2000, Şen 2016).⁵⁰ The significations of the story of Kemal, however, has so far been left unnoticed except for some registrations in the service of plot summary. Kemal is a significant character of *Virüs* not only for the “justified decision” he fabricates. A glance at Kemal’s life trajectory as well as at the way Osman portrays him in *Virüs* will make us more attuned with a possible resonance between *Virüs* and Deleuze’s theory on literature being an enterprise of health.

⁵⁰ Şen’s reading points out Osman’s ultimate embrace of life: “... Osman’ın içine düştüğü ve farkına vardığı; her seferinde hamlelerini ona göre düzenlediği bir oyunun zeminini Faik Deniz de fark etmiş ama Osman gibi yaşamayı değil, ölmeyi seçmiştir” (Şen 130); “Faik Deniz ölmeyi seçmişken Osman yaşamayı seçmiştir” (131).

2.3.1. Two Cases: Osman and Kemal

One of the sources in which the contrast between Osman and Kemal lies is their different political ideas. This contrast, however, is not ideological: Both are “communists.” Let us look at the following passage where Osman’s inner speech gives us an insight not only into his own personal history but also into Kemal’s:

Demokrat Parti’ye kurucu üyeler aranıyor şimdilerde.

...

Mal Müdürü’yüm. Ne de olsa iki dönem İktisat Fakültesi’nde dirsek çürütmüşlüğüm var. Rus klasiklerinden, Fransızca yazınından Türkçe’ye çevrilenlerin hemen büyük bir bölümünü okumuşum. Kolayıma gelen hece kalıbıyla evrensel barış, çokuluslu mutluluk dizeleri döktürüyorum, uyak sıkıntısı çekmeden, duygulanılıyor. ... Kemal’in evindeki toplantılara güvenilir dostlar dışında katılan olursa, *Nâzım*’ın, tahta döşeme altına saklanmış ilk basım kitapları çıkarılmıyor ortaya. ... *Sertel*’lerin evine girip çıktığından, *Esat Âdil Müstecâbi*’yi tanıdığından söz ederdi. İnanırdık. İçimizde en bilgisi, okumuşu, azarlansak da bazen, önemli değil. *Marko Paşa* tiryakiliği ne zaman başladı? Aşağı yukarı o dönemlerin fırtınası. ... Hey sevdalım, beni de o tutkusu yurdu sarmış az sayfalı gazete-dergi kırmasının yazı kadrosunda sanmıştı da, gülümsemekle yetinmiştim. Nasıl kıyar, uyandırırırım, geleceğin ünlü şairi, yazarı düşlerine dalıp gitmişliğinden seni! (V 22)

A “communist” archive from the 1940s’ Turkey: “Nâzım,” “Sertel,” “Marko Paşa.” In *Virüs*, Osman never uses this word while describing himself in his inner/exterior dialogues; yet, everybody knows him as a “communist.” Osman’s wife, unnamed in the text, reproaches: “*Alçak ne çabuk unuttun içeri tıkıldığın günleri. ... Nene âşık olmuşum bilmem ki! Vatan haini komüniste şapır şupur, bize yarabbi şükür diyerekten mahalle kopukları mı sataşmaz, müsteşar olacak it..*” (16). Sahir, a friend of Osman he visited in Istanbul, says—evoking not only Osman’s being a “communist” but also his being an “artist”: “*Sanatçı yaratılmak, en büyük lütfü Tanrı’nın. Sen bu Tanrı lafından pek hoşlanmazsın ya, neyse. Ah, ah bambaşka sizin dünyanız. ... Yahu ne azılı ‘Komünist’ sin sen! Sade sanatçı olsan neyse, üstelik zekisin de!*” (66-7). What is alluded above by Tutumlu, who mentions “Osman’s arrest for political reasons,”⁵¹ is also telling: Osman is

⁵¹ Gümüş tries to clarify these political reasons: “Osman Yaylagülü’nün 1950’nin hemen sonrasında, ‘51 Tevkifatı’nın yaşandığı günlerde tutuklandığı anlaşılıyor” (Gümüş 2000, 61). We may want to keep in mind, as one of the many autobiographical allusions demonstrated by Tutumlu, that Bener was also arrested in 1951. Erhan Bener, his brother, recounts that event: “Ne var ki, 1951 yılı Ocak ayında Kore savaşında uğranılan büyük kayıpların kamuoyunda yarattığı tepkiyi bastırmayı düşünen hükümet, bizde çok kez iktidarlarca uygulanan bir mizansen sahneye koydu ve komünizm umacısını canlandırmak amacıyla yurt genelinde geniş bir tutuklama kampanyası başlattı. Bu kampanyadan ben de ağabeyim de nasibimizi aldık. O asker olduğu için, Askeri tutukevine, ben Ankara Hilton diye adlandırılan Ankara Kapalı Cezaevine kapatıldık” (quoted in Tutumlu 2010, 22).

renounced by two of his acquaintances as being a communist who has communist friends: “... daha tanıdığı yıllarda benim komünistlerle, özellikle Savcı Kemal Yurdakul’la düşüp kalktığımdan dem vurarak, sapık fikirlerimi yaymaya çalıştığımı el yazımla da kanıtlayabilmek, ilgili makamlara duyurmak amacıyla bana bir mektup gönderdiğini de ileri sürüyor” (53). Dr. Doğan Alp’s “real” testimony during Osman’s (political) interrogation reads: “Osman Yaylagülü bence komünisttir. Çünkü ahlâksızdır. ... Bu şahıs herkesçe komünist olduğu bilinen Savcı Kemal Yurdakul’un en yakın arkadaşıdır” (113).

Osman and Kemal are, indeed, communist comrades, reading “Nâzım” and imagining a more egalitarian political future. The contrast between them, however, is about the way they perceive *the political*: While Kemal embodies as well as promotes the hope that will flourish from “active politics,” Osman finds himself always questioning this promise. Let us read the following two passages that already introduce to us the political tone of Osman’s inner dialogues. We are on the verge of the 1946 general elections and Democratic Party is the name of “a cluster of promises” (Berlant 23) appeared on the political horizons of the young communists of Turkey, among whom is Kemal:

Kemal’in savaşımcı iyimserliği, canını dişine takarak, insanları toplumsal sorunlarla ilgilendirmek için örgütlenme çabaları, inançsız doğamı inanmaya yatkınlaştıramıyor bir türlü. Ona göre Halk Partisi’nin ilk seçimde değilse bile ikincisinde tam yıkılması önkoşul. Özgürlük ortamı ondan sonra oluşacak. Halkın iç birikimi korkunç. Patlama, Demokrat Parti’yi onun özlediği yönde biçimlendirecek, öze kavuşturacak kuşkusuz. Savcılıktan ayrılıp memleketi Aydın’da avukatlığa başlayacak. Partiye girecek. Ben de, şu ne uzar ne kısalır memurluğu bırakıp, aktif politikaya atılmalyımışım. Birlikte gideceğiz Aydın’a. Biraz para tutsun, işlev kafam için ‘hukuk’u bitirmek sorun değil. Hem yanında deney kazanırım. Tasarılar, tasarılar.. (V 95)

“Hele dinleyin arkadaşlar!” Susuştuk. “Beğendiniz mi kurucuları?” Anlaşıldı sıkıntısı. “Değirmenci Muzaffer, Müteahhit Nusret, Otelci Naci. Al onu, vur buna. Sıkıyı gördüler mi kaçar bunlar, görürseniz. İyi de olur, o da başka, ama demir tavında gerek. Millet sabırsız.”

İyi, has da, politika hastası bu Kemal, Herkes mayışmış. Kim kurarsa kursun. Kuruldu ya! Pişmiş aşa su katmanın gereği ne? (124)

Kemal’s “militant optimism” contra Osman’s *pessimism*.⁵² Osman could not see Democratic Party as the locus that can meet with his political desires. Osman’s

⁵² Or, Osman’s “cruel optimism”? “A relation of cruel optimism,” Berlant suggests, “exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing. It might involve food, or a kind of love; it might be a fantasy of the good life, or a political project. It might rest on something simpler, too, like a new habit that promises to induce in you an improved way of being. These kinds of optimistic relation are not inherently cruel. They become cruel only when the object that draws your attachment actively impedes the aim that brought you to it initially” (Berlant 1). One can say

questioning of politics, however, is not restricted to the question if Democratic Party could really realize an “environment of freedom.” Neither is his “disbelief” at work only in “ideas, ideas” on a seemingly promising political career.⁵³ Osman’s inner/political interrogations expand into the conditions under which to forge political action as well. Indeed, that sentence we have read while passing thorough Osman’s bodily civil war may pertain to this sense of disbelief as well: “*Hiçbir ilkeye adayamadığı cömert kan, koyu kırmızı, kas yırtıklarından yayılıyor çaresiz avcuna.*” This questioning of politics turns into a real “question” upon Kemal’s pejorative attitude toward Viola, who he thinks is no different from a “campy bourgeois.” Resentful yet anxious, Osman says (in his inner dialogue):

Yanılıyor. Görürüz! Kedinin fareyle oynadığı gibi nasıl oynayacağım onunla. Ama bir yandan da, burnumun direği sızlıyor. Milyoner kızı olmamak onun elinde miydi? Hem niye olsun! Onun da değişmez yazgısı bu mu? Neden bizim saflarımızda yer almasın, dövüşmesin bizimle? Kiminle, kime karşı, nerede, nasıl, niçin ve ne suretle dövüşeceğiz, o da belli değil a, neyse! (169)

A communist struggle is what Osman desires; yet, he could not be sure “with whom, against whom, where, how, why and as what” they will forge this struggle—an impasse. A certain questioning of the politics on the part of Osman is observable (“*o da belli değil a, neyse!*”), while Kemal, “mad about politics,” preserves his hope for the active politics. Notwithstanding this commitment, Kemal’s hope for Democratic Party’s embrace by “the people” will soon crumble as well. What happens in the realm of politics is nothing but “fiasco”:

İyi ki, devretmiş görevini kunduracı Nedim’e. ... Fiyaskoyla sonuçlandı çünkü, genel seçimler, suçlanmaktan kurtuldu. Halk Partisi ezici çoğunlukta. Ölü toprağı serpilmiş gibiydi kasabanın üstüne, dişler gıcırıtılı, gözler kanlı, parlamaya hazır saman tınazı herkes, öbek öbek toplanılıyor, homurdanılıyor. ... Kemal’le konuşmuyorlardı, haklıydı elbette küsmekte. Hıdır, Mülayim, Sunullah, onlar da selamı sabahı kestilerdi. Abduş’un koltuk meyhanesine düşmeli. Barışlırlar belki, ordalarsa. (143)

that Osman seems to be a pessimist exactly because he is more than aware that any “attachment” to the Democratic Party will eventually prove to be unsatisfactory, as it eventually will “impede” the communist desire that demands a much more substantial fulfilment.

⁵³ One another questioning of politics reads: “Akçay’da ‘Bizim milletvekili adayımız sensin!’ naralarıyla havalandırılıp omuzlarına almışımı anımsıyorum da... Bir çaylarını, kahvelerini içmeden geçemiyorum çarşı içinden. ... Geriliyorum. Çin Seddi devriliyor patır patır üstüme. Deprem” (V 55). It is sensible that Osman could not embrace the idea of being a member of parliament—although “the earthquake” referred here seems more pertinent to his desire to Viola and Faik’s suicide.

After those “Akçay days,” Osman and Kemal accidentally meet in Ankara. While narrating this meeting, Osman portrays Kemal—who is still in search of “the environment of freedom” Democratic Party will eventually forge—as a “tired” person: “*Aydın’da avukatlık yapıyor. Demokrat Parti’nin büyük kongresine delege seçilmiş. ... Yenik, yorgun, yalnız*” (127). What we know about the contrast between Osman and Kemal other than these is the latter’s tragic end: “the break down.” Kemal, as Tutumlu already said, “ends up in an asylum.” The reader is told how the story of Kemal ends before we see Osman learning the fate of his dear friend. The above quotations are thus important not only for they tell how the story of Kemal and his “militant optimism” end but also for they constitute good examples of *Virüs*’s “achronologicality”:

Ayağı önemli değil, özü sakat, bozuk fonograf. Haksız her zaman, haksızın yanibaşında hep. O niye? Katlanmak kendine bile, bağışlanmaz haksızlık değil mi? Görünen köy kılavuz istemez. Ortada asılakalacak, kimseyi ilgilendirmeyen ya da herkesin canını sıkan temelsiz, açık, kapalı, sudan gagalamalarla onu bunu, çitilenip gidecek. Git, geber, ama bir bataklığa yutulurcasına. Kemal, akıl hastanesinde can vermiş. Tastamam ona göre. Sözde yüreklisinden, korkağına tek tek kıştırılıp ölüden beter edildi, onlarca dikkafalı sayılanların çoğu, köstebekleştirildiler.

Notice how Osman “talks to himself ... talks *against* himself” in a way that reminds one of Gürbilek’s diagnosis on Bener: “*özü sakat, bozuk fonograf*”. Indeed, the sentences following this paragraph reveals another radical moment of *Virüs*’s form of writing as a reflection of Osman’s schizophrenic cogito: “*Amaaa! Sus, sus yerin kulağı var! Sakalını kaşıyor. Kim bu, salt özbenine acıyan madrabaz?*” (86). But let us now focus on the content: Kemal *literally* “gets mad about politics,” perishing in an asylum. Osman learns the tragic end of Kemal while he was on trial, being interrogated by the judge (“*sorgu yargıcı*”) who was an acquaintance of Kemal: “*Biz de Nâzım okuduk delikanlılığımızda, gizli gizli. Kemal bir üst sınıftaydı.*” Upon the judge’s cry (“*Allah kahretsin, keşke bilmeseydim, duymasaydım.*”) Osman, anxious, asks both in his inner dialogue and in his exterior dialogue:

Ağlıyor mu ne? “Yoksa öldü mü?” dedim, gırtlığına bir cam bilye takılmış. Başını salladı: “Akli çok geldiği için olacak, akıl hastanesinde, Manisa Akıl Hastanesi’nde. Gidebilirsin. Ha, merak ediyorsun tabii. Bir süre daha yatacaksın. Son soruşturma açılacak. Delilleri değerlendirmek mahkemeye aittir. Yargılanacaksın. Beraat edeceğinden eminim. Ne var ki, burnun sürtülmeli biraz. Anladın mı, kolay değil vatan, millet kurtarıcılığına kalkışmak, o kadar, bedava kahramanlığa karnım tok benim.” (185)

If Osman is a case at hand that reveals the workings of the (schizophrenic) break-through that is deemed to need imprisonment, Kemal, whose life is desperately ruined in search of “active politics” and who ends up in an asylum, stands as the dangerous pole: break-down. It is toward the end of our reading that we will discuss how Osman could succeed where Kemal failed: not to plumb the depths so that “the break-through does not become a break-down.” Now let us ponder more on Osman’s inner dialogues as not only essentially political but also historical dialogues. Civil wars have always been political and, as Deleuze would say, “world-historical.” The *inner* (dialogue) has *already* been the *exterior* (dialogue.)

2.3.2. Osman Negotiates History

Let us remember Deleuze and Guattari’s emphasis on the schizo as the subject who is intensely invested in history: “No one has ever been as deeply involved in history as the schizo, or dealt with it in this way. He consumes all of universal history in one fell swoop.”

Now I want to draw attention to one of the most spectacular yet shockingly underrated passages of *Virüs*, whose intensity I argue constitutes a climax in the novel (and even in modernist Turkish literature.) The fragment in which this passage is inserted is from the “trial” episode of the novel, if we want to employ Tutumlu’s map. The fragment starts with a reported speech of the judge: “*Yaz kızım, soruldu.*” (V 48). Then the text proceeds in a way that Osman’s inner speech follows the reported speeches through which we follow the hearing:

“...ben, kesinlikle, gözleri aydın mandacıların, işleri iş, demedim.”

“Soruldu.”

(...)

“Yerine, zamanına, ulusun çıkarlarına göre tutum değiştirmek doğaldır, yararlıdır, demek istedim, istedim.”

Hani politikanın adını almazdık ağzımıza, göbeğine düştük. (49)⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Let us remember Osman’s (not merely personal) question here: “*İç diyalogunu nasıl denetim altına alabileceğiz?*” Şen pointedly argues for a negative correlation between Osman’s inner dialogues and his dialogues with other people: “Karşısındakiyle arasındaki mesafe o kadar büyümüştür ki artık aynı dilin sınırları içerisinde konuşmuyorlardır. Gündelik gevezeliklerin durağan ve katı yapısı terk edilmiş; karşısındaki kişi bir özne olmaktan çıkmış, bir oyunun aracına dönüşmüştür tamamen. ... Burada her bir diyalogda gittikçe genişleyen bir fay hattından bahsetmek gerek. Öyle ki genişlemenin yarattığı etki, artık en küçük bir karşılıklı konuşmaya bile izin vermez; iki kişiyi sonsuz kere birbirinden ayırır” (Şen 62).

At one point in the fragment, Osman says, in his inner speech, “*Sustu yargıç*”, and a 100-line long, indiscrete paragraph starts. In this paragraph, we learn the details of “political reasons”: “*Gazetelere başlıklar atıldı, koca puntolarla. BÜYÜK HIYANET ŞEBEKESİ ORTAYA ÇIKARILDI.*” (50). The following passage, which will be of our interest not only here but also throughout the rest of the chapter, is also from that concrete paragraph and worth quoting at length:

Ciğerimin köşesi, hekim adayı yiğenim, övünmeye ne hakkın var rastlantılardan, tersine, aramızdaki kan bağının, kantarın topunu sıkça kaçırdığına bakılırsa, sinir dengesini herhalde epeyce bozduğu hızlı hayta, “*Nymphomanie* ne demeye gelir bilmiyorsun anlaşılan, uymamış” dedi. Baktım sözlüğe. Uyy! başıma gelen. Günümüzün geçerli terimiyle *macro* düzeyde *narcissisme* önerime dudak büküldü. “Amca, sen ailede benim için oldukça ilginç bir vak’a olacağına benzersin!” Alınmadım, bir oktav daha şişindim. Islıkla bir türlü tutturmuş, *Meryemo*’luydu sözleri, gene *ayna var* işin içinde, radyoda söylenilmesi yasaklanmış mıydı, *karakolda* değil, suratımı sabunluyorum, kapı vuruldu güm güm. Sevmem! Tüylerim dikilir kastanyet şakırtısından. Dölü katıksız İspanyol, yay gibi gergin, güçlü boyunlarına kalleşçe saplı kılıçların dize getirdiği kutsal hayvanlığı, sen kalk, üstelik kuşuna diz *Federico Garcia Lorca*’nın gül yumuşacığı yüreğinde. Hadi uzat bakalım kendi kalın bağırsak yaşamını. Ağıt anıtlarıyla donat dünyanın dört bir yanını. Açıkladılar bütçelerini. Elli iki milyar dolar daha, ona eşit ya da çok, bilmem kaç milyar ruble, frank, sterlin, dinar, doyçemark, yen, florin, riyal, kuron... ensesi kalın, sömürge devletlerin, birbirine düşürerek ‘mazlum’ ulusları, kışkırtarak bağınazlıkları, dikta delillerini, silah pazarına dönüştürdükleri ülkelerin, o yüzden solda sıfır virgüllere tekerlenen adlarını say say bitmez para birimleri, ana kuzusu bebeleri boğazlamak, tazı belli delikanlıları, çiçek kokulu kızları, didinen, üreten köylüleri, işçileri, aydın kafaları, koyunları sıcacık ana-babaları, mutlu ölümler uman nineleri, dedeleri, kestirmesi: ataları *Âdem* ile *Havva*’dan beri kardeş, bacı, sevgili, dost yaratılmış insanlığı, insanlık; özgürlüğü, özgürlük adına yok etmek için kullanılacak öyle mi! Öttürün artık *İsrafil*’in yuf borusunu, yeter! Benden *Purcell* incesi şiirler bekleyen serap bungunu çocuk, bakıyorum – gözlerin kağrı tekerleği! Birbirimize mi ağlamalıydık? Altta kalanın canı çıksın çarkının kısır döngüsüne hep birlikte katkımızın aymazlığına, bireysel, döneke mutluluğumuzun soysuzluğuna, bile bile körlüğümüzün sıkılmazlığına boğalar gibi kızıp, çılgına dönsek de, elleri böğründe kalakaldığımız için boğulmalı değil miydik hiçkırıklara? Timsahsam, sürüngensem, bu puştluğumun, ikiyüzlülüğümün ayırımındayım, katalavis! Halam açtı kapıyı. (50)

One pathway through which Deleuze arrives at the formula “literature is a health” was “delirium.” The ability to “make [language] *delirious*,” Deleuze claimed, helps the writer to pass through *delirium* not as a clinical and pathological stage but as a creative process. Deleuze’s attention to the state of “delirium,” however, is not restricted to this

formulization. “Literature is delirium,” he writes in “Literature and Life,” “but delirium is not a father-mother affair: there is no delirium that does not pass through peoples, races, and tribes, and that does not haunt universal history. All delirium is world-historical, ‘a displacement of races and continents.’” (Deleuze 1997, 4). This grasp of delirium as a politically loaded limit-experience whose passage in literature promises a certain health traverses Deleuze’s critical and clinical methodology. In accord with his immanent anti-psychoanalytical critique, he also notes that it is not “a family story organized around a lack” that produces delirium: “On the contrary, delirium is an overflowing of history; it is universal history set adrift. ... Delirium is composed of politics and economics” (Deleuze 2006, 26). What makes the above quotation from *Virüs* spectacular is its ability to express this sort of *delirium* in its formal structure that forces the limits of syntax and grammar as well as in its content that reveals a tough negotiation on universal history—in a way that possibly constitutes a counter-example to Jameson’s “national allegory” framework: It seems that Osman’s story is much more complex a story than being the story of Turkish nation. A “whole other story [that] is vibrating within” Osman’s individual concern is rather a world-historical story.

Notice the invisible parentheses between “... *kapı vuruldu güm güm*” and “*Halam açtı kapıyı*”. What is exposed in the distance between these two successive moments is an intense “schizophrenic flow” whereby Osman’s “felt interior experience” turns into a sort of “collective enunciation”: What Osman negotiates in his inner dialogue is the fascists’ murdering of Spanish poet Lorca, (evoking Lenin’s formulation) “imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism,” colonialism that exploits “oppressed nations,” the mass killings that annihilate “humanity,” and ultimately the counterfeit (supposedly “Western”) discourse of “freedom.” Osman’s delirium is truly composed of “politics and economics”: “... *ensesi kalın, sömürge devletler*”, “*dikta delileri*”, “‘*mazlum*’ *uluslar*”, “*silah pazarına dönüştürdükleri ülkeler*”, “*para birimleri*.” Osman’s communist/schizophrenic cogito, negotiating the sufferings of *all* the oppressed people of the world, sensing how *all* the “babies,” “boys,” “girls,” “peasants,” “workers,” “intellectuals,” “father and mothers” have been killed by a “diabolical” capitalist/fascist system, is now even more disoriented yet sensitive, “hallucinating all history, reproducing in delirium entire civilizations, races, and continents” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 98). In this outburst of his *inner* dialogue, “all the pogroms of history,” Osman seems to say, “that’s what I am” (87).

“If literature is a kind of non-pathological delirium,” Tynan notes, “it is because it shares with schizophrenia the sense of depersonalisation which allows the individual or solitary self to experience in a collective manner. Schizophrenic delirium is distinguished by the fact that its content is often concerned with groups and populations” (Tynan 15). To elaborate “schizophrenic delirium” as a sort of “collective enunciation,” he refers to Elias Canetti, who notices the appearing of “all kinds of crowds” in “the imaginings of schizophrenics”—in a way that possibly reminds us of Osman’s negotiations on nations, babies, peasants, workers, and the humanity: “the mosquitoes talking,” “729,000 girls,” “the whispering voices of the whole of humanity” (quoted in Tynan 159). While this state of delirium, “as a pathological experience,” seems to be “terrifying and debilitating, literature, Deleuze and Guattari argue, functions as a means to render this experience in a non-pathological way. This is ultimately what joins the schizoanalytic project to the literary clinic” (159).

This grasp of delirium as a politically loaded state of mind where the (writing) subject finds his body/subjectivity overloaded with history/politics is to be read not only in *Virüs*, but, I argue, as a “Benerian” theme. One of the “vignettes”⁵⁵ published in his later work *Kapan* is entitled “Sayıklama.” The speaking/writing subject of this short text navigates between an “inner interrogation” and an exterior one, having not only “critical and clinical” but also political attentions. This “Delirium” of Bener, too, is “composed of politics and economics”:

İç hesaplaşmayı yüzeyden almamalı. İyice hırpalamalı, delik deşik etmeli. ... İnsafsızlıklar, kısımlar? Yanlış değil mi? Öldürme güdüsünü, yaşama güdüsünden ayırmak olası mı? Eyleme dönüştüğünde öfke, oç alma yerini alıyor, linç, asma, kesme. Haklı buluyor insanoğlu. İrdelemeden, kendiliğinden. Bireysel karşı eyleme girişilemezse, bir otoritenin alacağı kararı benimsemenin, daha tiksindirici olması gerekmez mi? Korkunç acımasızlığın dışa vurulmuş simgesi. *Paranoya* örneği. Toplum ona göre mi yönlendiriliyor. Cinayet furyası. Gitgide sarıyor insanları. Savaşı nasıl açıklamalı. Bireyin karşı koyması hiçbir anlam taşımıyor. (Bener 2014, 28)⁵⁶

Birtakım tansıklıklara inanma, safatalara boyun eğme *şizofrenisi*, büyük çoğunluğa yaşam olanağı sağlıyorsa, hiç bir öğretici başarı sağlayamaz. Akıl çözemeyeceğini, akıl, çözümsüzlük çözümülle devreden çıkarmayı yeğler.

⁵⁵ This sort of short writings published in Bener’s last works have been called “vignette” by Koçak (Koçak 2004, 27).

⁵⁶ It is striking to see in “Sayıklama” a sentence that reads like a good translation of what Deleuze has written in his *Difference and Repetition*: “We see no reason to propose a death instinct which would be distinguishable from Eros, either by a difference in kind between two forces, or by a difference in rhythm or amplitude between two movements” (Deleuze 1994, 113).

... [sic]

Ben deli miyim? Karar veremeyeceğim, başkaları öyle bir kanıya varabilecek, ama o karara katılamayacağım. (29)

Notice how an “inner interrogation” inevitably carries the subject to an interrogation about “humankind,” “pogroms,” “lynchings,” “murderings,” and “war.” Notice also how the familial/Oedipal drama is radically out of topic in a text called “Delirium.” This “felt interior experience” leads the subject to ask if he is mad: “*Ben deli miyim?*” He expects the answer to be “yes,” but declares that he will not agree with this judgment: “*o karara katılamayacağım.*”

After this resistance to a possible pathological judgment about him (as Dr. Doğan Alp would possibly do in the case of Osman), the subject starts to tell the story of his real treatment by a “mental health practitioner.” In response to her medical advices—“... *deneme tahtası olarak gördü beni, kuşuk yok. İlaçla sağaltma yöntemine başvurdu.*”—the subject utters a sentence that fortifies Karasu’s evocation of Bener’s “schizoid” “economy of I”—despite his identification of “schizophrenia” with a certain societal narrow-mindedness. We may be reading the most palpable expression of Bener’s quarrel with the distinction between the subject of the enunciating and the subject of the enunciation as a quarrel implicated in the question of health: “*Beni benden ayrı düşünmenin, sinir sistemini altüst etmenin sağaltımla ilgisi olmasa gerek.*” (30). If, Bener’s subject says, you want to cure me, you should not try to separate “I” from “me,” you should not differentiate between my subject of the enunciating and my subject of the enunciation, my thinking “I” and my speaking “I.” A question of subjectivity has already paved the way for a question of health: If neither any attempt to unify already dissolved subjectivity nor “medicine” is of use as a “method of healing,” then, what can appear on the horizon as an enterprise of health?

It is possible to imagine Osman uttering that sentence we read in “Sayıklama” in response to a possible attempt to pathologize and thus cure him: “*Bana deli diyecekler*” contra “*bu tür delilerde kolay ayırt edilemeyecek olan kandırma yeteneğini.*” But this juxtaposition of “Sayıklama” and *Virüs* demands attention not only for it shows us Bener’s subjects’ political/historical deliriums but also for it seems to justify the critics who have perseveringly pointed out a negativity in Bener’s texts. We must see the thorny limits of Osman’s schizophrenic flow: Considering the sense of “disbelief” these two delirious passages actively convey, it will seem more meaningful that Karasu has uttered those two words in succession: “A pessimist, a schizoid.” In these political/historical

deliriums, the “individual,” the “I” appears as a problematic realm: “*bireysel, dönekl mutluluğumuzun soysuzluğuna*” and “*Bireyin karşı koyması hiçbir anlam taşıyor.*” This aversion to “the individual concern” reaches its peak in that cry: “... *uzat bakalım kendi kalın bağırsak yaşamını. ... Timsahsam, sürüngensem, bu puştluğumun, ikiyüzlülüğümün ayırımındayım, katalavis!*” Osman’s “sense of depersonalization” seems to be linked with a certain sense of disbelief.

In their introduction to *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Literature*, Buchanan, Matts and Tynan propose that the question of “If neither reform nor revolution is possible at this juncture in history, then what is possible?” is “the essential political question asked by schizoanalysis” (Buchanan, Matts and Tynan, 8). Let us remember some other (political) questions we have already passed through: “*İç diyalogunu nasıl denetim altına alabileceğiz?*” was Osman’s question; “What can we do so the break-through does not become a break-down?” was Deleuze’s. In the next subsection, we will try to see how *Virüs* answers these questions.

2.4. Writing, an Impasse

We know that Osman’s relation to the act of writing is by no means restricted to what Tutumlu states. “Osman,” she says, “is interested in literature and translates poetry” (Tutumlu 2016, 46). Sahir already introduces to us *Virüs*’s lost, dissociated and pessimist subject as an artist: “*Sanatçı yaratılmak, en büyük lütfu Tanrı’nın. ... Sade sanatçı olsan neyse, üstelik zekisin de!*” Osman’s narration of his own personal history has already posited him as a “poet”: “*Mal Müdürü’yüm. ... Kolayına gelen hece kalıbıyla evrensel barış, çokuluslu mutluluk dizeleri döktürüyorum, uyak sıkıntısı çekmeden, uygulanıyor.*” We already passed through that self-reflexive sentence: “*Zamanlama yanlışları, birinci tekil kişiden, üçüncü tekil kişiye geçiş dalgınlıkları!*” In his political trial, in response to an allegation based on a so-called suspicious letter an eyewitness claims Osman was reading in “the canteen of the faculty,” Osman also recounts his own literary history:

“Tanık yanılmış. İyi anımsıyorum. ‘*Varlık*’ dergisinin başlıklı kâğıdıydı zarftan çıkardığım. ... Basılmak üzere gönderdiğim şiirin çok karamsar, biçim yönünden özensiz olduğu, açıkça *Fazıl Hüsnü Dağlarca* etkisi altında kaldığından söz edilerek, kendime özgü ‘üslup’ geliştirmeye çalışmaktığım öğütleniyordu. ... ”(V 116)

We also know that Osman has published “twenty, twenty-five” poems in various magazines as well as a “booklet”: “*Kişiliğini oldukça bulmuş saydığı yirmi, yirmi beş şiiri o dönem dergilerinde boy göstermiş, bir kitapçığı da yayımlanmıştı.*” *Virüs* presents Osman’s poetic archive not only by evoking this personal/literary history but also via the names of his poems. We know, from a letter sent by an ambiguous “G.” (that is, not by Viola⁵⁷) to Osman, that he has a poem called “*Yaşayamayan I*”:

‘Yaşayamayan I’i yeniden okudum. Birden büyüdü biliveren gözlerim, uyanmış yüz yıllık uyurgezerliğinden. ‘Yaşayan II’yi yaz ne olur. ... Son şiirini aldım ele. Denerken düşünebilir miyim ya da düşünürken deneyebilir miyim? Valla buldum karbonu! Biz işte bunu becerdik. Sen beni öldüreceksin adam! Nasıl dayanacak yüreğim hep ağzında olmaya? İçimin yangını sürüyor.
(75)⁵⁸

It is noteworthy that literature and life seem to be essentially linked with each other not only for Bener (that is, the writer of *Yaşamaz*) but also for Osman (that is, the writer of “*Yaşayamayan I*”)—to the extent that the titles of their writings powerfully bear a problematization of life. We also know that Osman’s literary archive is restricted neither to poetry nor to love letters.⁵⁹ Writing, as an impasse pertaining to *Life*, will appear in *Virüs* through some intertextual echoes as well—the echoes that portray him as a *writer*: “*Söylentiye bakılırsa, Musorski, soğuktan donayazarken bile notalarını duvarlara, kapı arkalarına yazarmış. ... Sözün özü, kişinin doğası, yüreğindeki ateşi sürekli canlı tutabilecek harlı çakımdan yoksun olmamalı!*” As Koçak pointedly discussed, the italics are abundantly in use in the modernist intertextuality of Bener’s novels. Koçak argues that Bener’s italics constitute “a ruin of discourses” that provides the *text*, which has now become an *intertext* but not a model thereof, with a *context*. Koçak notes “some books”

⁵⁷ Any reader of *Virüs* should note that the text leaves us alone with some unanswerable questions. The question regarding the writer of this letter is an example: We know that all the letters we read are the ones inherited from the love affair of Osman and Viola, and we see in some letters their signatures—such as “Viola’n”, “V.” and “O.Y.” Yet, this letter is signed by an ambiguous “G.” who could not match with any other character except for Viola. As she herself reveals, even Tutumlu’s narratological investigation could not offer a satisfactory answer to the question: “Yazarın verdiği yeni ipuçlarına rağmen ‘G.’nin kim olduğu sorusu netlik kazanmaz ve bu bölümde anlatılanların sıralamada nerede yer aldığı da tam olarak belirlenemez” (Tutumlu 2010, 67).

⁵⁸ Another echo between *Virüs* and “Biraz da Ağla Descartes”: The question asked by “G.” here (“*Denerken düşünebilir miyim ya da düşünürken deneyebilir miyim?*”) is the same question we read Descartes asked himself (“*Denerken düşünebilir miyim? Ya da düşünürken deneyebilir miyim?*”).

⁵⁹ Notice Osman’s reflection of his letter writing: “O bir yana, Viola’ya mektup yazma tiryakiliğine kaptırdım kendimi. Kimi geceler üçlere dörtlere kadar uykusuz kalmaya katlanıyorum, seve seve. Önce taslak hazırlanıyor. Öyle çalاکalem, esip savurmuyorum güya. O yüzden de bir halta benzemiyordu ya. ... Yassı uçlu, hokka kalemi kullanıyorum. Ne çok kullanıyorum” (V 140-1). As we will see more convincingly in Chapter 3, the writing paraphernalia is a constant leitmotif in Bener’s writing. For the time being, let us just note “*hokka kalem*” as a material embodying a certain “problem of writing”: “... bir halta benzemiyordu ya. ... Ne çok kullanıyorum.”

and “the data of national and international culture that could not suffice to make us ‘we’” among the components of this intertextual archive (Koçak 1991, 82). One could also see that *Virüs*’s intertextual italics convey a grasp of writing/art as an activity that essentially involves a certain resistance against life. Notice in the following passage not only Osman’s description of his literary persona in direct allusion to Don Quixote who wrestles with windmills but also his reproachful attitude toward “critics”:

... *Richard Strauss* müziğinde, *El Greco* yüzlü şövalye *Donkişot*’tum. Kahramanlık masalları okuya okuya daldığım gülünç düşlerin, eğlenceli mırıl mırıl, şakacı tenekeler sazların düetlerine konu olduğunu, eleştirmenler tepine dursun -alaya alındığını bilmiyordum. Seyisim *Sanço*, bas, tuba, klarinet şeytanca kışkırtmalarıyla uyarmaya çalışıyormuş biçimsel saflığımı, kendimi gerçekten beğenmişliğimi. Yel değirmenleriyle savaş. (V 151)

At this juncture, where Osman appears as a problematic writer who mulls over not only his literary experiments but also the very nature of the act of writing, we should go back to that spectacular passage where we read Osman’s schizophrenic delirium as a collective enunciation. Before this detour, however, I want to draw attention to an indistinct detail: The reader may have already captured the repetition of a specific word in Osman’s (inner) dialogues. Let us go back to those two passages we have already read, now to see Osman more convincingly as a writer:

Ben neyin tutsağımı bilmiyordum; oynarken oynadığımı ayırıyorum desem, hayli aşırı kaçacak, yaşadığımı ayırıyamıyorum desem, kendime bile inandırıcı gelmiyor; test sonuçlarına bakılırsa *nymphomanie* galiba hocam, şey Komiser Beyciğim. (46)

Ciğerimin köşesi, hekim adayı yiğenim, övünmeye ne hakkın var rastlantılardan, tersine, aramızdaki kan bağının, kantarın topunu sıkça kaçırdığına bakılırsa, sinir dengesini herhalde epeyce bozduğu hızlı hayta, “*Nymphomanie* ne demeye gelir bilmiyorsun anlaşılın, uymamış” dedi. (50)

I should have said “Osman ... as the writer of *Virüs*.” It seems that Osman’s “doctor candidate nephew,” who thinks Osman would be “quite an interesting case” for him, is the first critical and clinical reader of (Osman’s) *Virüs*: “*uymamış*”. But the reason why we should revisit that delirious passage is not the word “*nymphomanie*” per se. I will argue that it is in the middle of that passage of *Virüs* that we read the most powerful crystallization of Osman’s grasp of writing as an impasse. Let us ponder Osman’s cry one more time:

Öttürün artık *İsrafil*'in yuf borusunu, yeter! Benden *Purcell* incesi şiirler bekleyen serap bungunu çocuk, bakıyorum – gözlerin kağıt tekerleği! Birbirimize mi ağlamalıydık? ... elleri böğründe kalakaldığımız için boğulmalı değil miydik hıçkırıklara? Timsahsam, sürüngensem, bu puştluğumun, ikiyüzlülüğümün ayrımındayım, katalavis!

The intertextual echo here must be to Henry Purcell, a 17th-century English composer known for his delicate songs. Let us remember that we read before this intertextual sentence an intense negotiation on history painfully recoded by capitalist/fascist machine. To write like Purcell—Osman seems to say, how possible is this? How can I write, what can I write, in the face of this history? Why do I write, if it is no more possible to write like Purcell? Why do I write, if I will end up “collapsing in sobs,” being aware of the incapacity of what I write vis-à-vis murderings, pogroms, dead bodies? “Art is resistance,” said Deleuze, “it resists death, slavery, infamy, shame.” Osman the Artist seems to say “no,” having difficulty in committing himself to this idea: “*Timsahsam, sürüngensem, bu puştluğumun, ikiyüzlülüğümün ayrımındayım, katalavis!*” “Sayıklama” continues to resonate with Osman’s havoc with Deleuze: “*Tüm anlatılar, neyi amaçlar? Yazmak hangi sapmayı, yan etkilerinden soyutlayabilir?*” (Bener 2014, 29). The Benerian question “why write,” thus, is not a personal question per se, but a political question as well, finding its most solid form amidst world-historical deliriums.

But Deleuze and Guattari have praised Kafka not for his ‘plain speaking’ but for his ability to create “a way out of this impasse.” Although writing is more a question than an answer, more helpless than helpful, Osman ultimately writes *Virüs*. Writing is thus also a way-out, even when it writes nothing but its inabilities. Notwithstanding these solid appearances of absolute negativity (also in relation to the act of writing), it is also in *Virüs* written by the writer of “Yaşayamayan I” that we read these sentences that possess a sensibility that hardly seems to be pessimistic:

Gen’lerin, çözülebile bile yeni şifreler oluşturması gücüne, şimdilik köleyiz, ne yapalım?

Diyeceğim, devşirme seçenekler aracılığıyla *çıkamazımızdan* sıyrılmaya zorlanmıyor muyuz acaba?

İmdi, didikleminin, görmenin de kızılaltı ötesine gidilebilinince ‘zedelemek korkusu’ korku kavramına bile ters düşüyor mu?

Yorgunluğun, bıkmamanın da kendine özgü, tadı, kokusu vardır. Yaşayamamak da yaşamaktır.

Alışmaya alışacağız çaresiz. (V 60; emphasis mine).

It is also Osman, the sick, lost, disconnected artist, who strives for inventing new solutions in and for a life that gradually dilapidates: “Çözümüne razıyız, çözümsüzlüğe değil.” (15). If we are reading these sentences, if Osman cannot help but write these sentences, then *Virüs* embodies, through the act of writing, a paradoxical embrace of life as well: What can I do, if not performing my inability to write like Purcell? How can I write, if I can do nothing but writing? Do I have any other possibility except for writing what I could not write?

Not only “style” is obligation then. Writing, as an impasse, as an impossibility (“*Yel değirmenleriyle savaş*”), is also an obligation: “Musorski, soğuktan donayazarken bile notalarını duvarlara, kapı arkalarına yazarmış.” Osman could not help but write *Virüs* so that “the break-through does not become a break-down.” It “resists death, slavery, infamy, shame,” albeit that cry that will continue to hang over the work: “*katalavis!*”

CHAPTER 3

BAY MUANNİT SAHTEGİ'NİN NOTLARI: AN ENTERPRISE OF HEALTH

Bir iyileşme olacaksa eğer, edebiyat bunu ancak o zorunlu çiraklığın içinden geçerek yapabilir, “sağlık” üzerine düşünmek için sapkınlığı, “yol” üzerine düşünmek için yolunu şaşırmışlığı, “başkası” üzerine düşünmek için kimsesizliği, “halk” üzerinden düşünmek için halksızlığı üstlenerek yapabilir. Bu dünyada başarı şansı pek düşük bir yurtsuzluğu bir keşif aracına dönüştürebilirse yapabilir.

— Nurdan Gürbilek

3.1. A Tense Conversation

In the end of my reading of Bener's *Virius*, I argued for a certain resistance on the part of Osman. A double movement, I proposed: *Virius*, whose protagonist is its own writer, performs what Deleuze thinks literature performs while also constantly questioning the power of its performance in the face of an inoperative politics, a painful universal history, a collectivity that is not promising. In the first pages of *Sahtegi*, we hear a similar not-so-easy resonance. It is as if the subject of *Sahtegi* negotiates in his mind that key sentence of Deleuze I have quoted at the very beginning:

İnadına *Schönberg*'den yay çekiyor radyo. Dağıtmamak, sağaltmak. İyi gidiyordun, tabipliğin tutmuştu, eski yazdıklarının temize çekilmesi kasetçiliği yeterliydi hani, ne oldu? Lütfen durma, silkin. Yoksa... Hey aygın gündüz! Dingin, dengeli, kıraç akıllı olmaya özentisi, gülünce uyum sağlamak. Yinelemeci olmamalısın. Yine de çalacaksın kendinden. Olmuyor değil mi? Özrün var. Bak, daha birinci sayfanın on yedinci satırından bir sözcük ileri gidemedin. O zaman da gidemeyecektin. Ha bu gün, ha yarın'la sözde beni kandıracaksın. Neden öldürülmeye yaraşmıyorsun anladın mı? Anlaşılacak ille de. (S 11)

Or, it may be the case that what is negotiated here is more pertinent to the following quotation from Deleuze, whose critical and clinical methodology always points out a double movement: “More a physician than a patient, the writer makes a diagnosis, but what he diagnoses is the world; he follows the illness step by step, but it is the generic illness of man; he assesses the chances of health, but it is the possible birth of a new man” (Deleuze 1997, 53). Tynan notes that “this identity of doctor and patient, health and illness, strength and weakness, forms the central intuition of Deleuze's critical and clinical project.” The promise of this double identity lies in the writer's ability to acquire a grasp of health by passing through, by exhausting, the illness diagnosed. The artist “does not

simply suffer his or her illness but gains a rigorous perspective on it through the formal innovations of his or her writing, and thus manages to be both doctor and patient at once” (Tynan 2).

One of the plainest articulations of Deleuze’s motto “literature is a health” is to be found in *What is Philosophy?*, the last book written by Deleuze and Guattari. It is here that we read a crystallization of the idea that will serve as the basis in Deleuze’s critical and clinical readings of modernist literary works. Notice not only the blurring of the distinction between art/literature and philosophy but also a certain double movement evoked regarding the question of health:

... through having seen Life in the living or the Living in the lived, the novelist or painter returns breathless and with bloodshot eyes. ... In this respect, artists are like philosophers. What little health they possess is often too fragile, not because of their illnesses or neuroses but because they have seen something in life that is too much for anyone, too much for themselves, and that has put on them the quiet mark of death. But this something is also the source or breath that supports them through the illnesses of the lived (what Nietzsche called health). (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 172-3).

Not only an attention to medicine but also a double movement pertaining to Bener’s literary aesthetics (or, Bener’s “problem of *writing*”) have been detected by readers. Koçak proposes that there are two principles “always deviating from each other” in Bener’s narratives: “a principle of continuity wanting to start, to process and to connect” and “a principle of dispersion leading to not telling, to keeping mum, to disjoining” (Koçak 1991, 82).⁶⁰ In another register, Koçak also claims that a certain “dialectic” is at work in Bener’s text: “it was impossible not to sense that he did not cherish anything that does not carry in itself complication and contradiction” (Koçak 2005, 123). According to Gürbilek, “what makes Bener’s texts distinctive” is that “he maintains the same tense conversation in all works.” Gürbilek dovetails this distinctive conversation with the question of style: “If we will talk about the style of Bener, we should start analyzing this style here, with this tension between ‘Well, let me try to tell’ and ‘How to hope a benefit from telling?’” What follows may remind us of the connection Deleuze has made between literary style and “a style of life ... a possibility of life, a way of existing”: “the

⁶⁰ It is sensible that Koçak posits Bener’s second principle, the principle of negativity, as the dominant one: “Oyun da böyle: V.O.B.’de oyun vardır, parçalanmak, silinmek pahasına oynanır. Ama bu metin, bu parçalanmış gövde, olay yerinde toplanmaya başlamış okurların kendi kendilerine, ‘bu kadar parçalandığına göre, çok yüksekte düşmüş olmalı’ diye mırıldanmalarına bile izin vermez” (83).

tension, harboring not only a textual problem but also an ontological one, about which the literati no longer care very much” (Gürbilek 2004, 36).

Perhaps never has this conversation found its nest more palpably than this text, whose name, as repeatedly noted by readers, materializes an explicit double movement: “*Muannit* meaning ‘mule’ and *Sahtegi* suggesting something ‘not genuine’” (Tutumlu 2016, 47). My aim in this reading is to ponder this Benerian conversation between seemingly opposite stances, this intricate clash of principles, this oscillation between being “obstinate” and being “counterfeit” in *Sahtegi* through a discussion that will revolve around the keywords “illness” and “health.” What I am after is to accentuate the immanence of, rather than the opposition between, the two poles between which *Sahtegi*—as a materialization of Bener’s style—constantly navigates. The attention to *medicine* in *Sahtegi* goes beyond the mere textualizations recording how an elderly man suffers from his sickness to a discussion on *how*, *why*, and (more importantly) *if*, “literature, by gaining a perspective on sickness, is capable of transforming this weakness into a creative power” (Tynan 1). I will thus ultimately propose that *Sahtegi* is itself a discussion on literature and health—on a new possibility of life.

A certain attention to health (or, the lack thereof) captures the reader of *Sahtegi* from the very start. The text commences with the picturing of “a lethal, suicidal morning”:

Yine öldürgen bir intihar sabahı, yirmi miligram *nobraksin* almama karşın, ellerimin titremesini önleyemiyorum; kaydın bay Muannit Sahtegi, yapma, seni konuşmak değil, yazmak kurtarır derken, yani günlük adı altında ilk üç beş tümcenin yazıldığı günden tam üç yıl sonra, yeniden başlamayı deniyorum. Yoksa, galiba, dün gördüğüm, yanı başında sulandırılmış rakı şişesi, dilenen ihtiyardan beter yıkılmış olacağım. Neyi, nasıl, niçin kurtarmak? Neden bunca korkmak yıkılmaktan, yok olmaktan. (S 9)

“We ought perhaps to admire a book deliberately deprived of all resources,” Blanchot speaks of Samuel Beckett’s *The Unnamable*, “one that accepts beginning at that point where no continuation is possible, *obstinately* clings to it, without trickery, without subterfuge, and conveys the same discontinuous movement, the progress of what never goes forward” (Blanchot 2003, 213; emphasis mine). The paragraph that opens *Sahtegi*, while embodying a similar double movement Blanchot points out, can also be considered as an outline of the literary experiment it is made of—a paragraph-length *synecdoche*. *Sahtegi* welcomes the reader to a tense conversation oscillating between *symptomatology* and *therapy*: On the one side stand a “lethal, suicidal morning” and trembling hands of an aged body that desperately needs “*nobraksin*”; on the other side “writing”, “diary”,

“sentence”. What makes this conversation tense in *Sahtegi* is the distance between these two poles, which inhabits a solid problematization that disturbs the order of both poles: “yazmak kurtarır derken ... Neyi, nasıl, niçin kurtarmak?” In the effort to pass through this tough distance, the integrity of the subject crumbles as well, both syntactically and ontologically: “kaydın bay Muannit Sahtegi...”

As already stated, the subject whose mind these reflections on illness, health and the act of writing traverse is “bay Muannit Sahtegi.” Mr. Sahtegi is a “retired key consultant,” *an experienced bureaucrat*,⁶¹ who is also a writer, an artist.⁶² *Sahtegi* is composed of the notes Mr. Sahtegi takes by reviewing either what he remembers or what he had already noted in his diary.⁶³ These notes and reviews thereof roughly cover the late 1970s and 1980s by portraying Sahtegi’s predicaments, oscillations, exhaustions, and fears, revolving around such themes as senility, indigence, and exasperation toward politics, as well as his relationship with his adopted daughter Fatoş.⁶⁴ Indeed, Fatoş’s departure for England to study there for a year looms so large in Sahtegi’s life so that he

⁶¹ In an interview, Bener speaks of Mr. Sahtegi: “O dönemin, çekingen, yüzeysel görünümlü de olsa eleştirisini yapmayı, etkilerini oldukça deneyimli, görmüş geçirmiş bir bürokratın ağzından verebilmeyi amaçladım” (Bener 2004, 124). It may be good to keep in mind that *Virius*’s Osman and Bener himself were also experienced bureaucrats.

⁶² One of many clues reads: “Bay Sahtegi, yeni olmayan, aklıncı duyulmadık biçim engebelerine alıştırmalar peşinde diyeceksin, deme istersen, kimi dostların *iğvasına* kapılıp şiir yarışmasına katılmak avanaklığıma kızagülüyor gibiyim. Onurun batsın. Bence hafife alınmayacak yeteneğimi azdırır umuduma destek olunabilseydi... Avuç açmayı içime sindirsem de, kim, niçin kanını zehirletsin bile isteğe” (S 12). Readers have already pointed out Mr. Sahtegi’s being an artist. Gümüş: “Bulunduğu toplumsal çevre içindeki konumunun, Bay Muannit Sahtegi’nin anlaşılmasında ikincil bir yeri vardır. Bir şair ve yazardır o (tıpkı *Buzul Çağının Virüsü*’nün kahramanı Osman Yaylağülü gibi) ... Çok az yazmaya, dizelerini ‘çaylak’ bulmaya başlamış olsa bile...” (Gümüş 2000, 17). Tutumlu: “Bay Sahtegi yazardır ve yazdığı notları başka kişilere de okutur ve eleştirilerini alır ... Bu da Bay Sahtegi’nin sadece kendi için günlük tutmadığını, bu günlükleri kitaplaştırıp yayımlatmayı düşündüğünü gösterir. Dolayısıyla, elimizde Bay Sahtegi’nin yazdığı ve içinde onun anlatıcı olarak bulunduğu bir kitap vardır” (Tutumlu 2010, 89). In her *Türk Romanında Yazar ve Başkalaşım*, Jale Parla registers *Sahtegi* as one example of *Künstlerroman* (Parla 2015, 10).

⁶³ This juxtaposition of reviewing and rewriting (“*eski yazdıklarının temize çekilmesi kasetçiliği*”) calls for a comparative analysis between *Sahtegi* and Samuel Beckett’s play *Krapp’s Last Tape*. In Beckett’s play, an elderly man named Krapp listens to what he recorded on his *tape recorder* thirty years ago, while also making new records. This analysis would seem even more exciting if we consider that Beckett has been an inspirational figure for Bener.

⁶⁴ Ulusman’s reading shows that this relationship between Mr. Sahtegi and Fatoş is more complicated and indeed violent than it may first appear. *Sahtegi* already gives clues that Mr. Sahtegi has an incestuous desire (a “schizo-incest”?) for his adopted daughter Fatoş: “Sana ne be! Koynuma mı giriyorsun? Biriyle ilişki kursa da evlense, başımın derdi. Pek şaştınız değil mi? Yirmi beş yaş fark var aramızda. Evlat edinenlerin karıştırdığı halatlarla ilgili hikâyeleri yakıştırmaya kalkmayın bana da. Boğarım!” (S 21). What Ulusman shows, however, is the function of diary-writing in hiding Mr. Sahtegi’s “phallogocentric,” “misogynist,” and “mascist” ontology as well as his physical, symbolic, and even linguistic violence against Fatoş. Especially after Ulusman’s reading, my reading will certainly mean an exclusion of *Sahtegi*’s problem of gender, yet I still want to force the limits of the discourse of Mr. Sahtegi to try to forge an “exercise that extracts from the text its revolutionary force.” In this attempt to produce a relatively positive reading of a “phallogocentric” text, Jacques Derrida may also be of help: “... some works which are highly ‘phallogocentric’ in their semantics, their intended meaning, even their theses, can produce paradoxical effects, paradoxically antiphallcentric through the audacity of a writing which in fact disturbs the order or the logic of phallogocentrism or touches on limits where things are reversed: in that case the fragility, the precariousness, even the ruin of order is more apparent” (Derrida 1992, 50); “... sometimes the texts which are most phallogocentric or phallogocentric in their themes (in a certain way no text completely escapes this rubric) can also be, in some cases, the most deconstructive” (58).

reveals this crack as one of the reasons why he started to write. Mr. Sahtegi never stops declaring his disbelief in the promise of writing, yet continues to write—at least for two reasons:

İlki, aşağı yukarı sekiz yılı dolduran, yasal deyimiyle evlat edindiğim çocuğa tuhaf uyduluğumun bir yıla yakın bir süre için kesintiye uğrayacak olması, Fatoş'u uzak bir yabancı ülkeye yolcu etmişim, ikincisi, yaşımın göstergelerini sönüş yakınlığına yapışık saymaklığım. Başka gerekçeleri yok diyebilsem. (S 11)⁶⁵

There are two temporal axes in Mr. Sahtegi's notes: 1979-1980 and 1984-1987. Mr. Sahtegi starts keeping his diary on *1st October 1979*, just after his adopted girl Fatoş left for England for a year of study and continues to write it until *5th February 1980*. The second temporal axis starts with the narration of the day of *7th March 1984* under the title of *1st October 1979* and ends with the very last entry dated *13th September 1987* (Tutumlu 2010, 83-4). The narrative of *Sahtegi* is chaotic: Record of the past in the past, review of a record of the past in the present, record of the present in the present, record of any recording (that is, the act of writing and rewriting) seem to take place simultaneously, though not without temporal marks (the entry dates are always in italics) and sometimes with punctuation marks (brackets or slashes), in diary entries that are not chronologically ordered. The reader could not capture the time exactly, nor could the diary-writer: “*Günleri, yılları şaşırmağa başladım artık*” (S 58).

Although this narrative chaos calls for a narratological study that will pay attention to how Mr. Sahtegi's perception of life changes over time,⁶⁶ my aim is not to trace these

⁶⁵ Ulusman figures the former reason (Fatoş's departure) as the central, indeed single, instigator of the work. Considering, for example, that Mr. Sahtegi dedicates his notes to Fatoş (“*Bay SAHTEGİ'den FATOŞ'a; başlaması dileğiyle sunu yerine*”), this figuration may seem a fair one. Yet, it is my contention that Ulusman fails to do justice to the text insofar as she incorporates the second reason uttered by Mr. Sahtegi into the first one: “Sahtegi'nin yaşamsal bir bağ olarak diyalektik düzlemde kendini bağladığı Fatoş'un gidişi, ‘yaşam göstergelerinin sönmesini’, [sic] Fatoş'un yokluğunun Sahtegi'deki hem erotik hem de maşist evrenin biricik muhatabının gidivermesi anlamına gelir” (Ulusman 73). While convincingly showing, *pace* Schwab, how violently gender-biased Bener's/Mr. Sahtegi's “schizosphere” is, her tendency to ignore Mr. Sahtegi's problem of life and death steals from her otherwise thought-provoking analysis. This is apparent in her interpretation of every single sentence of Mr. Sahtegi as linguistic reflections of his “heteronormative,” “misogynist,” “patriarchal,” and “mascist” ontology. With a certain decontextualization, such sentences as “*yazsam ya, elimden ne geliyor başka?*” turns in her reading into Mr. Sahtegi's confessions whereby he does nothing but hide his incestuous desire for Fatoş: “bu ve benzeri örnekler, Sahtegi'nin arzularını dilsel alana geçirmekle ilgili kuşularının, kaygılarının günlükteki yansımalarıdır” (70).

⁶⁶ Having said this, I also sense within *Sahtegi* a certain resistance against a possible narratological reading that will unravel its temporal order. What I have in my mind are such sentences as: “Cumartesi, ertelenemez ertesiler – ille de hangisi, önemli mi? çağırıldığı halde bugün, hangi bugün? çıkageldi camcı.” (S 17); “Bu geriye dönüşlere tarih düşürmek niye? General *Wellington* 'ın anıları sanki. İleride şaşırmasın aman yazın tarihçileri.” (30); “Günleri, yılları şaşırmağa başladım artık.” (58).

lines—especially after Gümüş’s⁶⁷ and Tutumlu’s rigorous studies. What I am after instead is to read Mr. Sahtegi’s attempt to (re-)write (a diary) in its totality and as an experiment in search of a “healthy life.” We already have some promising clues through which we can grasp how Sahtegi’s mind is dominated by a certain negotiation on being a patient and being a physician, on life and death, as well as on literature’s abilities vis-à-vis these dualities: “*tabipliğin tutmuştu ... Olmuyor değil mi?*” As we already saw and will see below in this chapter, the words, concepts, and questions we have passed through while trying to decipher Deleuze’s critical and clinical project flash here and there in Mr. Sahtegi’s notes. Let us glance at the following passage that not only embodies the juxtaposition of a perspective on sickness and a perspective on health but also shows how self-reflexive Mr. Sahtegi’s notes are:

(28 Nisan 1984 Cuma notunu düşelim. ... Şirkette saygılıca davranıyor, çok yüklenmiyorlar üstüme, ama nereye kadar. “Hizmetlerinizden dolayı teşekkür eder, bundan sonraki yaşamınızda sağlık, mutluluk, başarılar dileriz” yollu bir zarfı masamda bulabilirim her an. Ne yaparız diyorum, umurunun teki değil. O zaman düşünüyoruz. Neyi? Yüz binlerce genç işsiz dolaşüyor ortalarda. Altmışını çoktan aşmış ihtiyar yeniden iş bulacak da! Günde iki paket sigara, *koroner* yetmezlik dedi, viziti 5000 liralık doktor, derhal keseceksiniz, içkiyi sigarayı, *stres*'ten kaçın. Başüstüne! Bir yanına inme iner de yatağa çivilenirsen, işte o zaman anlarsın ne demekmiş dik tutmak kuyruğu. Yoksa neye yarayacak sağlıklı yaşam?) (36)

The registration of senility in Mr. Sahtegi’s notes, while thoroughly diagnosing the bodily and psychic illnesses suffered by an old man (alcoholism, coronary insufficiency, stress), also signifies some other, non-individual roots of these sicknesses. We may want to add here the adjective “political” (or even “politico-economic”) as well: It is not only his own unemployment but also “hundred of thousands of young people” who look for a job that makes Mr. Sahtegi sick. This perspective on sickness as something that transcends the personal, signifying an illness that is related to *the political*, finds one of its most crystallized forms in the quotation below. Let us notice how inevitably Mr. Sahtegi dovetails his inner troubles with the political ones, his own personal illness with a social illness:

⁶⁷ Gümüş points out a certain difference between two temporal axes: “Sözelimi, aynı durumla 1979’da karşılaştıysaydı eğer, Bay Muannit Sahtegi’nin tepkileri aynı olabilir miydi? Sanırım, olmayabileceği biçiminde yanıtlanabilir bu soru. Şu demek ki, anlatı kişimiz yıllar içinde çözülen bir ruhsal yapıya, zamanla eriyen bir bilince, denetlenmesi güçleşen tepkilere, zayıflayan bir kişiliğe sahip olmaya başlamıştır.” (Gümüş 2000, 24). Let us detect Gümüş’s diagnosis on Mr. Sahtegi’s mental health: “... yıllar sonra günlüklerini gözden geçirerek, geçmiş yaşantısıyla ister istemez ikinci bir hesaplaşmaya tutuşuyor. Üstelik ruh sağlığı da artık sürekli belirsizlikler üretirken...” (72).

Bazı kararlar almalıyım. Gıdamı bu denli savsaklamamalıyım bir kez. Alt dişetlerim çekilmiş. Güçsüzüm. Ne olursa olsun birkaç satır yazmayı sürdürmeliyim. Oynatacağım yoksa.

Terör, günlük yaşamın – giderek, irkiltmez alışkanlığı. (79)

Let us also not ignore a certain problematization of writing in these symptomological passages where Mr. Sahtegi diagnoses not only his individual illnesses and but also the collective ones. Mr. Sahtegi's notes always employ a self-reflexivity vis-à-vis their productions, the simplest signs of which are such utterances as “*notunu düşelim*”. It is also important to note that the problematization of writing finds its most palpable expression when the sickness reaches its terminal phase, when the ill body faces an impasse he cannot easily account for: “*Güçsüzüm. Ne olursa olsun yazmayı sürdürmeliyim. Oynatacağım yoksa.*”⁶⁸ It is as if Deleuze's grasp of literature as a non-pathological enterprise of health, having impersonal and political significations, resonates here as the voice of Mr. Sahtegi's schizophrenic cogito. In its totality, *Sahtegi* seems like “a form of therapeutic becoming” Tynan, *pace* Deleuze, proposes: “Literature involves the capacity to help the life process to evade the worst effects of pathological breakdown (hospitalisation, catatonia and so on), and is thus implicated in a form of therapeutic becoming which is no longer ‘personological’ or individualist, i.e. oedipal, but which is related to the creation of ‘collective virtualities’, new modes of collective life, new ways of populating the earth” (Tynan 5). We will deal with the question to what extent *Sahtegi* is able to create these “collective virtualities,” or a new mode of collective life, more thoroughly below.

Mr. Sahtegi must write, otherwise he will “go off the rails”—but, he will continue to be obstinate: He will persist that writing is of no use. The below passage, while giving us another clue for Mr. Sahtegi's being a writer/artist, also presents a powerful problematization of the act of writing. We learn that Muannit Sahtegi has some other pieces published (before *Sahtegi*?), that the critics have criticized him for being too focused on “himself”:

(24 Haziran 1984, Pazar, saat 14.20. Dönüşler batağının hala yüzeyindeyim. Kimileri ‘ne çok kendinlesin, kendine acıyorsun’u çarptılar suratıma. Eğlendirici değilsem, kapkaralığıma dayanamıyorlar. Verdiğim zekât yetmiyor mu? Söz bıçkınlığım? ‘*Alsanıza acımı siz de dev dalgalar biraz koynunuza?*’ Soğuksunuz. Buzsunuz, benden beter! İki buçuk zekâ kırtısına

⁶⁸ Gümüş's comment on this series of sentences makes us face that negative reading again: “Tam anlatı bitmeye yüz tutmuşken, art arda sıralanan çok yalın, ama önemli altı kısa tümce. Ne yazık ki artık yararsızdır!” (Gümüş 2000, 38).

dayalı, dişime görelere göre ince sayılan bücür sokuşturuculuklarıma ne de çok bayılmıyor! Formundasınız Bay Muannit yine. ‘Ben içkiyi ciddiye alan adamım, *dipsomanım!*’ Hay ağzını öpeyim *Can Yücel*. Bence de yaşamının tek ciddi uğraşı bu olmalı. Ayılmamak. Çizgi film olmazlıklarında ya da mantığına uyumlu çilgınlıkları yaşamak! Çocukluk coşkusuzluğunu habire anımsayan hasta yapının doymaz açlığına başka türlü dayanmanın yolu yaratmalardan geçermiş! Yani kendini avutmalardan. Avutmanın avutuculuğu kurtaracak ha! Neyi? Denge kelepçesine vurulmuş duyarlılığım, aklım, evrenin sınırından hangi olağanüstü doluluğa şaşkınlıkla bakabilecek? Atomdan küçük elementler, bilinçlendirilmiş canlıların, evren oluşumunun çözülmesine yarayacakmış! Gizler de tükenince seyreyle sen gümbürtüyü! Bireysel yok olma korkusundan toplu kısımlarla kurtulmaya kalkışanlar yerden göğe haklı galiba.) (S 61)⁶⁹

Upon reading this passage from *Sahtegi*, one may want to rethink those intertextual passages of *Virius* or that sentence we have touched upon in our reading: “*Kahramanlık masalları okuya okuya daldığım gülünç düşlerin, ... eleştirmenler tepine dursun -alaya alındığını bilmiyordum.*” Yet, these echoes that may constitute convincing signs for an equation between three *writers* (Osman Yaylagülü=Mr. Sahtegi=Vüs’at O. Bener)⁷⁰ are not what I want to focus on right now. I rather want to dwell on that sentence: “*Çocukluk coşkusuzluğunu habire anımsayan hasta yapının doymaz açlığına başka türlü dayanmanın yolu yaratmalardan geçermiş!*” Let us attend to the exclamation point: It is as if Mr. Sahtegi plays havoc with Freud, whose assertion regarding creative writing I have quoted in the Introduction.⁷¹ It is as if Mr. Sahtegi could not, or even does not want to, see (his) writing as a *fulfillment* of a “sick body” that suffers from childhood traumas. The idea that writing is merely a “solace” could not satisfy Mr. Sahtegi.

⁶⁹ “Alcoholism” appears as one rubric of a much more elaborated critical and clinical study on Bener (which hopefully awaits me in a near future). In an interview, Bener reveals alcoholism as a distinctive passage of his life and literature: “Mükeyyifata karşı, keyif verici şeylere karşı da bir eğilimim var. Bir ara neredeyse kahvaltıda bira içmeyi bile düşünüyordum, uyguluyordum da. ... Bağımlılığa doğru giden yaşam dilimleri olmadı diyemem. Oldu. Ama her akşam bir miktar alıyordum, sonradan da artan bir şekilde oldu. Ama sonra kendimi yendim, bıraktım uzun süre. Daha çok da yaş olarak 25’lerde filan küçük şehirlerdeki memuriyet yaşamı dolayısıyla insanlarla ilişkilerden kaynaklanan içki alışkanlıkları oldu. Öykülerime falan yansımıştır. Hemen hemen tüm anlatıcılarımda da vardır, çevresindekilerde de. Hepsi de içerler, sanırım bizim yaşamımızda dostlukların kurulabilmesinde önemli bir etken. Hemen hemen her öykümde bir içki vardır, hissedilir” (Bener 2004, 128). For a discussion on Scott Fitzgerald’s alcoholism, see Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (1990), pp. 154-161. For a discussion on Deleuze’s reading of Fitzgerald in relation to his critical and clinical project, see Tynan pp. 42-44.

⁷⁰ Gümüş has already pointed out this similarity: “Osman Yaylagülü gerçekten de bazı kişilik özellikleriyle Bay Muannit Sahtegi’yi güçlü biçimde anıttırırken, Vüs’at O. Bener’in de oldukça yakınlık duyduğu bir bütüncül kişiliğe gönderir bizi” (Gümüş 2000, 58).

⁷¹ Let us remember: “A strong experience in the present awakens in the creative writer a memory of an earlier experience (usually belonging to his childhood) from which there now proceeds a wish which finds its fulfillment in the creative work.”

It was one of the most incisive Deleuzian/Guattarian critiques that psychoanalysis boxes us into childhood memories, thereby interpreting any creative act as a reflection of incurable psychic illness. “The mistake of psychoanalysis,” they say, offering an *immanent criticism*, “was to trap itself and us, since it lives off of the market value of neurosis from which it gains all its surplus value” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 10). Thinking this critique in relation to the act of writing, we may make more sense of “Literature and Life”’s assertion: “We do not write with our neuroses,” and the writer is the one who creates lines of flight. We know what was following these sentences: She is more a physician than a patient, more a “*tabip*” than a “*hasta yapı*”. Notwithstanding this possibly anti-psychoanalytic,⁷² indeed Deleuzian, discourse of Mr. Sahtegi, one should not see in Mr. Sahtegi’s notes an unproblematized view on literature’s being an enterprise of health. We know what was following: “*Olmuyor değil mi?*”

Amidst this tense conversation, something distinctive should have already been detected: Throughout his notes, Mr. Sahtegi “talks to himself, he talks *against* himself,” even when he seems to be talking to us: “*Bilmem anlatabiliyor muyum? Anlatamıyorsun elbet, hem anlatmak uğruna bunca çalışkanlık niye?*” (S 34). It seems that what Virüs’s Osman says—“*Kendi kendime konuşurum ben.*”—or what we read in “Sayıklama”—“*Beni benden ayrı düşünmenin, sinir sistemini altüst etmenin sağaltımla ilgisi olmasa gerek*”—appears here in *Sahtegi* as the foundational aspect of style—of *Sahtegi*’s discussion on literature and health: “*Bana ben acıyabilirdim*” (22). Indeed, Mr. Sahtegi’s language seems like “the language of ‘hearing voices’” we saw Deleuze and Guattari evoked while elaborating on what they dubbed “schizophrenic cogito.” In one note, Mr. Sahtegi reveals his inability to differentiate the voices he hears: “(*Cevdet’in kısa mektubundan sözedecektin, diyor biri, kim?*)” (56)

This preliminary reading, I believe, has prepared us to see how the conversation between illness and health as the medium of the questioning of literature is central and compelling in *Sahtegi*. We also captured some signs that make us think that the conversation that traverses Mr. Sahtegi’s mind does not pertain to his inner life or his

⁷² I want to go further and argue for a certain “anti-oedipalism” in Bener: “*Bu çocuk doğar, büyür, babası kadar olur*’, neden yalnız babası? *Sonra efendim ölür.*’ Yaa! Sanki ben seçtim eli mahkûm anamı, babamı, onlar ayıkladılar adaylar arasından yaratıcılarını” (V 39). It is thought-provoking that Bener, an author who concerns himself obsessively with the inner/psychic life of the subject, has paid no attention to familial/Oedipal dramas. “Havva” may seem to be an exception only if we ignore the socio-economic stratification embedded in the story. In this regard, “İlki,” one of the most acclaimed stories of him, will appear as the real exception. This story is so uncharacteristically Oedipal—to the extent that one may want to remember what Deleuze and Guattari dubbed regarding Kafka’s “Letter to Father”: “An Exaggerated Oedipus.” For a psychoanalytical exercise on Bener’s “İlki,” see Koçak’s recently published *Tehlikeli Dönüşler* (2017), pp. 56-7.

personal health per se, but is also a political conversation. As we will continue to see, the irony is used in this political conversation: “*Bireysel yok olma korkusundan toplu kıyımlarla kurtulmaya kalkışanlar yerden göğe haklı galiba.*” What follows in the next subsection will be an attempt to see the workings of this structure more thoroughly with the help of a *close reading*.

3.2. Obstinate and Counterfeit Machines of Muannit Sahtegi

Let us remember how Deleuze and Guattari defined the act of reading: “a productive use of the literary machine.” This definition is cunningly promising for a reading of *Sahtegi*, in which the word “machine” and its various ramifications crystallize a whole discussion on life, death, and writing. Indeed, *Sahtegi* in itself may seem like a productive use of a *literary machine*, or more pertinently of a *writing-machine*. In response to his friend Cevdet’s comments on what he has written,⁷³ Mr. Sahtegi notes: “‘*Üreten ellerinden öperim, diyor. Üretmiyorum, ürüyor ayrıkotları!*’” (S 68) “Something is produced” in Mr. Sahtegi’s notes, “the effects of a machine, not mere metaphors” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 9). The following exercise in search of “machines” of Mr. Sahtegi will render the above raw discussion on *Sahtegi*’s discussion on literature and health more palpable yet thornier.

It might be thought of as an instance of “dead metaphor” to signify anything with the signification of the machine. Yet *Sahtegi*, a text uncharacteristically prolific in its figurative language, plays with and hence animates this signification in unexpected ways, to the extent that metaphor tends to lose its metaphoricity. In many a note he writes, the body of Mr. Sahtegi who sees his death approaching is presented as some sort of a machine—an ill-treated but demanding, sick yet resisting machine whose paraphernalia is dysfunctional yet still active. Let us probe into a series of quotations in which words materialize the “little health” Mr. Sahtegi possesses:

1974 yılı Temmuz’unda taşındığımız evin her yanını elden geçirdikten sonra beden hurdalığı, koma duygusuzluğu çöreklenmişti algıdolaşıma, tinografime! (S 17)

Burnum musluk, şakırdamaya başladı bile. Oysa aspirine bile para harcamak niyetinde değilim. Kışa giriş dönemi tehlikeli. Aşya gribi yakaladı mı, buyrun cenaze namazına. Kendime de içlerdim. (...) Hiç değilse çift çorap çek buz

⁷³ Cevdet reads Mr. Sahtegi’s notes (*Sahtegi*) as Osman’s “doctor candidate” nephew reads Osman’s writings (*Virüs*): “Cevdet’ten biraz daha uzunca bir mektup geldi. ... Anılarımın bir bölümünü okumuş” (S 68).

ayaklarına. Yürek tulumbası basamıyor artık kanı oralara değin. Zaten eğri dürist bir şey yemiyorsun. İç yakıt nafile. Çemişe döndün, olur mu? Artık yarım limona kıy. Bayat belki, olsun, bir adet de *Degest* yut. (33)

Peride'nin anasında beyin uru saptanmış, ünlü bir cerrah sorunu çözdü. Ur da kötü huylu değilmiş bereket. Umarım ayrıntılar bu gece de yinelenmez. İçimdeki paslı yay nasıl gergin, çengelinden bir kurtulsa. Prostat ameliyatından sonra daha azdı diyorum, inanmaya çalışarak - yüreğimin sinsi ağrısı. Laf. (52)

(Şu sıra bel çukurunda oluklanan ter, kabalarımaya yayıldı. Hemen bir tablet Prent almalıyım. Belli sıkıştırarak sendeleyeyen kalbimiz. Aldım. ...) (71)

An inventory of the paraphernalia of Mr. Sahtegi's inoperative body-machine: a scrap, a faucet that leaks water, an idle blood-pump that lacks fuel, a rusted yet strained bow.⁷⁴ The signification of "machine" in these passages channel us back to the same tense conversation between two poles: "*koma duygusuzluğu*" and "*algıdolaşımı*", "*Asya gribi*" and "*Degest*", "*sendeleyeyen kalbimiz*" and "*Prent*." Let us also remember that we have already read how Mr. Sahtegi's inoperative body-machine runs out of power: "*Güçsüzüm. Ne olursa olsun birkaç satır yazmayı sürdürmeliyim.*"

In such a self-reflexive text as *Sahtegi*, the conversation between sickness and cure, between dysfunctional body-machine and its maintenance, between being out of power and being compelled to write cannot operate without disquieting the very operation through which this conversation is written. Mr. Sahtegi, while recounting the signs of collapse his body-machine indicates ("*yaşımın göstergelerini sönüş yakınlığına yaklaşmış saymaklığı*") also recounts the act of writing.⁷⁵ What is more, in this recording of the writing in the writing, how this record is kept in technical terms is also recorded: The inoperative but tenacious body-machine of Mr. Sahtegi is told, if it can ever be told, thanks to the "writing-machines." Mr. Sahtegi's notes constantly note the writing

⁷⁴ Ulusman reduces this problem of sick body into a mere sexual problem suffered by an impotent old man, who, unable to articulate his troubles in language clearly, has recourse to the use of trope: "Örneğin Sahtegi'nin yaş aldıkça artan cinsel kaygılarını yansıtan 'beden hurdalığı, koma duygusuzluğu' (s. 17), 'zorunlu bir kısır döngüdeyim' (s. 40), 'prostat ameliyatından sonra içimdeki paslı yay' [sic] (s. 52), 'paraşütü açılmıyor ürkütücülüğünü kullanan planör plotçuğum' (s. 11), 'uslanmaz genlerimin unulmaz kısırcı' (s. 13), 'ses vermez bir plastik çingirak' (s. 15) gibi göndermeleri, cinsel organını da sansürleyerek dilsel alana taşıdığını gösterir" (Ulusman 76). An impotent penis may, of course, be a part of Mr. Sahtegi's inoperative body-machine, yet the claim that the significations operated by these phrases refer exclusively to the Phallus as the master signifier needs justification.

⁷⁵ As may already be captured, the act of writing constantly records itself in *Sahtegi*: "Bak, daha birinci sayfanın on yedinci satırından bir sözcük ileri gidemedim." (S 11); "Anlatımızı, galiba ağılatımızı abartarak dillendirelim hele." (17); "Bu büro odasına taşınalı iki ay olmuş. Topu (24) sayfa. O da, ne başı belli ne sonu. Devam mı, tamam mı?" (23); "Uzun ettim elbet." (37); "İlk parantezi kapattım. Ellerim titremeye başladı." (37); "Yazalım olanı biteni." (69). In this attempt to record the writing in writing, a problem of communication always appears: "Anlaşılmak ille de." (11); "Anlatayım bari." (31); "Bilmem anlatabiliyor muyum? Anlatamıyorsun elbet, hem anlatmak uğruna bunca çalışkanlık niye?" (34); "Sonrası anlatılabilecekse, sonra anlatılabilecek." (63); "Hemen anlatamam, soğumalı." (68).

paraphernalia, not as mere figures of speech, but in a way that *Sahtegi's* discussion on health will be rendered more elaborate:

Geceye doğru on beş miligramı buldu *diazem*. Önceki gün akşam ilk kez tavan firdöndü yatağa girdiğimde. Eh, iyi diyordum bir yandan, abbas yolcuyuz galiba. Kalktım sürüne sürüne, bir beşlik daha. Her yanım ağrı, ama duymasızım. Ne güçlü direnç, şaşılır. Kaç hafta geçti aradan bu makinemin başına oturmduğumdan bu yana. Hesabı şaşırdım. Bu büro odasına taşınalı iki ay olmuş. Topu (24) sayfa. O da, ne başı belli ne sonu. Devam mı, tamam mı? (23)

(17 Haziran 1984 Pazar, saat 12.30. Makinemin başındayım. ... Bir meyhaneye kapağı atıp, deliler gibi sızıcaya dek içmek vardı. Yarımşar tablet kalp, uyku ilacımı attım hemen ağzıma. Bereket yarın işe gidilecek, rezil olursun uyarısı çınlayıp duruyor beynimde. Otur makinemin başına. Zaman yenik düşmezse yandın. ...) (53-4)

Galiba ilk kez, başlık gününü sıcağı sıcağına geçiriyorum defterime. 3 Kasım 1979 Cumartesi notlarım dönebilecek miyim, kimbilir? Önemi ne? Geçen cumartesiden bu yana, bir hafta, ölümüne ramak kala denize fırlatılan köpekbalığı çırpınılı yaşamından geçtim. Sabahlamayı göze alabilirsem, daha doğrusu dayanabilirsem sürdüreceğim, masanın üzerinde olduğu için kurtulabilen-makinemin tuşlarına vurmayı. (70)

Let us notice the double movement: Mr. Sahtegi's narration of his writing-machine never misses to record his illnesses. Or it may be the case that it is the record of illness that triggers him to keep record of his writing-machine as well: "*Kaç hafta geçti aradan bu makinemin başına oturmduğumdan bu yana*" follows the narration of a lethal night he hardly lived through with the help of "*diazem*", "*Otur makinemin başına*" comes with cardiacs and sleeping pills. Mr. Sahtegi continues to hit the buttons of his writing-machine within "an inch of his life." The writing-machine turns into an embodiment of the question of health, which will appear even more palpable in the quotation below. Mr. Sahtegi's privileged writing-machine is *typewriter*:

İmdi kardeş, lotus çiçeklerinin çelebi tohumu, bizim köyün gömütlüğü görüldü. Kıvrıldığım midye yatak, nasılsa elimde kalmış sekreter masası, ötemi berimi tikiştirdiğim kapısı mandallı dolabımdan başka satılık güvencem yok. Ha, bir de onarım budalası, mızıkçı daktilom. (12-3)

Mr. Sahtegi sees his death approaching and registers a list of the remaining goods: the bed, the table, the wardrobe. Yet, there is a privileged leftover that demands to be recorded in a separate record, despite Mr. Sahtegi's indifferent posture: "*Onarım budalası, mızıkçı daktilom*." This series of phrases powerfully bears the crystallization of

the conversation between two principles *Sahtegi* operates on: Mr. Sahtegi's typewriter *fools* him, is *fool* of being under maintenance; yet it is also the typewriter that is *fool* of maintenance. Writing-machine loves to ameliorate the body-machine of Mr. Sahtegi, yet it is also the writing-machine that needs amelioration. The writing, while being dysfunctional, makes Mr. Sahtegi, whose body is dysfunctional, functional.

Following the writing paraphernalia in the text would complicate this constitutive tension of *Sahtegi*. In the notes that seem to be written between 1979-1980, Mr. Sahtegi seems to be using a *ballpoint pen*:

Tükenmez kalemle yazmak, böylesine ufarak ufarak üstelik, orta parmağıma nasır bağlatacak, ağrısından keseceğim galiba, hızımı alamadığım halde. Hele az daha dayanalım. (32)

Su toplamış şehadet parmağım. Ucuz tükenmezin köşeli gövdesinden. Kesin ayrılış armağanı kalem kutusunda iyi bir tükenmez olduğunu anımsadım. Kullanmaya kıyamıyor muyum? Pek özenirdim *Scheaffer* marka dolma kalemim olsun. Otuz altı yıl Devlet kapısına git-gel'den sonra emekliye ayrılışım nedeniyle eksik olmasınlar iş arkadaşım memurcuklar, aralarında para toplamış, bilmişler gibi bana o markanın dolmasını da, tükenmezini de alıvermişlerdi. Hadi doluksama bakalım. Ne biçim erkeksin sen be! İçin kocaman, bol gözenekli sünger. Sıkıldıkça su bırakıyor. İşte hepsi bu. Doldur mürekkep, al eline berikini, ya da ötekini, yaz, dümbük! (35)

What makes Mr. Sahtegi ill is the pen thanks to which he takes his notes: Writing makes his fingers callous and blister. Yet neither is Mr. Sahtegi, suffering from writing, able to unhand his pen: "*Hızımı alamadığım halde.*" For writing has already become an "obligation": "*Yaz, dümbük!*"⁷⁶

It, then, may be the case that what we read in *Sahtegi* is less a conversation between two opposite poles than an intricate discourse on the immanence between two poles, insofar as we consider how ceaselessly Mr. Sahtegi *writes his inability to write*. We need to open the same parentheses we opened for *Virüs*.

⁷⁶ One other place in which the ballpoint pen appears as the writing-machine is the following: "Ellilere ulaştığında öykü yazmayı planlıyormuş Yurdanur. Hadi hayırlısı. 1950'lileri yazmalı diyor. Birikim sorunuymuş. Anlamam ne sorunu bu iş. 1950'liler dedi, de aklıma geldi. Dün gece televizyon ekranında 'Yoldaşlar!' deyiverdi *BORAN*. Hey gidi günler hey! "*Barışseverler Derneği*" bildirisine imza atanlardan bir sınıf arkadaşımı ziyarete gitmişim görüş gününde. 'İçimizden biri, bu günleri yazmalı', demişti. Sanırım kimse almadı kalemi eline. İstanbul'a bunca gittim geldim, yirmi sekiz yıl sonra bilmem nasıl karşılar beni? Bay Muannit Sahtegi'yi anımsamaz bile belki. Haklı" (S 44). It is possible to capture a reproachful intertextuality here: *Probably nobody penned the 1950s* but we know that Bener has already penned the 1950s in *Virüs*. Nevertheless, one hardly recalls Mr. Sahtegi: One hardly recalls Vüs'at O. Bener.

3.3. Writing, an Impasse

Kolay suçlanabilen: zaman. Beni geride bırakan, koyup giden. Ne atbaşı koşabiliyoruz, ne yarışı önde götürebiliyorum. Böylesine amansız, çılgın, yenik boğuşma. Yazarken sözde dural olan, kaçıyor elimin altından. Nasıl ileneyim bilmem! (9)

Zaman eğrisi benimle birlikte, bana bağımlı ne denli kendiliğinden çizildiyse, ben zamanı yitirinceye dek, onun ona yükletilen aracısı olmayı benimsemiş alçakgönüllülüğüne o denli katlanmış görüneceğim.

İşte böyle, değer yargısı derdine düşmeden, elim değdikçe, sıcağı sıcağına, olabildiğince keçi boynuzu ayrıntılar tatsızlığına da bulaşarak *yazmalıyım* baskısına karşı boğuştukça, başlangıç paranoyasında boğulmuş bulur adam kendini. (10)

That word: “*boğuşma*”, “*boğuştukça*”. The wrestling with language, whose traces in Bener’s interviews we have already followed, appears here in *Sahtegi* as the wrestling with writing whose power to capture the moment in an ever-elusive movement proves to be of no use. The imperative to write, then, signifies an experiment that is doomed to failure from the very start. Mr. Sahtegi could not stop writing, he could not throw away his typewriter, his fingers could not slow down while holding the pen, yet writing constantly undermines its own activity.

We have been forging an analysis of writing as an impasse from the very beginning indeed. Mr. Sahtegi has constantly *written* about how he could not write—how he could not proceed through the lines, how he could not take the notes he was supposed to take, how he could not fill the papers, how foolish his typewriter is, how disease-causing his pens are... What is more, he is not content with his paradoxical embrace of writing either:

Fatoş, “pazara gideceğim, biraz taze salatalık, yeşil biber alacağım, sen de git *evine*, biraz bir şeyler kar ala”, dedi, sepetledi beni *evinden*. Sabahleyin bezelye ayıkladım, hamamtasını kaolledim, bulaşıkları yıkadım, Cumhuriyet’e, Gırgır’a gözattım, vakit geçer gibi oldu. Kişi ya tam yürekli olmalı, ya tam dayanıksız. Bacakları yerine balık kuyruğu taşımanın pis duyarlılığına kapılmanın kıvrantısında tüken ha tüken. *Oğuz* gibi, ‘Acele ettiği için geç kalma telaşı içinde’ olmalı. Madem öyle, eğrisine, doğrusuna bakmadan delicesine derler a, yazsam ya, elimden ne geliyor başka? geldiğini varsayıdığımı sarılsam, çözümsüzlüklere lanet yağdıra yağdıra karnından konuşan adamların kolbebeklerine dönüştürmesem kendimi. (39)

Let us capture the echo between *Sahtegi* and *Virüs*: “*çözümsüzlüklere lanet yağdıra yağdıra karnından konuşan adamların kolbebeklerine dönüştürmesem kendimi*” and “*Çözümüme razıyız, çözümsüzlüğe değil.*” Mr. Sahtegi does not want to oscillate between “courage” and “weakness,” but to “write madly.” From within this resistance against his

own conversation between two principles flourishes a pure and honest revelation of his wrestling with writing: “*yazsam ya, elimden ne geliyor başka? geldiğini varsaydığım sarılsam.*”

Mr. Sahtegi’s wrestling with writing is as constant as his conversation between two poles, and the more he considers writing as an impasse the more it appears as a way-out. Mr. Sahtegi’s literary experiment is one that tests whether it is possible to extract possibilities from impossibilities: “A creator who isn’t grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator. A creator’s someone who creates their own impossibilities, and thereby creates possibilities.” (Deleuze 1995, 133). Indeed, Mr. Sahtegi seems to think that what he performs pertains not only to his ambivalence per se but also to the act of literature. He constantly refers to the (other) (male) authors, whose literary endeavors he thinks have been marked by a struggle with “bottlenecks”:⁷⁷

‘Böylesine cıvık fukara edebiyatını iyi alaya alırdı ha, halkına kendini adanmış büyük usta *Orhan Kemal* yaşasaydı. Bak sırası gelmişken, yürekleri prangalara, bukağılara, duyarsızlıklara dayanamayıp erken duranlara selam olsunla bağlayayım sözümü; çağdaş dilimin başozanı, canım *Nâzım Hikmet*, *Orhan Veli*, *Sait Faik*, *Cahit Sıtkı*, *Turgut Uyar*, daha adlarını saymaktan -baştacı edemediğimiz için yaşarken- utandıklarım. Amanın ne uzun çile, ne yapayım da kavuşayım kemiklerinize, izin çıkmasını beklemeden. Elimde biliyorum, ama... (S 40)

Cevdet’ten biraz daha uzunca bir mektup geldi. ... Tek kişi buna benzer bir şeyler demeli demek, hiç değilse. Yetmişlik J. Arden usta da, sanırım vızgelir savına karşın, yazmayı sürdürebildiğine göre, en az iç çalkantılarını iletmeyi düşünmediğini ileri süremiyordur. (68)

Sefil herif! Başlarken hayli iddialıydım sanıyorum. *Gide*’vari bir ağırbaşlılık, *Rousseau*’dan ileri içtenlik! Hoş, onların da ne sıkıntıları olmuştur kimbilir. Hem bu gün bağırsaklarım gaz dolu, kabızlığım da azdı rakıyı bırakalı türünden bayağılıkların yazıya dökülmesinin ne anlamı var, denebilir. Oysa ne bileyim, üç beş yüz yıl sonra, tez konusu bulmakta sıkıntı çeken bir üniversite öğrencisi, bu bir yılgın dönem özet kesitinin yüzeysel notlarından bile yararlanabilir, değil mi efendim! (56)

The reference to writers, thus to the act of writing, has always come in Mr. Sahtegi’s notes as a discussion on a certain “problem of *writing*”: To write is nothing but *to be able*

⁷⁷ Speaking of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Gürbilek says: “Yazarın işi Tarih’e çoktan kayıtlı çıkışı göstermek değil, labirentte zaten işaretli, ufukta er ya da geç belirecek garantili çıkışa işaret etmek değil, bu çıkışsız haritada başarı oranı pek düşük kaçış denemelerinin kendisini bir keşif arayışına dönüştürmektir. Yazmak darboğazda yazmaktır: Çıkışı çıkışsızlıktan, ufluğu ufuksuzluktan, imkânı imkânsızlıktan yaratmaktır” (Gürbilek 2016, 76-7).

to endure writing. The writer is one who resists to “bonds, gyves, insensitivities,” to “apathy.” Let us also notice that it is in the middle of this intertextual questioning of writing that another evocation of a perspective on sickness, health and literature emerges. He asks himself: Why put your intestinal gas and constipation down on paper? *Why write?*

Mr. Sahtegi never stops to question his and/or literature’s ability to create possibilities from within impossibilities. In the beginning of his writing experiment, Mr. Sahtegi has revealed his will to render nonsense the nonsense: “*saçma ’yı saçma kılmayı deneyeyim*” (10). When we come to the end, however, we find Mr. Sahtegi unable to believe even in the promise of the nonsense. He thinks that even his attempt to reach asignification failed. Let us notice the appearance of a certain inoperative machine here as well:

Amadeus Dörtlüsü çalışıyor. Notlarımı okumayı içim kaldırmıyor, saçmayı saçma kılamamışım besbelli. Daha yirmi sayfa var geride ayıklanacak. Gezdireceğim dedektör su bulamayacak, orası apaçık. Ne yapmalı... Birkaç tarih düşürelim en iyisi: (S 80)

Writing, as a failed experiment, has recoiled into a mere attempt of historical documentation: “*Birkaç tarih düşürelim en iyisi*”. This is an appropriate point to start to ponder how Sahtegi’s question “why write” neither is a personal question per se nor concerns itself only with his own “little health,” but also questions literature’s abilities vis-à-vis political, historical, and collective sicknesses.

3.4. Collective Health

On 2nd June 1984, Mr. Sahtegi notes: “*Yazdıklarımın bakmıyorum artık. Hezeyan kuşkusuz.*” (64) Mr. Sahtegi’s “delirium,” albeit seemingly dominated by a never-ending negotiation on his sick body—“... *neye yarayacak sağlıklı yaşam?*”—or his sick relation with Fatoş—“*Sağlıklı sayrılar mıydık yoksa?*” (15)—, is also “composed of politics and economics,” as Deleuze would say. To read what comes after the colon in the quotation above may be a promising starting point to see “a whole other story [that] is vibrating within” Mr. Sahtegi’s personal diary:

Birkaç tarih düşürelim en iyisi:

20 Kasım 1979 Salı, Saat: 21.25

İstanbul Hukuk Fakültesi Dekan Yardımcısı Prof. Ümit Yaşar Doğanay öldürüldü. Dün de MHP İl Başkanı İlhan Darendelioğlu öldürülmüştü...

5 Şubat 1980 Salı, Saat: 21. 20

Bir hafta mı oldu, korkunç boyutlu devalüasyona başvurulalı. Bir dolar 47.10 Türk Lirası'ndan 70.- Türk Lirası'na yükseldi. Ardından zam patlamaları, yüzde yüz-yüzde dört yüz oranlarına varan. KİT'lerin 361 milyarı buluyormuş zararı. Örnekleyeyim: Dolmuş 7.5 liradan 10 liraya, rakı 160 liradan 250 liraya, Samsun sigarası 15 liradan 25 liraya, gazeteler 10 liraya çıktı. Defter, kalem vb. yüzde dört yüz zam gördü. Gazete kağıdının tonu 9000 liradan 40.000 liraya fırlamış. Bugün kırk yayınevi 'batıyoruz' yollu bildiri yayımladı... (80)⁷⁸

Why do we read these sentences in an elderly man's diary whose *raison d'être* is his adopted daughter's going away and his sick body having one foot in the grave? Why does Mr. Sahtegi the Stingy, who constantly mulls over his own death, note in his notes the casualties resulting from a never-ending political chaos and an escalated financial crisis? Why does a sick and old man, who has been criticized for being too focused on himself (“*Kimileri 'ne çok kendinlesin, kendine acıyorsun' u çarptular suratıma.*”) need to keep the record of politics and economics in his personal diary? Especially if he himself declares his indifference toward political issues:

Dün geceki konuşmaları anımsadım. Ayhan'ın Hukuk Fakültesi'nde okuyan oğluna göre, TİP en tutarlı parti. Saygılı, dinliyordum. Delikanlı, “J. Paul Sartre'ın 1968 Fransız öğrenci eylemlerini desteklemesi davaya ihanetti,” dedi. Babasının yanıtı: “FKP yorumlarının hemen doğru kabul edilmesi yanlış. Her şey gelir geçer. Sartre çağının büyük düşünürlerinin başında anılır.” Anlamam. Ben küçük, zavallı dertlerimin boğulmasındayım. (79)

Mr. Sahtegi's powerful political irony crystallized in one single sentence: The text works against what its writer says. We know that there are some other reasons why Mr. Sahtegi started to take his notes: “*Başka gerekçeleri yok diyebilsem.*” What “suffocates” Mr. Sahtegi is neither “his small, miserable troubles” nor his “little health” per se, but “what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him.” Mr. Sahtegi will continue to be primarily concerned with himself, yet *his self* is already loaded with a politico-economic conversation. Mr. Sahtegi's notes make up a personal, indeed *selfish* diary, yet “the enunciation is always historical, political, and social” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 41). In *Sahtegi*, the word that most effectively bears this blurring of the distinction between interiority and exteriority, between personal and collective histories, is “terror”:

⁷⁸ Tutumlu has pointed out how a certain financial crisis constantly traverses Mr. Sahtegi's mind: “Bay Sahtegi'nin dikkat çeken özelliklerinden biri de sürekli olarak para hesabı yapmasıdır. ... Bay Sahtegi, emekli maaşıyla kıt kanaat geçinmeye çalışır. Daha sonra çalışmaya başlasa da maddi sıkıntıdan bir türlü kurtulamaz” (Tutumlu 2010, 78-9).

İki kez telefon edildi Aydın'dan bu gece. Bay Emrullah Dikişçi, müvekkilim, çok sinirli, ıvecen. Bir de davayı yitirirsek, dilerse nalları dikebilir. Ben asarım, keserim dedim mi? Her gelişinde maçı yitirmek olağandır aranağmesini yineledim.

Saat 01.30. Fatoş'tan ses yok. Günlük, politik gelişmelere değinemedim. Sayın Ecevit, 'CHP'nin gücünü kişilerde aramak yanlıştır', diyesiymiş. Ya nerede arayacağız bu ülkede üstad?

İstanbul Bayrampaşa'da terör. Kahve taraması. Altı ölü, yığınla yaralı. Buyrun cenaze namazına. (69)⁷⁹

Bazı kararlar almalıyım. Gıdamı bu denli savsaklamamalıyım bir kez. Alt dişetlerim çekilmiş. Güçsüzüm. Ne olursa olsun birkaç satır yazmayı sürdürmeliyim. Oynatacağım yoksa.

Terör, günlük yaşamın – giderek, irkiltmez alışkanlığı. (79)

Let us notice how the individual concerns of Mr. Sahtegi inevitably dissolve into the collective ones encompassed by the word “terror”: The act of writing fails and immediately registers the causalities; Mr. Sahtegi could not “address everyday politics” but notes “the terror in Bayrampaşa.” This dissolution makes itself felt more palpably in the second quotation above, where the imperative to write (“*yazmayı sürdürmeliyim*”) as well as the grasp of this imperative as a “a form of therapeutic becoming” (“*oynatacağım yoksa*”) pave the way for a barren, destitute sentence that powerlessly records the political impasse toward which the subject is no more sensitive: “*Terör, günlük yaşamın – giderek, irkiltmez alışkanlığı.*” The tension embodied by these prosaic sentences that are in service of a mere historical documentation reflects an inability to communicate the inner experience in deteriorating political conditions. Mr. Sahtegi the Chatterbox finds his roughneck utterance (“*Söz bıçknlığı?*”) useless in the face of the killings that increasingly shatter any political hope. This political impasse is resolved only through a narration that resembles a newspaper clipping—almost reminding us of those that flash here and there in Leylâ Erbil's *Cüce*.⁸⁰ It seems that the attempt to write, which has always already been in crisis, has been renounced for the sake of documenting the unresolvable political crisis causing many people to suffer and die. We should also see that Mr. Sahtegi's historical documentations go beyond the sheer recordings of what Tutumlu

⁷⁹ The same utterance we read in relation to “*Aya gribi*” (“Buyrun cenaze namazına.”) repeats here in relation to “terror,” offering a certain similarity between Mr. Sahtegi's reactions to the personal concerns and the political ones.

⁸⁰ In Erbil's *Cüce*, another captivating text that powerfully problematizes the distinction between the private and the public, the already fragmented story of Zenîme is interrupted by little quotations from some newspapers: “‘Gazi Olayları Olarak Bilinen Davanın 31. Duruşması Trabzon Ağır Ceza Mahkemesi'nde Görüldü.’ ... ‘Oruç Tutmadığı İçin Döverek Öldürüldü...’” (Erbil 2009, 29). Thanks are due to Selen Erdoğan for bringing Erbil's text to my attention.

dubs “social circumstances of his era.” Neither does what Bener offers, that is “an experienced bureaucrat’s critique of his era,” enable us to account for Mr. Sahtegi’s inner yet political interrogations. Not only his own personal history but also political history appears in Mr. Sahtegi’s interiority as “something ... that has put on [him] the quiet mark of death.”

Yet, this amalgamation of the personal and the public should not call for an unproblematic celebration of Mr. Sahtegi’s politics.⁸¹ Let us look at the following paragraphs that oscillate “between two poles of delirium” (Deleuze 1997, 4):

İlk parantezi kapattım. Ellerim titremeye başladı. ... (Üçüncü parantez, ‘Asala canileri, Tahran’da elçiliğimizin sözleşmeli sekreteri Işık Yönder’i başından ağır yaraladı.’ Yaşayamayacağı kesin denebilir. 29 Nisan 1984, saat 17.00 haberlerinden.) Haberleri bir ucundan dinleyerek yazmayı sürdürüyüm en iyisi. (S 37)

CANIM PAŞAM, ciğerimin köşesi paşam, ben seninle doğdum, bakma büyümediğime, ‘sarışın bir kurda’ değil, hiçbir güzelliğe benzemeyen, sığamayan paşacığım, hani sen ölmeyecektin, senin doğruların ölmeyecekti, o köhne çağ tarihe gömülecekti, bir daha hortlamayacaktı?

Buyruğunla müstevli güçleri bir şahlanışta Akdeniz’e döken bu kahraman ulusun torunları birbirini boğazladı Kahramanmaraş’ta! Ardından, altta kalanın canı çıksın, vur abalıya, dön köşeyi çılgınlığı. (38)

In our reading of *Virüs*, we touched upon Deleuze’s assertion “literature is delirium”. Deleuzian double movement is pertinent to this definition as well. “Literature and Life” reads: “Delirium is a disease, the disease par excellence, whenever it erects a race it claims is pure and dominant. But it is the measure of health when it invokes this oppressed bastard race that ceaselessly stirs beneath dominations, ... a race that is outlined in relief in literature as process.” In this line of thought, Deleuze warns against a mixing of a “delirium of domination” and “a bastard delirium” (Deleuze 1997, 4). It is possible to read the political impasse that is negotiated by Mr. Sahtegi as such a mixing: On the one side stand “Asala canileri” and “kahraman ulus” that may remind us of a

⁸¹ One problematization needs to address the problem of gender and sexuality: Mr. Sahtegi’s own personal- or schizo-sphere is always implicated in the political sphere; yet, as Ulusman’s study powerfully shows, when it comes to the daily practices, he is desperately ignorant about the principle “the personal is political.” It seems that what *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* dubbed “an entire micropolitics of desire,” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 10) even in a schizo-sphere, may have problematic aspects, that “a libido that is too fluid, too viscous” may not be something to celebrate.

certain nationalistic discourse, on the other side stand the dead bodies of the Kahramanmaraş massacre⁸² as one single evidence of the failure of the national project.

The editors of *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Literature* suggest that Deleuze and Guattari have been interested in the authors who express this sort of mixing because they praise “their propensity to manifest both regimes at once, and thus to provide us with a kind of ‘map’ of ‘diagram’ of desire” (Buchanan, Matts and Tynan 2015, 13). “The ultimate aim of literature,” says Deleuze in “Literature and Life,” “is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life.” Thinking in line with this, that negotiation of Mr. Sahtegi would appear as a political negotiation as well: “*tabipliğin tutmuştu ... Olmuyor değil mi?*” As outlined in the Introduction, Deleuze’s critical and clinical project that posits literature as an enterprise of health accentuates political and collective significations of the literary endeavor without assigning the author the duty to project political truths. This Deleuzian perspective does not position the author as a representative of her community, or an ideology, or a revolution that will soon come and save us, but as a creator of “collective virtualities,” or of new perspectives on a healthier life. Yet, to acquire such a perspective on health, the author/artist should first make a diagnosis. Let us glance at the following passage from *Sahtegi*:

Basmakalıp törelerin, belki kalıtsal, zararlı göreneklerin, kast anlayışına, yazgıcılığa bağlı öğelerin kökü kazınıncaya dek bu böyle gidecek korkarım. Toplumun sağlıklı, yeni, katılaşamaz, gelişmeye açık bir esnek yapıya kavuşturulması, durağanlığa, kesinliğe, bağnazlığa yenilmez bir yaşam biçiminin benimsenmesi, benimsenmekten de öte doğa yasalarınca gibi yaşanması, kimbilir daha nice yüzyılların sorunu olarak sürüp gidecek!
ÜHÜ, ÜHÜ, ÜHÜ! (42)

To Mr. Sahtegi, “societal health” is a slender chance, more an impossibility than a possibility. It is this sort of impossibility that Deleuze sees as the condition of the flourishing of “collective virtualities”: The author can forge a collective enunciation, a collective becoming, a collective health, when, where and especially because she cannot

⁸² In 2006, Celalettin Can noted how literature could not come to terms with the Kahramanmaraş massacre: “Maraş’ın filmi, tiyatrosunu yapamadık. Romanını yazamadık. Maraş katliamı üzerine kaç şiir yazıldı, bilemiyoruz ama bir şiir kitabının olmadığını biliyoruz. Maraş üzerine bir ağıtımız bile yok. Ağlayamıyoruz” (Can 2006). Even if we ignore the fact that Can forgets about a series of literary works that “write the novel of” the Kahramanmaraş massacre, such as İnci Aral’s *Kıran Resimleri*, one can argue that the Kahramanmaraş massacre found a place in literature in one single sentence of a diary written by a sick man. To juxtapose here Koçak’s conceptualization of “political novel” in his reading of Ayfer Tunç’s *Dünya Ağrısı* might be of use: “Şu halde ‘politik’ bir öykümüz, romanımız, anlatımız vb var, ‘bizde’ var, şimdi daha çok ve fazlasıyla var – ama iyisini yapmak, bazen, çok zaman, kuşatıcı söylem ve üslupların *Dünya Ağrısı*’nda olduğu gibi çaresizce iki yana yıkılmasıyla oluyor” (Koçak 2015, 20).

find the existing collectivity promising—as Gürbilek also argues. “It is literature that produces an active solidarity in spite of skepticism,” *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* reads, “and if the writer is in the margins or completely outside his or her fragile community, this situation allows the writer all the more the possibility to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 17). Tynan argues that it is this “problematic” nature of the author that gives her a perspective on health through sickness, that renders her both patient and physician, “both a collective and an individual: he or she is an individual instantiation of a more general malaise, but also a virtual case of solution to this malaise” (Tynan 15-6). The “singular” case of an author reflects a problematic event that questions the distinction between interiority and exteriority: “The significance of authors is neither the fact that they embody simply collective concerns, nor that they are remarkable as individuals alone, but that they demonstrate the forces of impersonality which efface the collective/individual opposition altogether” (12).

It is not hard to consider Mr. Sahtegi the Artist as a problematic person on an array of parameters: his obsession with his sickness, his obsession with his writing, and, as Ulusman pointedly showed, his obsession with Fatoş. Yet, the distinction between the individual and the collective, and the questioning thereof, will also portray him as a problematic figure. The keyword in this problematization of the collective is “*müliyozluk*”:

(İştahının bodrumu, dansing midir, gazino mudur ne halttır, bir boğazlanasınca karı aynı yayık, adına şarkı dedikleri çığırılarını sirenleştiriyor, beşte bir aklım, ne olur çıkma. Ya da çık çığırından in aşağı, kat kat boyalı, şamandıra kışlı, inek memeli yaratıklara salya akıtanları; hüngürtü pazarlayıcılarına alkış tutanları kurşuna diz. Sakın yargılama, hoşgörme. Rahim duvarına tutundukları andan beri kulaklarına üflenen, midelerine indirilen ekşimik çorba bunlar deme. Sabah akşam minibüslerde, saz salonlarında, evlerde, televizyonda, meyhanelerde... Canım Tanrı'cığım lütfen sağır et beni, en iyisi al canımı. Nükleer güçlerin sınırlandırılmasına ne gerek var. Basiverin yalvarırım büyük patronlar kırmızı düğmelerinize. Hepimizin sorumlu olduğu şu müliyozluk yok olsun. Uzun ettim elbet. Yani bir ben mi kalacağım taş taş üstünde bırakılmamışlığın ardında. *Havva* da gerek öyle ya, döllenmeyi bekleyen! Yeniden yaratma özünü korumak mı? Öyle bir öz mü var sanıyorsun. Gelinecek nokta bundan farklı olacak ha! Kapa çenen *Hırsız Saksagan*, yaralı ceylan! İşinla kendini o eski, yalın zamana.) (S 24)

Let us point out the similarity between Sahtegi's “*Basiverin yalvarırım büyük patronlar kırmızı düğmelerinize. Hepimizin sorumlu olduğu şu müliyozluk yok olsun*”

and Virüs's Osman's "*Öttürün artık İsrail'in yuf borusunu, yeter!*" It seems that the solution offered for the antagonism between the individual and collective appears in *Sahtegi* in a more ironic yet still serious tone. What this political irony signifies is a subtle, forceful diagnosis: "*Rahim duvarına tutundukları andan beri kulaklarına üflen, midelerine indirilen ekşimik çorba bunlar deme. Sabah akşam minibüslerde, saz salonlarında, evlerde, televizyonda, meyhanelerde...*"⁸³ What Mr. Sahtegi finds where he looks for "a people" is its absence: "A people, in a way, is what's missing, as Paul Klee used to say" (Deleuze 1995, 126). Cut off from the society, Mr. Sahtegi, a solitary artist,⁸⁴ is aware of his "problematic" nature. Irony is of use here:

Biz leylak kokamayız. Birimiz sümbülleşmeye kalktı mı, hepimize aşşığılık kompleksi gelir. Ben kendi payıma, feryatlı figanlı arabesklerle ruhumu besleyemediğim için uyumsuzlaştım. Doğrusu ayıp ettim, kendi başıma bok yedim, sizlerden irak kaldım. (S 25)⁸⁵

What is more, not only does the existing collectivity not work, but the existing politics does not promise a hope either. In Mr. Sahtegi's notes, a certain exasperation toward "active politics" and the politicians is observable. One such reflection of political exhaustion is the following:

Saat 13.00 Haberleri'nde açıklandı. *Ecevit Hükümeti* sundu istifasını Cumhurbaşkanı Korutürk'e. Ama ne yenilgi! Ara seçimlerde yirmi beş ilde AP, oy oranını yüzde elli dörde yükseltirken, CHP yüzde kırktan yüzde yirmi dokuza yuvarlandı. Açık beş milletvekili toptan, kırk dokuz senatörün otuz yedisi AP'ye gitti. TİP solda sıfır. Sol toplamı denizde damla bile değil. *Demirel'*in gerdanı daha kırmızı. Cakasından geçilmiyor. Kural belli. İflas bayrağını çektin mi ekonomide, denize düşen yılan sarılır. Halk bilinçleniyor, aydınlık günler eli kulağında falan fıstık, cart cemberek. Halk ekmek kavgasında anam, babam, kardeşçiğim. *Kaçmaz, Boran, Aybar*, daha karalayın birbirinizi bakalım siz. (48)

⁸³ Unsurprisingly, this diagnosis, too, is gendered: "*kat kat boyalı, şamandıra kılı, inek memeli yaratıklara salya akutanları; hüingürtü pazarlayıcılarına alkış tutanları kurşuna diz.*"

⁸⁴ Gregg Lambert, in his essay "On the Uses and Abuses of Literature," writes: "To use an expression invoked throughout Deleuze's work, and is principally inspired by Blanchot's writings, the writer's solitude cannot be reduced to a normal situation of solitude in the world, to an experience of being-alone and apart from others. Writers do not experience their aloneness from the perspective of this world, from this or that society, or from the presence of others who exist, but rather from the perspective of another possible world or another community that these figures anticipate, even though the conditions for this community are still lacking" (151).

⁸⁵ His awareness of his position disturbs him. The "*dolmuş*" scene is telling in this regard: "Ağzı yüzü oynadı genç adamın, parladı. 'İki buçuk lira bizim gibiler için büyük para anladınız mı tuzukuru vatandaşlar!' İlk durakta, gözleri kançanağı, attı kendini otobüsten dışarı. İkinci durağa kadar zor dayandım. Daha üç duraklık yolum vardı. Burnumu çeke çeke yürüdüm. 'Yürü hayvan oğlu hayvan yürü!'" (S 24-5)

What can one do in the face of an inoperative politics? What happens if the existing collectivity does promise nothing but apathy? *Orhan Kemal* the Master did succeed to commit himself and his literature to his “people”—Can Mr. Sahtegi do this?⁸⁶ Deleuze’s assertion “You write with a view to an unborn people that doesn’t yet have a language” has been rooted in these sorts of impossibilities. Writing seems like the only way-out Mr. Sahtegi could produce out of the (political) impasse: “*yazsam ya, elimden ne geliyor başka?*” This appearance of writing as a resistance that may or may not be useful resonates with Deleuze and Guattari’s reading of Kafka’s literary experiments: “it isn’t a question of liberty as against submission, but only a question of a line of escape or, rather, of a simple way out, ‘right, left or in any direction,’ as long as it is as little signifying as possible” (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 6). One can also see the textualization of how politics is of no use as a triggering factor of the appearance of the act of writing as a political act. Let us read the following passage that I think embodies this crisis:

10 Ekim 1979

(28 Mayıs 1984 Pazartesi, saat 20.45 / Bayatlayan günlüğümü tazelemeyi deneyeceğim.

Biraz önce Fatoş’a uğradım, yoktu. *Kebap Çankaya*’dan peynirli pide getirttim, iki şişe *Tuborg* devirdim. Kral bira diyorlar, merak! Cumhurbaşkanı’nın *Manisa* ilçelerinde halka söylediği sözleri dinledim. Bu günlük basılırsa düşüncelerimi kâğıda aktaramayacağım. Çünkü korkuyorum. Korku benim doğal, *anayasal* hakkım değil mi? Bu hakkıma saygı duyulması gerekmez mi? Ne dediğinize değinmeyeceğim, nasıl söylediğinize baktım sayın Cumhurbaşkanı. Nasılınızı beğenmedim. Korkumu işte bu kadarlık yenebiliyorum. Bilmem bu yüzden kafamın ezilmesi gerekir mi? Herhalde. Özür dilerim, bilgisizliğimin ayırımında olmamak, bağışlanır umarım. Kapıcı dairesindeki inime geldim. Güçlü uyku ilacımın etkisini bekliyorum. Doktorun verdiği Prent adlı ilaçtan da aldım. Bu geceyi ter içinde birkaç kez uyanmadan geçirebilecek miyim? Sanmıyorum, yine uyanacak, bölünen uyku acılarıyla sabahı bulmaya çalışacağım. Parantezler açmaktan – yılmama karşı, kendimi alakoyamıyorum. Peki kapatayım. Yoruldum.) (43)

Ulusman interprets this passage as a revelation of how Mr. Sahtegi chooses to stay silent in the face of Kenan Evren’s authoritarianism, how he performs auto-censorship.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ This question may pertain to the promise of socialism as well. Let us remember how Koçak offered to read a history of socialism in Bener (even in *Sahtegi*): “Orada hayal edilmiş veya yüceltilmiş bir tarihin yanı başında, yaşanmış ve maruz kalınmış bir tarih de bulacaktır.”

⁸⁷ The relevant passage from Ulusman’s study reads: “... Evren’in yarattığı baskıyı, bu baskıya boyun eğmek zorunda bırakıldığını ilan ederek eleştiren Sahtegi, oto-sansürü peşinen kabullenmiştir. Haberle ilgili hiçbir değerlendirme yapmadan, bir ‘uyku ilacı’ alıp yatar. Dönemin siyasi atmosferine ve sansüre vurgu yapması, elbette bir eleştiri biçimi

Considering how authoritarianisms successfully create paranoia (we do not need to live through the 1980s to know this), it is unmerciful to read Mr. Sahtegi's "fear" as a "choice." I will go further to argue that it is more probable to think Mr. Sahtegi's subtle political irony ("*Bilmem bu yüzden kafamın ezilmesi gerekir mi?*") as an "assessment" of political pressure *par excellence*, or even a subversive act that debunks the enforced silence. What we see in this note of Mr. Sahtegi is less an auto-censorship than an attempt to record how the innermost experience can turn into a political experience in a totalitarian regime of control: "*korkumu bu kadarlık yenebiliyorum.*"⁸⁸

Yet, *Sahtegi* resists the finalization of its own political and collective enunciation as well, and continues to be a tense conversation. Mr. Sahtegi's cry "*Gelinecek nokta bundan farklı olacak ha!*" will conjugate with a capitalized *Yes*:

Savaşsız, acısız olamayacak, ama *OLACAK*, olması şart birader. Daha ileri toplum oluşturulmasına değin, ilk aşamada *Sartre*'in dediği gibi. Sanatçı yaratılışın –neymiş neymiş(!)– öznel acıları, ölümlülüğün diyelim yetmezliği yaratılarına, o hep var olacak, hangi ortam getirilirse getirilsin. (38)

The artist, in any case, will be suffering from her "subjective pains," and her art's inability in the face of death. It is necessary to bear in mind that Mr. Sahtegi, while constantly mulling over these individual and collective possibilities and impossibilities, cannot but write—however powerless the "creation" is in the face of death: "*Parantezler açmaktan – yılmama karşın, kendimi alakoyamıyorum.*" In the last subsection, we will revisit this *obstinacy*.

3.5. Something in Life

Bir kış daha dayanmalıyım. Altmış beş yaşımı doldurabilirsem ikinci emekliliğimi kimse yadırgamaz sanırım artık. Ölümü beklerim, sessiz sadasız köşemde. Yollarda yığılıp kalıverecekmişim gibi geliyor bana. Gözlerimin altı torbalandı. Ölüm nasıl beklenir? Param yeterse rakı içerek, gece-gündüz birbirine karışır... *ARAGON*'du yanılmıyorsam bu yöntemi benimseyen. Ben de ne Aragon'um ya! *Alkışlarla alkışlarla* geçivermedi hayat! (81)

olarak değerlendirilebilir; ancak oto-sansüre de boyun eğmiştir. Fatoş'a duyduğu arzu ve enest tabusu üzerinden toplum ahlaki söz konusu olduğunda da, yine susmayı, gizlenmeyi, oto-sansürü tercih eder" (Ulusman 121).

⁸⁸ Let us remember how the act of writing (a diary) appears as an act of resistance in George Orwell's totalitarian dystopia *1984*. To keep a diary was Winston Smith's very first (political) action, albeit encompassed by an impasse: "To mark the paper was the decisive act. ... A sense of complete helplessness had descended upon him" (Orwell 2003, 94); "All he had to do was to transfer to paper the interminable restless monologue that had been running inside his head, literally for years. ... Suddenly he began writing in sheer panic, only imperfectly aware of what he was setting down" (95). Notice a certain attention to illness and sanity amidst Winston's negotiation on his diary-writing: "Winston stopped writing, partly because he was suffering from cramp" (96); "It was not by making yourself heard but by staying sane that you carried on the human heritage. He went back to the table, dipped his pen, and wrote: ..." (113).

This last intertextual echo we hear in *Sahtegi* refers to the lyrics of a song written by Çiğdem Talu and Esin Afşar. Upon reading Mr. Sahtegi's dense conversation on art's curative abilities, which almost turns *Sahtegi* into a treatise on art, the name of the song, unidentified in the text, would be noteworthy: "Sanatçının Kaderi." The song starts with an artist's joyful celebration of her artistic endeavor: "Sanat için çarpardı yüreğin / Alkışlarla alkışlarla / Hüzün dolu olsa da gözlerin / Alkışlarla alkışlarla." We then follow her gradual decline: "Şimdi ne kadar yalnızsın / Alkışlarla alkışlarla." In the end, we hear an unhappy voice crying an unhappy ending: "Alkışlarla alkışlarla uçuverdi seneler / Kahkahayla kahkahayla işin bitti dediler." In the end of his notes, Mr. Sahtegi, inevitably suffering from his "subjective pains," declares the failure as his fate—as *the fate of the artist*.

Yet, what I want to pay attention in the last analysis is not this unhappy ending, whose analysis has repeatedly been done by readers.⁸⁹ I rather want to bring into view the flourishing of a life energy ("*hayat!*") despite all long-awaited yet absent applauds. "Yes," Deleuze says, "the essence of art is a kind of joy, and this is the very point of art. There can be no tragic work because there is a necessary joy in creation: art is necessarily a liberation that explodes everything, first and foremost the tragic" (Deleuze 2004, 134). Behind all the suicidal mornings of Mr. Sahtegi whose body suffers in the face of death, behind all historical, political, and collective impossibilities out of which he could not produce a possibility except for writing, behind all impasses in which he finds himself stuck, a certain *vitalism*⁹⁰ is sensible in Mr. Sahtegi's notes—despite the difficult question we read he asked himself: "*Denge kelepçesine vurulmuş duyarlılığım, aklım, evrenin sınırından hangi olağanüstü doluluğa şaşkınlıkla bakabilecek?*" Despite this incurable disbelief in the promise of life, he discovers in life an astonishing sensibility, an extraordinary fullness. Let us look at the following passage one more time:

Geceye doğru on beş miligramı buldu *diazem*. Önceki gün akşam ilk kez tavan firdöndü yatağa girdiğimde. Eh, iyi diyordum bir yandan, abbas yolcuyuz galiba. Kalktım sürüne sürüne, bir beşlik daha. Her yanım ağrı, ama duymasızım. Ne güçlü direnç, şaşılır. Kaç hafta geçti aradan bu makinemin

⁸⁹ As we saw in the critical reception of *Virüs*, the authorized diagnosis on *Sahtegi* also posits a certain "nothingness" as the endpoint. Gümüş: "Bay Muannit Sahtegi artık günlük tutamıyor; dışsal yaşamdan aldığı izlenimleri verili bilgiler olarak, yalın biçimleriyle aktarıyor; yorum yapmıyor, alaycılığını da unutmuş görünüyor; kısacası, ruhsal bakımdan tam bir hiçleşmenin eşliğinde bulunuyor" (Gümüş 2000, 79). Similarly, Koçak has made the following comment regarding "Bener's subject": "Yöneldiği bir yer vardır, bir dönüşsüzlük eşliği, bir silinme noktası" (Koçak 2004, 22).

⁹⁰ "Everything I've written is vitalistic," Deleuze says, "at least I hope it is, and amounts to a theory of signs and events" (Deleuze 1995, 143).

başına oturmduğumdan bu yana. Hesabı şaşırtdım. Bu büro odasına taşınalı iki ay olmuş. Topu (24) sayfa. O da, ne başı belli ne sonu. Devam mı, tamam mı? (S 23)

“*Her yanım ağrı, ama duymasızım. Ne güçlü direnç, şaşılır.*”—Mr. Sahtegi’s “body is sick because there is a life within it that is too strong to be lived” (Tynan 15). This is the moment that crystallizes “a possibility of life” that strikes Mr. Sahtegi, harboring the tough discovery of health. “The illnesses of the lived” is all-pervasive; yet, only by exhausting this perspective of sickness can Mr. Sahtegi gain “the source or breath that supports him.” Plus, it is through this flourishing of the “resistance” that Mr. Sahtegi has recourse to his writing(-machine), in line with what Deleuze says: “There’s a profound link between signs, events, life, and vitalism: the power of nonorganic life that can be found in a line that’s drawn, a line of writing, a line of music” (Deleuze 1995, 143). Indeed, Mr. Sahtegi’s inevitable embrace of life also pertains to the flourishing of health through a line of music. If one word that signifies this ultimate vitalism in Mr. Sahtegi’s notes is “*direnç*”, the other one would be “*inat*”: “*İnadına Schönberg’den yay çekiyor radyo. Dağıtmamak, sağaltmak.*” It is a line of writing, it is a line of music,⁹¹ that awakens him, that renders his lifeless (*Yaşamazsınız?* “Yaşayamayan I”?) life full of a *joie de vivre*.⁹² “The ‘Good’ or healthy life,” Smith remarks, “is an overflowing and ascending form of existence ... always increasing the power to live, always opening up new possibilities of life (Smith xv).

“*Devam mı, tamam mı?*” is a question that is not only textual but also ontological—as Gürbilek proposes. Mr. Sahtegi constantly evokes the principle of “*tamam*” in his notes, he always tends to stop writing, he always waits for his death; yet, if we are reading these notes, if we have *Sahtegi* in front of us, then it is the case that the principle of “*devam*” was a more foundational, more essential principle. Ultimately, it seems that the Mr. Sahtegi of “*yazmayı sürdürüyüm en iyisi*”, “*Yazmayı sürdürmeliyim*”, “*yazsam ya,*

⁹¹ In this line of thought, Bener’s wrestling in search of extracting “music” from language may also be considered as an act in search of a certain non-organic, pre-discursive, affective vitalism.

⁹² Regarding Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari write: “That’s why it is so awful, so grotesque, to oppose life and writing in Kafka, to suppose that he took refuge in writing out of some sort of lack, weakness, impotence, in front of life. ... Only two principles are necessary to accord with Kafka. He is an author who laughs with a profound joy, a *joie de vivre*, in spite of, or because of, his clownish declarations that he offers like a trap or a circus. And from one end to the other, he is a political author, prophet of the future world, because he has two poles that he will know how to unify in a completely new assemblage: far from being a writer withdrawn into his room, Kafka finds that his room offers him a double flux, that of a bureaucrat with a great future ahead of him, plugged into real assemblages that are in the process of coming into shape, and that of a nomad who is involved in fleeing things in the most contemporary way and who plugs into socialism, anarchism, social movements. ... Everything leads to laughter, starting with *The Trial*. Everything is political, starting with the letters to Felice” (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 41).

elimden ne geliyor başka?” circumvents the Mr. Sahtegi of “*Neyi, nasıl, niçin kurtarmak?*”. Thanks to the creative possibility extracted from lethal impossibilities, *obstinacy* to life ultimately outlives the *counterfeit* sickness. It is *in* his writing that Mr. Sahtegi clings to life that is already rusted. It, then, may be the case that Mr. Sahtegi’s sentence “*İçimdeki paslı yay nasıl gergin, çengelinden bir kurtulsa*” signifies an affirmation, rather than a negation, of life—waiting for life, more life, not death.

Such a productive paradox *Sahtegi* embodies: Even when Muannit Sahtegi writes what, how, and why he cannot write, he cannot but write. In this novel of Bener, where writing seems to be less a possibility than an impossibility in the face of life, where there is hardly a chance for individual and collective recovery, we hear a voice that forcibly, constantly, resistingly, in spite of oneself says *Yes* to life.⁹³

Deleuze could have added the name of Mr. Sahtegi into his list of sick artists or philosophers: “The artist or philosopher often has slender, frail health, a weak constitution, a shaky hold on things: look at Spinoza, Nietzsche, Lawrence. Yet it’s not death that breaks them, but seeing, experiencing, thinking too much life. Life overwhelms them ...”

⁹³ This is the same *Yes* Gürbilek hears, with the help of Deleuze and Nietzsche, in Ayhan Geçgin’s texts: “Olumsuzun kısılcından kurtulabilmiş bir saf Evet” (Gürbilek 2016, 90). A comparative study that will look at the parallelisms between *Sahtegi* and Geçgin’s *Gençlik Düşü* would be productive, only if we consider that in both books an artist discusses literature’s abilities by doing literature. Both books have been marked as examples of *Künstlerroman*: *Sahtegi*, as already mentioned, by Parla (2015); *Gençlik Düşü* by Koçak (2017). Considering Osman’s being a writer/artist, *Virüs* (as a *Künstlerroman*?) may also be part of this comparative study.

CONCLUSION

... *the great literary characters are great thinkers.*
— Gilles Deleuze

In an interview, Bener states that he does not “consider himself as a writer” (Bener 2004, 117). Departing from a sentence he uttered in another interview (“doing literature is not my job”), Gürbilek argues that there is “an aspect in Bener’s works that works against literature” (Gürbilek 2004, 40-1). “The writer,” Koçak comments on Bener’s works), possibly mindful of this sort of a sentiment, “has difficulty in believing the fiction as an illusion” (Koçak 2004, 25). We know that these commentaries have been motivated primarily by a desire to account for Bener’s autobiography/fiction impasse: Bener’s “problem of *writing*” as a problem that passes through literature and life, fiction and reality.

May this “labour of fiction” be translatable into a labour of philosophy as well? May Bener’s oscillation between autobiography and fiction be an oscillation between what is traditionally coded as literature and what is traditionally coded as philosophy, reflecting a desire to produce more than fiction, rather than an inability to produce fiction? “To write is also to become something other than a writer,” Deleuze says in “Literature and Life,” and continues: “To those who ask what literature is, Virginia Woolf responds: To whom are you speaking of writing? The writer does not speak about it, but is concerned with something else” (Deleuze 1997, 6). We know that this “something else” is not irrelevant to the difference Deleuze claims he does *not* recognize: the difference between literature and philosophy. In what we have quoted from him so far, Deleuze repeatedly referred to “the artist or philosopher,” saying that “artists are like philosophers.” In another piece, he talks about “philosophizing as a novelist” or “being a novelist in philosophy” (Deleuze and Parnet 2007, 54). In *What is Philosophy?*, while speaking of some “thinkers [who] are ‘half’ philosophers but also much more than philosophers,” Deleuze and Guattari refer to “those unhinged works of Hölderlin, Kleist, Rimbaud, Mallarme, Kafka, Michaux, Pessoa, Artaud, and many English and American novelists, from Melville to Lawrence or Miller, in which the reader discovers admiringly that they have written the novel of Spinozism.” What is at issue in these texts, they say, is not to “produce a synthesis of art and philosophy,” but to “branch out and do not stop branching out” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 67).

I would like to argue, as a postscript to my readings of Bener's novels, that a reflection on the difference between literature and philosophy, or on the blurring thereof, may help us see Bener's novels' force more effectively, while potentially contributing to the complicated discussion on the "genre" of his works—we have seen how a discussion on Bener's autobiography/fiction impasse has ramified into such categories as "memoir-novel," "autobiographical novel," "memory narrative," "diary," and "Künstlerroman." Can we also add "philosophy" into this list, considering Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and Nietzsche as (not only Deleuze's but also) Bener's "philosophical precursors"? Considering the centrality in Bener's works of the question "why write," Bener's (autobiographical?) novels can also be categorized as dense works of philosophy of art, reflecting a desire to discuss what art can do, instead of declaring a disbelief in literature. At this juncture, where the differentiation between literature, philosophy, and autobiography seems to be not so rigid, a recourse not to Deleuze but to another philosopher may be more helpful. In an interview, Derrida talks about an "idea of an internal polylogue" (Derrida 34), an "adolescent dream of keeping a trace of all the voices which were traversing me" (35):

No doubt I hesitated between philosophy and literature, giving up neither, perhaps seeking obscurely a place from which the history of this frontier could be thought or even displaced—in writing itself and not only by historical or theoretical reflection. And since what interests me today is not strictly called either literature or philosophy, I'm amused by the idea that my adolescent desire—let's call it that—should have directed me toward something in writing which was neither the one nor the other. What was it?

What follows this question, which addresses not only his writing experience but also the writings that attracted his attention, would, I guess, surprise the readers of Bener: "'Autobiography' is perhaps the least inadequate name, because it remains for me the most enigmatic, the most open, even today" (34). Autobiography is perhaps the least inadequate name for Bener's text as well, not (only) because these texts blur the distinction between reality and fiction but (also) because they *hesitate* between philosophy and literature, discussing, through the discourses of their great characters who are both *artists* and *thinkers*, new possibilities of life.

I started to think of Bener's novels through a scrutiny on this "idea of an internal polylogue," or on what Deleuze and Guattari dubbed "the free indirect discourse running through me." Departing from an analysis on the distinctive figuration of "the felt interior experience" in Bener's texts—a figuration whose philosophical source we find in "Biraz

da Ađla Descartes”s rewriting of the law of cogito—, I tried to show in my readings that Bener’s novels embody a tough problematization of the distinction between “the thinking ‘I’” and “the speaking ‘I’,” between the subject of the enunciating and the subject of the enunciation, to the extent that a multiplicity of voices turns into the dominant style—not only “textually” but also “ontologically.”

This problematization in Bener’s novels addresses the inner experience not as an isolated experience. In many ways, my study has labored to show that Bener’s novels’ question of subjectivity is not a personal question per se but rather questions the interface between inner world and exterior world, individual concern and collective concern, private history and public history. The analysis on the question of subjectivity in Bener’s novels thus carried us to a discussion on *the political*: Focusing on those passages where what I dubbed “the immanence of the political to the personal” crystallizes, where the personal enunciation leans toward a collective enunciation, I portrayed Bener as a political author and his novels as political novels. To show how Bener “textualized” politics in his novels was only one aspect of this endeavor. I rather wanted to bring into view the appearance of the political in Bener’s novels as an inevitably immanent component of the inner world, and thus of *the space of literature*. In other words, I showed that a “political concern,” which has been deemed to lack in Bener’s texts, is indeed quite a foundational concern in Bener’s novels, albeit always encompassed by an impasse. Smith argues, *pace* Deleuze, that “what constitutes the new object of a political literature or cinema” is “the *intolerable*, that is, a lived actuality that at the same time testifies to the impossibility of living in such conditions.” Political literature, thus, does not project the long-awaited collective truth into the literary practice but rather is “constituted on a set of impossibilities in which the people are missing, in which the only consciousness is the consciousness of violence, fragmentation, the betrayal of every revolution, the shattered state of the emotions and drives: an impasse in every direction” (Smith xliii).

How to find a “way-out” of this “impasse in every direction”? We passed through those passages in Bener’s texts where a tough problematization of politics/history/collectivity leads to a tough problematization of the act of writing. I tried to show in my readings that Bener’s/Osman’s/Mr. Sahtegi’s question “why write” is a question that is less personal than political, interrogating what literature can do in the face of world-historical impasses shaped by capitalist/fascist system. This questioning ended up with an uncomfortable yet forceful embrace of the act of writing as a (political) way-

out, embodied by the very existences of *Virüs* as a text written by Osman and *Sahtegi* as a text written by Mr. Sahtegi.

Deleuze and Guattari helped me unravel the knot in Bener's novels of these three rubrics of study (subjectivity, politics, the act of writing). At issue in this attempt to invite Deleuze and Guattari to this tripartite reading was not a desire to produce a brand-new "Deleuzian" reading. In the face of many an attempt to "digest"⁹⁴ Deleuze by repeating Foucault's now-famous statement "Perhaps one day this century will be known as Deleuzian" or by dint of an appropriation ("applied Deleuze") whereby his concepts are too easily squeezed into literary texts, a recourse to Deleuze's approach to literature, especially for a reading of such a "pessimist" and "dark" author as Bener, was risky. Yet, I could not help but continue to think of Bener's writings in tandem with Deleuze's: Throughout the process of working on this essay, in which "hearing voices" is a constant (methodological) leitmotif, it was striking for me to hear some *echoes* between Bener and Deleuze—the echoes that I hear most sonorously in "Bener's subject's" havoc with the distinction between the subject of the enunciating and the subject of the enunciation, in "Biraz da Ağla Descartes"'s rewriting of cogito by way of an emphasis on "sensation" and "experimentation," in Osman's and Mr. Sahtegi's deliriums that are "composed of politics and economics" as well as Bener's "Delirium" on "humankind," in Osman's probable "schizophrenic mental state," in Mr. Sahtegi's oscillations between "being a patient" and "being a physician," and, eventually, in *Virüs*'s and *Sahtegi*'s tough yet powerful vitalisms (Spinozisms?). What is more, it is as if Karasu and Gürbilek have already paved the way for a reading in which to hear these echoes: Without uttering the names of Deleuze and Guattari, they have already pointed out Bener's "sick" and "schizoid" subjects. When I first imagined this study in 2015, the project of reading Bener's novels with the help of Deleuze's approach to literature was based more on a foresee than a discovery. Looking back at this essay, I see that that foresee had not been ungrounded. Having said this, I see this essay as a humble draft for a much more elaborate study on Bener's works as well as on the possible connections and disconnections

⁹⁴ In an essay he wrote on the 20th anniversary of the death of Deleuze, Brian Massumi, the English translator of *A Thousand Plateaus*, was calling for "undigesting Deleuze": "Deleuze is one of the most cited authors around. He is everywhere, to the point that Deleuze fatigue is palpable in many quarters. ... How could it have come to this? What allowed Deleuze to be digested by the [academic] institution that spat him out with such distaste for so long (and still does, ironically, in his home country)? Is there any sign of indigestion, or food poisoning, that might offer Deleuze's thought an expectorant hope of a vivid postprandial afterlife?" (Massumi 2015). Thanks are due to Arda Çiltepe for bringing this article to my attention.

between Bener and Deleuze, one that will pay more attention to such areas of study as “micropolitics of desire.”

It will thus not be inappropriate to finish this essay with another echo between Bener and Deleuze. The last paragraph of “Literature and Life” reads: “If we consider these criteria, we can see that, among all those who make books with a literary intent, even among the mad, there are very few who can call themselves writers” (Deleuze 1997, 6).



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